POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS) IN

ENGLISH

SEMESTER IV

CORE COURSE 10

TWENTIETH CENTURY: FICTIONAL AND NON-FICTIONAL PROSE

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI, NADIA, WEST BENGAL

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Director's Message

Satisfying the varied needs of distance learners, overcoming the obstacle of distance and reaching the unreached students are the threefold functions catered by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems. The onus lies on writers, editors, production professionals and other personnel involved in the process to overcome the challenges inherent to curriculum design and production of relevant Self Learning Materials (SLMs). At the University of Kalyani a dedicated team under the able guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor has invested its best efforts, professionally and in keeping with the demands of Post Graduate CBCS Programmes in Distance Mode to devise a self-sufficient curriculum for each course offered by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL), University of Kalyani. Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2017 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal. Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome. During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance. Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PGBOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt thanks is also due to the Course Writers-faculty members at the DODL, subject-experts serving at University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level of the DODL of University of Kalyani. Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode. Self Learning Materials (SLMs) have been published by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, University of Kalyani, Kalyani-741235, West Bengal and all the copyright reserved for University of Kalyani. No part of this work should be reproduced in any from without permission in writing from the appropriate authority of the University of Kalyani. All the Self Learning Materials are self writing and collected from e-book, journals and websites.

Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning
University of Kalyani

CORE COURSE X

TWENTIETH CENTURY: FICTIONAL AND NON-FICTIONAL PROSE

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BLOCK I

SUB-UNIT I

LORD OF THE FLIES

By

WILLIAM GOLDING

CONTENT STRUCTURE

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Unit 2 (a): Brief study of the characters

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Unit 3 (a): Human depravity and innate savagery

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Suggested Readings

Assignments

UNIT 1

Unit 1 (a): Life and Works of William Golding

Sir William Gerald Golding was a British novelist, playwright, and poet. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature for his parables of the human condition. Golding attracted a cult of followers, especially among the youth of the post-World War II generation. He was born in Cornwall, England, to Alec Golding, a socialist teacher who supported scientific rationalism,

and Mildred Golding, a supporter of female suffrage. He was educated at the Marlborough Grammar School, where his father worked, and later at Brasenose College, Oxford. While his father had been an insistent atheist, Golding himself was a Christian, though he did not become a member of any established Church. He began attending Brasenose College at Oxford in 1930 and spent two years studying science, in deference to his father's beliefs. In his third year, however, he switched to the literature program, following his true interests. Although his ultimate medium was fiction, from an early age, Golding dreamed of writing poetry. While still at Oxford, a volume of his poems was published. Later in life, he dismissed this work as juvenile. From 1935 to 1939, Golding worked as a writer, actor, and producer with a small theatre in London, paying his bills with a job as a social worker. He considered the theatre his strongest literary influence, citing Greek tragedies and Shakespeare, rather than other novelists, as his primary influences.

In 1939, Golding began teaching English and Philosophy at Bishop Wordsworth's School. With the exception of the five years that he spent in the Royal Navy, he remained in the teaching position until 1961. During World War II, Golding joined the Royal Navy in 1940, took part in the action that saw the sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck*. The five years he spent in the navy (from 1940 to 1945) left an enormous impact, exposing him to the incredible cruelty and barbarity of which humankind is capable. Writing about his wartime experiences later, he asserted that "man produces evil, as a bee produces honey." During his days at sea, Golding had increased his knowledge of Greek history and mythology by reading. When he returned to his post at Bishop Wordsworth's School in 1945, he began furthering his literary career. He wrote three novels but all of those remained unpublished. In 1954, Golding finished *The Lord of the Flies* which was initially rejected by twenty-one publishers. At last Faber & Faber accepted the manuscript and agreed to publish it.

Lord of the Flies tells the adventurous story of a group of British schoolboys stranded on an island in the pacific who revert to savagery. Although it suffered initial rejection by many publishing houses, it ultimately became a surprise success. The gripping story of the novel explored the savage side of human nature, even as young boys, when left without the constraints of the civil society. Riddled with symbolism, the book set the tone for Golding's future works, in which he continued examining man's internal struggle between good and evil. E.M. Forster declared *Lord of the Flies* the outstanding novel of its year. Initially, the story of a group of schoolboys stranded on an uninhabited island during their escape from war received mixed reviews and it did not sell many copies. But the teachers of literature at

different universities were greatly impressed by the symbolism of the work and they started including the novel into their syllabus. As the novel's reputation grew, it drew many critical appraisals and scholarly reviews which gradually solidified its literary merit.

Golding continued to develop a similar thematic pattern regarding the essential violence and depravity in human nature in his next novel, *The Inheritors*, published in 1955. This novel deals with the last days of the Neanderthal man. Some of his notable subsequent works include *Pincher Martin* (1956), the story of a guilt-ridden naval officer who faces an agonizing death, *Free Fall* (1959), and *The Spire* (1964), each of which deals with the inherent corruption of human nature. *Darkness Visible* (1979) tells the story of a boy horribly burned in the London blitz during World War II. His later works include *Rites of Passage* (1980), which won the Booker McConnell Prize. It has two sequels, *Close Quarters* (1987) and *Fire Down Below* (1989). These three novels portray life aboard a ship during the Napoleonic Wars and the three of them comprise the Sea Trilogy. In addition to his novels and his early collection of poems, Golding published a play entitled *The Brass Butterfly* in 1958 and two collections of essays, *The Hot Gates* (1965) and *A Moving Target* (1982).

In 1980, he was awarded the Booker Prize for *Rites of Passage*. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. In 1983, Golding received the Nobel Prize for literature for his novels which, according to the Nobel committee, "with the perspicuity of realistic narrative art and the diversity and universality of myth, illuminate the human condition in the world of today." In 1988 he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. On June 19, 1993, Golding died of a heart attack in Cornwall. At the time of his death, he was working on an unfinished manuscript entitled "The Double Tongue," which focused on the fall of Hellenic culture and the rise of Roman civilization. This work was published posthumously in 1995. Golding's extremely productive output—five novels in ten years—and the high quality of his work established him as one of the late twentieth-century's most distinguished writers. In 2008, *The Times* ranked Golding third on their list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945".

Unit 1 (b): Substantive Text Summary

Chapter One: The Sound of the Shell

On an unnamed tropical island, a twelve-year-old boy with fair hair climbs out of plane wreckage. At the lagoon, he encounters another boy, who is chubby, intellectual, and wears thick glasses. The fair-haired boy introduces himself as Ralph and the chubby one introduces himself as Piggy. Through their conversation, the readers get to know that in the midst of a nuclear war, a group of boys was being evacuated to an unnamed destination. Their plane crashed and was dragged out to the sea, leaving the boys stranded on an unfamiliar island. Because of the atom bomb's devastation, it's likely that no one knows the boys' whereabouts. Ralph, excited by the idea of living without any adult supervision, immediately takes advantage of the newfound freedom on the island but Piggy is less pleased. They discover a large pink and cream-colored conch shell, which Piggy realizes could be blown as a trumpet. He convinces Ralph to blow through the shell to summon any other survivors to the beach. The sound soon attracts other survivors from the crash, boys between ages 6 to 12. Among them are Sam and Eric, two young identical twins, and red-headed Jack Merridew, who is accompanied by a band of choir boys. Jack is revealed to be their leader. Then the assembled boys vote to decide a chief, choosing Ralph over Jack. Ralph suggests that Jack should remain in charge of the choirboys, designating them as hunters. Then Jack, Ralph, and another boy named Simon go to explore the island and find food sources. On their return, they encounter a piglet caught in jungle vines. Jack pulls his knife but falters, and the pig gets away. But he vows that next time, he will show no mercy towards his prey.

Chapter Two: Fire on the Mountain

The explorers return and Ralph blows the conch to assemble all the boys for a meeting. Seeing that the meeting was leading to chaos, Ralph announces that they will have to establish some rules, not only in meetings but also in everyday life. He says that only the boy holding the conch can speak and then he will pass it along to the next speaker. Piggy takes the conch and points out that no one knows their location which means they might have to be

on the island for a really long time. At this point, the group of the littlest boys pushes a representative forward – a small boy with a mulberry-coloured mark on his face. He claims to have seen a snakelike "beastie" or a monster in the woods the night before. Though they are frightened, the older boys quickly reassure the littluns (little ones) that there is no monster and the little boy's vision was only a nightmare. Ralph calms everyone and explains that the island is theirs and the goal is twofold: one, they should try to ensure their rescue, and two, they should try to have some fun. Thinking about the possibility of rescue, Ralph, then, suggests that the group should build a large signal fire on the top of the island's central mountain so that it might attract passing ships and planes. Jack leads the boys to collect dead wood and use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and set the wood on fire. In their reckless, disorganized efforts they create a massive bonfire and set a swath of trees ablaze. Piggy reprimands them for not only the waste of so much firewood but also the probable death of some of the littlest boys since some of them had been playing in the area consumed by the rapidly moving fire. He tells them furiously that one of the littluns — the same one who told them about the snake-beast — was playing over by the fire and now is missing.

Chapter Three: Huts on the Beach

The chapter begins with Jack alone on a pig hunt. The length of his hair and the tattered condition of his shirt indicate that weeks have passed since the boys were abandoned on the island. He hurls his spear at a group of pigs unsuccessfully. Frustrated that his day's hunt has ended yet again without a kill, he returns to the area where Ralph and Simon are constructing shelters out of tree trunks and palm leaves. Ralph, annoyed with Jack, implies that he and the hunters are using their hunting duties as an excuse to avoid the real work. Jack responds by commenting that the boys want meat. Jack and Ralph continue to bicker and grow increasingly hostile toward each other. Ralph is irritated not only because the huts keep falling down but also because none of the other boys besides Simon will help him, although they previously agreed to help build shelters. But now the boys are off playing, bathing, or hunting with Jack, even though they have failed to catch a single pig. Jack promises that soon they would be successful. Ralph also worries about the smaller children, many of whom are unable to sleep due to nightmares. After helping Ralph with the shelters, Simon sneaks off and wanders through the jungle alone. At first, he helps some of the littluns reach fruits

hanging from a high branch. Then he looks around to make sure that he is not followed, walks deeper into the forest, and eventually reaches a thick jungle glade – a peaceful, beautiful open space full of flowers, birds, and butterflies. There he sits down, marvelling at the abundance and beauty of life that surrounds him.

Chapter Four: Painted Faces and Long Hair

The chapter begins with a general description of the routines of the boys in the island and their difficulties in adjusting with the daily rhythms of this tropical life. When the sea rises in the midday, the little boys are often troubled by bizarre images that seem to flicker over the water. Piggy dismisses these images as mirages caused by the sunlight striking the water. We are introduced to Percival, the smallest boy on the island, who had previously stayed in a small shelter for two days and had only recently emerged. The littluns spend most of their days searching for fruit to eat and playing with one another. The large amount of fruits that they eat causes them to suffer from diarrhoea and stomach ailments. They also remain collectively troubled by the nightmares and visions of the dreadful "beastie" which supposedly hunts in the darkness. Sometimes they occupy themselves by building castles in the sand. But two vicious older boys named Roger and Maurice, in order to display their superiority over the littluns, cruelly kick down their sandcastles. Jack, obsessed with the idea of killing a pig, camouflages himself by painting his face with clay and charcoal. Then he and several other boys enter the jungle to hunt. From behind the mask, Jack appears liberated from shame and self-consciousness. Ralph believes that he sees smoke coming from a ship, but Simon points out that there is not enough smoke in their signal fire up in the mountain to get the attention of the ship. They hurry to the top of the hill, but it was too late to rekindle the flame. Ralph screams for the ship to come back, but it passes without seeing them. Frustrated and sad, he furiously blames Jack and his band of hunters, whose job it was to maintain the fire. From the forest, Jack and the hunters return, covered with blood and humming a bizarre war chant. Their hunt has finally been successful as they are carrying a dead pig on a stick. Nevertheless, Ralph admonishes them for letting the fire go out. Jack and his hunters, who are overjoyed and crazed by the kill, ignore Ralph. Piggy begins to cry at their lost opportunity and blames Jack. The two argue, and finally, Jack punches Piggy in the stomach, breaking one of the lenses of his glasses. Maurice pretends to be a pig and the hunters circle around him. They start re-enacting the savagery of the hunt by wildly dancing

and singing around the fire, "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in." Ralph declares that he is calling a meeting.

Chapter Five: Beast from Water

Ralph decides to call a meeting to bring the group back into order. He blows the conch shell and the boys gather on the beach. Ralph scolds the boys by pointing out how they have disrespected the rules: they refuse to work at building shelters, do not collect drinking water, neglect the signal fire, and do not even use the designated toilet area. He also reminds them that the fire is the most important thing on the island, for it is their means of escape. He then addresses the growing fear which is beginning to overwhelm many of the boys. The littluns, in particular, are increasingly plagued by nightmare visions. Ralph reassures them by saying that there are no monsters on the island. Jack begins to yell at the littluns for screaming like babies and not hunting or building or helping in any way. He also tells them that there is no beast on the island. Piggy agrees with Jack, telling the kids that there is no real reason for fear unless it is of other people. A littlun, Phil, comes forward to describe a large and horrid creature that he saw moving among the trees. Simon reveals that he was walking in the jungle at night, going to his special place. Percival claims that a beast comes out of the sea and this idea terrifies all the boys. Suddenly, Jack proclaims that if there is a beast, he and his hunters will hunt it down and kill it. Simon explains that the boys themselves, or something inherent in human nature, could be the beast they fear. Jack aggressively undermines Ralph's authority and leads the boys onto the beach in a sort of tribal dance. Eventually, only Ralph, Piggy, and Simon are left. Piggy urges Ralph to blow the conch shell and summon the boys back to the group, but Ralph is afraid that if they refuse to come, then they will become like animals. He tells Piggy and Simon that he might relinquish the leadership of the group, but his friends reassure him that the boys need his guidance. Piggy warns Ralph that if he steps down as the chief Jack will do nothing but hunt, and they will never be rescued. Suddenly, the three boys are startled by an unearthly wail and they find that Percival is still sobbing.

Chapter Six: Beast from Air

Ralph and Simon pick up Percival and carry him into a shelter. Unbeknownst to the sleeping boys, some military airplanes battle fiercely above the island. They neither hear the

explosions in the aerial battle nor do they see a dead pilot dropping from a parachute on the mountaintop. The next morning, the twins Samneric (Sam and Eric), the two boys on duty at the fire, wake up and go to rekindle the signal fire. In the flickering firelight, they spot the twisted form of the dead pilot and imagine it to be the shadowy image of the dreaded beast. Immobilized by fear, they rush back to the camp, wake Ralph and tell him what they have seen. Ralph immediately calls for a meeting where the twins reiterate their claim that a monster assaulted them. They describe it as having teeth and claws and state that it followed them as they ran away. The horrified boys organize an expedition to search the island for the monster. They set out, armed with wooden spears, and only Piggy and the littluns remain behind. Despite Jack's hostility towards Ralph and his rules, Ralph not only allows Jack to lead the hunt but also decides to accompany the hunters. They soon reach a part of the island that none of them has ever explored before — a thin walkway that leads to a hill with small caves. The boys are afraid to go across the walkway so Ralph goes to investigate alone. Soon, Jack joins him in the cave. The two boys experience a brief rekindling of their old bond as they have fun together exploring the new mountain territory. However, some boys begin to play whimsical games and lose sight of the purpose of their expedition. Ralph angrily reminds them that their original goal is to find and kill the beast. He also commands them to return to the other mountain so that they can rebuild the signal fire. The boys get displeased by Ralph’s commands but they grudgingly obey. Contradicting Ralph, Jack states that he wishes to stay where they are because they can build a fort.

Chapter Seven: Shadows and Tall Trees

Ralph is disheartened that the boys have become dirty and undisciplined. He gazes sadly at the vast ocean and considers it like an impenetrable wall obstructing any hope of escaping the island. Simon joins him and he lifts Ralph’s spirits by prophesying that they will leave the island eventually. That afternoon, Jack suggests that they should hunt the pig while continue to search for the beast. The boys agree and quickly track a large boar. Ralph, who has never hunted before, gets excited and caught up in the exhilaration of the chase. He throws his spear at the boar, and though it nicks the animal’s snout only, Ralph is thrilled with his marksmanship nonetheless. Jack is wounded and he proudly presents his bloodied arm to the crowd, which he claims is grazed by the boar’s tusks. After the boar gets away, the excited hunters re-enact the chase with a boy named Robert playing the role of the boar. They dance,

chant, and ultimately it gets out of control as they jab Robert with their spears. Jack suggests that they should use a littlun next time as the hunted pig. While the boys laugh, Ralph is shocked at Jack's audacity and the increasingly violent behaviour of the hunters. As darkness falls, Ralph suggests that they should wait until morning to climb the mountain because it will be difficult to hunt the monster at night. Simon volunteers to cross the island alone and go back to the beach to inform Piggy about the hunters' whereabouts. Though the hunters are tired and afraid, Jack vows that he will go up the mountain to look for the beast. He mocks Ralph of being afraid. To prove his worthiness as a leader, Ralph agrees at last. Then Ralph, Roger, and Jack start to climb the mountain. After a while, Ralph, tired of Jack's continual mocking, challenges him to go alone and climb to the summit. Jack returns from the mountaintop terrified and claims to have seen the monster. Since Jack seems for the first time afraid, Ralph and Roger immediately climb up to have a look. There they see a large, shadowy form with the shape of a giant ape, making a strange flapping sound in the wind. Actually, it is the dead paratrooper that looks like an ape-like creature. Horrified, the boys hurry down the mountain to warn the group. By the time they reach the base of the mountain, darkness has fallen.

Chapter Eight: Gift for the Darkness

The next morning, the boys gather on the beach to discuss the monster. Jack assures the others that his hunters can defeat it. As Ralph dismisses this idea Jack tells the hunters that Ralph considers them as cowards. He then proposes that Ralph himself is a coward who should be removed from the leadership. The boys refuse to openly vote against Ralph and Jack storms away in tears. He asserts that he will no longer be a part of Ralph's group and anyone who wants the same can join him. Simon suggests that they should climb the mountain and face whatever is there. But the other boys are too afraid to do so. Piggy, thrilled that Jack is gone, suggests that they should build a new signal fire on the beach. The boys start to build a new fire, but many of them sneak away to join Jack's group. Piggy tries to convince Ralph that they are better off without the deserters. They wonder where Simon has gone and assume that he might be climbing the mountain. Piggy starts the fire with his glasses. But Simon goes to his hidden spot in the forest to rest. Jack gathers his new group and declares himself to be the chief. In the mood of celebration, they kill a sow by driving a spear into its anus. Then the boys leave the sow's head on a sharpened stake in the jungle as

an offering to the beast, coincidentally in full view of the spot where Simon is sitting. As they place the head, the black blood drips down the sow's teeth, and the boys run away in fear. Ralph's group is startled as Jack approaches with his tribe. His hunters steal burning branches from the fire on the beach. Jack invites Ralph's followers to join him to the feast that night and even to join his tribe. The hungry boys are tempted by the idea of pig's meat. At the top of the mountain remains the pig's impaled head, now swarming with flies, at which Simon stares with rapt attention. Mesmerized at the sight, Simon believes that the pig's head speaks to him which he has dubbed as the Lord of the Flies. He thinks that it is calling him a silly little boy. The Lord of the Flies claims that he is the Beast, and he laughs at the idea that the Beast could be hunted and killed, for he is within every human being and thus can never be defeated or escaped from. Terrified and disoriented by this disturbing vision, Simon falls and loses consciousness.

Chapter Nine: A View to a Death

As a storm builds over the island, Simon regains his consciousness. He staggers toward the mountain and in the failing light sees the dead pilot with his flapping parachute. Watching the parachute rise and fall with the wind, Simon realizes that the boys have mistaken this harmless object for the monster. From his vantage point, he can see that most of the boys are at the fire at Jack's camp, so he heads there to give everyone the news that the beast is not real after all. Piggy and Ralph go to the feast out of curiosity and hunger. At the feast, Jack sits on a great log like a king on a throne, his face painted like a savage and garlanded like an idol. When he sees Ralph and Piggy, he orders the other boys to give them something to eat. He is languidly issuing commands and treating the boys like his servants. After the meal, Jack invites all of Ralph's followers to join his tribe, for he gave them food and demonstrated that his hunters will protect them. Most of them accept, despite Ralph's attempts to convince them otherwise. The storm breaks over the party and as it starts to rain, Ralph asks Jack how he plans to survive in the storm considering he has not built any shelter. Jack tries to reassure everyone by ordering his group to perform their ritual pig hunting dance. The boys begin dancing and chanting wildly, and they are soon consumed by frenzy. Suddenly, they see a shadowy figure creep out of the forest. It is actually Simon who crawls out of the forest and tries to tell them about the true identity of the beast. In their wild state, however, the boys do not recognize him. Shouting that he is the beast, the boys descend upon Simon and start to

violently tear him apart with their bare hands and teeth and ultimately kill him. The rain increases and the boys back off, leaving Simon's body on the beach. Meanwhile, the strong winds lift the parachute and the body attached to it and blow it across the island and into the sea, a sight which again terrifies the boys, who still mistake the body for a beast. At the same time, the strong tide, propelled by wind, washes over Simon's body and carries it out to sea, where a school of glowing fish surrounds it.

Chapter Ten: The Shell and the Glasses

The next morning, Ralph and Piggy meet on the beach. They are deeply ashamed of their previous night's behaviour. The two are now virtually alone except for Sam and Eric and a handful of littluns. Piggy, who is unable to confront his role in Simon's death, attributes the tragedy to a mere accident. But Ralph is consumed with guilt and insists that they have been participants in a murder. Piggy whiningly denies the charge and objects to the use of the term "murder". Piggy says that he participated in it only because he was scared, to which Ralph replies that he was not scared. He does not know what came over him. Samneric return to the beach and seeing them Piggy asks Ralph not to reveal to the twins that they were involved in Simon's death. All four appear nervous as they discuss where they were the previous night, trying to avoid the subject of Simon's murder. All insist that they left early, right after the feast. At Castle Rock, Jack begins to act like a cruel dictator to his own tribe members. Boys are punished for no apparent reason. The entire tribe, including Jack, is in utter denial that they had killed one of their own. They seem to believe that Simon really was the beast and that the beast is capable of assuming any disguise. Jack states that they must continue to guard against the beast, for it is never truly dead. He declares to the group that tomorrow they will hunt again. Reluctantly, Bill asks Jack what they will use to light the fire. Jack answers that he plans a raid on Ralph's camp to get fire for another pig roast. The hunters descend upon Ralph's camp at night and badly beat Ralph and his companions, who do not even know why they are being assaulted. But Piggy knows why, for the hunters have stolen his glasses, and with them, the power to start fire.

Chapter Eleven: Castle Rock

The next morning, Ralph and his few companions try to light the fire but it is impossible without Piggy's glasses. Piggy, crying and barely able to see, suggests that Ralph should hold a meeting to discuss their options. They decide that their only choice is to travel to Castle Rock and the four remaining biguns (big ones) will ask Jack's tribe for the glasses back. Samneric express a real fear of approaching the other boys who have now become complete savages. Ralph decides to take the conch shell with him, hoping that it will remind Jack's followers of his former authority. When they approach the Castle Rock, Ralph blows the conch but Jack's hunters, unimpressed by it, tell them to leave and throw rocks at them. Suddenly, Jack and a group of hunters emerge from the forest, dragging a dead pig. He warns Ralph to leave his camp but Ralph demands the return of Piggy's glasses. Ralph struggles to make Jack understand the importance of the signal fire which holds the hope of their ever being rescued. But Jack orders his hunters to capture Sam and Eric and tie them up. Ralph finally calls Jack a thief, and Jack responds by trying to stab Ralph with his spear, which Ralph deflects. As Piggy tries to speak, holding the conch, hoping to remind the group of the importance of rules and rescue, Roger releases a massive rock down the mountainside in Piggy's direction. Ralph, who hears the rock falling, dives and dodges it. But the boulder strikes Piggy, shatters the conch, and knocks him off the cliffs to his death on the rocks below. A large wave quickly carries off his body. Jack screams in victory at Ralph and then throws his spear at him and the other boys quickly join in. The spear wounds Ralph but bounces off, and he flees into the jungle. Roger and Jack begin to torture Sam and Eric, forcing them to submit to Jack's authority and join his tribe.

Chapter Twelve: Cry of the Hunters

Ralph hides in the jungle and thinks miserably about the knack for inhuman violence that the boys have developed in this chaotic island. He decides to return to Castle Rock to try reasoning with Jack's group. In the night, he sneaks down to the camp and finds Sam and Eric guarding the entrance, having been forced to join the tribe. He tries to win back their loyalty in vain. They tell him that Jack plans to send the entire tribe after him the next day and give him a chunk of meat. Ralph finds a place in a dense thicket to sleep for the night. In the morning, he hears Jack torturing the twins to find out where Ralph is hiding. Several boys try to break into the dense thicket unsuccessfully. So they flush him out by rolling boulders

into it and setting it on fire. Consequently, he abandons the hiding place and fights his way past Jack and his group of body-painted warrior-boys wielding sharp wooden spears. At last, he ends up on the beach, where he collapses in exhaustion, his pursuers close behind. Suddenly, Ralph looks up and surprisingly finds a British naval officer standing over him. The officer tells the boy that his ship has come to the island after seeing the smoke and blazing fire in the jungle. Jack's hunters reach the beach and stop chasing Ralph upon seeing the officer. The officer assumes that the boys have been only playing games. The other boys start to appear from the forest gradually, and the officer begins to realize the chaos and violence among the stranded boys. He becomes reproachful and asks how could the English boys like them have lost all reverence for the rules of civilization in such a short period? Ralph insists that they were organized and good at first and then he begins to weep for the early days on the island, which now seems impossibly remote. He is overwhelmed by the knowledge that he has been rescued, that he will escape the island after coming so close to a violent death. He weeps for the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart, and he weeps for the deaths of Simon and Piggy. All of the other boys begin to cry as well. The officer turns away, embarrassed, while the other boys attempt to regain their composure. The officer keeps his eye on the cruiser in the distance.

UNIT 2

Unit 2 (a): Brief Study of the Characters

Ralph

Ralph, one of the oldest boys on the island, is generally thought to be the protagonist of the story. William Golding describes Ralph as handsome, athletic, attractive, charismatic, and decently intelligent. Among his many other qualities, the competency for leadership is noticeable from the very beginning of the novel. As soon as the narrative begins, he is quickly elected as the leader of the boys. With his keen sense of diplomacy and innate talent for leadership, he presides over the other boys with a natural sense of authority and never becomes absolutely autocratic. At first, Ralph gets irritated by Piggy's nonstop questions and

considers his ideas to be dull. He even enjoys teasing Piggy in the beginning. But as the narrative progresses, Ralph realizes what an asset an ally like Piggy can be and he starts depending more and more on Piggy's intelligence. Ralph's relationship with Piggy remains the sanest and the most sensible bonding that we find in the novel. It is obvious that Ralph does not possess the kind of overt intelligence that Piggy exhibits but he also demonstrates common sense and adequate intelligence of his own.

For the most of the story, he remains calm, rational, responsible, and realistic. Being realistic is the dominant feature that sets him apart from others in the chaotic island. For example, he is the one who strongly believes that his father would find him and they would be rescued. This is realistic because he knows that the people in charge of them would definitely find out that their plane crashed and come looking for the boys. He again proves his capacity for rational thinking when he refuses to believe in the dreadful beast that everyone is so afraid of. He knows that there cannot be one such inexplicable creature on the face of the earth and there would definitely be some logical explanation behind its so-called existence. Ralph also knows that in order to survive on the island without adults, they must do certain things like building shelters, making the fire signal, gathering foods, keeping clean, arranging proper sanitation, having strong leadership and a stable government. While most of the other boys are initially concerned with having fun and avoiding work, Ralph convinces everyone to build huts for their dwelling. Ralph is always conscious about their ultimate goal which is to get out of the island. He is seen all the time thinking and discussing ways to maximize their chances of being rescued. He is not at all a coward as Jack had tried to establish in front of the group on multiple occasions. He works vigilantly to keep the group's focus on the hope for rescue. When the time comes to investigate the Castle Rock, Ralph takes the lead alone, despite his fear of the so-called beast. He displays a strong sense of responsibility towards everyone in the group, especially the littluns.

He clearly demonstrates determination and self-sufficiency. A fine instance of his exhibiting independence is seen when he is the first boy to step up to become a leader. This proves his self-reliance because he immediately knows what rules to make up without other people telling him what to do. Another significant example is how Ralph does not choose to become barbaric and participate in the hysteria of Jack’s tribe. For the most part, he stays on the side of civility, order, and discipline, even when he is the only person left in his group. He did not get involved with the first savagery and bloodlust of the boys when they injured Rodger who was acting as the pig. Ralph successfully survived on his own when he refused to join Jack’s

tribe like everyone else and was hunted viciously for it. For all these reasons, Ralph's power and influence over the other boys were secure at the beginning of the novel. However, as the group gradually succumbed to savage instincts and barbarity over the course of the action, Ralph's position declined while Jack's rose. Eventually, most of the boys except Piggy left Ralph's group for Jack's, and he is left alone to be hunted by Jack's tribe.

At first, it looked like Ralph and Jack would be a good friend. Ralph became irritated with Jack when he and his hunters were too busy with hunting and having fun only. They also refused to abide by the rules he set and did not participate properly in building the shelters and keeping the fire going. Jack found Ralph annoying because he was their main obstacle in the path of having reckless fun without any adult supervision. He found Ralph to be dictatorial who only focused on being rescued and tried to impose rules on them. After a series of disagreements, Jack started questioning him and then openly opposing his leadership. He even tried to kill Ralph. In this context, it is noteworthy that we have seen Ralph going through a severe change of heart and attitude towards life on the island. When they reached the island he was delighted with the fact that there was no grown-up present. Having started with a schoolboy's romantic attitude towards "adventures" he read in storybooks, Ralph eventually loses his excitement about their newly-gained autonomy. The island completely destroys his innocence. Soon he starts longing for the comfort and security of home. He starts missing the civilized world as life on the island becomes exhausting and lawless. He remembers the images of home and nation; recollects the memories of the peaceful life of eating cereal and reading children's books. He misses proper bathing, cutting hair, and grooming. Gradually his dreamy adventure transforms into a terrifying nightmare.

Once he loses his authority and everything around him turns chaotic, he also starts to lose his power of organized thought. While he used to be always ready for their meetings with all his strategies and suggestions, later on, he struggles to develop an agenda. He is often found staring at the vast sea with a vacant look in his once optimistic eyes. He becomes more and more lost in a blurred maze of vague thoughts. Being a leader, his authority and efforts to run a stable government for collective welfare depended mostly on his verbal dexterity. Ralph's loss of verbal ability and his lack of proper communication with the boys are the reasons which cost him his command over the group. In the beginning, Ralph was unable to understand why the other boys would indulge in bloodlust and barbarism. The hunters, whom he expected to behave like civilized British boys, started chanting, body-painting, and dancing like savages and it was a baffling sight him. Eventually, Ralph, like Simon, realized

that savagery and evil exist inside everyone but he remained determined not to let this savagery engulf him. When Ralph hunted a boar for the first time, however, he experienced the exhilaration and thrill of bloodlust and violence. When he and Piggy attended Jack's feast, they were also carried away by the frenzy; danced with the group, and astonishingly participated in the killing of Simon. But it is also true that Ralph's strong morality soon made him realize what an atrocity they committed. He was the only character who identified Simon's death as a murder and tried to convince Piggy about the same. This firsthand knowledge of the evil that exists within him, as within all human beings, was both appalling and tragic for Ralph. Consequently, it shattered his world and submerged him into listless despair and misery for a time. Sir William Golding created this allegorical microcosm of *Lord of the Flies* to serve as a cautionary tale to illustrate a deeper sense of morality. With his sound judgment and a strong sense of morality, Ralph remains the most civilized character throughout the novel. Due to his unflinching commitment to the ideals of justice and order, he represents the political tradition of liberal democracy. Ralph's story ends semi-tragically: although he is rescued and returned to civilization when he sees the naval officer, he weeps with the burden of his new knowledge about the human capacity for evil.

Jack Merridew

The headstrong, cruel, sadistic, and egocentric Jack Merridew is considered to be the novel's primary antagonist and the antithesis of Ralph. Sir William Golding describes Jack as "tall, thin, and bony; and his hair was red beneath the black cap. His face was crumpled and freckled, and ugly without silliness. Out of this face stared two light blue eyes, frustrated now, and turning, or ready to turn, to anger." He was the former choirmaster and "head boy" at his school which gave him a previous experience of exerting militaristic control over others by treating the choirboys as his subordinates. At the beginning of the novel, Jack displayed no such inclination for savagery and cruelty but retained the instilled values of his civilized British world just like any other boy. The first time he attempted to hunt a pig, he was unable to kill it. We understand that he was still bound by the established rules of civil society and his struggle to murder a living thing evokes our sympathy towards him. But soon his basic instinct for savagery, violence, and sadistic pleasure takes control over his outward personality. He becomes obsessed with two things – hunting and power. His desire for power was clearly discernible when Ralph becomes the leader of the boys. He is noticeably furious after losing the election and continually tries to undermine Ralph's authority.

Though his first attempt at hunting was unsuccessful due to his hesitations soon he becomes a sadistic killer. When he is finally able to slay a kill for the first time it stirs up a crazy and violent streak in him. Thus begins his preoccupation with hunting and his sadism aggravates throughout the novel. Golding curiously mentions that Jack had a “compulsion to track down and kill things that were swallowing him up". The use of the word "compulsion" evokes the idea that this love for violence is not something Jack can control and it is something ingrained in his psyche. Another probable reason is that the other boys made fun of Jack when his first endeavour to kill the pig was ineffective. That failure somehow made him less masculine in front of the whole group and proving his manliness made him maniac. That bloodlust and savagery quickly disseminate among other boys and his group of hunters launch a barbaric killing ritual. After killing a pig they start a war dance around the carcass chanting “Kill the pig, cut her throat, spill the blood”. This creepy and disturbing ritual, performed enthusiastically by the boys, proves how brute they can be and evil exist even among young minds like theirs.

The central conflict on the island ensues when Jack stops cooperating with Ralph and refuses to follow his rules. He is thrilled that there is no adult supervision on the island and wishes to enjoy freedom without any restriction or guilt. He periodically opposes the authority of the conch by saying that the established “conch rule” does not matter to him. The conch symbolizes order and limitation to him, both of which he does not want his impulses to be dominated by. This is an interesting transformation because throughout their entire boyhood, boys like Jack, have been restrained by the governing rules of their civilized society. However, on the island that moral and social conditioning speedily disappears from Jack’s character. He forgets his ethical lessons, cultural boundaries and societal civility. Naturally, he wants to retain this newly tasted independence and it is the reason behind his complete disregard towards keeping the fire going. He neither wants to be rescued nor focus on the greater good of the group. This attitude inevitably stirs an open clash with Ralph whose sole motive is to maximize their chances of returning home. While he was trying to impeach Ralph he proposes a rationale that his hunting skills should earn him the leadership because “He’d (Ralph) never have got us meat". Eventually, Jack decides to leave Ralph's group and create one of his own by taking many boys with him. He convinces the boys to choose his side by luring them with the promise of the hunt. His preoccupation with hunting becomes an intoxicating obsession. He says, “Rescue? Yes, of course! All the same, I'd like to catch a pig

first.” His followers are also exhilarated with the frenzy of the hunt and it is only a matter of time that they almost kill Roger just like a pig.

The bloodlust of Jack and his group intensifies with each killing. The more barbaric he becomes, the more he is able to exert his authority over the boys. He paints his face like a savage and the dictator in him becomes predominant. His love for power and violence appears to be somewhat connected as both capacitate him to feel elevated above others and exalted. As he acquires more control over the group and diminishes his rival Ralph’s leadership, his militaristic nature becomes autocratic. He assumes the title of “chief” and makes other boys his subordinates. He starts using some boys who would raise their spears together and declare “The Chief has spoken.” Being a rule-breaker himself, he is manipulative enough to feign an interest in establishing some rules, but only to have the power of punishing others. He takes this role most seriously and establishes himself as a primitive leader of a jungle-tribe. On the night of Simon's killing, Jack is seen sitting near the pig-roasting fire over a large log with his painted face. He is garlanded like an idol to be revered and worshipped.

Near the end of the novel, he has severed every tie with logic or common sense. He becomes paranoid to preserve his power and starts feeding misinformation to the tribe. This is typical of any dictator who tries to control his subjects by controlling the information. By then he has learned to use the boys' fear of the beast to regulate them and have them under his thumb. This is even a subtle reminder of how religion indulges in the superstitious beliefs to manipulate the collective psyche. Golding's weaving of Jack's character development, from an innocent little choir boy to a barbaric villain, is fascinating indeed. As opposed to Ralph and Piggy, Jack represents anarchy. His return to civilization and further adjusting to that life will be troublesome naturally. Jack symbolizes the id of one’s personality— he advocates the notion that one’s base desires are should be followed, regardless of consequences or morals. Jack is the kind of person which Golding believed everyone would eventually become if left alone to set one’s own standards and live the way one naturally wanted. Golding believed that the natural state of humans is chaos and that man is inherently evil. When reason is abandoned, only the strong survive. Jack personifies this idea perfectly.

Simon

Simon, the most thoughtful character in the novel, epitomizes a kind of inherent human goodness and spiritual grace that is deeply affiliated to nature itself. The physical manifestation of this feature is frequently seen during his solitary nature walks in the jungle and the private bower where he spends time. While Ralph symbolizes the political and moral aspects and Piggy the scientific and cultural facets of civilization, Simon embodies the spiritual side of human nature. Like Piggy, he is an outcast – the other boys consider him weird and somewhat insane. This dreamy boy is also prone to occasional fainting spells. He is dissimilar to them not only due to his physical weakness but also for the concern that he feels for the vulnerable Littluns. He is the most generous of the Biguns and the children follow him most of the time while he picks fruits for them from the branches that they can't reach. Most of the boys abandon their civilized shell and moral exterior as they realize the ordered world of civilization can no longer impose rules to suppress their basic instincts. We understand that morality is not ingrained in their nature; rather the adult world, with the threat of punishment, has severely intimidated and conditioned them to avoid their knack for criminality. But Simon stands on a different point of this spectrum because he acts righteously not out of any social conditioning but due to his absolute belief in the innate values of humanity.

Apart from being moral and just, he is also insightful and brave. It is Simon who always fearlessly walks alone in the jungle and he is the one who suggests that they should confront the "beast" by climbing the mountaintop. Likewise, his perceptive nature enables him to realize that the monster is not a physical beast but it is the ingrained evil and savagery hidden inside human beings. This idea of inherent evil within each human being is not only very close to Golding's own philosophy but also the central thematic concern of the novel. Against this idea of vice, Golding posits the contrasting character of Simon, full of essential human goodness. When Simon tries to visualize how the beast might look like, "there arose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick." This is nothing but Golding's own idea of humanity degenerated by inherent flaws and corruption. Simon is the first boy to find out that the dreadful beast is nothing but the dead pilot. By courageously pursuing to confront the "beast" on the mountaintop, Simon fulfils his destiny of Revelation. When he attempts to inform others about the dead pilot they take him for the beast and murder him in frenzy. His inability to share the revelation with the other boys signifies that

they are not ready for it. However, his brutal murder shows the scarcity of goodness amid the abundance of evil.

Simon is a prophet and a philosopher whose encounter with the “Lord of the Flies" is of paramount importance. The incident characterizes the goodness of humanity confronting the lowest. This is when he realizes how the beast lurks within each man. The intuitive nature of him goes unrecognized by the rest of the boys. Their failure to comprehend Simon and making him the outsider typify the place visionaries hold in society – on the peripheries, perpetually misunderstood and disregarded by the majority. Simon's role as a mystic and a visionary is established not only by his hidden place of meditation but also by the author's description of his eyes. While Piggy wears the glasses – representing one version of scientific vision – Simon's radiant and intense eyes symbolize the mystical version of the truth. His reputation as a mystic is again solidified when Ralph worries that they will never go back to England and Simon prophesizes "I think you'll get back all right." Though William Golding never made a direct connection between his novel and the Bible, the narrative frequently suggests that Simon is a Christ-like figure. The novel contains many subtle allusions indicating the Judeo-Christian allegory. He stands as a counterpoint to the evil and barbarity that surround the island. Simon represents kindness, bravery, selflessness, innate goodness, and self-sacrifice. We often see him taking care of the Littluns, comforting, feeding, and protecting them. All these actions parallel the Biblical Christ's benevolence.

Piggy

The chubby, bespectacled, talkative boy who symbolizes the voice of reason and civilization in the novel is Piggy. Though he dislikes being called “Piggy” we never actually get to know his real name. He is rational, sensitive, and meticulous and his intellectual talent attaches him with Ralph in particular, who starts admiring him gradually. Apart from Ralph, he was unable to make friends and blend in with the group. His asthma, weight, and poor eyesight were the reasons behind his hesitance to physical labour. These things also made him not only physically inferior to the other boys but also vulnerable to ridicule and exclusion. Though he was initially an outsider among the boys, they somewhat accepted him eventually as they discovered the use of his glasses to ignite the fire. Ralph was the first boy Piggy met on the island after the ill-fated crash and they remained loyal friends throughout the novel. He represents the adult world of logic and reason and most of the time it was his brain that

sprouted the successful ideas promoted by Ralph. Ideas like using the conch to call meetings, building shelter for the group, and vigorously supporting the idea of signal fire were all developed and endorsed by him. Interestingly, his act of frequently quoting his aunt also provides the only female voice in the whole narrative. But it is also true that all his scientific and rational approach to problems would have been ineffective without Ralph's leadership. He acts as Ralph's most trusted advisor because he shares no rapport with other boys as well as lacks leadership qualities.

His independence from the group prevented him from being exposed to the mob mentality that grew afterward under the command of Jack. Nonetheless, he also could not escape the temptations of violence and savagery that gripped the island. Even Piggy and Ralph participated in the frenzied ritualistic dance and the unintentional killing of Simon. Though Piggy tried to convince himself and Ralph that it was an accident and not a murder, his participation in the hysteria and lack of remorse proves how everyone is partially susceptible to evil. His recurrent clashes with other boys inevitably culminate in his murder by Roger who intentionally drops a rock on him. This unthinkably brutal act indicates the ultimate triumph of savagery over civilized order. It is this moment when the boys' last connection with their humanity and civilization is finally disconnected. He is the only boy who constantly worries about protecting the rules of English civilization. He is concerned about what their parents and other adults would think of them when they would find them as savage, lawless boys. Speaking of the deaths of Simon and the littlun with the birthmark, he asks "What's grownups goin' to think?" as if he is not so much mourning the boys' deaths as he is mourning the loss of values, ethics, discipline, and decorum that caused those deaths. He symbolizes rules, discipline, order, and moral conduct and his situation worsens as the island becomes more and more chaotic. His nickname is emblematic of the real pigs on the island, hunted by Jack's men. Likewise, it foreshadows his eventual murder.

Unit 2 (b): The Inherent Evil within Human Beings

Lord of the Flies raises several relevant questions regarding the nature of evil and its genesis in the human psyche. Drawing profoundly from the social-religious-cultural-military ethos of

his own times, Golding conceived an allegorical microcosm of the same world he knew and lived in. The island and the boys and many other objects and events in the novel represent Golding's view of humankind in general and some characteristics or values found in the British culture specifically. The plot of the novel was driven by Golding's own consideration of the origin and expansion of human evil, a complex issue that involves scrutiny not only of human nature but also the causes, effects, and manifestations of evil. When *Lord of the Flies* was first released in 1954, Golding described the novel's theme in a publicity questionnaire as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not only on any political system however apparently logical or respectable. Golding raises some fundamental questions: is evil innate within the human spirit, or is it an influence from an external source? What role do the societal rules and institutions play in the existence of human evil? Does the capacity for evil vary from person to person, or does it depend on the circumstances each individual faces? These thematic enquiries are at the core of *Lord of the Flies* which, through detailed depictions of the boys' different responses to their situation, presents a unique articulation of humanity's potential for evil. On one hand, the narrative depicts a quest for order amidst all the disorder precipitated by the evil within humankind. On the other, the author tries to investigate the concept of evil through a socio-political prism that disputes the idea of man's innate nobility. Evil does not have to be introduced into the heart of man from without, it is always lurking within, awaiting its opportunity to take over, and we are never safe from its predations.

The terrifying fact that the main characters in *Lord of the Flies* are young boys suggests how the potential for evil is deeply ingrained in small children. For example, When Roger first arrives on the island; he is still within the moral restraints of his old civilized life. As he throws stones at a boy named Henry, he never directly hits him because that is something forbidden in a disciplined society. Although his inner vileness wants to hurt the child, the moral codes imprinted in his behavior remains somehow intact. When Jack splits from Ralph's group, Roger instinctively follows him and gradually every shred of that morality, associated with his past life, sheds off. During the pig hunting episode, Roger wants to harm the pig and pushes even harder when he knows the pig is in excruciating pain. He indulges in the pain he is inflicting, satisfying the dark desires his heart yearns for. With the progression of the story, the desire to kill burns even stronger in him. He deliberately kills Piggy with no hesitation and without a hint of regret. This punctuates his internal violence and truly shows

just how vile a man's heart can be. Even Ralph and Piggy, who struggle hard to maintain their sense of discipline and civility, ultimately participate in the mass murder of Simon. Both these representatives of order and humanity, also momentarily surrender to the thrill of violence, frenzy and mass hysteria. While Piggy tries to deliberately deny their participation and refuses to call it a murder, Ralph is devastated to realize that they are no better than Jack or Roger and possess darkness inside as well.

The novel ends with Ralph realizing and grieving the indelible mark of evil in each person's heart, an evil that he scarcely suspected to exist before witnessing its effect on the island. The boys discovered within themselves the evil urge to inflict pain on others and enjoyed the same. When confronted with a symbolic choice between civilization and savagery, they choose to abandon the values of civilization. This same choice is made constantly all over the world, all throughout history. Golding places supposedly innocent schoolboys in the protected environment of an uninhabited tropical island to illustrate the point that savagery is not confined to certain people in particular environments but exists in everyone as a stain on, if not a dominator of, the nobler side of human nature. Nevertheless, the novel is not entirely pessimistic in tone because Golding creates characters like Ralph, Piggy and Simon to symbolize man's capacity to fight evil. While evil impulses may lurk in every human psyche, the intensity of these impulses-and the ability to control them-appears to vary from individual to individual. Through the different characters, the novel presents a continuum of evil, ranging from Jack and Roger, who are eager to engage in violence and cruelty, to Ralph and Simon, who struggle to contain their brutal instincts. We may note that the characters who struggle most successfully against their evil instincts do so by appealing to ethical or social codes of civilization. They do not immediately embrace their darker side like the rest of the boys and assiduously cling to the societal and moral norms that govern human behavior in a civilized society. Though they constitute the minority, they are steadfast in their adherence to rules and committed to the concept of "what's right's right" (*LF* 195). Golding suggests that while evil may be present in all of us, it can be successfully suppressed both by the social norms that are imposed on our behavior and by the moral norms which we decide as inherently "good," and internalize within our wills.

E.C. Bufkin in his review of the novel examines how *Lord of the Flies* depicts universal evil as a beast concept and the boys represent "ordinary bestial man." At first, this concept of a dreadful beast lurking in the dark exists in the littluns' subconscious, disturbing their dreams and generating fear. They believe that the beast is a "snake-thing" and imagine that it comes

at night to eat them. Golding underlines and Bufkin notes that the “beast is actually a man-made product of superstition, ignorance, and darkness-out of which it comes and in which it operates”. Gradually, this imagination of the beast appearing to the children acquires a more frightening image as the dead paratrooper on the hill. Golding makes it emphatically clear that man’s deep-rooted inclination for evil is by no means supernatural. The myth of the beast is carefully cultivated to disguise the boys' violent acts behind a mask of self-righteousness. Their belief becomes stronger with each act of violence and the beast becomes a receptacle to vent their pent up savagery. In this context, it is noteworthy that Golding's novel rejects supernatural or religious accounts of the origin of human evil. While the boys fear the "beast" as an embodiment of evil similar to the Christian concept of Satan, the novel emphasizes that this interpretation is not only mistaken but also, ironically, the motivation for the boys' increasingly cruel and violent behavior. It is their irrational fear of the beast that increases the boys' paranoia and leads to the murder and mayhem on the island.

Simon, the misunderstood mystic, finds out the truth about the dead paratrooper. The Lord of the Flies communicates to Simon in the forest glade and says “Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!” (*LF* 105). Then it laughs at the boys’ efforts to externalize their savagery in the form of an animal or some other fearsome creature. He is the one to get the revelation that evil is an active element of human nature that seeks expression; the "beast" is an internal force, present in every individual, and is thus incapable of being truly defeated. That the most ethical characters on the island – Simon and Ralph – each come to recognize his own capacity for evil indicates the novel's emphasis on evil's universality among humans. The lord of the flies then, as the pig's head claims one to be, maybe read as a symbol of the innate evil lying within every human soul. The fact that it is a lord but of the flies undermines the connotation of the word 'lord' which otherwise means one of noble rank. Metaphorically, these boys are somewhat like the flies that surround the pig’s decaying head.

The ambiguous and deeply ironic conclusion of *Lord of the Flies* examines the social evolution of evil as the novel is set in the backdrop of a nuclear war. We cannot but wonder if the boys are mimicking the actions and attitudes of the adult world or are they conditioned by a world that advocates meaningless violence. The naval officer, who repeats Jack's rhetoric of nationalism and militarism, is engaged in a bloody war that is responsible for the boys' aircraft crash on the island and the same is mirrored by the civil war among the survivors. In this sense, much of the evil on the island is a result not of the boys' distance from society, but of their internalization of the norms and ideals of those society-norms and ideals that justify

and even thrive on war. Are the boys corrupted by the internal pressures of an essentially violent human nature, or have they been corrupted by the environment of war they were raised in? *Lord of the Flies* offers no clear solution to this question, provoking readers to contemplate the complex relationships among society, morality, and human nature. Though Ralph is given a brief respite from the ordeals he faced on the island, there is no escape from the larger question of violence as he is returning to a world ruined by the ravages of war.

UNIT 3

Unit 3 (a): Human Depravity and Innate Savagery

William Golding, who had been a naval officer during the World War and had witnessed quite a lot of action, wrote *Lord of the Flies* to explore the human savagery and depravity he had seen. The basic question that people tend to ask is where did all these savageries come from? Post-war English generation was strategically taught that all of it came from them, the enemy, the Nazi Germans, those who bombed London — but this was an answer that did not satisfy Golding. He had not only been a naval officer but also a schoolmaster, and knew English boys categorically. We see at the beginning of the book, Jack proclaims "We're English and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things" (*LF* 07). But it is precisely he who transforms into a tiny Hitler and leads the rest of the children into the paths of unthinkable evil. A band of British boys, when left to their own, constructs on the island a state which is not very different from the Nazi one. Obsessed with imaginary enemies, they accept a leader with total power; they suppress freedom, persecute dissenters and ruthlessly impose barbaric rituals. That is why perhaps the most compelling theme in *Lord of the Flies* is man's innate savagery and the restraining influence that culture plays in our lives. Canonical literature has always focused on the nobility of human endeavour and Golding disputes this stereotype by emphasizing the dichotomy between man's savage instincts and the refinement imposed by culture. The novel focuses on man's overwhelming instinct for barbarity when freed from the confines of civilization.

Ralph, Piggy and Simon symbolize the spirit of order, democracy and civilization. Jack and Roger, on the other hand, represent man's primal urges. As the narrative progresses, there is a

marked shift in power politics and most of the boys choose to side with Jack. They paint their bodies and hide the shame imposed by the culture behind their masks of bestiality. The temptation represented by Jack's anarchic lifestyle proves too strong to be resisted and most of the boys join him. Golding thus projects man's nature as inherently evil and susceptible to savage yearnings. The novel also inspects the readiness and ease with which the boys adapt to their barbaric nature once the cover of culture is removed. Human morality is posited nothing but a "construct" that is nurtured by the codes of civilization. In the isolated island, the boys had access to far too much of absolute freedom — no rules, no regulations, no social pressures, no adult supervision. Subsequently, all sense of order and discipline seems to be breaking down. As Cassandra Clare observes, “Too much of anything could destroy you... Too much darkness could kill, but too much light could blind”. Golding foreshadows the boys’ slow descent from practicing civility into savagery through Piggy’s rational voice: “What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages? What're grown-ups going to think? Going off— hunting pigs..." (*LF* 99) This shows the process of degeneration of the 'ever-superior' human beings first into bestiality and then into savagery. The mythical Lord of the Flies becomes the most prominent symbol of savagery in the novel. The beast is represented by the head of a sow which had been killed in an extremely brutal manner. It laughs at the boys' efforts to externalize their savagery in the form of a fearsome creature. Simon has the revelation that evil is an active element of human nature that seeks expression. This expression is manifested in the constant bloodlust provoked by the violent killing of the sow and then in Simon's brutal murder. With Piggy's barbaric and intentional killing, at the hands of Roger, we see that the regression to savagery is complete. Ultimate depravity has crept in among the once innocent children.

Theodore Dalrymple notes “one of the most powerful carnivalesque elements in *Lord of the Flies* is that of the pig, which Golding uses symbolically to subvert dominant racial assumptions, in particular toward the Jews. This has alarming relevance to the atrocities committed against the Jews in World War II. The pig symbol is a major motif: as the locus of projected evil; as food for the schoolboys; as propitiation to the Beast; but more than anything, as the meat, the Jews do not eat”. This link between pig flesh and the Jews is reinforced by Golding's choice of the novel's Hebraic title. "Lord of the Flies," as John Whitley renders it, comes from the Hebrew word *Beelzebub*. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that the eating of pig meat during carnival time is an anti-Semitic practice. It is an act of contempt toward the Jews. White asserts how the pig becomes human and the

human being becomes pig in the frenzied, carnivalistic debauchery of Jack and his totalitarian regime. The shadowing of pig hunt and human hunt, ending with Simon's and Piggy's deaths, and almost with Ralph's, signifies the link between the pig symbol and the extermination of the Jews. The name "Piggy" does not merely imply obesity. He is always on the periphery of the group of schoolboys, always mocked, never quite belonging. "There had grown tacitly among the biguns the opinion that Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent, but by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination for manual labour" (*LF*, 70). We find something of the stereotype of a Jewish intellectual in this description of the bespectacled Piggy, with his different accent and physical feebleness.

Paul Crawford notes In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding's critique of British imperial, proto-fascist history is powerfully registered by the Nazification of English schoolboys: "Shorts, shirts, and different garments they carried in their hands: but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge in it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone frill" (*LF*, 20–21). Dalrymple reflects that Golding tries to subvert the dominant cultural notions of the superiority of civilized English behavior. "These are the kind of assumptions that buoyed the complacency of England, and indeed other Allied nations, namely, that the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis were an exclusively German phenomenon". But the novel overthrows the view that the "civilized" English people are incapable of the kind of atrocities carried out by the Nazis during World War II. The Beast is human beings in general, both Nazi-like, and English. He destroys the post-war English smugness about the belief of racial and cultural superiority, of scientific progress, notions casting long shadows over atrocities against the Jews carried out in World War II. He draws a parallel between the violent history of English imperialist adolescent masculine culture and the extermination of the Jews. Golding's critique is not directed exclusively at Nazi war criminality but at the post-war smugness of the English who too readily distanced themselves from what the Nazis did. He reminds them of their long infatuation with social Darwinism.

Unit 3 (b): *Lord of the Flies*: A Religious Allegory

As a popular literary device, an allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which a character, place, or event is used to convey a broader message about real-world issues and occurrences. The allegorical device aims to deliver a secondary level of connotation other than the primary level of meaning, through symbolic figures or events. The two levels combine to create a deeper sense of implication that the author wishes to impart. Allegory is often used to project the author's moral or political perspective in a veiled manner. Characters in allegory generally become personifications of abstract ideals like virtues and vices, moral perspectives, religious tenets and so on. In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding creates an allegorical cosmos of the post-war world where the backdrop is in the dreadful grip of a nuclear war. As the novel begins, we see that the uninhibited tropical island is endowed with the pristine beauty and vitality of Eden. That the island is meant to represent the Garden of Eden is easily deduced from the following sentence: "The forest re-echoed; and birds lifted, crying out of the tree-tops, as on that first morning ages ago" (*LF* 02). But the Edenic grace of the island gradually metamorphoses into a sinister atmosphere that forms the ideal setting for the brutality espoused by the boys. Golding's microcosm of the island closely mirrors the adult world wherein war and terror have destroyed the remnants of human kindness. In Milton's *Paradise Lost* the angels fall from Heaven while a mighty war was happening in the paradise, and Golding has duplicated this situation, too; for the plane carrying the boys is attacked and shot down during the World War.

According to many critics, the symbolic movement of the boys, from innocence to evil, is actually a re-enactment of the Biblical Fall of Man and its consequences. In the beginning, the boys are "dropped from the sky". The fall of the parachutist is also a sign "coming down from the world of grown-ups", and later his corpse "swayed down through a vastness of wet air…; falling, still falling, it sank towards the beach…" Simon, after his hallucinatory conversation with Lord of the Flies, "fell down and lost consciousness" and when killed, he "fell over the steep edge of the rock". Piggy also dies after being hit by the rock which fell over him from forty feet. In the last scene of the novel, we see Ralph has fallen and the naval officer looks down at him with astonishment. These are but a few of the many examples of literal "fall" images that run through the novel, suggesting the spiritual fall through physical actions of the characters. The initial innocence of the boys can be compared to the state of

Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Other critics have suggested that the boys might also represent the fallen angels who ultimately became devils. Jack and his band of the choir boys who used to sing songs of angels underwent a savage metamorphosis on the island. Their religious chanting of angelic songs became a ritualistic chant of paganism: “Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!” Ironically, the choirboys become the most violent and sadistic in their metamorphosis into savages hunting and dancing in cannibalistic ecstasy. This is, however, not a "metamorphosis" in the proper sense of the term. They only lay bare their inherently evil nature hidden within their very minds. The choirboys soon lost their religious teachings and ethical traits because such qualities are not ingrained in them but imposed on them.

Most of the commentators have identified Simon as the Christ figure in the narrative whose actions closely mirror many Biblical incidents. Of all the boys, he is the one most troubled by the presence of evil within the group. He alone gets the revelation about the dreaded beast but he is tortured and killed cruelly for trying to reveal the truth. Kirstin Olsen comments on the similarities between Simon and Christ and says, “Simon, like Christ being subjected to the mocking reverence of Pilate’s men, is ridiculed by the boys, who call him "batty" and "cracked". Most significantly, in the very act of bringing the truth of the beast's nature to the boys, he is mistaken for the beat and executed” (Olsen 127). Simon's encounter with the Lord of the Flies is reminiscent of Christ's conversation with the devil in the wilderness. While Christ attains victory over the devil, Simon cannot boast of such a claim as he realizes that the evil he is trying to fight is within their hearts. Though he comprehends its real nature, he is helpless to act against it. Nevertheless, his spiritual fortitude urges him to warn his friends and it is during this attempt that he is murdered viciously. Simon thus dies for no fault of his own and his sacrifice does not liberate the other boys from their state of sin. In the end, Ralph weeps for the “end of Innocence” (*LF* 230) and this cry echoes the primordial wail of the Biblical man as his Eden is lost forever. Ralph’s idyllic Eden is lost to the boys and there is no promise of redemption as they have murdered their saviour.

The title of the novel is also infused with Biblical allusions as to the eponymous Lord of the Flies is a reference to Beelzebub. In the narrative, Beelzebub is the “beast” whose physical manifestation is the sow’s head impaled on a stick and covered with flies. The materialization of this devil coincides with theemergence ofsavagery in the boys.Simon’s conversation with the Beast is captured in a surrealistic passage that highlights how it is impossible to completely defeat the evil within them. The Beast says to Simon, “Fancy

thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" (*LF* 161) And it is quite possible that the killing of the sow, to which the boys are "wedded in lust," may be analyzed in terms of sexual intercourse; as a symbolic, parodic re-enactment of the Original Sin. "The sow fell and the hunters hurled themselves at her. This dreadful eruption from an unknown world made her frantic; she squealed and bucked and the air was full of sweat and noise and blood and terror. Roger ran round the heap, prodding with his spear whenever pig flesh appeared. Jack was on top of the sow, stabbing downward with his knife. Roger began to push until he was leaning with his whole weight. The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream." (*LF* 58)

Golding's attitude to Christianity is somewhat ambivalent, as David Anderson cites: "Golding is a maker of myths, not a debater of doctrines: his concern is the creation of theologically significant experience rather than a theological statement." (Bloom 55) In his interview with James R. Baker, Golding asserted his strong belief in the "Original Sin" which is inherent in human beings. The center of Golding's concern is the debate surrounding this concept of original sin – whether it should be seen in the light of the traditional Christian doctrine as the result of a primal rebellious act; or as an inevitable accessory of man's existential condition. It can be said that the doctrine is no longer the same if it leaves God out and we know that there is no presence of God on the island. If human wickedness and misery are attributed to pre-rational drives deriving from man's animal ancestry the Biblical story loses its relevance. The Christian doctrine of Original Sin is about the rupture of man's relationship with God; it is not about the incompleteness of evolutionary development.

Golding's narrative tries to analyze man's predisposition towards the notion of evil and how an individual is inevitably drawn to a natural state of sin, once freed from the fetters of civilization. However, Golding does not posit this notion of evil as an external agent and highlights the fact that evil actually resides within the humans. In this aspect, Golding's narrative differs from the Biblical idea of evil as there is no external agent to lure the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. The Eden in the novel is corrupted not by the imaginary beast but by the innate evil residing in the hearts of the boys. In the Psalm no. 37 of the *Old Testament* it is found "For evildoers shall be cut off… But the meek shall inherit the earth" (*Holy Bible*, Ps. 37.8-9). But such optimism seems to have lost validity at the setting of the atrocious World Wars. Contrary to the biblical notion, it is the strong and the fittest who would inherit the earth with blood in their hand and evil in their head. It is this social Darwinism and the darker

side of the "survival of the fittest" myth which is amply put into question in the novel *Lord of the Flies* where Golding exposes the theme of dispossession of the innocent and the good.

UNIT 4

Unit 4 (a): A Freudian Psychoanalytic Reading of the Text

Psychoanalysis is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques related to the study of the unconscious mind. This discipline was established in the early 1890s by the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud who retained the term psychoanalysis for his own school of thought. Freud believed that the human mind is responsible for both conscious and unconscious behaviours and decisions that it makes based on psychic drives. Freud's structural model of the psyche defined and distinguished three distinct but interacting agents – id, ego and superego. The id, according to Freud, is the part of the unconscious that seeks pleasure and it holds all of humankind's most basic instincts. It is the impulsive, unconscious part in the mind that is based on the desire to seek immediate gratification. The id does not have a grasp on any form of reality or consequence. The ego is responsible for creating a balance between pleasure and pain. It has a better grasp of reality and understands that all desires of the id cannot be fulfilled. The reality principle is what the ego operates by in order to control the instinctual demands from the id. Freud believes that the superego is what allows the mind to control its impulses that are looked down upon morally. Without the superego, Freud believed, people would act out with aggression and indulge in other immoral behaviours because the mind would not have any way to differentiate between right and wrong. The superego is considered to be the "consciousness" of someone's personality and can override the drives from the id. Different characters and incidents in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* can be examined in this light of Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

In the novel, Jack clearly represents the Freudian concept of Id, overpowering the Ego and the Super Ego. Just as the id always works to gratify its own impulses without any regard to

the cost, Jack solely cares about his own pleasures as opposed to their collective rescue. Jack is not interested in obeying the rules established by Ralph. Much like the id, Jack focuses on immediate and primitive pleasures as opposed to a long-term plan. A person operating at the id level may be motivated by hunger, jealousy, or the desire for something, based on instinct. Jack is primarily motivated towards two things only – lust for power/control and hunger for hunting/killing. He shows no interest in the signal fire and spends all of his time hunting pigs and getting meat instead. Being motivated by the pleasure principle, he enjoys the idea of catching, controlling, and killing pigs. He also had an unquenchable thirst for power that made it difficult to accept Ralph's leadership. Driven by this unchecked desire, he turned from civilized to barbaric.

The first time he attempted to hunt a pig, he was unable to kill it. We understand that he was still bound by the established rules of civil society. When he is finally able to slay a pig for the first time it stirs up a crazy and violent streak in him. Thus begins his preoccupation with hunting and his sadism aggravates throughout the novel. The bloodlust of Jack and his group intensifies with each killing. The more barbaric he becomes, the more he is able to exert his authority over the boys. He paints his face like a savage and the dictator in him becomes predominant. The boys with him also begin to act on the id of their personalities and lose the sense of discipline and order. In the end, they seem to have lost every shred of humanity. Human lives became very cheap for them. For example, among all the followers of Jack, Roger can be taken as a prime example of acting under the sole influence of the id. Previously, he used to tease and hurt the littluns just for the sake of pleasure. Later, we see how id completely dominates his unconscious when he brutally hunts the mother-pig and ultimately murders Piggy intentionally.

Ego is "the part of the personality corresponding most nearly to the perceived self, the controlling self that holds back the impulsiveness of the id in the effort to delay gratification until it can be found in socially approved ways." Freud describes the ego as being like a rider on a horse (the id), trying to hold the horse in check.Golding represents Ralph as a true embodiment of the ego. Just as the ego is the rational aspect of the mind, Ralph's rationality is exhibited in his role as a leader. He focuses mostly on the idea of being rescued and organizes the fire as a mode of getting the attention of any rescue ship. He works on building shelters for the members of the tribe. He attempts to keep meetings organized and establishes the rule of the conch to keep order. Ralph's role as the ego perfectly demonstrates how the ego must always balance the id and the superego. Jack's selfish desire for hunting and control

epitomizes the id's constant need to seek pleasure. As the chief, Ralph always strives to keep the boys as members of a civilized community on the island. Golding puts Ralph into situations where he must choose between pleasing Jack or listening to Piggy and Simon's for the collective well-being. Ralph, as the leader of the tribe, attempts to be the best human he can be and often follows the guidance of the superego. Although, like every person at one point or another, Ralph does succumb to the primitive desires that Jack embodies. He gives in to the pleasure of hunting and in that frenzied moment participates in the murder of Simon. But Ralph's strong morality soon made him realize what an atrocity he had committed and he immediately regrets his actions.

Superego is: "The part of the personality corresponding most nearly to conscience, controlling through moral scruples rather than by way of social expediency. The superego is said to be an uncompromising and punishing conscience". In *Lord of the Flies* Piggy and Simon are the two main characters who reflect Freud's concept of the superego for the most of the part. The superego is the section of the mind that seeks to control the impulsive behaviour of the id. It acts as an internal censor. Piggy aims to be that voice of reason but is only able to do so with the help of Ralph. He constantly reminds Ralph of their need to keep the fire burning and to take proper responsibility for the littluns. Piggy stands between Jack and his act of pleasure-seeking. Further, just as the superego must employ the ego to control the id, Piggy alone cannot control Jack and he must rely on Ralph to do so.

Simon also epitomizes the superego. He watches over the boys and always contributes to the wellbeing of their group. When the littluns were unable to reach the fruits, Simon picked fruits for them. It shows the helping nature of Simon which is obviously driven by his conscience. He employs both societal and moral rules and he is the one boy who never participates in destructive behaviors. He is also the only one to realize that the true beast is inside the boys. Simon's moral compass, much like the superego, allows him to see the inherent evil of the mankind. The superego attempts to lead a person to the morally right pathway, much like Simon aims to show Ralph how he can do what's best for the tribe. He exhibited exemplary behaviour until his last breath.

Throughout the novel, it is depicted how the id is continuously trying to overpower the ego and the superego and the brutal murders of Simon and Piggy show the ultimate defeat of the superego. Morality, truth and conscience become the victim of the innate savagery of human nature and the id overpowered everything. Apart from developing the characters to illustrate

the Freudian Concept of the Human Mind, William Golding also attempted to analyze the vision of the beast in terms of Freud's psychoanalysis. Examined under the Freudian microscope, the dreadful beast can also be viewed as a manifestation of the id, the instinctual urges, fear and desires of the human unconscious mind. It terrifies the boys because the beast emerges from their own unconscious minds. Freud said that some events and desires can be too frightening or painful to acknowledge. He believed that such information is stored inside the unconscious mind through the process of repression. A Freudian explanation of why the boys felt such strong fear towards the beast is that their reality-testing apparatus had seized to function properly. If their reality-testing mechanism would have worked properly, the nightmares about the beast would not have become embodied. It is to be noted that the idea of the beast first appeared in the minds of the littluns. According to Freud, it is common that children feel the presence of an evil force threatening them when their parents are absent, and this is exactly what we see among the children on the island. The reason why the older children did not believe in the beast at first is that due to their age they had gotten further in their psychological development, and therefore their reality-testing apparatus worked better.

Unit 4 (b): Symbolism in the Novel

The cosmic symbolism of the island

The underlying cosmic symbolism of the novel is built-up since the very beginning when the boysare dropped on an uninhabited tropical island in the Pacific Ocean. As the setting of the novel, the symbol of the island is central to the theme that the inherent evil lurking inside human nature can cause the ultimate destruction of innocence and beauty. Golding pursues on along-established tradition by making the island "roughly boat-shaped"; and thus, implying that thechildren typify all mankind on their journey through life. The island as a ship is, then, a symbol of the world in microcosm.

The microcosmic aspect of the island is stretched further through the presence of all the four elements – earth, air, fire, water. The storm represents a warring interplay of them all. The physical island, itself representing the earth element, is surrounded by the other three. But in

addition to that, the essence of the earth is also exhibited as the clay with which the boys paint their faces. The Signal Fire is the unequivocal fire element that symbolizes not only the beckoning for rescue to the civilization but also as a destructive force. And water and air are theelements from which the boys believe the beast comes. The dead paratrooper, whom they finally think to be the dreaded beast, came from the airand was carriedaway, by the wind, to the sea.

The Storm

Golding cultivates another traditional cosmic symbol, the storm, to reflect in the realm of nature the evil or chaotic incidents happening in the worldof man. A storm accompanies the confused landing of the boys on the island, and later another storm develops in gradual stages that parallel those leading up to the boys' feast and the slaughter of Simon. After the slaughter of the sow, "high up among the bulging clouds thunder wentoff like a gun," and later "the thunder boomed again." In the next chapter, "over the island, the build-up of clouds" continues, and when the boys eat their kill they do so "beneath a sky of thunderous brass that rang with the storm-coming."After Jack's sneering declaration that the conch no longer counts, "all at once the thunder struck. Instead of the dull boom there was a point of impact in the explosion." The thunder becomes more violent as the boys become more violent and wild in their dance; and the dark sky, also, becomes "shattered"by "blue-white scar[s]." Then at last, after Simon has been killed, "the clouds opened and let down the rain....”

Symbol of the Conch

The conch represents the spirit of democracy and the voice of authority. It also stands for man's reasoning faculty and functions as an ordering principle. When Ralph and Piggy find the conch shell, they start using it to summon the other boys for meetings. "The conch rule" was established and it bestowed a sense of legitimacy to the one who held the shell. As the person is given the privilege to speak while holding the conch it becomes a symbol of free speech in democratic ethics. It can be noticed that though Ralph is comfortable wielding its influence, Jack is vexed by its presence right from the beginning. Ralph and Piggy try to cling on to the vestiges of democratic ideals by insisting on the shell's significance but Jack and his group constantly deride its authority. Ominously, the breakdown of the conch, as well as democratic order, was foreshadowed by the remark made when the conch was first discovered: "Careful! You'll break it ". Later, Roger hurls a great rock to crash down upon Piggy and, when it hits him, “the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments andceased

to exist." Piggy's death and the subsequent destruction of the conch annihilate all traces of culture from the island. It heralds complete anarchy which is mirrored in the ensuing hunt for Ralph. In other words, order, rational behavior, and benevolent authority have been completely smashed on the island.

The Fire

The signal fire, like the conch shell, is another symbol representing the value of the civilization. It is, in fact, a kind of portal to home, to civilization; a symbol of hope and communication. In the beginning, the boys diligently maintain the fire to attract the attention of ships passing by. The fire signifies their fervent desire to escape from the island and return to the familiar and civilized world. However, as their innate savagery asserts itself, the desire for a "return" vanishes gradually. The boys soon forget the purpose of the fire and ignore the duty to keep it ignited. Apart from Ralph and Piggy, all the others are content in enacting the roles of little savages and are no longer interested in denouncing the budding power of their bestiality. By the time the boys start to lose their hope in salvation and show off their wilder, primitive side, they begin to forget about the fire. Later in the novel, we see that due to the negligence of the boys, the fire starts burning out of control. It already induces the idea of the destruction of purity, innocence and hope. In one way or another, the fire became both a symbol for salvation and destruction too, in a paradoxical way.

Piggy's glasses

Piggy's glasses are one of the most dominant symbols in the novel signifying multiple connotations. They represent rational thinking and scientific spirit. As a symbol of reason, it is fittingly worn by the intellectual thinker of the group. While the other boys indulge in running naked, having fun and hunting for food, Piggy is the one always observing. The usage of glasses is simple: people use those for looking. But here, it has a deeper meaning. Looking leads to vision, to sight, that can be easily interpreted as a metaphor for knowledge. Piggy knows a lot more than the others, such as how to use the conch and the need for installing order. His glasses are also used to ignite the fire. The power politics in the narrative revolves around the ownership of these glasses. One side of it is eventually broken in a scuffle following the failure of the passing ship to see any smoke on the island; later the remaining lens is stolen in a night raid led by Jack. The breaking and losing of the glasses

indicate, symbolically, the breakdown of visionary reason.Piggy's resulting blindness corresponds to the darkness of eclipsing unreason. The fates of the conch and of the glasses, like their functions, are thus related to each other and to Piggy – all are ultimately broken. Piggy's bespectacled head, the source of all reasonable plannings, breaks open after his fall- "His head opened and stuff came out and turned red." After this event reason no longer exists; for this fall destroys the conch and, by splitting his head, kills Piggy.

The Spiked Pig's Head

The bloody, severed and spiked pig's head is, of course, a symbol of paramount interest. Jack impaled the severed head on a stick and placed it as a placatory offering to the imaginary beast they were so terrified of. This complicated symbol acquires greater implication in the novel when Simon confronts the sow's head in the glade. It seems to him that the spiked head is speaking to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart. This object is called Lord of the Flies, and it is a repulsive sight: "dim-eyed, grinning faintly, blood blackening between the teeth". In this way, The Lord of the Flies, then, becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast – the embodiment and voice of evil and the demoniac. It is the Biblical Beelzebub, the lord of the flies and dung, the Prince of Devils. And it is the evil that is ingrained in every human being. The materialization of this devil coincides with the emergence of savagery in the boys, manifested in the acts that they commit. It is the principal symbol of fear and in the last chapter, it becomes the traditional symbol of death – a skull. The animal is distinguished from the human by the reasoning faculty which it lacks. And a human's loss of this faculty reduces him to the bestial level. Through the use of animal imagery Golding is able to keep constantly before the reader the motif of degeneration, the changing from the reasoning human to the unreasoning animal state. Ralph explicitly tells the other boys, by way of warning, that "we'll soon be animals" and the prediction becomes a reality.

Other Animal images

Curiously the children are described by various animal images by Golding. They cast "bat-like" shadows, sit like "black birds," and run round "like insects." They howl and pant "like dogs," point like setters, and steam like seals. Even Ralph eats "like a wolf" and terms

himself, Piggy, and Simon "three blind mice." Jack, in particular, is described with such imagery. As a hunter, he becomes doglike, "down like a sprinter, his nose only a few inches from the humid earth," "on all fours." He is swallowed up by the animal compulsion to track down and kill" and his laughter has a "bloodthirsty snarling." He is "ape-like," and Ralph once terms him a "swine." Ironically, Piggy himself is compared to pigs, besides being mocked by a pig nickname.

The imagery of the Fun Games

At first, we see how the children indulge in ceaseless fun and games, taking full advantage of the absence of any parental authority. But gradually we witness the transition from the "fun" of the boys' games to a horrible reality. These games are childish amusements at first - but slowly they become tinged with cruelty and violence. They began playing and enacting the episode of pig-hunting by using Robert in the role of the pig. Soon the innocent game turns violent and Robert is physically hurt. The episode is a foreshadowing of the barbaric killing of the sow and also of the murder of Simon, each episode of the sequence being more savage and more evil than the one preceding it. After the murder of Piggy, innocent games have become a ghastly evil reality. When Ralph is pursued, the boys actually want to kill him and they would have succeeded had the naval officer not appeared. The officer, ignorant of the appalling metamorphosis of the boys, speaks in an authoritative yet elderly benevolent tone. When he saw that Jack and his tribe were pursuing Ralph, he assumed that it was all a part of the "fun and games" they had been indulging in. but the readers, as well as the boys, know the dark side of these apparently childish games.

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Assignments

Essay Type Questions

1. Write a note on the theme of human depravity in the novel *Lord of the Flies*.
2. Develop an explanation of why some critics feel that William Golding's main theme is that evil is an innate trait of mankind. Give suitable references.
3. Identify some of the significant symbols in the novel and justify your answer by providing illustrative textual references.
4. How does the character of Ralph change by his unique experiences on the island?
5. Compare and contrast the characters of Ralph and Jack.
   What is an allegory? Would you consider *Lord of the Flies* as a religious allegory? Substantiate your answer.
6. Examine the novel and its characters in light of the Freudian psychoanalytic theories.
7. Do you consider Simon as a Christ-like figure in the novel? Justify your claim with an analysis of the Biblical allusions from the text.
8. Two major symbols in the novel are the conch shell and piggy's glasses. Analyze the importance of these symbols.
9. The novel's narrative action draws and increasingly firm line between savagery and civilization. Do you agree? Discuss with close references to the text.

Short-answer Type Questions

1. Who is the titular Lord of the Flies in the novel?
2. How did the British boys land on an uninhabited tropical island?
3. Write a short note on the setting of the novel.
4. How did Ralph become the leader of the boys?
5. How and why the signal fire was built?
6. Write a short note on the character of Piggy.
7. Interpret this infamous chanting "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!"
8. Was there an actual beast on the island?
9. Critically analyse Simon's encounter with the Lord of the Flies?
10. How was Simon killed by the boys? What was Ralph's reaction to this horrific event?
11. Describe the awful murder of Piggy along with the destruction of the conch shell.
12. How the boys were finally rescued at the end of the novel?

BLOCK II

SUB-UNIT I

DUBLINERS

BY

JAMES JOYCE

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 5 (a) : Life and Works of James Joyce (1882-1941)

Unit 5 (b) : An Introduction to *DUBLINERS*

Unit 6 (a): A Brief Synopsis of Select stories from Joyce's *DUBLINERS* :
The Sisters

Unit 6 (b): Eveline

Unit 6 (c): The Boarding House

Unit 7 (a): A Brief Synopsis of Select stories from Joyce's *DUBLINERS* : Clay

Unit 7 (b): A Painful Case

Unit 7 (c): The Dead

Unit 8 (a): Representation of Ireland in *DUBLINERS*

Unit 8 (b): Epiphanies of James Joyce

List of References

Suggested Reading

Assignments

UNIT 5

Unit 5 (a): Life and Works of James Joyce (1882-1941)

One of the most influential writers of the Modern era, James Joyce was born on February 2, 1882 at West Rathgar in Dublin, Ireland, to John Stanislaus and Mary Joyce. He was educated at the Jesuit boarding school Clongowes Wood College, near Clane, Co. Kildare, and from 1893, at the Jesuit day-school Belvedere College, Dublin, and subsequently at the Royal University of Ireland (1898-99) and University College, Dublin (1899-1902). A good linguist from an early age, he read and studied extensively, and in 1901, wrote a letter of profound admiration in Dano-Norwegian to the playwright Henrik Ibsen. Apart from Ibsen, he was influenced by Gerhart Hauptmann, Dante, George Moore, and W.B. Yeats (who treated him with considerable personal kindness).

Dissatisfied with the narrowness and bigotry of Ireland, as he saw it, Joyce went to Paris for a year in 1902, where he lived in poverty, wrote verse, and discovered the novel *Les Lauriers sont coupes* (1888) by Edouard Dujardin (1861-1949), which later became an inspiration behind his use of interior monologue. He returned to Dublin in 1903, on receiving the news of his mother's death. However, after a brief stay in the Martello tower (mentioned in his novel *Ulysses*) with Oliver Gogarty, then left Ireland for good with Nora Barnacle (1884-1951), the woman with whom he had spent the rest of his life. He first met Nora in 1904 when she worked as a chambermaid in a hotel and fell in love with her; she later bore him a son and a daughter. They lived at Trieste for some years, where Joyce taught English at the Berlitz school, before moving to Zurich in 1915. After the end of World War I, however, they settled in Paris.

Joyce's first published work was a volume of verse, *Chamber Music* (1907), which was followed by *Dubliners* (1914), a volume of short stories, published after great delays and difficulties, culminating in his final visit to Ireland in 1912, when the sheets were destroyed through the prospective publisher's fear of libel. When the stories finally appeared, they were greeted with much enthusiasm by Ezra Pound, in a review in *The Egoist*. Joyce's friendship with Pound greatly influenced his literary career and helped him to establish as a writer of repute. Another important ally whom Joyce met during this period was the independently

wealthy Harriet Shaw Weaver, a business manager and later became the editor of *The Egoist*, and a lifelong benefactress of Joyce.

Joyce also met with difficulties at the time of the performance and publication of his play *Exiles*; it was published in 1918, staged unsuccessfully in the same year in Munich, and first performed in London by the Stage Society in 1926. A significant instance of his literary oeuvre, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a largely autobiographical work, was published serially in *The Egoist* in 1914-15 (part of a first draft, "Stephen Hero", appeared in 1944), and in one volume in 1916 (New York) and 1917 (London). The novel, narrated mostly by an omniscient narrator, is a *Kuntslerroman*, dealing with the life of its protagonist and an artist, Stephen Dedalus. The novel reflects how an artist perceives his surroundings, as well as his views on faith, family, and country, and how these perceptions often conflict with those prescribed for him by society. As a result, the artist feels distanced from the world. Unfortunately, this feeling of distance and detachment is misconstrued by others to be the prideful attitude of an egoist. Thus the artist, already feeling isolated, is increasingly aware of a certain growing, painful social alienation.

By the virtue of a strong and influential support from Pound and Yeats, Joyce received a grant from the Royal Literary Fund in 1915, and shortly thereafter, a grant from the Civil List. Yet, despite the financial support and the growing recognition of his genius, he continued to struggle against poverty and suffered from a persisting visual problem. A severe attack of glaucoma in 1917 led to years of pain and some operations. Moreover, his daughter's severe mental illness became a source of his trouble in the later years.

His other major work of fiction *Ulysses* first appeared in the *Little Review* (from March 1918 to December 1920), and was later published in a single book form in Paris on February 2, 1922, on the occasion of Joyce's 40th birthday. The first UK edition of the book appeared in 1936. Originally constructed as a modern re-telling of Homer's *The Odyssey*, the entire action of *Ulysses* takes place in and immediately around Dublin on a single day (June 16, 1904). The three central characters—Stephen Dedalus (the hero of Joyce's earlier *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*); Leopold Bloom, a Jewish advertising canvasser; and his wife, Molly—are intended to be modern counterparts of Telemachus, Ulysses (Odysseus), and Penelope, respectively, and the events of the novel loosely parallel the major events in Odysseus's journey home after the Trojan War. The novel was received as an instance of

consummate power and stupendous scale by diverse writers including, T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, and Arnold Bennett.

Another small volume of verse, *Poems Penyeach*, was published in 1927, and his other work of merit, *Finnegans Wake*, extracts of which had already appeared as "Work in Progress" (from 1928 to 1937) was published in its complete form in 1939. *Finnegans Wake* is a complex novel that blends the reality of life with a dream world. The motive idea of the novel, inspired by the 18th-century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, is that history is cyclical. To demonstrate this, the book ends with the first half of the first sentence of the novel. Thus, the last line is actually part of the first line, and the first line a part of the last line. The plot itself is difficult to follow, as the novel explores a number of fractured storylines. The main tension, however, comes from the juxtaposition of reality and dream, which is achieved through changing characters and settings.

Joyce underwent surgery in Zürich for a perforatedduodenalulcer on 11 January 1941, He fell into a coma on the following day. He awoke at 2 a.m. on January 13, 1941, and asked a nurse to call his wife and son, before losing consciousness again. They were on the way to the hospital when he died 15 minutes later. Joyce was less than a month short of his 59th birthday.His body was buried in the Fluntern Cemetery, Zürich. James Joyce's literary works have prompted a wide range of critical commentary in different languages, and he has remained a literary figure of global interest till date.

Unit 5 (b): An Introduction to *Dubliners*

"Life we must accept as we see it before our eyes," the young Joyce had announced, "men and women as we see them in the real world"; and that meant making art out of "the dreary sameness of existence." It is this realism, which functions as a driving force in his *Dubliners*. Essentially, a collection of short stories, which, though were completed in the early years of the twentieth century, were not published until 1914 due to James's ongoing tussle with the publishers over the frank sexual contents.

In 1905, Joyce, then a young man of twenty-three years of age, sent the manuscript of twelve short stories to an English publisher. However, the stories, though realistic and interesting, were not accepted by the publisher who was making unnecessary delay in his response,

giving James ample time to add three more stories, "Two Gallants," "A Little Cloud," and "The Dead" in the course of the next two years. The fifteen stories in the collection represent a decaying picture of the city of Dublin in Ireland, where Joyce himself was born, raised, and spent a major part of his life.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Dublin had been the second city of the British Isles and one of the ten largest cities in Europe. Its' marvellous architecture, an elegant layout, and a bustling port made the path for a dynamic and agreeable urban life. But her situation altered drastically in the latter half of the century as Belfast had outstripped her as the great city of Ireland, resulting in the devastating economic condition. Formerly fashionable Georgian townhouses turned into horrible slums, with inadequate sewage and cramped living conditions. Her ports were in decline, and chances for advancement were slim for the lower and middle classes. In those days, power rested in the hands of a Protestant minority. Therefore, to reflect the financial decay of the city, *Dubliners* dwells heavily on the themes of poverty, stagnation, hopelessness, and death. Joyce has observed this decay minutely and attempted to reflect this 'paralysis' in every single detail of Dublin's environment, from the people's faces to the dilapidated buildings, and many characters assume that the future will be worse than the present. It is important to note that most of the stories in the collection focus on members of the lower or middle classes. Thus, the characters of each story aptly suit the tragic fate of the city, of which they are parts. The connecting thread of the stories is a boy, who often acts as a narrator, who has reached the verge of adolescence and bears living testimony to the tragedy of the characters concerned, of people whom he had met, somewhere or the other, in the course of his life in the deadly city.

UNIT 6

Unit 6 (a): A Brief Synopsis of Select stories from Joyce's *Dubliners* : The Sisters

The first story of the collection "The Sisters" was initially published in *The Irish Homestead* on 13 August 1904, and then rigorously revised by Joyce in the subsequent years, before being published finally in *Dubliners* in 1914. It is narrated by a young unnamed narrator who tries to grapple with the death of his neighbour, an old priest named Father Flynn.

The opening paragraph of the story beginning with the sentence, "There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke", generates the ambivalent expectation in the boy narrator's mind to see lighted candles from the priest's bedroom window shedding their reflection on the "darkened blind"(Joyce 7). The boy's ambivalent attitude to the dying priest is captured in the sentence, "Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis"(Joyce 7). It must be noted that the word “paralysis” that defines the physical inability of the old priest, also refers to the prevalent condition of Dublin, which has been paralyzed by the agony of tremendous financial insecurity. When the boy comes downstairs for supper, he finds their neighbour Old Cotter talking to his uncle and aunt. His uncle informs him of Father Flynn's death which they have learned from Old Cotter. The boy pretends that the news does not interest him as he is aware that he "was under observation" of Old Cotter and his uncle. His uncle admits that the priest had "taught him a great deal. ... and ... he had a great wish for him"(Joyce 8). At this Old Cotter expresses his reservations in a sentence as he says, "I wouldn't like children of mine …to have too much to say to a man like that". He then clarifies his stand by placing his opinion that he thinks the .priest's company is detrimental to the growth of young children who, he thinks, should mix only with those of his age.

The boy, though angry with Old Cotter for his moralistic sermons regarding the adverse effects of the priest's company on the "impressionable" mind of children, couldn’t help himself out from his attempt "to extract meaning from his unfinished sentences". He falls asleep and dreams of "the heavy grey face of the paralytic" following him with the desire to confess something. He feels haunted by the priest and is left in a state of wonder“while it smiled continually”(Joyce 9). Even in his dream he remembers that the priest died of paralysis.

On the following day, the narrator, accompanied by his aunt, visits the deceased's house to pay respects. They went inside the room of the priest where he was put to rest; his face bearing the note of relief. The priest's sisters, particularly Eliza, who appears to be the younger one, tries to unravel the mystery behind the mysterious behaviour of the priest, which was generated by a simple act of breaking an empty chalice leads to the priest's loss of vocation. She underlines the eccentricity in her brother's behaviour when she recounts how two priests discovered Father Flynn one night sitting "in the dark in his confession- box, wide--awake and laughing-like softly to himself'. This idiosyncratic act, as Eliza adds, confirmed to all that something was seriously wrong with him and that might be the reason

for his profound alienation from society. The story ends with Eliza's vague judgemental assertion that "there was something gone wrong with him"(Joyce 17).

Unit 6 (b): Eveline

The fourth story of the collection “Eveline” opens with the portrait of a pensive and exhausted protagonist, introduced in the typical Joycean style as “she”, who is shown seated leaning her head against the dusty window curtains “inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne”(Joyce 37). The narrator's twice repeated representation of Eveline inhaling the “odour of dusty cretonne” makes it almost obvious that she does not detest her bleak and dingy surroundings despite her protestations to the contrary. She has grown so acclimatized to the dusty background that she is hardly aware of inhaling dust- particles.

Eveline is found in a nostalgic mood, revisiting the bygone days, and reviewing the sweeping changes that time has brought about in her family as well as in the neighbourhood. Suddenly she seems to remember her decision to leave her home to change the course of her life. However, she discovers herself firmly rooted in her home amidst the familiar objects occupying a vast portion of the room. She has almost developed a filial bond with the things she has been dusting for so long that the very thought of being divorced from them fills her with a pang of separation as "she had never dreamed of being divided" from them. One such object is the yellowing photograph of the priest, hung on the wall, above the broken harmonium, whose name has remained unknown to her.

The protagonist again reverts to the focal point, her decision to leave home, still unsure about it as she questions herself, “was that wise?”(Joyce 38). She tries to seek justification for her decision by hovering over the pros and the cons of her intended move. Though she knows that her home ensures her food and shelter; besides she lives with those whom she knows closely, still she is not sure about her move. Moreover, she is well aware of the hard work she has to do both at home and in the store she works in to ensure this security. She would miss her home but she is sure she would not regret leaving her working place as her colleague Miss Gavan does not like her. Although the thought may appear exciting apparently, the very thought of staying in a new place, at a new home in a far off alien country evokes fear in her mind as the hour of her departure seems approaching.

The readers are then introduced to Frank, her suitor, with whom "[Eveline] was about to explore another life". Eveline effusively describes him as “very kind, manly, open-hearted”(Joyce 39). Frank has promised to marry her and take her to Buenos Ayres where "he had a home waiting for her. The unfamiliar name of her potential destination and the romantic life generates an amount of excitement in her mind, and make her revisit her first meeting with him and how their courtship developed gradually. In her impoverished and uneventful life, her visit to the theatre to see an opera *The Bohemian Girl* with him is a memorable incident which she recollects with happiness. The narrator underlines her ecstasy in the sentence: “... she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him” (Joyce 40).

The romantic operas she has watched might have created an impression in her mind about the romantic hero which seems to befit Frank. The attraction for him is enhanced by his inexhaustible stock of stories about distant lands which exude an air of romance into the suffocating monotony of Eveline's constricted existence in Dublin. Her happy recollection of Frank is clouded by her remembrance of her father's vehement objection to her love affairs with a sailor expressed with a dismissive generalization: “I know these sailor chaps” (Joyce 40).

The narrative switches back to the present as the protagonist advances a few steps to pursue her ambition. The moment she gazes on the letter she has written to her father informing him of her resolution to leave, her determination suffers a setback to think of her old father who, she is sure, “would miss her” (Joyce 41). As she is lost in thought of her lonely old father, she hears a street organ playing the same melancholy tune as she heard on the last night of her mother's illness. It appears “strange” to Eveline that "it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. The remembrance of the promise she had made to her dead mother shakes her resolve more powerfully than her concern for her living father. Moreover, the memory of her mother’s predicament, possibly wrought by her father's tyranny, appears to enact in her mind's eye what the future has in store for her if she fails to act now. Frank appears as a saviour to her, she emphatically proclaims to herself, “would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love too” (Joyce 41).

But her momentary excitement of beginning a new life with a romantic companion goes like a flick, as the time of their departure arrives. The last part of the story focuses on a silent

Eveline muttering her prayers to God to direct her in her moment of crisis. The distress surging her mind makes her hear the whistle blown by the boat she is scheduled to board with Frank as mournful. Eveline grows too inert to listen to what Frank is telling her repeatedly and she guesses that he must have told her something about the passage. Her indifference to Frank becomes too evident when she clutches the iron railings so that Frank cannot forcibly draw her into the boat. At that moment, she feels that the metallic bar might offer her more support and ensure her safety, than the warm clasp of her erstwhile suitor. His urgent call to her to board the vessel by seizing her hand arouses a strange sort of emotion in her as her perception of Frank has undergone a transformation. Her deemed saviour appears to Eveline now as her potential destroyer as she suspects " ... he would drown her". Eveline is seized by a feeling of anguish which she gives vent to in her repeated " No" followed by exclamations and the finally dismissive utterance: " It was impossible" (Joyce 42). She remains inert in her decision even before the caressing address "Evvy" made by the astonished and confused Frank. He goes on insisting her to follow him till the moment the boat leaves. At that instant, a complete metamorphosis overshadows her whole being, bringing in a total trans fixation. Her transformation is described in the following way: "She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal." The climactic point of her metamorphosis is rendered in the concluding line of the story: "Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (Joyce 43).

Unit 6 (c): The Boarding House

"The Boarding House" is the fifth story in order of composition; (the manuscript bears the date 1 July 1905) and is the seventh story in *Dubliners*. The story, on a simple note, deals with a domineering mother and her daughter who is too subdued to be a protagonist. The narrator writes in the introductory part, "She was a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself: a determined woman", and then "Mrs. Mooney ... was a big imposing woman"(Joyce 66). She appears to have inherited the aforementioned qualities from her father who was a butcher and was, by nature as well as by profession, a merciless man. It is this inherited mercilessness that marks her decisions and actions.

Mrs. Mooney has not wasted much time to seek separation from her bullying husband and drives him away forthwith from her house, keeping custody of their children. She, as it

transpires in the course of the narrative, is an indulgent mother but very strict and cruel as a wife. Her business instincts, presumably inherited from her father, enable her to invest the residual amount she could retrieve from her not-so-much-earning butcher business, which was run by her drunkard husband, in setting up a boarding house.

The focal point of the narrative, is, however, not Mrs. Mooney, but her daughter Polly, who has the "habit of glancing upwards when she spoke with anyone, which made her look like a little perverse Madonna" (Joyce 67). The mother keeps a constant eye on the daughter and compels her to remain confined to the house to demolish the possibility of her separated husband's connection with her.

The narrator then divulges the perverted motive of the mother who exploits her daughter's liveliness to expand her business when he mentions that the mother's "intention was to give her the run of the young men". She is being referred as a "shrewd judge" who winks at Polly's presumably continuous flirting with her young boarders dismissing it as their pastime and hence not to be taken seriously. She seems to have studied them to realize that "none of them meant business"(Joyce 68).

Mrs. Mooney's confidence in herself and the irrefutable arguments she frames like a manipulative lawyer ensure her that she would win before she meets her adversary, who is, of course, the victimized Doran. Joyce underlines the essence of her argumentative character in the way she arranges her points:

> To begin with she had all the weight of social opinion on her side: she was an outraged mother. She had allowed him to live beneath her roof, assuming that he was a man of honour, and he had simply abused her hospitality... He had simply taken advantage of Polly's youth and inexperience: that was evident. The question was: what reparation would he make? (Joyce 69-70)

Mrs. Mooney decides that the only reparation that can compensate for the irreparable loss of her daughter's honour is marriage. She appears sure about winning Doran's consent in marriage as he is a serious young man, quite unlike Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Meade, or Bantam Lyons, with whom her task, she knows, would have been much more difficult. The comparative merit of Doran undoubtedly establishes his superiority to other boarders and his temperament along with his sound financial status might be the rationale for her decision to trap him as her prospective son-in-law. But Mrs. Mooney's mention of three young men,

presumably her boarders, seems to imply her daughter's wide circle of suitors who were allowed to pass time flirting with Polly by the indulgent mother.

Doran is soon introduced in the story as an "anxious" and an extremely nervous young man who is not even able to shave because of his "unsteady hand". His tense state of mind is easily comprehendible from the narrator's declaration that "every two or three minutes a mist gathered on his glasses so that he had to take them off and polish them with his pocket-handkerchief"(Joyce 71). He remembers with agony the confession he made to the priest on the previous night and his sin was magnified in such a way by the priest that he had to give his consent to the reparation of marrying her. According to some critics, Doran is presented in the story as both the seducer and the seduced, thereby underlining the inherent contradiction in the story.

The so-called protagonist of the story, Polly, appears in the forefront at the closing section, immersed in a reverie, oblivious to her spells of crying a bit ago, and filled with hopes and visions of the future. Her reverie is broken by her mother's voice, calling her name in a loud tone, which brings back to reality. She is presumably suffused with ecstasy when she learns that Mr. Doran wants to speak to her. Then she remembers "what she had been waiting for"(Joyce 75), which is the concluding sentence of the story.

Unit 7

Unit 7 (a): A Brief Synopsis of Select stories from Joyce's *Dubliners*: Clay

The tenth story of the collection, "Clay" deviates from the preceding stories in its minimal use of dialogues or direct speech and narration. The speeches that appear to be quoted are actually what Maria, the protagonist, recollects. But the title of the story betrays the most succinct use of metaphor which functions as the presiding image in the story.

The story "Clay", like its counterparts in *Dubliners*, does not yield to a well knit-plot which generally characterizes a conventional work of fiction. The narrative, instead, is delivered from Maria's consciousness, making it a pioneering work to employ the "stream-of-consciousness" technique which later became a hallmark of Joyce's fiction.

The story, in simple terms, does not contain a plot. It revolves around the life of its protagonist Maria, who works in the kitchen of an industrial laundry. She is like by everyone in the laundry because of her gentle nature and calm approach. The only retreat in Maria's monotonous life is to visit Joe and his nanny, who comprises of her family. However, her life takes a different course after her visit on Hallow's Eve, and the scores of event make her realise the emptiness of her existence.

The protagonist is described by a third-person in the following way: "Maria was a very, very small person indeed but she had a very long nose and a very long chin. She talked a little through her nose, always soothingly: Yes, my dear, and No, my dear"(Joyce 110). The narrator repeats his observation on Maria "when she laughed ... the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin", which is interpreted by critics as quite closer to the look of a witch. Again, the third- person narrator reports her thought after her encounter with the "elderly gentleman" on the tram: " ... she thought how easy it was to know a gentleman even when he has a drop taken"(Joyce 114). It might appear ironic that she hardly knows herself and the gentleman appears to have his hand in hiding the packet of cake Maria leaves behind on the tram.

In the closing part of the narrative, she sings the song "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls ..." by Balfe, referred to in "Eveline" too, but she skips the second verse and the narrator points it out in an assertive tone, "But no one tried to show her her mistake ... "(Joyce 118). In the crucial episode, the readers are as 'blindfolded' as Maria who cannot unravel the mystery of her initial mistake in the game when she lays her hand on a wet substance. The narrator is not there to reveal the secret of the commotion that it leads to. The readers have to construct the gap in the narrative by surmising that one of the next-door girls might have played a trick on Maria.

It is probably in her complacent state of mind despite the uncertain future she is progressing to that Joyce seems to portray the irrevocable working of the motif of paralysis that shrouds the consciousness of Maria in this story like her counterparts engulfed by it in the other stories of *Dubliners*.

Unit 7 (b): A Painful Case

The very next story of the collection “A Painful Case” is the seventh story in the order of composition and was completed in July 1905. However, Joyce’s letter to Stanislas reveal his dissatisfaction over the story: "I wrote some notes for 'A Painful Case’ but I hardly think the subject is worth treating at much length"(LII 182). Some critics have perceived "A Painful Case" is a story in which something happens and hence we may detect a 'plot' which characterizes a happening' story, and it seems to satisfy, to some extent, the conventional expectations from a story.

Often delivered from the point of view of the narrator, and sometimes that of the protagonist, the narrative opens on an ironic note justifying James Duffy's selection of “Chapelizod” as a much better locale to live in as he wants to live far from the madding crowd of the city, and he dismisses all the other suburbs of Dublin as "mean, modern and pretentious"(Joyce 119). After a brief description of the essential items and furniture that James himself has purchased according to his requirements, the narrative sweeps into the interior of the house. "The lofty walls of his uncarpeted room were free from pictures", implying that he intentionally keeps the walls bare to match the ascetic atmosphere of the room. What appears striking in these opening lines is a passive tone of narration: "A bookcase had been made ... The bed was clothed with white bed-clothes ... The books on the white wooden shelves were arranged ..."(Joyce 119).

The second paragraph deals with the distinctive temperament that marks James Duffy, the protagonist, beginning with the narrator's informative assertion: "Mr. Duffy abhorred anything which betokened physical or mental disorder. A medieval doctor would have called him saturnine". Then, the narrator remarks that his face carrying "the entire tale of his years, was of the brown tint of Dublin streets". The colour 'brown' which recurs in Dubliners, is associated with paralysis, or, as Joyce denotes, bears the implication of a sterile mindset. As argued by a critic, in "A Painful Case", the colour seems to permeate the very face of the protagonist, that is, it is not confined to the streets and houses which assume brown in the preceding stories. Duffy appears, as the narrator comments, to be "ever alert to greet a redeeming instinct in others but often disappointed" (Joyce 120). This is perhaps the reason why "he had neither companions nor friends ...” (Joyce 121). These details provided by the omniscient narrator in third person prepare us to evaluate how Duffy handles probably the

most important experience of his life, which could have brought about a drastic transformation in his life.

Though an apparently aimless person, Duffy's only "dissipation" of life, as the narrator informs, consists of his spending the evenings before his landlady's piano, roaming about the outskirts of Dublin and enjoying Mozart's music. On one of his visits to a concert, he happens to meet a lady whose remark on the empty house strikes him "as an invitation to talk". He initiates a conversation and comes to know that she is Mrs. Sinico. Despite getting ample opportunities of enjoying her company, Duffy remains formal in his approach, and hence, the relationship remains strictly confined to intellectual exchanges as befitting his temperament.

However, despite his resistance, he has no option than to submit himself to her desire as they are almost on the verge of experiencing a union with Mrs. Sinico "in the romantic backdrop of their interaction" in "the dark discreet room" of her house, in which "the music still vibrated in their ears". Here, the narrator's voice is heard: "This union exalted him, wore away the rough edges of his character, emotionalized his mental life"(Joyce 123-4).

But the arousal of his rational self disabled him to pursue the illicit relationship and they mutually agree to snap off "their intercourse". Leaving the trembling woman on the lonely streets of the night, Duffy walks away abruptly, fearing an outbreak of emotion on her part. After a few days, he is startled, at the same time agitated to hear the news of Mrs. Sinico's suicide: He resents "the threadbare phrases, the inane expressions of sympathy, the cautious words of a reporter won over to conceal the details of a commonplace vulgar death ... " He cannot help thinking that "not merely had she degraded herself; she had degraded him. He saw the squalid tract of her vice, miserable and malodorous" (Joyce 128).

After this episode, four years have passed, in the course of which Duffy has revisited the entire course of events, and can't think about the mental trauma that Mrs. Sinico has gone some years ago which compelled her to take her own life. He also starts feeling that it is he who has taken life from her, and who is responsible for her death. This sense of guilt haunts him for quite some time. "He gnawed the rectitude of his life.; he felt that he had been outcast from life's feast" (Joyce 130). He is thoroughly shattered by the realization that Mrs.Sinico has been the only person who seems to have loved him, and he has rejected her love and "sentenced her to ignominy, a death of shame" (Joyce 130).

The closing paragraph of the story marks a change in style and tone of narration by showing the dawning of sense on Duffy's deranged mind. He is found in the act of making a strenuous

effort to recover his former self by starting to doubt "the reality of what memory had told him". He seems to realize that he has been under a spell of illusory sounds and visions by revisiting his memory of Mrs. Sinico. Finally, the hardcore realist in him makes a comeback after waging a protracted war with the repressed contour of his mental realm. This is how Joyce seems to establish the ultimate victory of reason over emotion and thus he averts the expected melodramatic close of the story. But what Duffy cannot drive away from his mind is his loneliness which seems to differ qualitatively from the loneliness he derives from and relishes in the solitary abode he selects with care to avoid communion. The narrative closes with the indirect discourse which captures his feeling of loneliness: "He felt that he was alone" (Joyce 131).

Unit 7 (c): The Dead

The last story of the collection “The Dead” was written by Joyce in around 1907, when he was in a constant tussle with the publishers to give life to his stories in a book form and was in urgent need of financial assistance. This story deviates from the other stories in the collection in terms of its subject and style.

In a dramatic undertone, the story opens on the evening with Lily, the domestic assistant of the Morkans, welcoming the guests to the annual Christmas dinner party at the Morkans’. The party is given by the three ladies, aunt Julia, aunt Kate and their niece, Mary Jane, who are related to the protagonist Gabriel.

The story, which apparently lacks a plot, is delivered through the consciousness of Gabriel. As the story opens, the three ladies are found in a pensive mood, eagerly waiting for the arrival of their nephew Gabriel and his wife Gretta. When the couple finally arrives, it is already late enough. On his arrival at the scene, he is found to have a bitter experience with Lily as the latter rebukes him in some way. Lily informs Gabriel that his aunts are waiting for him and that he should hurry, he remarks, in an attempt to please her, " ... I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man ... ". To this, she replies with bitterness: "The men that are now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you". Her response appears humiliating to the protagonist and he “coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake ...” (Joyce 202)

The handsome young man Gabriel is then found in a nervous state as he rehearses the speech that he has prepared to deliver at the dinner table. When the supper is about to start, Gabriel thinks again about his speech, and gets momentarily distracted in the thought of the snowfall outside, as he wonders,

> "How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and fonning a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!" (Joyce 218-9)

Gabriel delivers a hyperbolic speech, praising Mary Jane as the youngest hostess whose playing of "her Academy piece" he bitterly criticized earlier.

The dinner rituals are held properly held, followed by social interactions, song, and dance. The party ended with Gabriel carving the goose and the deliberation of an emotional speech which brings tears in his aunts' eyes. On his aunt's insistence, Gabriel and his wife consent to stay in the hotel room for the night.

Inside the darkness of the hotel room in which the electric lights are not functional, Gabriel notices his wife is upset with the thought of something. With his heart filled with amorous feelings for her, he tries to establish a conversation with her, to which she clearly shows no interest. After a few moments of resistance, she breaks down completely and reveals that the last song of the party "The Lass of Aughrim." Has brought in her mind the memory of a boy named Michael Furry, whom she once knew, who used to sing that song, and now lies dead.

Gretta's confession of her love for Michael Furey breaks his illusions and makes him perceive himself as a "ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians, and idealizing his clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror." Upon his enquiry regarding the cause of the boy's death, Gretta recalls the tragic event: it was winter, Michael was sick and was not allowed to go outside, nor to allow any visitor. Gretta was about to leave her grandmother's house in the pursuit of studying in a convent. She wrote a letter to the boy, informing him about her approaching departure, and promised to meet him when she would return in summer. On the rainy winter night before her departure, she heard a sound in her window. She went near it and opened it to find Michael standing there, shivering in the cold. Anxious of his feeble health, she urged him to go home, but the boy told her that he didn't

want to live. Upon Gretta's insistence, he returned after a while but died within a week of Gretta's departure.

Gretta finishes the tragic tale and breaks into uncontrollable sobs. Later, when Gretta falls asleep, Gabriel wonders about the dead boy who had risked his life and died for Gretta's love. He also mediates upon the transient nature of human existence, thinking about his old aunts, who would be leaving the lure of earthly existence after some years, and he has to attend their funeral ceremony. Hence, on the night of festivity, Gabriel finds the loom of death hovering around his life, and realizes that the dead boy, Michael Furey has taught him the meaning of the word "love". He looks outside through the window to observe the snowfall, reminding him again of mortality: "His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead" (Joyce 255).

Unit 8

Unit 8 (a): Representation of Ireland in *DUBLINERS*

In a letter to his brother Stanislaus, dated 25 September 1906, Joyce expresses his feeling of humiliation on hearing a girl "sneering at [his] impoverished country".

> "Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in *Dubliners* at least) none of the attraction of the city for I have never felt at my ease in any city since I left it except in Paris. I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter 'virtue' so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe. I have not been just to its beauty: For it is more beautiful naturally in my opinion than what I have seen of England, Switzerland, France, Austria or Italy "(L II 166-67).

Joyce's aim of writing *Dubliners*, as it seems, is to capture the decaying condition of Ireland which has to bear the dual burden of British colonialism which swept the country of its own cultural roots, and the ensuing financial restraint that heightened its misery all the more. The stories in the collection capture different facets of Irish society from the perspective of

characters of varied socio-economicstandards. The characters, in this sense, becomes a representative of the class to which they belong – Father Flynn from "The Sisters" is a representative of clergy, while Maria and Eveline carry the traits of typical middle-class ladies. Mrs. Mooney and her daughter Polly reflect the condition of women who are left with limited employment opportunities and thus, have to invest their energy and wit in pursuit of a secure life. The tragic fate of Mrs. Sinico shows the weakness of ladies prone to excessive emotion, which leads her to take her own life. Aunt Julia and Kate from "The Dead" represents the decaying condition of the Irish aristocracy. James Duffy and Gabriel from "A Painful Case" and "The Dead" respectively undergo a total transformation in terms of their mindscape, and thus reflects the transitory nature of human existence.

In his introduction to Tomedi's book, dedicated to Dublin, Harold Bloom asks: "Is a literary place, by pragmatic definition, a city?" (Bloom, 2005, p. ix). If the answer is yes, then *Dubliners*are about the inhabitants of Dublin. But the relation between the fiction, the city, and Joyce himself had been so troublesome that it delayed the publication of the book for about ten years. Seamus Deane goes further than Bloom and states that Joyce's enterprise was founded on a paradox.

> "Dublin was an absence, a nowhere, a place that was not really a city or a civilization at all. It was a Cave of the Winds, like the 'Aeolus' chapter in Ulysses, the home of the cosmetic phrase, the Dublin rouge on the faded cheek of the English language. Joyce wanted to dismantle its provincialism and its pretensions; yet he also sought to envision it as the archetypal modern city, as the single place in which all human history was rehearsed" (Deane 35-36).

According to Abbot and Bell (2001, p. 12), Joyce wanted Dublin of 1904 to be seen by readers without a map neither from any other source other than his book. *Dubliners* also relates the politics of its time, and it is what makes a collection a literary masterpiece of historical significance.

While Dublin in the stories represents the geographical place, Nicolas Pelicioni di Oliveira argues, it also has a metaphorical significance, representing colonial Ireland at a time of growing nationalist resentment of a deeply rooted betrayal.

As S. Deane reflects, (2004, p. 35-36), Joyce saw Dublin as a city that inhabited three spheres of civilization: the British Empire was the first one; the second was that of Roman Catholicism; and finally, ancient Europe was the third, and yet it had no artistic

representation. Joyce wanted to portray the paralysis of his people by showing the endless, futile quest for an origin that had overtaken them, and he wanted to provide them with an identity securely their own. (p. 160). For Joyce, on the one hand the origin is beyond history, and history is a sequence of betrayals, the reason why Irish people would be leaderless, subjected to an authoritarian Church. The artist, on the other hand, in his quest for origin, is the only one who can provide spiritual life. With *Dubliners*, Joyce became part of the Irish Revival, forging a new representation for a country.

Unit 8 (b): Epiphanies of James Joyce

Derived from Greek, the word 'epiphany' means a sudden manifestation of a deity. In Christian theology, it also means the manifestation of a hidden message for the benefit of others, a message for their salvation. Joyce gave the name epiphany to certain short sketches he wrote between 1898 and 1904, and the idea of the epiphany was central to much of his early published fiction.

Through his education at the Jesuit schools at Clongowes Wood and Belvedere College, Joyce was steeped in Catholic religious ideas. He even suggested that there was a certain resemblance between the mystery of transubstantiation in the Catholic mass and what he was trying to do as an artist, changing the bread of everyday life into something with permanent artistic life. In making this claim, Joyce envisaged himself as an artist/priest of the eternal imagination through whom the flesh becomes a word. It's no surprise, then, that he adopted the idea of epiphany to suit his own artistic ends.

Joyce himself never defined exactly what he meant by epiphany, but we get some idea of what it means from the way in which the character Stephen Daedalus defines it in "Stephen Hero", an early version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen says that epiphanies are a sudden and momentary showing forth or disclosure of one's authentic inner self. This disclosure might manifest itself in vulgarities of speech, or gestures, or memorable phases of the mind.

Joyce's brother Stanislaus saw the epiphanies as something more like records of Freudian slips. Writing after Joyce's death, Stanislaus claimed the epiphanies were ironical observations of slips, errors, and gestures by which people betrayed the very things they were most careful to conceal. Oliver St John Gogarty, a friend of Joyce's and one of the models for the character Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*, thought that Fr Darlington of University College had told Joyce that epiphany meant 'showing forth,' and that an epiphany was a showing forth of the mind in which one gave oneself away.

Nonetheless, the notion of the epiphany remains slightly obscure and even somewhat confusing. For instance, in the course of Stephen Hero, Stephen tells Cranly that he believes the clock on the Ballast Office is capable of an epiphany, but neither Stephen nor Joyce make clear how this might be possible. Also, the word epiphanic has been used by scholars to describe the kinds of revelations that occur at the end of Joyce's short stories in *Dubliners*, and these moments of revelation are often called epiphanies. However, it is not always clear just what such epiphanic moments reveal or just how these so-called epiphanies relate to what Joyce called epiphanies.

Though the epiphanies proper were written between 1898 and 1904, Joyce may have been developing the idea for some time before that. His brother Stanislaus mentions a series of short prose sketches written in the first person that Joyce began while still a sixteen-year-old student at Belvedere College. These sketches were called 'Silhouettes' and, though none of them are extant, they seem to have been similar in style to what Joyce later calls epiphanies. It may be that Joyce also got some of his ideas about epiphany from his reading of the Italian author Gabriel D'Annunzio. *L'Epifania del Fuoco* ("The Epiphany of Fire") was the first part of D'Annunzio's novel *Il Fuoco* ("The Fire") that Joyce almost certainly read while attending University College. D'Annunzio's writing also influenced the young Joyce's early ideas on aesthetics and the role of art and the artist in society.

The epiphanies reflect aspects of Joyce's life at the time when they were written, a formative period in Joyce's life. They are like snapshots, recording specific and minute fragments of life and they are presented without commentary. Often these fragments appear without a given context, making it difficult to determine Joyce's intention and meaning. Some of the epiphanies are rendered as a dramatic dialogue while others are simple prose descriptions or prose poems.

Several epiphanies center on social visits to the home of the MP David Sheehy. The Sheehy's lived at 2 Belvedere Place, not far from Belvedere College. Richard and Eugene Sheehy attended Belvedere with Joyce, and Joyce regularly visited their house. There he became friendly with the Sheehy sisters (Hanna, Margaret, Mary, and Kathleen) and even developed a crush on Mary. Joyce's friend Tom Kettle later married Margaret Sheehy, and another friend, Francis Skeffington, married Hannah. Margaret gave elocution lessons and wrote short dramatic sketches, and Joyce appeared on stage in one of her sketches, *Cupid's Confidante*, when it was first performed in 1900.

One of these epiphanies records a guessing game, where Margaret Sheehy has an author in mind and the others are trying to guess who it is through a question-and-answer session. In the epiphany, Joyce claims to have known who she had in mind (the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen) but tells her that she got the age wrong. The epiphany gives us some insight into Joyce's feeling about Dublin as an intellectual desert, where Ibsen's name is known, even notorious, but nothing else is known about him. In another epiphany, Hannah Sheehy is asked who her favourite German poet is and replies Goethe, quite possibly because she knows no other German poet, again revealing something of the intellectual desert. Yet other concerns a teasing comment made about the 'rabblement' being at the door, a mocking reference to Joyce's essay "The Day of the Rabblement" which was published in a booklet along with an essay by Francis Skeffington.

Closer to home, three epiphanies concern the death of Joyce's brother George in March 1902. One of these is a particularly dramatic sketch in which Joyce, playing at the piano, is questioned by his mother who emerges from the sick room and is concerned about what is happening to George. In fact, it records the moment when Joyce and his mother realize that George has just died. In another epiphany, Joyce records that everyone in the house is asleep and that his dead brother George is laid out on the bed where Joyce had slept the night before. Joyce says that he cannot pray for him in the way that the others do, and twice refers to George as 'poor little fellow'. Another epiphany records an exchange between Joyce and Skeffington, who apologizes for having missed the funeral. Skeffington appears to use the usual, clichéd formulae for expressing condolences, and these formulae contrast starkly with Joyce's own, more personal feeling of grief.

Some of the other epiphanies come from Joyce's time in Paris. One records prostitutes walking the streets and eating pastries, and this, in a more refined form, turns up later in

Stephen Dedalus' reminiscences of Paris in *Ulysses.* He also has a dream-like epiphany of his mother, where his mother's image is confused with that of the Virgin Mary. This may have been written in response to letters from her about the hardships the family was suffering in Dublin.

Another describes Joyce, lying on the deck of a ship, hearing the voices of the choirboys from the nearby cathedral of Our Lady. Stanislaus claimed that Joyce wrote this about his journey home on 11 April 1903, after receiving a telegram from his father telling him that his mother was dying. There is another epiphany about a woman and a young girl making their way through a crowd at a funeral, and a reworked version of this appears in the 'Hades' episode of Ulysses. It's not clear whether the original epiphany related to the funeral of Joyce's mother or his brother.

It seems that Joyce circulated the epiphanies in manuscript form before he left Dublin in December 1902 to go to Paris. It also seems likely that he showed the manuscript of the epiphanies to the poet W.B. Yeats when they met in 1902. Later that year, as he was preparing to leave for Paris, Joyce gave Stanislaus (who was the keeper of the manuscript of the epiphanies) instructions that, in the event of his death, copies of the epiphanies were to be sent to all the major libraries of the world, including the Vatican. Stephen Dedalus somewhat disparagingly recalls a similar desire in the 'Proteus' episode of Ulysses where his epiphanies were to be sent to all the major libraries of the world, including Alexandria.

From Paris in February 1903, Joyce sent Stanislaus 2 poems and 13 epiphanies, with instructions on where the epiphanies were to be inserted into the existing manuscript. It seems that, even at this stage, Joyce was still considering publishing a book of epiphanies, just as he had planned to publish his aesthetic system as a book. However, he decided to combine his aesthetic system and epiphanies with the short essay entitled "A Portrait of the Artist" which had been rejected by John Eglinton (editor of Dana, and a librarian at the National Library of Ireland). All three elements were incorporated into Stephen Hero, on which Joyce started work in January 1904.

After January 1904, Joyce did not write any further epiphanies. However, that did not mean that the epiphanies were of no further use to him. In their book, The Workshop of Daedalus, Robert Scholes, and Richard Kain shows how individual epiphanies were incorporated into Joyce's later works, including "Stephen Hero", *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Dubliners,* and *Ulysses*.

In manuscript form today, 22 epiphanies are in the collection at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and another 18 at Cornell University. Those at Buffalo are from Joyce's own collection of manuscripts. Those at Cornell come mainly from Stanislaus Joyce's commonplace book. There are indications from the page numbering on the Buffalo manuscript that there may have been at least 70 and possibly even more epiphanies originally.

At his most polemical Joyce could sound tough-mindedly disparaging about beauty as an artistic ambition, but the main solace to be found within the bleak world of his stories is the very great beauty with which he writes them; and, something like a Sickert painting, the paradoxical loveliness with which these impeded lives are portrayed comes from a kind of exquisite attention, wholly insignificant events dwelt upon with the same rapt fascination that previous generations of artists would have deployed on heroic or historic subjects. The great Joycean scholar Richard Ellmann put it best: "Joyce's discovery, so humanistic that he would have been embarrassed to disclose it out of context, was that the ordinary is the extraordinary" (Joyce 8).

The position is 'humanistic': that is, wholly secular; there is nothing transcendental in this world-view; but when the young Joyce privately invented a new genre to capture this new-found extraordinariness, he adopted a religious word – epiphany. The epiphany (meaning 'manifestation') was originally the episode in the Christian story when the wise men first saw the infant Jesus: the moment is the first showing of the divine within the world, which is its new home: Joyce takes that thought, but he relocates its spirituality wholly within the frame of the mundane. In his abandoned novel "Stephen Hero", which he wrote alongside the short stories, he has Stephen, his spokesman, explain:

> By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself'. The theory sponsors an artistic vocation: 'He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments (Joyce 9).

Joyce duly collected real epiphanies, glimpses he witnessed of Dublin life, like pencil sketches for paintings. Some are short, atmospheric prose-poems, but the more impressive are captured fragments of talk, defamiliarised into art by their unexpected transcription:

Skeffington – I was sorry to hear of the death of

your brother….sorry we didn't

know in time…..to have been at

the funeral…..

Joyce – O, he was very young ….a boy….

Skeffington – Still…..it hurts…. (Joyce 10)

The book of epiphanies went nowhere, but the sketches showed the way to a larger art of poised, unfinished fragments: their memorable, studied inconsequence would become a defining quality of the short story as Joyce reinvented it in *Dubliners*. 'Clay' ends, exemplarily, with nothing like a normal ending to a tale, and the effect is very beautiful. Joyce borrows the worn language of his subjects, achieving an effect of terrific emotional restraint, barely hinting at a range of tragic possibilities (tears, losses, endings, calls for help) without confessing them: "and his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end, he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was." We discern a significance that is lost on the characters themselves. Joyce's genius is here minimalist, exploiting the implication of understatement: he called the technique "a style of scrupulous meanness" (Joyce 11).

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Assignments

Essay-type Questions

1)What are the major themes of the stories included in Joyce's *Dubliners*? Discuss with reference to the stories prescribed in your syllabus.

2) Comment critically on Joyce's art of characterization in *Dubliners*.

3) Write a note on the representation of Ireland in Joyce's *Dubliners*.

4) How does Joyce capture the psychology of an adolescent boy in "The Sisters"?

5) Analyse the character of Eveline, and compare it with the character of Polly in "The Boarding House" and Maria in "Clay".

6) How does Joyce address the element of death in *Dubliners*? Discuss with reference to "A Painful Case" and "The Dead".

7) Comment critically on the use of epiphanies in the stories of *Dubliners*.

Short Answer-type Questions

1) Comment briefly on the role of Father Flynn in the young boy's life in "The Sisters".

2) Why does Eveline chooses to remain in her familiar life despite being mistreated by her abusive father?

3) How would you perceive Mrs. Mooney's act of conspiracy in the story "The Boarding House"?

4) In what way does the story "Clay" foreground the emptiness of Maria's life?

5) Sketch the character of James Duffy from the story "A Painful Case".

6) Comment on James's use of symbolism in "The Dead".

BLOCK III

SUB-UNIT I

SELECT ESSAYS FROM *LITERARY OCCASIONS*

By

V.S. NAIPAUL

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 9 (a) : Introduction: Life and Works of V.S. Naipaul (1932-2018)
Unit 9 (b): Some Notes on Diaspora and Expatriate Communities
Unit 10 (a): About Naipaul's *Literary Occasions*
Unit 10 (b): "Reading and Writing: A Personal Account"

Unit 11 (a): Naipaul on "East Indians"
Unit 11 (b): "Conrad's Darkness and Mine"
Unit 12 (a): Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*
Unit 12 (b): Criticism and Conclusion

List of References
Assignments

UNIT - 9

Unit 9 (a): Introduction: Life and Works of V.S. Naipaul (1932-2018)

"I have always moved by intuition alone. I have no system, literary or political. I have no guiding political idea. I think that probably lies with my ancestry."

-V.S. Naipaul, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 2001.

An esteemed novelist and travel writer of Indian descendants, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born in Chauganas, Trinidad on August 17, 1932 to Seeparsad Naipaul and Droapati Capildeo. Naipaul's grandfather had migrated to Trinidad from India in the 1880s to work as indentured labourers on the sugar plantations. In the year 1939, when Naipaul was six years of age, the family moved to a big house at the Port of Spain, Trinidad's capital.

Naipaul started his formal education there, studying at Queen's Royal College, before procuring a Government Scholarship to study at University College, Oxford in England in 1950. Since a very early age, and before he departed for England, Naipaul had nurtured a desire to become a writer. He started working for the BBC for a brief period before beginning his career as a writer engaged with colonial and postcolonial concerns. The writings of his early period contained various facets of life in Trinidad. His first novel *The Mystic Masseur*, published in London in 1957, centers around the life of a frustrated writer of Indian descent, Ganesh Ramsumair, who struggles to make his book published in Trinidad, but fails to become successful in the field of writing and turns to become a mystic and a religious healer. Naipaul's next novel *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958) describes the weird circumstances surrounding a local election in one of the districts of Trinidad. His next work was a collection of short stories entitled *Miguel Street* (1959) presents comic portraits of varied facets of life in Trinidad. Naipaul's next work of critical acclaim was a novel titled *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), which, also set in Trinidad, reveals the tragi-comic life of a man (modelled on Naipaul's father Seeparsad Naipaul) who is thwarted from achieving independence.

Naipaul's novel *Mr. Stone and the Knight's Companion* (1963) was the only work to be set in London, followed by *The Mimic Men* (1967), narrated by a failed politician on a fictitious Caribbean island.

After the completion of *A Flag on the Island* (1967), a collection of stories set in the West Indies and London, his works – both fiction and non-fiction – become more overtly political and pessimistic. His next novel *In a Free State* (which was awarded the Booker Prize in 1971), explores problems of nationality and identity through linked narratives about displaced characters. The novel entitled *Guerrillas* (published in 1975) depicts political and sexual violence in the Caribbean; *A Bend in the River* (1979) presents an equally horrifying portrait of emergent Africa. A mostly autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) reflects the growing familiarity and changing perceptions of Naipaul upon his arrival in various countries after leaving his native Trinidad and Tobago. His next fictional venture *A Way in the World* (1994) is historical like that of his earlier narrative *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969).

Naipaul's predominantly gloomy view of postcolonial societies can also be located in his travel and autobiographical books such as *The Middle Passage: The Caribbean Revisited* (1962) which covers a year-long trip across Trinidad, British Guiana, Suriname, Martinique, and Jamaica in 1961. His first visit to his native land India failed to leave much impact upon the mind of the young writer, but culminated in the form of a travelogue titled *An Area of Darkness* (1964). His stark disillusionment is reflected in the following lines:

> India had not worked its magic on me. It remained the land of my childhood, an area of darkness; like the Himalayan passes, it was closing up again, as fast as I withdrew from it, into a land of myth; it seemed to exist in just the timelessness which I had imagined as a child, into which, for all that I walked on Indian earth, I knew I could not penetrate. In a year I had not learned acceptance. I had learned my separateness from India, and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors (Naipaul 1964).

His pessimistic portrayal of India remains prevailing in the subsequent parts of the trilogy, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990).

His other travel narratives include *The Return of Eva Peron* (1980, which chronicles his visit to Argentina), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981, about his travel across the South Asian continent after the Iranian Revolution), and *The Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief* (2010).

Naipaul's recurrent themes of political violence, alienation, and homelessness have brought the grounds of his similarity with Joseph Conrad. His sequential novels *Half a Life* (2001) and *Magic Seeds* (2004) revolve around the life of an Indian named Willie Somerset Chandran in India, Africa, and Europe.

V. S. Naipaul was knighted in 1989, was awarded the David Cohen British Literature Prize by the Arts Council of England in 1993 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001. He holds honorary doctorate degrees from Cambridge University and Columbia University in New York, and honorary degrees from the universities of Cambridge, London and Oxford. He died August 11,2018, only a few days ahead of his 86th birthday.

Unit 9 (b): Some Notes on Diaspora and Expatriate Communities

Since the latter decades of the nineteenth century, people from various European colonies had undertaken a journey to the plantation colonies in Surinam, Trinidad, and Guiana. These immigrants were appointed as indentured labourers in several plantations in exchange of a negotiable amount. These people, later categorised as members of Old 'Involuntary' diaspora would settle eventually in their host land and extend their family across generations. One of the esteemed Diaspora critic Sudesh Mishra has made a distinction between the old and the new diasporas in his essay "From Sugar to Masala: Writings by the Indian Diaspora" (2003). According to him, the old diasporas are those who migrated "semi-voluntari(ly)" as indentured labourers, during the era of colonial expansion (from around 1830 to 1917) to the plantation colonies such as Fiji, Mauritius, and Trinidad. The new diasporas, on the other hand, have migrated voluntarily, in the era of late capitalism, to the "thriving metropolitan centres" such as Australia, United States, Canada, and Britain for better prospects. He uses the term 'Sugar' to designate the old diasporas, and the term 'Masala' to refer to the new diaspora. Mishra distinguishes the old diaspora from the new in terms of their psychological and cultural practices:

> If the old diaspora can be identified through its melancholic withdrawal into zones of exclusivity, the new diaspora can be identified through its conscious

> occupation of border zones, exemplified by the uneasy interaction between gender, class, ethnicity, nation-states (Mishra 285).

Mishra's essay significantly represents the transformation in the concept of 'home' for different categories of diasporic people: while 'home' for the people of sugar diaspora is indicative of a place for putting down the cultural 'roots', for the masala diaspora, 'home' is related to the rootlessness and the "constant mantling and dismantling of the self in makeshift landscapes" (Mishra 294).

Being a descendent of an Indian family in Trinidad, V.S. Naipaul falls into the category of 'Old' diaspora, or an 'expatriate' as he calls himself. While expressing his "Magnificent Obsessions" with India, he states:

> Deep within the being of an expatriate writer, the alienation syndrome ensnares them. The authors themselves are caught up in the east-west bound, enshrouded in a mist of alienation. The peripheral eastern influence and the profound western ambience has synthesized many a times into a body of confused philosophy, which results in existential crisis, both for the author and the targeted nation! (Naipaul 17)

As a member of an expatriate community in Trinidad, and being dislocated from the country of his forefathers, Naipaul was always haunted by a sense of loss "some urge to reclaim, to look back" (quoted from Salman Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands", 1991, 10). his insatiable urge of revisiting was combined with the realization that he could never really return to the country of his origin due to certain socio-psychological circumstances. Therefore, he chose to create "imaginary homelands" which he built upon his own perception of 'home'. Memory, therefore, becomes a tool for Naipaul to recreate his homeland, through his writings, as a means of staying closer to his cultural roots.

Unit 10

Unit 10 (a): About Naipaul's *Literary Occasions*

Published in 2003, his collection of essays entitled *Literary Occasions* takes us deeper into the life of V.S. Naipaul to have a glimpse of his process of becoming a writer. The book, in a series of fragments, offers us a composite picture of an individual, whose writings have opened up a new arena of viewing the world in the twenty-first century. As observed by Pankaj Mishra in his Introduction to the book:

> To recognise the fragmented aspects of your identity; to see how they enable you to become who you are... this ceaseless process of reconstituting an individual self deep in its home in history is what much of Naipaul's work has been compulsively engaged in (Mishra).

Naipaul's *Literary Occasions* anthologizes eleven essays including "Reading and Writing: A Personal Account", "East Indians", "Conrad's Darkness and Mine" and his much acclaimed Nobel Prize Speech, "Two Worlds". In the initial pages of the book, he describes his childhood and adolescence in Trinidad and pays tribute to his father Seeparsad Naipaul, the first Indo-Trinidadian journalist and writer, whose literary ambitions remained confined to Trinidad.

The essays included in the collection, written on diverse aspects of literary discourse, enable the reader to launch an enquiry into the mysteries of written expression and of fiction in particular. Placing the great Nobel laureate at the very center of such an exploration, it would indulge us to look reveal the vital connection between memory, self-knowledge, and literary endeavour.

Unit 10 (b): "Reading and Writing: A Personal Account"

Published individually in 2002, and later included in *Literary Occasions*, Naipaul's essay "Reading and Writing: A Personal Account" is immensely autobiographical, taking us deeper into the world of his childhood in Trinidad, his university days in England and the beginning of his career as a writer of literary pieces, both fiction and non-fiction alike. He begins the essay with an admission:

> I was eleven, no more, when the wish came to me to be a writer; and then very soon it was a settled ambition. The early age is unusual, but I don't think extraordinary. I have heard that serious collectors, of books or pictures, can begin when they are very young; and recently, in India, I was told by a distinguished film director, Shyam Benegal, that he was six when he decided to make a life in cinema as a director (Naipaul 1).

The person who became an inspiration for young Naipaul, was his father Seeparsad Naipaul, whose great will, effort, and determination motivated him to [pursue the path of creativity. Seeparsad Naipaul, a journalist and a writer himself, worked diligently to shape the mind of his son Vidiadhar, which he says, "was soft and like melted iron". The father used to read paragraphs from various texts to his son, as he has recognized in "Reading and Writing" :

> My father was a self-educated man who had made himself a journalist. He read in his own way. At this time he was in his early thirties, and still learning. He read many books at once, finishing none, looking not for the story or the argument in any book but for the special qualities or character of the writer. That was where he found his pleasure, and he could savor writers only in little bursts. Sometimes he would call me to listen to two or three or four pages, seldom more, of writing he particularly enjoyed. He read and explained with zest and it was easy for me to like what he liked. In this unlikely way—considering the background: the racially mixed colonial school, the Asian inwardness at home—I had begun to put together an English literary anthology of my own (Naipaul 2).

While talking about his ancestry as a second-generation diaspora in Trinidad, Naipaul talks about the cultural heredity of his people, whom he had observed from a close proximity in his boyhood days. As he writes:

> We were an immigrant Asian community on a small plantation island in the New World. To me India seemed very far away, mythical, but we were at that time, in all the branches of our extended family, only about forty or fifty years out of India (Naipaul 2).

The country of his origin, India, was known to him only through the mythical tales and stories that his forefathers would narrate about their homeland. The version of India which was presented to Naipaul and the picture of his country that he had formed in his mind was largely imaginary, bearing minimum relevance to the actual country. In his childhood, he was told the story of the great Hindu epic *The Ramayana*, and had seen it to be enacted in the form of Ramlila:

> The Ramayana was the essential Hindu story. It was the more approachable of our two epics, and it lived among us the way epics lived. It had a strong and fast and rich narrative and, even with the divine machinery, the matter was very human. The characters and their motives could always be discussed; the epic was like a moral education for us all. Everyone around me would have known the story at least in outline; some people knew some of the actual verses. I didn't have to be taught it: the story of Rama's unjust banishment to the dangerous forest was like something I had always known (Naipaul 3).

The Classical Hindu epic was regarded with high esteem in the island country because the immigrants from India, those who had arrived there several years ago as indentured labourers, would feel some sort of association with the epic-hero Rama. As Rama was banished from his land as a result of some conspiracy and was compelled to live fourteen years in exile, the members of Old involuntary diaspora would regard themselves in similar misery, living the life in perpetual exile with the regard for their ancestral country as their actual home and the place of eventual return.

As Naipaul's father got the job of a reporter in a local newspaper, the family shifted to another house in the city, moving further away from their relatives and, by extension, from their cultural roots:

> When my father got a job on the local paper we went to live in the city. It was only twelve miles away, but it was like going to another country. Our little rural Indian world, the disintegrating world of a remembered India, was left behind. I never returned to it; lost touch with the language; never saw another Ramlila (Naipaul 3).

It was by the virtue of his father's motivation that encouraged him to create his own literary anthology that Naipaul decided to become a writer. As he reminisces,

> My private anthology, and my father's teaching, had given me a high idea of writing. And though I had started from a quite different corner, and was years away from understanding why I felt as I did, my attitude (as I was to discover) was like that of Joseph Conrad, himself at the time a just-published author, when he was sent the novel of a friend. The novel was clearly one of much plot; Conrad saw it not as a revelation of human hearts but as a fabrication of "events which properly speaking are accidents only." "All the charm, all the truth," he wrote to the friend, "are thrown away by the…mechanism (so to speak) of the story which makes it appear false" (Naipaul 4).

In his literary endeavour, he acknowledges the debt of the modernist writer Joseph Conrad whom he viewed as his prime motivation :

> For Conrad, as for the narrator of *Under Western Eyes*, the discovery of every tale was a moral one. It was for me, too, without my knowing it. It was where the Ramayana and Aesop and Andersen and my private anthology (even the Maupassant and the O. Henry) had led me. When Conrad met H.G. Wells, who thought him too wordy, not giving the story straight, Conrad said, "My dear Wells, what is this Love and Mr. Lewisham about? What is all this about Jane Austen? What is it all about?" (Naipaul 4).

The next section of the essay moves forward to offer us a glimpse of Naipaul's student life when he procured a Government scholarship to study at a University in England for a tenure of maximum seven years:

> When I won my scholarship—after a labor that still hurts to think about: it was what all the years of cramming were meant to lead to—I decided only to go to Oxford and do the three-year English course. I didn't do this for the sake of Oxford and the English course; I knew little enough about either. I did it mainly to get away to the bigger world and give myself time to live up to my fantasy and become a writer (Naipaul 4).

In the course of his stay in England, as a fellow of Oxford, he was still haunted by a sense of blankness regarding what to write and how to write. He voiced his feeling thus:

> At Oxford now, on that hard-earned scholarship, the time should have come. But the blankness was still there; and the very idea of fiction and the novel was continuing to puzzle me. A novel was something made up; that was almost its definition. At the same time it was expected to be true, to be drawn from life; so that part of the point of a novel came from half rejecting the fiction, or looking through it to a reality (Naipaul 5).

Even after the completion of his three-year-long course, he was left to wonder how to begin the process of writing. He left Oxford and came to London to get some clue regarding the initiation of his literary career, and occupied the basement of the house of his cousin, a student of law, and an admirer of his creative impulse.

After a rigorous attempt at writing in the course of his five-month-long stay in London, he managed to write noting.

> And then one day, deep in my almost fixed depression, I began to see what my material might be: the city street from whose mixed life we had held aloof, and the country life before that, with the ways and manners of a remembered India.

It took him four long years to determine the subject of his writing, to realize that he can represent the life of the people of his own community. He recalled:

> To get started as a writer, I had had to go back to the beginning, and pick my way back—forgetting Oxford and London— to those early literary experiences, some of them not shared by anybody else, which had given me my own view of what lay about me (Naipaul 5).

In the process of telling the tale of his people, Naipaul thought, fiction would be an appropriate genre, taking him "as far as it could go." Moreover, his prior experiences of traveling at different plantations at the Caribbean islands and the "old Spanish Main' would provide him an opportunity to deliver the narratives in the form of a travelogue. Thus, he admits: "Fiction, the exploration of one's immediate circumstances, had taken me a lot of the way. Travel had taken me further" (Naipaul 6). It was by the chance "accident" of being under the plea of a publisher in the United States, that he had to try his hands at writing pieces of non-fiction.

The essay "Reading and Writing", thus, takes us deeper into the personal foray of V.S. Naipaul as he recalls his struggle in the pursuit of becoming a writer. The autobiographical piece, beginning at the colonial setting of Trinidad to offer a glimpse of the culture and experience of the immigrants, takes the reader to an imaginary trip to England where he had spend some years before becoming a writer. As argued by a critic while writing a review of the essay, "The book gives us glimpses of the young, vulnerable, intelligent boy who grew into a wonderful writer over time."

Unit 11

Unit 11 (a): Naipaul on "East Indians"

In this short essay written originally in 1965, V.S. Naipaul locates the history of his forefathers, the community of expatriates in the plantation colony of Trinidad. From the perspective of a postcolonial writer, Naipaul observes that the relationship between the

"metropolitan and, " the "colonial" or the colonizer and the colonized is based on the element of "mutual distrust", because one category can neither completely rely on, nor completely demolish the existence of the other in the equation of power. A significant reason behind this distrust is the element of confusion inherent in the identity of the colonized native. Though the image of an American (be he a Greek American or a Latin American) is fixed, the image of an Indian o East Indian generates a sense of wonder in the mind of the colonizers. As he writes, "…to be Latin American or Greek American is to be known, to be a type, and therefore in some way to be established. To be an Indian or East Indian from the West Indies is to be a perpetual surprise to people outside the region" (Naipaul 1).

> The idea of West Indies brings into our mind the discovery of Christopher Columbus, slavery, and the "naval rivalries of the eighteenth century". But, Naipaul observes, when we think about the East, we will definitely have the image of the Taj Mahal and Hindu religious men. He reveals, "To be an Indian from Trinidad is to be unlikely. It is, in addition to everything else, to be the embodiment of an old verbal ambiguity" (Naipaul 1).

There was a time, Naipaul states when everything "Oriental" was perceived to be imported from India or Turkey. "So Long as the real Indians remained on the other side of the world, there was little confusion" (1). It all began since the middle of the nineteenth century; by that time, slavery had been abolished and the Africans refused to work for their white masters. In an attempt to cope up with the ensuing crisis and the shortage of workforce in the plantation colonies at Surinam, Guiana, Trinidad, and Mauritius, the European colonialists started hiring workers from China, Portugal and India, who were identified as indentured labourers. Above all the rest, the Indians succeeded the most in acclimatizing with the climactic condition and other factors. Naipaul writes,

> The Indians fitted. More and more came. They were good agriculturalists and were encouraged to settle after their indentures had expired. Instead of a passage home they could take land. Many did. The indenture system lasted, with breaks, from 1845 until 1917, and in Trinidad alone the descendants of those immigrants who stayed number over a quarter of a million (Naipaul 1).

Those immigrants from India were initially known as "Hindus" as the country was previously called "Hindustan". But, it created a feeling of grievance among the inhabitants, since many immigrants followed the religion of Islam. Naipaul then states,

> In the British territories the immigrants were called East Indians. In this way they were distinguished from the two other types of Indians in the islands: the American Indians and the West Indians. After a generation or two, the East Indians were regarded as settled inhabitants of the West Indies and were thought of as West Indian East Indians. Then a national feeling grew up. There was a cry for integration, and the West Indian East Indians became East Indian West Indians (Naipaul 2).

In a conglomeration of varied cultures in the host land, the Indian immigrants eventually lost their original identity:

> East Indians, British Indians, Hindustanis…. these Indians of Trinidad are no longer of Asia. The temples and mosques exist and appear genuine. But the languages that came with them have decayed. The rituals have altered (Naipaul 2).

However, the Indians or "East Indians" continued their social and religious practices to maintain an association with their cultural roots. Naipaul has addressed the dual process of acclimatization and deculturalisation that the East Indians have experienced upon their arrival and settlement at different plantation colonies, resulting in the eventual feeling of dislocation from their traditional and cultural roots.

Unit 11 (b): "Conrad's Darkness and Mine"

Through the phase 'Conrad's darkness", Naipaul makes a direct allusion to the famous novella, *Heart of Darkness*, which, like his novel, *A Bend in the River*, is set in the African Continent. Like Conrad, Naipaul represents Africa as a place of darkness; everything he observes seems to confirm his pessimistic view. In his "Naipaul in Africa : The Razors Edge"

(2001), J.M. Coetzee observes that in Naipaul's books, "Africa is seen as a dream-like and threatening place that resists understanding, that eats away at reason and the technological products of reason" (Coatzee 10). In an interview, Naipaul once remarked that:

> In Africa you can get a profound refusal to acknowledge the realities of the situation; people just push aside the real problems as if they had all been settled. As though the whole history of human deficiencies was entirely explained by the interlude of oppression and prejudice, which have now been removed; any remaining criticism being merely recurrence of prejudice and therefore to be dismissed (cited in King, 1993: 116).

His later reading of the *Heart of Darkness*, though a book about Africa, gave him the first glimpse into the dark continent, that "demoralized land of plunder and licensed cruelty." Naipaul was deeply impressed by Conrad – the exile, the outsider, the traveller who had been everywhere before him, to the "dark and remote places" of Asia and Africa, where the people "are denied a clear vision of the world." Here is a very concise and clear-cut explanation of his way of approaching a writer like Conrad:

> To understand Conrad, then, it was necessary to begin to match his experience. It was also necessary to lose one's preconceptions of what the novel should do and, above all, to rid oneself of the subtle corruptions of the novel or comedy of manners. When art copies life, and life in its turn mimics art, a writer's originality can often be obscured. To take an interest in a writer's work is, for me, to take an interest in his life; one interest follows automatically on the other. And to me there is something peculiarly depressing about Conrad's writing life.
> (Naipaul 1).

In his essay "Conrad's Darkness and Mine" he describes how he reacted to Conrad's descriptions in the *Heart of Darkness*, arguably Conrad's most successful book:

> "The African background-"the demoralised land" of plunder and licensed cruelty- I took for granted. That is how we can be imprisoned by our assumptions. The background now seems to me to be the most effective part of the book; but then it was no more than what I expected. The story of Kurtz,

> the upriver ivory agent, who is led to primitivism and lunacy by his unlimited power over primitive men, was lost on me" (Naipaul).

Conrad became a driving inspiration behind Naipaul, as he pays a visit to different parts of the globe and witnesses the massive exploitation of the colonialists in the once colonized lands. On his visit to his ancestral land, of which he had imagined a utopian picture for some thirty years of his life, he was met with a growing feeling of disillusionment, leading him to categorize the territory as an "Area of Darkness". Despite his Indian descent, he cannot possibly overlook the country's dirty neighbourhoods, populated with starving, sick, poor beggars. To Naipaul, the experience of poverty to its extremes is more than painful. The Indian environment is, for him, an unbearable collection of squatting people in the streets, of sleeping homeless, and of decrepit beggars impossible to avoid. Naipaul did not need much to realize that

> India is the poorest country in the world. Therefore, to see its poverty is to make an observation of no value; a thousand newcomers to the country before you have seen and said as you. And not only newcomers. Our own sons and daughters, when they return from Europe and America, have spoken in your very words..." and to finally conclude that beggary in India will never be properly understood by Europeans. All those beggars asking for baksheesh are an unavoidable reality of India, for the simple reason that, once you give to a beggar, you perform an "automatic act of charity, which is an automatic reverence to God (Naipaul AD).

From his description cited above, one can readily understand that his attitude towards his motherland and her people is predominantly that of an orientalist. The reason which turns *An Area of Darkness* into a dystopia is not only about India's inability to rise to the standards of the Western world, but also about the incapacity of the writer to pursue a childhood myth. The writer's imaginary world defines his identity. However hard he tries, he cannot identify with the people around him:

> In India I had so far felt myself a visitor. Its size, its temperatures, its crowds: I had prepared myself for these, but in its very extremes the country was alien. Looking for the familiar, I had again, in spite of myself, become an islander: I was looking for the small and manageable (Naipaul AD)

Despite being criticized as a "third worlder denouncing his own people (by Edward Said, cited in Wise 1996: 59-60), Naipaul maintains that he had not meant the book to be an attack on India, but

> as a record of my unhappiness. I wasn't knocking anybody, it was a great melancholy experience actually. Mark you, it's full of flaws: what it says about caste is influenced by ideas I had picked up here, British ideas. I think differently about caste now. I understand the clan feeling, the necessity of that in a big country. And the book was bad about Indian art. I should have understood that art depends on patrons, and that in Independent India, with the disappearance of independent royal courts, the possibility for art had been narrowed – instead of thinking that this was rather terrible, that there was no art. It will nag at me now, it will nag at me for some years (Naipaul AD).

After making an in-depth analysis of the literary works of Joseph Conrad, from his short stories like "The Lagoon" and "Karain" to his more mature works like *Nostromo*, *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*, Naipaul states about Conrad's limitations:

> My reservations about Conrad as a novelist remain. There is something flawed and unexercised about his creative imagination. He does not—except in Nostromo and some of the stories—involve me in his fantasy; and Lord Jim is still to me more acceptable as a narrative poem than as a novel. Conrad's value to me is that he is someone who sixty to seventy years ago meditated on my world, a world I recognize today. I feel this about no other writer of the century. His achievement derives from the honesty which is part of his difficulty, that "scrupulous fidelity to the truth of my own sensations" (Naipaul 136).

In this notable essay "Conrad's Darkness and Mine", Naipaul relates how his restless emigration to England precipitated his thoughts about the hideous simplicity of beliefs and actions. Like Conrad his predecessor, it is Naipaul's position as a circumnavigator which makes him reflect on similar issues:

> Conrad - sixty years before me, in the time of a great peace - had been everywhere before me. Not as a man with a cause, but a man offering, as in

> Nostromo, a vision of the world's half-made societies as places which continuously made and unmade themselves, where there was no goal, and where always something inherent in the necessities of successful action ... carried with it the moral degradation of the idea. Dismal, but deeply felt: a kind of truth and half a consolation (Naipaul 163).

Unit 12

Unit 12 (a): Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*

In his essay "Reading and Writing: A Personal Account", V.S. Naipaul has talked about his indebtedness to Joseph Conrad whose writing style and art of fiction have created immense impact in his young mind. In 1974, Naipaul writes an essay entitled "Conrad's Darkness" in which he tries to define indebtedness to the esteemed modernist writer, which is also "an account of his difficulty" (CD: 205). Observing many links between himself and his literary forerunner, Naipaul writes, "Conrad's value to me is that he is someone who sixty or seventy years ago meditated on my world, a world I recognize today. I feel this about no other writer of the century(CD: 219). In his essay entitled "Conrad's Darkness and Mine", Naipaul makes a comparative analysis of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and other tales with his own version of stories and novels concerning what he views as "darkness".

Heart of Darkness, a novella by Joseph Conrad was published serially in 1899, and in book form in 1902. The tale, written at the height of British colonialism, reflects Conrad's own horrifying experience as he worked briefly in the Belgian Congo in 1890. The novella incorporates the narrator Charles Marlow's journey on another river. Travelling in Africa to join a cargo boat, Marlow grows disgusted by what he sees of the greed of the ivory traders and their brutal exploitation of the natives. At a company station, he hears of the remarkable Mr. Kurtz, who is stationed at the very heart of the ivory country and is the company's most successful agent. Leaving the river, Marlow makes an arduous cross-country trek to join the steamboat which he will command on an ivory-collecting journey into the interior, but at the Central Station he finds that his boat has been mysteriously wrecked. He learns that Kurtz has dismissed his assistant and is seriously ill. The other agents, jealous of Kurtz's success hope

that he will not recover, and it becomes clear that Marlow's arrival at the Inner Station is being deliberately delayed. With repairs finally completed, Marlow sets off on the two-month journey towards Kurtz. The river passage through the heavy motionless forest fills Marlow with a growing sense of dread. The journey is like "travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world." Ominous drumming is heard and dark forms glimpsed among the trees. Nearing its destination, the boat is attacked by tribesmen and a heldsman is killed. At the Inner Station, Marlow is met by a naïve young Russian sailor who tells Marlow of Kurtz's brilliance and the semi-divine power he exercises over the natives. A row of revered heads on stakes around the hut give an intimation of the barbaric rites by which Kurtz has achieved his ascendancy. Ritual dancing has been followed by human sacrifice and, without the restraints imposed by his society, Kurtz, an educated and civilized man, has used his knowledge and his gun to reign over his dark kingdom. While Marlow attempts to get Kurtz back down the river, Kurtz tries to justify his action and his motives : he has seen into the very heart of things. But his last words before dying are : "The horror! The horror!" Marlow is left with two packages to deliver, Kurtz's report for the Society for Suppression of Savage Customs, and some letters for his Intended. Faced with the girl's grief, Marlow tells her Kurtz died with her name on his lips.

Conrad himself described the novella as "A wild story of a journalist who becomes manager of a station in the (African) interior and makes himself worshipped by a tribe of savages. Thus described, the subject seems comic, but it isn't."

Reminiscent of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* (1979) chronicles a physical as well as a psychological journey of the protagonist while exploring themes of exile and corruption, both personal and political alike. The novel's opening lines are: *"The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it."*

Set in an unnamed African country after independence, the novel is narrated by Salim, an Indian Muslim merchant and a shopkeeper in a small but developing city into the heart of the continent. Being raised in the community of Indian traders on the east coast of Africa, Salim buys a shop in Central Africa from his friend Nazruddin at the "bend of the river" (ostensibly the River Congo). On moving into the new territory, he finds the town in a desolate state, almost like a "ghost town"; barfing traces of European settlement which was then in a status

of ruin as a result of a violent encounter between the colonizers and the natives. Salim opens a store supplying the basic needs of the local people and receives Metty as his assistant.

One of his steady customers is Zabeth, a "marchande" from a village and a magician as well, who has a son, Ferdinand, by a man of another tribe. Zabeth asks Salim to help him get educated.

The town gradually develops into a trading center as Government agencies spring up, bringing the European salesmen and visitors to its core. Shortly thereafter, Salim is visited by his friend Indar, who grew up with him on the east coast, then went to England to study and now has become a lecturer at the new institution. He takes Salim to a party in the Domain to meet Raymond, who had been the advisor and mentor of the President and his young wife, Yvette. Salim gets lured by Yvette's youthful beauty and establishes an adulterous affair with her, which eventually breaks off. Soon, the town is hovered by unrest as the local people grew ferocious of the dominating attitude of the President. In a state of confusion, Salim travels to London, where he meets Nazruddin, who had moved to Uganda after selling off his business and then went to Canada, which he left and finally landed up in London where he became a landlord. After his engagement with Nazruddin's daughter, Salim returns to Africa. Upon arrival he learns that his business has been expropriated under the President's new programme of "radicalization" and transferred to Théotime, a "state trustee", an ignorant and lazy person who retains Salim as a manager and a chauffeur. With the realization that he has lost everything, Salim is betrayed by his former shop assistant Metty, and is arrested. He is presented to the commissioner, Ferdinand, who has moved up in the administration after receiving training in the capital. Ferdinand tells him that there is no safety, no hope, and that everybody is in fear of his life: "We're all going to hell, and every man knows this in his bones. We're being killed. Nothing has any meaning." He sets Salim free and tells him to leave the country. Salim takes the last steamer before the President arrives. During the night there is a battle on the ship, as rebels try to kidnap it. The attack is repelled, but the attached barge, full of Africans, is snapped loose and drifts down the river.

Unit 12 (b): Criticism and Conclusion

“I began as a comic writer and still consider myself one," Naipaul wrote in the foreword to the 1983 edition of *A House for Mr. Biswas*. "In middle age now I have no higher literary ambition than to write a piece of comedy that might complement or match this early book."

In *Naipaul: An* Introduction *to His Work*, Paul Theroux describes Naipaul as completely dedicated to his art. Naipaul’s characters Ganesh (The Mystic Masseur), Biswas (A House for Mr. Biswas), Ralph Kirpal Singh (The Mimic Men), and Mr. Stone (Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion) are all writers who, like Naipaul himself, participate in the “thrilling, tedious struggle with the agony and discouraging, exhilarating process of making a book.” Naipaul considers extensive travel essential to sustaining his writing and to releasing his imagination from deadeningly familiar scenes.

Consequently, Naipaul has received wide critical attention. He is the subject of a number of full-length critical studies and innumerable articles, and his books have received front-page reviews. Irving Howe has called him “the world’s writer, a master of language and perception, our sardonic blessing.” Writer Elizabeth Hardwick considers the sweep of Naipaul’s imagination and the brilliant fictional frame it encompasses unique and without equal in contemporary literature. Writer Paul Theroux considers him superior to existentialist author Albert Camus in his treatment of the theme of displacement. Critics and students of Naipaul place him in the company of such masters of fiction as Joseph Conrad—whom Naipaul admires intensely—and Graham Greene. In fact, critic Michael Thorpe has stated that Naipaul is Joseph Conrad’s heir as a political novelist. Moreover, even his critics praise his mastery of English prose. For example, in 1987 Nobel laureate Derek Walcott, a Caribbean-born poet who rejects many of Naipaul’s views, described Naipaul as “our finest writer of the English sentence.”

Thus, as observed by a critic, Sir Naipaul will be remembered as a magical craftsman of English prose leaving behind a complex, challenging library of work which - despairing of the limitations of fiction to describe reality - occupying a space between imagination, travel-writing and autobiography in his attempt to capture the complexities of the modern world.
He saw himself as a lone, stateless observer; free of ideology, politics and illusion.

For the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, Naipaul represented third-world people "not with sugary magic realism but with their demons, their misdeeds and horrors - which made them less victims and more human. “But to his detractors, Naipaul was essentially political; bearing witness against the post-colonial world with great writing but shielded from criticism by virtue of being 'one of them'.

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Assignments

Essay-type Questions

1. Write a note on the concept of 'home' as perceived by the members of expatriate communities.
2. What inspired Naipaul to become a writer and how did he manage to achieve his aim? Elucidate with reference to his essay "Reading and Writing".
3. What was Naipaul's stake on the community of East Indians in the plantation colony of Trinidad?
4. How did Naipaul perceive 'darkness' and differentiated it from that of Conrad?
5. Comment critically on the role of memory in the writings of Indian diaspora with particular emphasis on Naipaul.

Short Answer-type Questions

1)What role did Seeparsad Naipaul play in the life and writing a career of his son Vidiyadhar?

2)In which famous writer did Naipaul find his prime motivation?

3) Why did Naipaul say, " To be an Indian or East Indian from the West Indies is to be a perpetual surprise to people outside the region"?

4)Why did he consider his ancestral country India to be an "Area of Darkness"?

5)Comment critically on Naipaul's narrative technique in the essays that you have studied.

BLOCK IV

SUB-UNIT I

IMAGINARY HOMELANDS

By

SALMAN RUSHDIE

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 13 (a): Life and works of Salman Rushdie

Unit 13 (b): An estimation of Salman Rushdie's Diasporic Consciousness as reflected in his essays

Unit 14 (a): "Imaginary Homelands": Nation and Nationality

Unit 14 (b): "Imaginary Homelands": Literature and Memory

Unit 15 (a): "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist" – a critical analysis

Unit 15 (b): "Commonwealth Literature" as a "Racially Segregationist" category

Unit 16 (a): "The New Empire within Britain" – a critical analysis

Unit 16 (b): Rushdie's negotiations with the existence of blatant Racism in Britain

Suggested Readings

Assignments

UNIT 13

Unit 13 (a): Life and Works of Salman Rushdie

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie, a British-Indian novelist, was born on June 19, 1947, in India. His father was a wealthy businessman who had been educated at Cambridge University in England. Initially, Rushdie was educated at a Bombay private school before attending The Rugby School in England. He went on to attend King's College at the University of Cambridge, where he received his M.A. degree in history. After completing his M.A., Rushdie briefly lived with his family in Pakistan, where his parents had moved in 1964. During his stay in Pakistan, he worked as a television writer but soon returned to England. There he remained a freelance advertising copywriter from 1970 to 1980.

In 1975 Rushdie published his first book, *Grimus* which did not sell very well despite some positive reviews. Rushdie continued working as a part-time ad writer over the five years it took him to write Midnight's Children. He quit his job after finishing the novel without even knowing if it would be published. Released first in the United States in 1981, *Midnight's Children* which tells the story of India's complicated history through a pickle-factory worker named Saleem Sinai, was a critical and commercial success. The protagonist is caught between the two major and conflicting Indian religions, Islam and Hinduism. The book received laudatory reviews in the United States and was a popular and critical success in England. The honours included the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). In 1993 and 2008 it was awarded the "Best of the Booker". Rushdie followed this up with Shame (1983) which won the French literary prize, Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, further cementing Rushdie's reputation.

Rushdie's fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is about the survival of two Indian men who fall out of the sky after their jumbo jet to England is blown up in midair by terrorists. These two characters then gain divine and demonic powers. The book also depicts a character modelled on the Prophet Muhammad and portrays him in a manner that generated worldwide criticism and anger from the Muslim community. The Muslim community leaders in Britain denounced the novel as blasphemous right after its publication in 1988. Public

demonstrations against the book spread to Pakistan in January 1989. On February 14 the spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, publicly condemned the book and issued a *fatwa* against Rushdie; a bounty was offered to anyone who would execute him. He went into hiding under the protection of Scotland Yard. Although he occasionally emerged in public places and sometimes in other countries he was compelled to restrict his movements. Khomeini's death threat extended not only to Rushdie himself, but to the publishers of *The Satanic Verses*, any bookseller who carried it, and any Muslim who publicly approved of its release. Several bookstores in England and America received bomb threats. Many book-burnings were held throughout the world. Two Islamic officials in London, England, were murdered for questioning the correctness of Rushdie's death sentence on a talk show.

Even at the height of controversy and despite the standing death threat, Rushdie continued to write, producing *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), a collection of essays and criticism; the children's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990); the short-story collection *East, West* (1994); and the novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). To mitigate the outrage, Rushdie even issued a public apology and voiced his support for Islam. In 1998, after nearly a decade, the Iranian government announced that it no longer wants to continue the fatwa against Rushdie. He recounted the experience of his decade-long life under the fatwa in the memoir *Joseph Anton* (2012). He chose the name to honour the writers Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekov. Following his return to public life, Rushdie published the novels like *The Ground beneath Her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), *The Golden House* (2017). In totality, he has written eleven novels, as well as a pair of children's books and published several collections of essays and works of non-fiction. Overall, his books have been translated into more than 40 languages. Rushdie has received honorary doctorates and fellowships at six European and six American universities. In 2007 Queen Elizabeth II knighted him, an honour criticized by the Iranian government and Pakistan's parliament. In 2014 he was awarded the PEN/Pinter Prize.

Unit 13 (b): An estimation of Salman Rushdie's Diasporic consciousness as reflected in his essays

There is a substantial difference between the term "diaspora" of the third century B.C. and that of the twentieth and twenty-first century "diaspora". The term has been metamorphosed into a concept, a theory. In earlier centuries, diaspora meant only a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries. In the present century, diasporism means not only relocation of people but also relocation of culture, relocation as well as dislocation of sensibility. The very outlook has been transformed. George Steiner's widely discussed essay, "Our Homeland, The text" similarly proclaims "a diasporist sensibility seeking to locate the Jewish homeland not in the enclosed territory of a nation-state but in the de-territorialized idioms of rabbinic spiritual and discursive traditions." Postcolonial diaspora theories present the displaced subject as a bearer of radical political sensibility. Postcolonial diaspora theory is a revisionist discourse. The term diaspora is very often applied interchangeably with migration; it is normally invoked "as a theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism... Not surprisingly diasporic thought finds its apotheosis in the ambivalent, transitory, culturally contaminated, and borderline figure of the exile caught in a historical limbo between home and the world." The new narratives of the diaspora have revised the classical meaning of diaspora as a condition of "catastrophic" loss and dispersion to be lamented and if possible avoided altogether. Diaspora is now being used as "an alternative site of sociality and belonging marked by mixed cultures, transgressive poetics/politics, and de-centered subjectivities". Diasporic communities are characterized by their movement. Their movement is not only from one place to many places but it keeps on continuing, if not within a single generation then by its successive generations. One's first landing place gradually becomes a new point of departure for a re-gathering elsewhere. Diasporic communities are the marginalized people who use modes of cultural production to resist. They try to build and exhibit their ethnic and national identities in relationship to the homeland as well as the place of settlement. They use the means of cultural production to represent themselves in the public sphere. Elleke Boehmer defines diasporic writers as "the descendants of migrants."Actually, they are indigenous writers and they attempt to show that

despite long years of depredation and deprivation “the past is all about us and within.” Diasporic literature becomes a political instrument in the hands of such writers who call into question important aspects of metropolitan, political, and cultural hegemony. Salman Rushdie sums up the entire project of diasporism in a single phrase “the empire writes back with a vengeance.” Diasporic writing, like postcolonial writing, is often understood as a displaced deregulated practice. Therefore, diasporic writing is associated with metropolitan, migrant, and multicultural. Diasporic writers are cosmopolitans and as cosmopolitans, they belong to more than one world but to none entirely. This un-belongingness or partial-belonging also adds another species in diasporism as Bharti Mukherjee asserts: “dislocation is not impoverishment but an expansion of cultural and aesthetic experience.” Salman Rushdie is a prominent diasporic writer, though he does not fit in the definition of Boehmer according to which diasporas are the children of the migrants. He describes his identity as an Indian writer in England as being “made up of bits and fragments from here and there.”

Salman Rushdie is one of those writers of the diaspora dais and the postcolonial platform who have really shaken the foundations of our conventional thought and idea with his newfound theories of coloniality, post-coloniality, nation, nationhood, nationalism, history, politics, society, art, culture, constructing and deconstructing it all, busting the myths of prejudice, hypocrisy and sham living. Rushdie identifies himself as a person belonging to the Indian diaspora and his literary works are the manifestation of his diasporic consciousness. Rushdie’s brilliant treatise *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) testifies this position. He asserts “that literature is an expression of nationality” and “books are always praised for using motifs and symbols out of the author’s own national tradition. . .” This very idea influences all diasporic writers worldwide. Living in one country and writing about their own has been the primordial purpose of many diasporic writers; nationalists in thoughts, natives in cultures, and indigenous languages are the main instruments of their writings. This essay continues Rushdie’s search for the nation, but here the search for India becomes more personal – it is Rushdie’s own search for his home and his attempt to reckon what it means for him to write about the Indian experience while living outside the geographical bounds of India. Rushdie reflects upon what it means to be an emigrant, on the role of memory in constructing an “imaginary homeland,” and on the value and insight that can be gained when one writes and views life through the lens of displacement and distance from one’s place of origin. He begins his essay by referencing the well-known quote written by L. P. Hartley: “The past is a foreign country.” Rushdie's own experience, however, runs counter to Hartley’s statement.

As an emigrant who lives far from his home country, Rushdie finds, “that it’s [his] present that is foreign, and that the past is home.” Therefore, as a postcolonial diasporic writer, he desires to claim his homeland through his literary exercises: “It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt”. He talks about the intense sense of loss faced by a writer who is out of the country and out of language, which, he says, “is made more concrete for him by the physical fact of discontinuity, of his present being in a different place from his past, of his being 'elsewhere'”. A person from a diasporic community constantly feels alienated from the host culture, but he is also alienated from his home culture. This leads to a sense of identity crisis among the diasporic population.

However, Rushdie finds particular advantage in this ambiguity of culture and identity. He believes that geographical and cultural isolation can provide them with previously unexplored angles of entering literature. Therefore, for Rushdie being an immigrant is also bliss. He says, in the aforesaid treatise, that the immigrant who loses his roots, language, and social norms “is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human.” He clarifies what the fictional preoccupation of these writers is:

> . . . exile or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some argue to reclaim, to look back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.

Rushdie is very suspicious of mainstream history and that is why, after all, he is interested in a third world counter-narrative. He presents history in his fiction neither as a historian nor as a historical novelist but magically. He fictionalizes reality with the help of fantasy and becomes a magic realist. For Rushdie “History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish and capable of being given many meanings.” He claims to prefer the mode of a fairytale which eschews direct reference to actual historical events. He thinks that realism can break a writer's heart. According to him, the position of the migrant writers is that of

“translated men” but also believes while some things get lost in translation; other things are gained in the process.

UNIT 14

Unit 14 (a): “Imaginary Homelands”: Nations and Nationalism

The idea of the nation as a uniform and a homogenous community is one that Salman Rushdie wishes to call attention to in the essay "Imaginary Homelands". Here Rushdie challenges the simplistic idea that a literary work must correspond to a singular national culture. He claims that an Indian or a South African writer need not only write about India or South Africa in a narrow sense and contends that the words "Indian" or "South African" do not have clear definitions in the way, for instance, that Hindu nationalists might want. Rushdie's views on nations and nationalism are very similar to those of Benedict Anderson as propounded in his celebrated book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). Anderson calls the nation an imagined political community, noting that “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Nationalism thus becomes an artificial (but not unnecessary) exercise by which citizens of a nation are made to seem like they have much in common and by which they are held together.

Rushdie often engages with ideas of the nation and nationalism in his fictional works. In simple terms, nationalism can be defined as a desire by a large group of people (such as people who share the same culture, history, language, etc.) to form a separate and independent nation of their own. Thinkers since Ernest Renan in the nineteenth century have argued that nations are not 'natural' entities. In his influential book Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983) Benedict Anderson puts forward a theory about the constructed nature of nations. He defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. He uses the phrase “imagined community” because the members of such a community will never know

the other members personally, and yet, they assume an affinity with them through a popular mental image of solidarity. Rushdie is also aware of the contemporary critiques of the concepts of nation and nationalism. Significantly, he chooses to call his essay "Imaginary Homelands". It is because of the imagined nature of the nation that it is possible to have multiple versions of a single nation. Rushdie says that the India that he has tried to recreate in *Midnight's Children* was his version of India, “a version and no more than one version of all the hundred millions of possible versions”.

The terms 'Nation' and 'Identity' are very important in the study of diaspora literature. While thinking about the concept of nation and identity, it becomes necessary to investigate the way of living life and human existence, in the past and present. Problems of the nation, identity, national identity, individual identity, etc. are the recent needs that have surfaced and which were never experienced by mankind in the past. The life that people lived in the past was mainly with themselves and their families. The question of the nation and national identity was neither experienced nor imagined by mankind in prehistoric ages. However, those primitive values, the way of life, the needs and the objectives of life have entirely undergone a change and notions like the nation, nation-states, national identity have emerged. The 20th century observed scientific progress, and it also created a need for migration and mobility, in search of an improved existence and more sophistication. With large scale migration and mobility, the problems of nation and identity got new magnitudes, particularly in this age. The immigrant has to think about his/ her identity in the new environment and surroundings. These issues raise numerous questions like does a person who moves to a new land, cease to be a native of his native land? There is one more perspective of looking at, and that is in the form of our oriental faith, that wherever a person goes, he cannot cut off himself from his roots. Migration and mobility, according to this belief may bring a change in the dress, language, and way of living life but the spirit remains the same. The real problem of nation and identity emerges when such an expatriate finds himself nowhere, even in the middle of the ocean of human beings. He fails to detach himself from his original roots and similarly fails to plant himself in the land of a new culture. Sometimes the land of that new culture does not accept him fully, and such a state creates in him the feeling of “nowhere-ness” that is nothing but the problem of nation and identity. Psychologically, every person wants to be acknowledged, in other words, the problem of nation and identity is associated with the human sense of belonging. People want to accept and be accepted. Whenever any interruption takes place in this need, the problem of belonging emerges. One does not have to

take it for granted that the problem of nation and identity takes place in the life of a person only when s/he involves migration and mobility. Since it is a psychological feeling this experience can probably arise even within his/her native land.

Identity becomes the core issue in any investigation of diaspora, a particularly diasporic identity that is made of various factors and sub-factors. This diasporic identity plays on multiple levels. It is also based on the history or conditions leading to migration, as well as the individual responses to these circumstances. This experience of dislocation is dependent on factors such as the generation of diaspora that one belongs, the impact of globalization, why the diasporic has shifted away from his homeland, and also the approach of the host country towards the diasporic community. There are some factors like language, dress, and socio-cultural environment that deepen the problem of nation and identity after migration takes place. Expatriation involves the nervousness of belonging to two communities on the part of an immigrant that culminates in a kind of conflict in him/her that something other people do not have to struggle with. The development that takes afterward is painful. It recognizes 'fluid identity'. It is an acknowledgment of substitute realities; this is a positive way forward, where people talk about each other's culture and redefine our anticipations and aspirations.

Unit 14 (b): “Imaginary Homelands”: Literature and Memory

At the beginning of his essay "Imaginary Homelands", Rushdie explains how his visit to his ancestral house in Bombay led to being born in him a desire to reclaim his past through a literary project, and since his past, as he saw it, was inseparable from the Bombay and India of his past, his project would involve a reclaiming of the city and the country too. This is how he says, his novel *Midnight's Children* was born. But Rushdie also admits that the process of looking back contains its dangers; he says that the fact of the physical alienation of diasporic writers from India hinders them from reclaiming an authentic version of India or Bombay. Instead, they will end up creating fiction, “not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.” He says that the Indian-born writer who writes from outside India has to deal with the world of his homeland in fragments, like pieces of a

broken mirror, “some of whose fragments are irretrievably lost.” However, he also highlights the fact that the fragments of memory are not any less valuable for that matter. He says that the partial nature of his memories of India rendered them more evocative. In his words, “fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols and the mundane acquired numinous qualities.” He does not recommend dismissing the broken glass as a mere mirror of nostalgia but considers it a useful tool with which to work in the present.

It is Rushdie's search for his home and his attempt to reckon what it means for him to write about the Indian experience while living his life outside the geographical bounds of India. Rushdie reflects upon what it means to be an immigrant, on the role of memory in constructing an "imaginary homeland," and on the value and insight that can be gained when one writes and views life through a lens of displacement and distance from one's place of origin. Rushdie begins his essay by referencing the well-known quote written by L. P. Hartley: “The past is a foreign country.” Rushdie's own experience, however, runs counter to Hartley's statement; as an émigré who lives far from his home country, Rushdie finds, “that it's [his] present that is foreign, and that the past is home.” During one of his visits to Bombay, the city where he spent his childhood, he is surprised to discover how much — in bits and pieces — he remembers from his younger days and how much information about that time is preserved in archives, such as phonebooks and photographs. Rushdie contrasts his own faulty and partial memory with history as it is preserved in such photos and phonebooks. Whereas personal memory always seems incomplete and made up of singular perspectives, institutional memory seems eerily complete in its portrayal of definite truths and facts about the past. Though his trip to Bombay is a homecoming for him, Rushdie, nonetheless, feels like he is virtually a foreigner to India: "Bombay is a city built by foreigners upon reclaimed land; I, who had been away so long that I almost qualified for the title, was gripped by the conviction that I, too, had a city and a history to reclaim."

Rushdie is well aware that the distance that separates “exiles or emigrants or expatriates” from their home countries will inescapably alter their perspective on them: “…our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost. . .” According to him, the way an immigrant can lay claim to a nation and make it his/her home is by embracing the imperfection of his or her cracked memory. It is only by reconstructing the past through "broken mirrors" that the Indian writer from outside the country can create his/her own India. Whereas in "The Riddle of Midnight:

India, August 1987" Rushdie interviews people to discover clues to national identity, here he resorts to his own "fallible" memory. In Rushdie's estimation, the fragmented view of the Indian writer who writes from outside of India—the cracks in the broken mirror—may prove to be an asset rather than a flaw:

> The broken mirror may be as valuable as the supposedly unflawed one…It was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols and the mundane acquired numinous qualities.

Moreover, the fragmented perspective of a diasporic writer not only speaks to the experiences of fellow émigrés but also speaks to a more universal human experience, for as Rushdie contends: “It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is a part of our common humanity…the writer who is out-of-country and even out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form…. This may enable him to speak properly and concretely on a subject of universal significance and appeal.” Furthermore, he notes that human beings are “not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions,” and thus the perspective of expatriate writers reflects a very human and wholly universal point of view.

Rushdie likens the task of the writer to an archeological exercise where one examines the available remains and fossils to construct a story about what might have been in ancient times. According to him, the goal of literature to represent and reflect our reality is not a humble one. Description in literature is itself a political act because it gives life to realities that may have been discredited by powerful governments or corporations or religious groups; according to Rushdie, “re-describing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it,” This is why he claims that “writers and politicians are natural rivals.” A politician may want us to think that there is the only way to be Indian or American or nationalistic. However, writers expose a million different everyday realities and experiences to prove the inherent falsity of such an approach.

UNIT 15

Unit 15 (a): "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist" – a critical analysis of the essay

The term "commonwealth" has a long history. It was first used by Oliver Cromwell, after establishing the republican government in England in 1649. It implied common good or public good; a body-politic in which power is with the people. The Cromwellian concept of the Commonwealth lasted for 300 years. Then in 1931, the previous concept was given a completely new meaning in the statute of Westminster when with the creation of the dominions, the British Empire was re-christened as the British Commonwealth of Nations. The concept of commonwealth literature came into practice in the mid-twentieth century. Various factors were responsible for its growth in the nineteenth century. An important aspect of the so-called Commonwealth literature may be that it is written in one place by people from another place. Whereas an earlier generation of writers settled in Britain many contemporary authors have chosen to live in Canada or the United States. A significant number of the West Indian or Caribbean diaspora (itself part of the African diaspora) has found itself in Canada, alongside the Indian/Asian diaspora.

According to Rushdie, one of the rules or one of the ideas on which the edifice rests is that literature is an expression of nationality. Literature is a general representation of cultural particularities i.e., literature varies from culture to culture, from one period to the other. There is another element of literature that shocks the literary mind. A respectable literary piece, according to Rushdie, must meet the demands of authenticity. Authenticity demands that sources, forms, style, language, and symbols all derive from a supposedly homogenous and unbroken tradition. There is where tragedy falls to the ground. The lexicon of "Commonwealth literature" (as it applies to the literary aspect of British colonialism) is an innovation. Literary critics often praise the achievements of Commonwealth literary figures, forgetting the most essential element of literature. Today, literary works are not mutually exclusive in the sense that, they are simultaneously influenced by different cultures. In some Indian novels, both the form and the writing style resemble that which Europeans used in the

early 20th century. This is not an intentional event. Many of these writers are Western-educated. As such, their style would inevitably follow the Western model.

"Commonwealth literature" is, therefore, an unreliable face of historicity. It is neither founded on one form nor guided by an encompassing set of norms. Indeed, when one talks of Commonwealth literature, one needs to look beyond the borders of the nation-state to the land of the West. In short, according to Rushdie, Commonwealth literature is an encompassing myth. Besides, he says that Indian society and Indian literature have a complex and developing relationship with the English language. This kind of post-colonial dialectic is propounded as one of the unifying factors in the essay; but it does not exist, or at least is far more peripheral to the problems of literature in Canada, Australia, even South Africa. Every time one examines the general theories of "Commonwealth literature" they come apart in one's hands. English literature has its Indian branch. By this, he means the literature of the English language. This literature is also Indian literature. There is no incompatibility here. English is an Indian literary language, and by now, thanks to writers like RabindranathTagore, Amit Chaudhuri, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, and others, it has quite a pedigree. Now it is certainly true that the English-language literature of England, Ireland and the USA are older than, for example, the Indian counterpart; so it's possible that "Commonwealth literature" is no more than an ungainly name for the world's conclusion. "Commonwealth Literature" is thus used to cover the literary works from territories that were once part of the British Empire, but it usually excludes books from the United Kingdom unless these are produced by resident writers who originate from a former colony. The great irony, however, is that much of the best literature that has emerged from Britain in the last years has been produced by writers from or with roots in colonies.

Unit 15 (b): "Commonwealth Literature" as a Racially Segregationist Category

The Commonwealth of Nations is a body comprised of fifty-three member states that were previously territories of the British Empire. The Commonwealth was, primarily, a way to define the relationship of England with its colonies that had gained their independence from

the British Empire in the twentieth century. It survives largely as a vestige of colonialism. In his essay "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist," Rushdie expresses dissatisfaction not only with the global reception of this body of work but also with it being categorized as the "Commonwealth literature." This grouping marks its members as minors – belonging, in most cases, to erstwhile British colonies. At the same time, it collapses the diversity of their experiences, colonial or otherwise. The category lumps together writers in the English language who are not themselves British or from the United States, the category of Commonwealth literature ghettoizes these writers and restricts their growth and creativity. It is a categorization that attempts to reduce a vast body of differences to certain commonalities and key features. Rushdie then proceeds to outline his case for why the label of "Commonwealth literature" not only fails to make sense but also is a damaging and seemingly racist categorization. When Rushdie attends a Commonwealth literature conference, he becomes pointedly aware that "our differences were so much more significant than our similarities." As Rushdie tries to puzzle out what precisely it means to be a Commonwealth writer, he questions the influence of race and language in determining which writers are awarded the status of "English writers" and which are grouped into the category of the "Commonwealth writers": "…the effect of creating such a ghetto was, is, to change the meaning of the far broader term 'English literature'—which I'd always taken to mean simply the literature of the English language—into something far narrower, something topographical, nationalistic, possibly even racially segregationist."

Therefore, Rushdie contends that the classification of "Commonwealth writers" creates a ghetto. He not only highlights the fact that the bounds of this ghetto are based on false assumptions but also outlines the reasons why this false categorization is so damaging. Rushdie consistently opposes any effort to restrain as well as enchain any ambitious author within any "Literary Ghetto" like the term "Commonwealth Literature". Any rules which tend to confine any author within the parameters of tradition are conservative. Literature, according to Rushdie, transcends national boundaries and can, therefore, never occupy such "phantom" categories as English Literature or Commonwealth Literatures in isolation. Such boundaries are primarily designated by political or linguistic concerns. Yet, in this way, Rushdie emphasizes how the imaginative content of literature obscures such narrow demarcations.

For example, the category of “Commonwealth literature” denies India's experience with the English language outside of colonial experience. Rushdie's dissatisfaction with the term arises partly the fact that it does not adequately reflect the reality of English in the world. India's relationship with the English language is complex and not always explained by hatred for India's erstwhile rulers. Rushdie sees English as a means by which writers of the ex-colonies can redress the balance of power that has traditionally favored the imperialists. As it is remade in the hands of those who were once excluded and subjugated, the English language offers opportunities to change the complexity of the relationship between England and its former colonies:

> …those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it…they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers…. The children of independent India seem not to think of English as being irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. They use it as an Indian language, as one of the tools they have to hand.

Interestingly, Rushdie also points out that an advantage of English — at least within the realm of the literature of India and the Indian diaspora — is that it offers an aspect of neutrality, as he notes that in South India "resentment of Hindi is far greater than of English." Rushdie claims that English can "permit two Indians to talk to each other in a tongue which neither party hates." Moreover, Rushdie considers literature by Indian authors written in English to be wholly within the realm of English literature, rather than being simply "Commonwealth literature," contending that classifications should not oversimplify what are rather complex realities. He further delineates the negative impact of labels such as the "Commonwealth literature" by underlining the fact that such a category reinforces the assumption that literature is a straightforward expression of some authentic nationality, pointing to the "bogy of Authenticity" and highlighting "the folly of trying to contain writers inside passports."

Rushdie as a migrant intellectual, striding across continents, has made the most of his ambivalent status by looking both, before and after. “After” refers to his new position in his recently adopted country and “before” refers to his abandoned status in his deserted country. But just because a writer is embedded in a tradition it does not imply and lead to his being

confined to a "literary ghetto". A writer, according to Rushdie's expansive definition, is transnational and if he writes in English at all, it does not mean that he demeans his native, mother tongue. Today no author can escape the lure of writing in English because of its worldly status and cross-cultural referentiality. In this context, the migrant writer lives under an ambiguous existence. He can neither forget his roots and traditions nor can he return to his past except in a sort of imaginary manner. At the same time, he is actively involved in a recreation of his destiny in a wholly new country that has its own tradition, language, and culture. In this quest for redefinition and reformation of his existence, the migrant writer acquires a unique historical position since his work contains and reflects the inseparable tensions between various cultures at several points of history. Living in a state of cultural symbiosis, the migrant writer can only create "imaginary homelands", the fictions of the mind.

Rushdie does not deny that there are connections, affinities, and commonalities among the works of certain writers, but his point is that these connections are not necessarily determined by language or nationality. And, the creation of false categories based on nationality, serves to mask those commonalities that do exist:

> …the creation of this phantom category served to obscure what was going on, and worth talking about… if we were to forget about 'Commonwealth literature', we might see that there is a kind of commonality about much literature emerging from those parts of the world which one could loosely term the less powerful, or the powerless…. This seems to me to be a 'real' theory, bounded by frontiers which are neither political nor linguistic but imaginative.

Thus, Rushdie concludes with his central point — that the categorization of writers should be based on "imaginative affinities" rather than being guided by linguistic or national boundaries. He purports that such a grouping would far more accurately reflect the realities of our modern interconnected world. He closes with a reference to William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming": "Perhaps 'Commonwealth literature' was invented to delay the day when we rough beasts slouch into Bethlehem. In which case, it's time to admit that the center cannot hold." Many critics read Yeats' poem, which he penned in the aftermath of the First World War as a lament for the end of an era, a requiem for the downfall of Western, or at least European civilization. While Yeats' poem is bleakly apocalyptic, it is clear that Rushdie

uses these lines to declare the end of the era in which English was "the sole possession of the English". Having referred to Yeats, he intends to mark the beginning of a new age, an era in which the canon of English literature ought to be expansive enough to encompass works by writers from across the cultural and global spectrum.

UNIT 16

Unit 16 (a): "The New Empire Within Britain" – A Critical Analysis

Born in a former British colony, but bred in England, Salman Rushdie in this particular essay delves into the ways the white factions deal with an increasing and visible social transformation that has taken place in Britain before and during the 1980 s. Rushdie has written this essay in response to the British Nationality Act of 1981 and the Falklands War. The text also emphasizes the existence of racial discrimination of the fifties that the non-white groups faced. He specifies that racism continues to be an integral part of British society. He also lists several examples, albeit mostly personal, and hints at the possible solutions to overcome these racial prejudices. In tandem with these examples, the author warns the readers of a widening social chasm between the white British society (who are incidentally also the addressed) and the people of color whom the author repeatedly labels as 'immigrants' to highlight the most commonly used racial slur by the other party. Rushdie attempts to show how language reflects the overall opinion and attitude of a social group.

Moreover, the author uses a "we-you" distinction repeatedly throughout the text: the "we" denoting the oppressed minority, and the "you" signifying the white majority. By drawing this opposition, he both alienates the readers and makes them uncertain whether he is objective at all. Rushdie introduces his essay by evoking South Africa and Nazi Germany as the stark opposition of Great Britain. By this harsh negation the similarities, rather than the differences, are implied between these three countries. By doing that Rushdie wants to show how lack of extremity does not undermine the validity and existence of racial prejudice. To make the reader understand the graveness of the situation, he applies a shocking introduction

to draw the reader in and then proceeds to present the underlying theme of colonialism and its effect on Britain. He implies that by resuscitating this long-gone era and glorifying it Margaret Thatcher, the triumphant Prime Minister at the peak of his popularity is insulting the people of color. Rushdie also argues that the white groups do not want to alter the existing power relations between the whites and the colored, and this mentality echoes in their language. The essayist says no other language in the world possesses such a wide range of racist slangs as English does. Then he furthers his argument by reflecting on both the recent work and speech made by E.P. Thompson, a historian, and Margaret Thatcher, the then prime minister. The author suggests that recent public and political statements, like the Cheltenham's speech, used linguistic elements that implied the inferiority of the people of color.

Rushdie digs even further and points out the problematic elements of racial slurs that are deeply embedded in British society. He derives this phenomenon to the conscious unwillingness of the public to face the problem and thus halts any possible improvements. This public includes both the white commoners and the leading political forces: anyone who uses derogatory terms. The basis of this gulf, comments Rushdie, is the white elite's reluctance to make concrete and radical changes. That is what the author calls 'purging'. He also warns that the chasm only becomes even more pronounced because the above-mentioned elite is unable or reluctant to connect with the oppressed groups in Britain. But he also reiterates, "Britain is not Nazi Germany." At the very beginning of this essay, Rushdie used this phrase as an instrument of shock and attention, but in the following paragraphs, the writer counterstrikes and essentially states that at least, Germans atoned and actively purged Germany of an ideology that was objectively recognized as wrong. But Britain never admitted colonialism to be an abominable practice, let alone the thought of purging it off. With several examples, Rushdie puts the blame entirely on the “British Empire” which, for him, still lives and thrives in the minds of the white population.

The second part of the argument deals with the concept of labels, stereotypes, and identity, in addition to how they are connected and why they are significant. The author explores the many ways in which the term "immigrants" has been misused and misunderstood. He exhibits some sociological evidence, without unfortunately naming the concrete sources, to prove that the proportion of the immigrants is lesser than that of the emigrants, and that the white immigration also occurs. The author wants to add context to his following argument as he

condemns the former and the present immigration laws, giving two examples then concluding that the skin color, rather than nationality, determines the entry. The text goes on to underline how wide the social, economic or political gap is between the white and the colored citizen, and expresses skepticism whether the previously discussed gap can ever be overcome. Rushdie defines the behavior of the whites as deliberate ignorance, an attitude that leads to the oppressor not to see or act upon the injustices that they cannot experience. Furthermore, the text claims that the two groups cannot relate at all exactly because of the said disparity between these experiences.

Unit 16 (b): "The New Empire within Britain": Rushdie's negotiations with the existence of blatant Racism in Britain

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Born in a former British colony, yet bred in England, Rushdie in this particular essay delves into the visible social transformation that has taken place in Britain before and during the 1980 s. The essay had been a response to the British Nationality Act of 1981and the Falklands War. The text also emphasizes the existence of racial discrimination of the fifties that the non-white groups faced. Rushdie specifies that racism continues to be an integral part of British society. He also lists several examples, albeit mostly personal, and hints at the possible solutions to overcome prejudices. Rushdie introduces his essay by evoking South Africa and Nazi Germany as the stark opposition of Great Britain. By this harsh negation the similarities, rather than the differences, are implied between these three countries. Rushdie then proceeds on with his argument by reflecting on the recent speech made by Margaret Thatcher, the then Prime Minister: "The people who thought we could no longer do the great things which we once did . . . that we could never again be what we were. There are those who would not admit it. .. but – in their heart of hearts—they too had their secret fears that it was true: that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world. Well, they were wrong." The author suggests that recent public and political statements, like the Cheltenham's speech, used linguistic elements that implied the inferiority of the people of color. And with this notorious speech, coming from such a leader who "has a considerable gift for assessing the national mood", racism in Britain gets its blatant approval

from the government itself. Thatcher's vociferous invocation to the spirit of Imperialism presupposes the passing out of The Nationality Act of 1981.

The 1981 Nationality Act was not concerned with the constitutional rights of citizens, nor with mapping out the relationship between citizen and state; it was an Immigration Act designed to define, limit and remove the entitlements to citizenship from British nationals in the Commonwealth (the former colonies) thereby restricting immigration to the British Isles and creating 'aliens' within the borders of the nation-state. This Act instituted a 'citizenship gap' within the British state and between the state and former British colonies, as large numbers of British nationals found they had been designed out of citizenship. This Act illustrates what Foucault termed 'state racism': a means of classifying, distinguishing, and opposing a population-based on appeals to essentialist categories of origin. For Foucault, racism always disguises or is an alibi for, and historical class struggle. In the context of Britain, a post-imperial class struggle over the resources of a diminished empire was underway. The 1981 Act produced 'ethnic hierarchies' in Britain which, combined with the existing class divisions, led to civil unrest. This, in turn, enabled minorities to be constituted 'as a threat to the social body' and targeted through policing and reform. The claim that the Act was ushering in a new period of 'home rule' through state racism was central to Salman Rushdie's polemical 1982 essay "The new empire within Britain". Rushdie argued that as the British Empire contracted, the borders of the empire were being reproduced at home through newly legitimized practices of state racism, which in turn explained hostility towards the police as agents of state power. As Rushdie wrote, "For the citizens of the new, imported empire, for the colonized Asians and blacks of Britain, the police force represents that colonizing army, those regiments of occupation and control." Rushdie mentions The Nationality Act of 1981 and proclaims:

> The combination of this sort of institutional racism and the willed ignorance of the public was clearly in evidence during the passage through Parliament of the Nationality Act of 1981. This already notorious piece of legislation, expressly designed to deprive black and Asian Britons of their citizenship rights, went through despite some, mainly non-white, protests. And because it didn't affect the position of the whites, you probably didn't even realize that one of your most ancient rights, a right you had possessed for nine hundred years, was being stolen from you. . . . From now on citizenship is the gift of government. You were blind because you believed

> the Act was aimed at the blacks; and so you sat back and did nothing as Mrs. Thatcher stole the birthright of every one of us, black and white, and our children and grandchildren forever.

State racism is legitimized predominantly through the need for security and the idea that non-citizens threaten to overwhelm the diminishing resources of the welfare state and are stealing the resources that rightfully belong to citizens.

The author explores the many ways the term "immigrants" has been misused and misunderstood. He condemns the former and the present immigration laws, giving two examples and then concluding that skin colour, rather than nationality, determines entry. He asks everyone to think about the word 'immigrant', because it, according to him, demonstrates the extent to which racist concepts have been allowed to seize the central ground and to shape the whole nature of the debate. Rushdie reveals the facts that

> . . . for many years now there has been a sizeable amount of white immigration as well as black, that the annual number of emigrants leaving these shores is now larger than the number of immigrants coming in; and that, of the black communities, over forty percent are not immigrants, but black Britons, born and bred, speaking in the many voices and accents of Britain, and with no homeland but this one. And still the word 'immigrant' means 'black immigrant'; the myth of 'swamping' lingers on . . .

Thus, in this essay, Rushdie delves deep into the Immigration policy of Britain and reveals its inherent racism for the rest of the world. He clearly articulates, the white Britishers' revulsion for the coloured people is the sole cause of their problem with immigration. He also unmasks the seemingly "virtuous and desirable" policy of Great Britain in the name of "racial harmony". He notes, "The call for 'racial harmony' was simply an invitation to shut up and smile . . ." in the face of scathing discrimination. The camouflage of "racial harmony" is implemented to persuade the blacks ". . . to live peaceably with whites, in spite of all the injustices done to them every day." He also exposes the hypocrisy behind the coinage of the new catchword "multiculturalism" which means, for Britishers, ". . . little more than teaching the kids a few bongo rhythms, how to tie a sari so forth." For Rushdie, multiculturalism, like "integration" and "racial harmony", is nothing but the latest addition to the token gesture towards Britain's blacks.

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Suggested Readings

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Assignments

Essay Type Questions

1. Give a sketch of Rushdie's notion of diasporic consciousness.
2. Show after Salman Rushdie, how is literature related to memory?
3. Write an essay concerning "Imaginary Homelands" addressing issues like nation, nationalism, and identity.
4. Show how racism is a phenomenon very much prevalent in post-colonial British society.
5. "'Commonwealth Literature' does not Exist". Explain.

Short-answer Type Questions

1. Write short notes on:
   a. Imaginary Homelands
   b. Diaspora

2. What does Rushdie mean by the term “Institutional Racism”?
3. Write short notes on:
    a. Assimilation
    b. Integration
    c. Racial Harmony
    d. Multiculturalism

4. Show after Salman Rushdie, how is the Immigration Law of Britain discriminatory towards the Black people of the country?
5. Critically analyze Margaret Thatcher’s speech in Rushdie’s essay “The New Empire within Britain”
6. Why does Rushdie consider “commonwealth literature” to be a literary ghetto?
7. Explain the role of the English language in the former colonies of Britain.

POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS) IN

ENGLISH

SEMESTER IV

CORE COURSE 11

TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI, NADIA, WEST BENGAL

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Director's Message

Satisfying the varied needs of distance learners, overcoming the obstacle of distance and reaching the unreached students are the threefold functions catered by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems. The onus lies on writers, editors, production professionals and other personnel involved in the process to overcome the challenges inherent to curriculum design and production of relevant Self Learning Materials (SLMs). At the University of Kalyani a dedicated team under the able guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor has invested its best efforts, professionally and in keeping with the demands of Post Graduate CBCS Programmes in Distance Mode to devise a self-sufficient curriculum for each course offered by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL), University of Kalyani. Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2017 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal. Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome. During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance. Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PGBOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt thanks is also due to the Course Writers-faculty members at the DODL, subject-experts serving at University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level of the DODL of University of Kalyani. Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode. Self Learning Materials (SLMs) have been published by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, University of Kalyani, Kalyani-741235, West Bengal and all the copyright reserved for University of Kalyani. No part of this work should be reproduced in any from without permission in writing from the appropriate authority of the University of Kalyani. All the Self Learning Materials are self writing and collected from e-book, journals and websites.

Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning

University of Kalyani

CORE COURSE 11

TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERARY CRITICISM

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BLOCK I

SUB-UNIT I

SCHOOLS OF CRITICISM

STRUCTURALISM

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- i. A.J. Greimas
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- i. Five Codes of narrative

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Suggested Readings

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UNIT 1

Unit 1 (a): What is Structuralism?

Structuralism, a form of criticism that flourished in the 1950s and 60s, tries to evaluate a work of art in the context of the larger structures that contain them: genre, culture and language. Structuralist criticism takes a text as the subject matter of criticism and seeks to answer how a narrative works and generates meaning. Structuralism considers the text as an entity by itself devoid of the shadow of authorial intention. And since a text is nothing but words, language and linguistic theories become the cornerstones of Structuralism. Along with its related field, semiotics (technically the study of 'signs'), structuralism is one of the most influential modes of critical and cultural analysis of the twentieth century. Structuralism's emphasis on the language or formal properties of texts, their structures and frames in specific genres like the novel or poetry, is an extension of the kind of work New Criticism practiced.

Structuralism believes that the world is organized as structures. 'Structures' are forms made up of units that are arranged in a specific order. These units follow particular rules in the way they are organized or related to each other. Let us see how units are organized in a poem. A poem is a structure constituted by units such as sounds, phrases, pauses, punctuation and words. Every unit is connected to every other unit. The poem is thus the result of all the units put together. In order to understand the poem's meaning, we need to read all these component parts together and see how the images generated by the words held together with the rhyme scheme, the sounds, the stops (punctuations). The meaning of the text is not confined to or generated by any one of these units—it is the result of all the units working together. A word in a poem makes sense because of its specific location in the poem and its relationship with the other words, images and sounds in the poem. This is the *structure* of the poem. Thus 'literature' is a system, or structure, whose constituent parts include the poem, the essay, the novel and drama. In this structure called literature, each form (or unit) generates meanings in particular ways.

Expanding this notion, we see that literature is one system within a larger system of representation of culture. The system of culture includes other non-literary forms such as cinema, reportage, television, political speeches, myths and traditions. 'Culture' is a structure where these various forms exist in relation to each other. Meaning is generated when we understand the rules by which myth, literary texts and social behaviour are linked to each other. As we shall see, such a notion of linked elements informs the definition of 'text'. Structuralism is interested in the relationship between the elements of a structure that results in meaning. Since it believes that meaning is the effect of the coming together of elements, it follows that if we understand the rules governing the relationship between elements we can decipher the processes of meaning-production. Structuralism is the study of structures of texts—film, novel, drama, poem, politics, sports—with specific attention to the rules, or grammar, of the elements. Structuralism looks at the relationships between the various elements within the self-contained, well-organized structure of a text in order to understand the ways (the grammar or rules) by which the text produces meaning. It focuses on the form of a text by looking at elements like voice, character, setting, and their combination.

Unit 1 (b): Fundamental Assumptions of Saussurean Linguistics

Structuralism finds its origin in the works of the early twentieth-century linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. However, he was not the first to study language. During the nineteenth century, much research was done in the field of language, but those historical linguists were mostly interested in the origin and development of related languages. Saussure realized that it was not enough to see how words acquire meaning over time (what is called a *diachronic study).* We need to see how words mean within a period and as part of a general system of language. This is the *synchronic study* where we look at words within the current state of the language and not at its history. In his 1916 work *A Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure calls for a scientific study of language rather than a historical one.

In order to better understand Saussure's ideas, we need to look at some of the key components of his theory.

i) Langue and Parole

Saussure argues for two distinct parts within the language. The system or structure of language and the conventions that rule and govern speech is Langue. The *set of rules* by which we combine words into sentences, use certain words in certain ways is termed *langue.* The actual utterance – everyday speech where we use words in the social context is called Parole.
Langue may be defined as a collective system of conventions or rules that is necessary forsocial transactions in a specific language. It is "a storehouse filled by the members of a given community through their active use of speaking, a grammatical system that has a potential existence in each brain, or, more specifically, in the brains of a group of individuals." (Saussure 13-14) *Parole* is the individual realization of the system by using the conventions of the said language. While *langue* is the shared system of rules that a speaker 'unconsciously' (Culler 10) draws from *parole* is the actual utterance of the speaker. In cleaving language into the social and the personal, Saussure reveals that language is "not a function of the speaker." (Saussure 14) Thus, when we are reading individual literary utterances such as a poem or a novel, we are in fact delving into a larger social structure that is the *langue.* Saussure proposes that language as a system of signs must be understood as a complete system at any given time and not as an accumulation of meaning over time.

'Speaking' or utterance is a willful and intellectual individual act, while 'language' is 'both the social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty.' Then, in a nutshell, Langue is the whole linguistic system, the total content of a language shared by a community of speakers as a source when speaking. As such, it is the whole network of relations and differences of its units. Noam Chomsky, linguist and exponent of transformational generative grammar, calls it 'competence'. Parole is the specific utterance made when speaking or writing, using langue as the repertoire of words and grammatical rules. Chomsky calls it 'performance'. Saussure opines that the study of *langue* is the *synchronic* study of the relationship among the elements of language at a particular point in time: therefore *langue* should be studied, not *parole*.

While constructing a parole out of the langue, two kinds of choices are made. First, an item (word) is chosen from among other items of the same wordclass potentially available in that

position. For example, ‘shirt’ is chosen from the wordclass: coat, vest, blazer, tunic.... This is a ‘paradigmatic’ choice. Second, the positions or arrangement of items chosen paradigmatically are chosen now to convey intended meaning through the utterance. This is a ‘syntagmatic’ choice. Saussure pointed out that all utterance was made possible because words within a langue were arranged in a system that gave them meaning. This system worked by marking the difference of each word from others, and again in different situations or utterances. Thus, differences operate on both paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels within a langue. For example, we understand 'light' because it is different from 'darkness', and in another utterance, we may understand 'light' because it is different from 'heavy'. Meaning, then, is made by difference and is valid as long as the word or ‘speech sound’ exists within a given system. This implies that meaning is a matter of differential relations wholly independent of a thing in the material world beyond the linguistic system.

ii) Sign, Signifier and Signified

The concept of signs has been around for a long time, having been studied by many philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, William of Ockham, and Francis Bacon, among others. The term "semiotics" "comes from the Greek root, seme, as in semeiotikos, an interpreter of signs". It was not until the early part of the 20th century, however, that Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce brought the term into awareness. Saussure opines that things as diverse as the fashion system, a poem, toys, a cricket, or a traffic sign can be seen as a system of signs. Saussure explains that words are not symbols that correspond to referent objects and a sign is not only a sound-image but also a concept. Thus he divides the sign into two components: the signifier (or "sound-image") and the signified (or "concept"). That is, ROSE is the sign made up of a) the letters that make up the word “rose” and b) the concept or image that the word evokes when one sees or hears the word “rose”.

Another good example is the traffic sign system:

Signifier (red)

Sign _____

Signified (stop)

It is easy to see that this signification works only within the system, outside which 'red' can signify 'bloody' or 'lively' or 'beautiful.' So, the relation between the signifier and signified is found to be arbitrary, provisionally agreed upon for temporal and area-specific communication systems. The American Semiotician C.S. Peirce usefully distinguished three types of signs in social use. They are —

(a) Iconic (the sign resembles the referent) e.g., a picture of a ship.
(b) Indexical (the sign associated with referent as cause and effect) e.g., smoke for fire.
(c) Symbolic (sign arbitrarily linked to referent) e.g., language.

In a langue, the word or 'speech-sound' is a symbolic sign pointing at a signified concept, defined by difference.

The relation between the signifier and the signified is an arbitrary one. For instance, the signifier s-k-y conjures an image of the blue sky. However, there is no reason why such a tiny three-lettered word should be able to describe the vast expanse above our heads. It works merely because people speaking the language have agreed upon the decision to call the sky, sky. There is no relational sense in the way languages associate a signifier with a signified. This is evident by the way the different languages have different signifiers for the same concept – sky is *ciel* in French and *himmel* in German. Thus, it becomes evident that words do not have inherent meanings but only make meaning in a system of relations and differences.

iii) Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic

Language is structured through a system of binary opposition. Everything from the smallest entity, the *phoneme,* to complex sentences follows these rules. For instance, the signifier *cat* is unique because of its phonic difference from signifiers where the vowel is altered such as *cut, cot* and from signifiers bearing consonant differences such as *bat, sat, pat*. According to Saussure, the meaning of a sentence arises from the difference between signifiers along two axes of relationship—the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic. The syntagmatic is the horizontal axis of combination and the paradigmatic is the vertical axis of selection. *The cat sat on the*

mat comprises words that make sense owing to the selective combination of signifiers. The process of arranging the subject (the cat) followed by the verb (sat), the preposition (on)and finally, the predicate noun (the mat) is what Saussure calls the syntagmatic axis of language. As Storey observes one can extend the meaningfulness of a sentence by still adding more parts and "[m]eaning is thus accumulated along the syntagmatic axis of language." (117) So, we may modify the sentence by adding more words like "in the drawing-room", or "after having lunch" to it.

Every item of language has a *paradigmatic relationship* with every other item which can be substituted for it (such as *cat* with *dog*), and a *syntagmatic relationship* with items which occur within the same construction (for example, in *The cat sat on the mat*, *cat* with *the* and *sat on the mat*). The relationships are like axes, as shown in the accompanying diagram.

			Syntagmatic			
	The	cat	sat	on	the	mat
Paradigmatic	His	dog	slept	under	that	table
	My	brother	played	in	his	room

Therefore, Saussurean linguistics has three basic assumptions:

1) Arbitrariness: The meaning we attribute to words is entirely *arbitrary*, and prescribed through usage and convention only. There is no inherent or "natural" connection between the word and the meaning. The word has no quality that suggests the meaning (except perhaps in onomatopoeic words like "hiss" "grrr" etc), nor does meaning "reside" in the word. Therefore, language cannot be said to stand for, or reflect, reality or the world: language is *a system in itself.* To phrase it in its proper terminology, the relation between the signifier/word and signified/meaning is purely arbitrary.

2) Relational: No word has its meaning in isolation. It possesses meaning through its difference from other words in the organizational chain. Thus "cat" means cat only by virtue of its difference from "cap" or "hat".

3) Systematic: The whole is greater than the parts. We need to analyze how meaning is produced through the acts of language and understand the set of structures in language that enables us to speak and make sense. In short, we need to study signs and sign systems. Language is this *form*, not substance.

The influence of Saussure's theories of language can be seen in the works of anthropologists like Claude Levi Strauss and Mary Douglas who analyze cultural norms and practices as part of binary systems of differences. Roland Barthes's work on mythologies draws heavily on the Saussurean linguistic system. He looks at popular culture from washing powder advertisements to steak-eating through the lens of the semiotics. Literary criticism adopted Structuralism with the hope that it would "introduce a certain rigour and objectivity into the impressionistic realm of literature." (Selden 87) Structuralist narratology received a great boost from Vladimir Propp who wrote *Morphology of the folktale*. Propp theorized a system of thirty-one 'functions' which form the backbone of not just Russian but almost all tales, myths and stories in general.

Unit 1 (c): Russian Formalism

De Saussure's structural linguistics was first appropriated for the study of literature in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century (Davis & Schleifer: 128; Eagleton: 97). Two groups of critics began working towards what became known as *Russian Formalism*: the Moscow Linguistic Circle (in 1915) and Opojaz - the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (in 1916). Russian formalism is the name given to this school of literary scholarship that originated in the second decade of the 20th C. flourished in the 1920s and was suppressed in the 1930s. Its leading exponents were unorthodox linguists and literary historians such as Boris Eichenbaum (1886-1959), Roman Jakobson (1895-1982), Victor Shklovsky (1893-1984), Boris Tomashevskij (1890-1957), and Jurij Tynjanov (1894-1943). As the movement developed

other theorists and literary scholars were drawn into this school though they did not describe themselves as formalists such as Viktor Vinogradov (1895-1969), Viktor Zhirmurskij (1891-1971) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1971).

History of Russian Formalism

The origins of Russian Formalism can be traced to the universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg before World War I where students, dissatisfied with the study of literature in the academy, formed private groups to discuss the problems of philology. These resulted in the formation of OPOJAZ (The Society for the Study of Poetic Language) an acronym formed of the Russian first letters of the society's name. OPAJAZ began in St. Petersburg in 1914 and was dissolved in 1923. The nucleus of the Opojaz group was formed by Shklovsky, Eichenbaum, Jakobson and Osip Brick (1888-1945). The second group of formalists, formed under the leadership of Jakobson, was called the Moscow Linguistic Circle which and was formed in 1915 and remained active till 1920 when Jakobson went away to Prague. While Opajaz was mainly formed of literary scholars who were less interested in linguistics and focused on the study of literary history and close readings of works, the MLC applied the new scientific developments in linguistics to the study of literature. Another group that flourished with the Opojaz and the MLC was the so-called Bakhtin Circle which was formed in Leningrad around the classical scholar and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975).

Eventually, the Petersburg and part of the Moscow group merged and began to be referred to as the Petersburg and Moscow Opojaz. In 1919, the group received official recognition as a learned society. However, it was short-lived because of increasing attacks on Formalist aestheticism by the official Marxist critics. After its dissolution in 1923, some of the members attempted to continue under another socially oriented image called the Lef (Left Front of Art) and the Movyj Lef (The New Left Front of Art) which lasted for only two years between 1923 and 1925. Though the Moscow Linguistic Circle did not publish any of their work, the Opojaz published three collections of essays in 1916, 1917 and 1919 on which the information and theory of Russian Formalism is based. It is noteworthy, as Victor Evlich mentions, that the "formalist" label was applied to the new school by its opponents rather than its adherents; the latter favoured such abstruse and unveiled self-definitions as the morphologic approach or the 'specifiers' (spetsifikatory); naturally, these names were easily abandoned.

Features of Russian Formalism:

Literariness

The formalists viewed literature as a distinct verbal art rather than a reflection of the society or a battleground of ideas. In an early study, Roman Jakobson thus wrote: "The subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality but literariness i.e. that which makes a given work a work of literature." This implies that there is a *literary* function of language and another which is non-literary. Formalism came to be based on a binary scheme where the language is divided into the *poetic* and the *everyday.* Jakobson points out that of the six functions of language; the poetic is distinguished from the other five by the fact that it focuses on the communicative act and thus the actual words being used. The focus is on the message for its own sake. In literature, therefore, *language is foregrounded*; and in any literary use of language, the poetic function is *dominant.* The Formalists did not look, as literary students usually had, toward history, culture, sociology, psychology or aesthetics, etc., but toward linguistics, a science bordering on poetics and sharing material with it, but approaching it from a different perspective and with different problems.

This literariness was sought not in the author's life and mind or in the reader's reception of the work, but in the work itself. Specifically, it is sought in the artistic devices peculiar to imaginative writing; the devices with which the writer reshapes his subject matter through the medium of language. For Viktor Shklovsky imaginative literature was a unique mode of discourse precisely because of its "orientation towards the medium" or the "perceptibility of the mode of expression". In literature and especially in poetry, language is not simply a vehicle of communication. In fact, the word becomes here an object in its own right an autonomous source of poetic value and significance. Thus, the multiple devices at the poet's disposal such as — meter, rhythm, imagery, rhetorical tropes converge upon the verbal sign to reveal its complex structure. Unlike poetry, prose narrative does not have a similar complexity of organization but narrative fiction also has its own intricate patterns of tension and balance, its own parallels and contrasts.

Like the structuralists of the later decades, the Formalists believed in certain key assumptions:

- Literature, especially poetry, was a special function of language.
- It was possible to discover the underlying formulae or *structures* of literary texts by a study of its *devices* (a term they were fond of using to describe literary techniques such as symbolism).
- The literary analysis could be as accurate and precise as science.

The purpose of criticism was to find out how a literary text generated or possessed the *literariness.* This can be described as the main concern of the Russian Formalists. Literariness was the effect of the formal and the linguistic properties of a text—and the purpose of criticism was to discover these underlying properties. What a literary text did was to use language in such a way that everyday objects could be made to look different, extraordinary or even strange. Literary and poetic language transformed everyday objects into something else by using words about the objects differently. A literary text represents the world in such a way that ordinary things appear different. This is what engages our (the reader's) attention. This process is what Shklovsky termed *defamiliarisation.*

Victor Shklovsky and *defamiliarisation:*

One of the methods by which the literariness of literature and the foregrounding of language are affected is stated in Shklovsky's essay *Art as Technique,* (1917) considered to be a theoretical manifesto of Formalism In this essay, Shklovsky says that art creates symbols. These symbols help us to see things instead of merely recognizing them. Skhlovsky admits that everyday life brings about an automatization of perception: "As a perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. For Shklovsy, art helps us to destroy these automatic and superficial perceptions by isolating objects and events from their usual contexts and moving them to unusual ones: "Art exists to help us recover the sensation of life; it exists to make us feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The end of art is to give a sensation of the object as seen, not as recognized. The technique of art is to make things '*unfamiliar'* and to make forms obscure so as to increase the difficulty and duration of perception.

Defacilitation and *defamiliarization — Zatrudnenie and Ostranenie*

These are basic to the artistic perception and they become key techniques in the Formalist dialectics of representation. Shklovsky defined literature entirely in linguistic terms, calling it "the sum total of all stylistic devices employed in it." Advocating the idea of "*defamiliarisation*" In "Art as Technique," he argued that the chief effect of literary language was to "make strange" everyday objects and experience. This causes us to see things "differently," thus inducing a change in our consciousness itself. This *defamiliarisation* enables us to experience the *"artfulness"* of an object and draws our attention to the material process of language itself. The essay treated Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* as a novel that parodied earlier conventions of writing and thus drew attention to the very *act of literary writing.* Sterne, argues, Shklovsky, was testing the limits of realism (the established form for the novel during that time) by showing how literary representations of reality were only *representations* (or signification) of reality.

The formalists focused on poetry as a supreme example of the device of *defamiliarization*. Poetic language has the following features that make it different from ordinary or everyday language:

- It does not seek to convey information; it is an end in itself.
- It is *self-reflexive*, drawing attention to itself. Poetic language makes us aware that it is unique (for example: 'My love is like a red, red rose' by Edmund Waller alerts us to the fact that something unusual is going on. The quality of love is not an object, so the poet is using the two keywords, love and rose, in an odd combination).
- It often uses a word to mean multiple things and thus *destabilizes* meaning itself. The words in poetry can mean more than one thing.

Together these features of poetic language produce the effect of *defamiliarization*.

Therefore, *defamiliarization* is the literary device whereby language is used in a way that ordinary and familiar objects are made to look different. It is a process of *transformation* where the language asserts its power to affect our perceptions. Reality is thus modified for us through a special use of language. In short, the content of reality, story or theme is made to look attractive, ugly or good through the representation in language. It is therefore about *form* as it

affects content and reading. Defamiliarization is what distinguishes poetic or literary language from non-poetic or non-literary language.

Roman Jakobson and dominance

In fact, these ideas on *the form* can be extended to include Jakobson's concept of *dominance* which was another important theoretical premise in the Formalist theory. Jakobson defined *dominance* or the *dominant* as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure." The dominant may be sought not only in the poetic work of an individual artist, and in the poetic canon but also in the art of a given epoch as a whole. For instance, Jakobson says, sculpture dominated Renaissance art, music the Romantic period and the rise of prose realism in the novel. Poetic evolution was thus seen as a matter of the changes in the elements of the poetic system which was a result of a 'shifting dominant'.

Boris Eichenbaum and *Skaz*

Another important contribution to the theory of fiction by the Formalists involves their examination of the relationship between the oral and the written story. Eichenbaum is better known as a literary historian and narratologist. In his essay, "On the Theory of Prose", Boris Eichenbaum points out that prose genre is usually cut off from the oral and vocal aspects of the narrative. However, with the use of speech orality re-enters fiction. In tales like the *Decameron or The Canterbury Tales* moreover, there are direct links with speech because they are based on the oral tale or the gossips anecdote and, therefore, emphasize the narrator's voice. This inclusion of the element of voice is related to the formalist concept of "*Skaz*" as a narrative technique. The formalists believed that the writer *hears* his works when he creates them and that some of his effects are lost in the silent reading of fiction. *Skaz* thus implies an account of the manner speaking of the characters or the narrator (as distinct from the author) which is articulated through narrative styles. This consideration of the 'voice' in fiction finally develops into Bakhtin's definition of the novel as *polyphonic* as opposed to the monologic nature of epic and tragedy. The Formalists were among the first to investigate prose narrative and determine the laws of its construction, evident in Eichenbaum's essay "How Gogol's Overcoat is Made".

In this famous essay, he emphasized the autonomous nature of the work of art and analyzed the tale without any references to extra-literary referents.

Criticism and Conclusion

This misrepresentation of language is probably a result of the Formalist emphasis on the the immanence of meaning in literary works. Language is, therefore, seen as self-referential, generating its meanings within the literary structures and arrangements of a text and not dependent on any other context except that of literary and linguistic devices and usage. In fact, this is the major criticism that was brought against the Formalists by the Marxist critics. Fredric Jameson sums up this view in his book *The Prison House of Language:* "Formalism is thus, as we have suggested, the basic mode of interpretation of those who refuse interpretation; at the same time, it is important to stress the fact that this method finds its privileged objects in the smaller forms, in short stories or folk tales, poems, anecdotes, in the decorative detail of larger works .... the Formalistic model is essentially synchronic, and cannot adequately deal with diachronic, either in literary history or in the form of the individual work which is to say that formalism as a method stops short at the point where the novel as a problem begins."

In fact, Shklovsky's concept of '*defamiliarization'* defines literature as its own end in the specific devices of its expression. When Shklovsky's concept is compared to Brecht's theory of 'alienation' — which has a similar function — the former is revealed to be a static function in the sense that it only designates a function of language as being literary. Brecht's concept, on the contrary, is dynamic because it posits a theory of literature that uses distortion and strangeness only to emphasize that the real/reality can be changed, reinterpreted and reinvented through human actions. By denying interpretation, the Formalists thus often, alienate themselves from history and the human attempts to understand the world.

An attempt to correct these lapses and contradictions was made by the later Formalists and others like Bakhtin and Zhirmunsky who attempted a historicizing of these aspects of literary language. This is clear in the consideration of genres and an attempt to reexamine literary traditions. Eichenbaum thus theorizes the evolution of genres which tend to move from serious and elevated forms (like the epic) to comic and parodic versions. There are obviously local and

historical conditions that influence these variations, but the final result is a regeneration of genres and the discovery of new forms. Eichenbaum's theory of genres thus represents an increasing sophistication in Formalism anticipating Structuralism. In fact, Jakobson attempted to give a historicist emphasis to his Formalist study of shifts and transformation of literary forms which finally result in an attempt to reconcile the historical with the individual work in linguistic study. This aspect of Formalist analysis in the field of poetic language had a pioneering significance for linguistic research in general since it provided important impulses towards overcoming and bridging the gap between the diachronic historical method and the synchronic method of a chronological cross-section.

The Formalists thus contributed to the development of a theory of literature which emphasized the importance of language and the structures and rules of language in the construction of literary texts and also in literary analysis. Thereby, it attempted to create a grammar for the creation of texts and for their scientific study. It foregrounded the importance of literary texts in terms of their method and function. Formalism engaged with the relationship between form and content in literary works and the structures and processes which contribute towards the formation of meaning.

Unit 1 (d): The Prague School and Roman Jakobson

Closely aligned with Russian Formalism is the Prague School of structuralists. Roman Jakobson, a Russian immigrant, was one of the central figures in this school. From Russia, Saussure's ideas spread to Prague when Jakobson migrated there in 1920 (and eventually he went to the USA). When the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC) was founded in 1926, he became one of the major theorists of Czech Structuralism (Eagleton 98). Jan Mukarovsky, Felix Vodicka, Rene Wellek and Josef Vachek joined the group gradually. They represent a transition stage between Russian Formalism and the later structuralism. The school saw poems as "functional structures" in which the signifiers and signifieds are governed by a set of relations.

The Prague critics argued that these signs must be analyzed *in and as themselves*, without relating them to any external reality.

The Prague's School central tenet was that *language is a coherent system fulfilling a range of 'functions' in society.* Jakobson's work on language built on this tenet. The Prague School believed that there was a poetic or aesthetic function of language. *Poetic language foregrounds its own use.* This means poetic language does not seek to convey information. Instead, it draws attention to its own utterance, to what and how it is saying/speaking. Jan Mukarovsky, therefore, declared that 'the function of poetic language consists in the maximum of foregrounding of the utterance … it is not used in the service of communication …' (qtd. In Hawkes 1997: 75). Once again we see the Russian Formalists' emphasis asserting itself: Poetic language is an end in itself, it does not seek to do more.

Prague Linguistics also used De Saussure's concepts as their point of departure, especially his emphasis on the *arbitrary relationship between sign and referent* - that is, between word and thing. This was also one of the basic concepts of the Formalists: consequently, Prague Linguistics agreed that the text was indeed an *autonomous object,* detached from its social, cultural and historical circumstances. But, more than the Formalists, the Czech structuralists stressed the *structural unity* of a work. The different *elements* of a text were in fact *functions of a dynamic whole:* texts were viewed as *functional structures* that ought to be studied in their own right as they functioned according to their own rules (Eagleton: 100). In a sense Prague Linguistics took over the ideas of the Formalists, elaborating on them and systematizing them further.

The Prague school of linguistics represented a kind of transition from Formalism to modern structuralism. Later on the terms, *structuralism* and *semiology* became merged, as *semiotic* or *semiology* means the systematic study of signs. *Structuralism* especially transformed the study of poetry, however, it *revolutionized the study of narrative. It created a whole new science - narratology* (Eagleton: 103). However, after 1930 Russian Formalism and Prague structuralism had almost no impact on Western criticism and theory until 1960 in France with the coming of French Structuralism (Martin: 25; Davis & Schleifer: 129).

Jakobson's Model of Communication

One of the most distinguished thinkers in linguistics, philology and aesthetics, Roman Jakobson was responsible for the development of semiotics as a critical practice. In the Jakobson model of communication (either oral or written) the following SIX constituent elements play pivotal roles:

CONTEXT
REFERENTIAL

MESSAGE
POETIC
ADDRESSER----------
ADDRESSEE
EMOTIVE
CONATIVE
CONTACT
PHATIC
CODE
METALINGUAL

i) A message is sent by an addresser to an addressee. To facilitate this, they need to use a common code, a conduit/channel of communication, and the same frame of reference. Each of these elements has a corresponding function in the communicative act.

ii) Language seen from the addresser's point of view is emotive (expressing a state of mind). Seen from the addressee's perspective, language is conative (seeking an effect).

iii) If communication concerns itself with the context, it is referential (which privileges the information content of any utterance) if the communication is oriented towards the code of communication it is metalinguistic (the query "do you understand me?" typifies this nature)

iv) When the message focuses on the words of the message itself that is when the communication draws attention to itself it is poetic.

v) And finally, when the communication focuses on the act of contact it is phatic. (denoting or relating to language used for general purposes of social interaction, rather than to convey information or ask questions. Utterances such as *hello, how are you?* and *nice morning, isn't it?* are phatic.)

Let us take an actual example. Suppose I write, in a letter to a friend who lives in a different town, the following sentence:
I work in a university that is at a distance of 12 km from my home.
We have six elements as follows:
1. Addresser (myself)
2. Addressee (my friend)
3. The message
4. Contact (the letter, handwritten or e-mailed)
5. Code (writing)
6. Context (the language used in the writing, both of us understand English)

The process of communication as it happens above can be described as follows:

- An addresser sends a message to an addressee.
- The message requires a medium or *contact* (visual, oral, audio, and now electronic).
- The message is in the form of a code or process (speech, writing, numbers).
- Both addresser and the addressee must share the same context of language and conventions of speech and writing in order to understand each other's speech/writing.

Roman Jakobson and Metaphor-Metonymy

Jakobson worked with aphasics, people with an inability to use language without difficulty. Observing the way aphasics use and understand ordinary speech, Jakobson developed a theory of language use. Jakobson argued that there are two major rhetorical figures: metaphor and metonymy. Both are figures of *equivalence* because they *substitute* a new term that is believed to be an equivalent for the main/original term. Adopting the two distinct uses of language namely selection and combination, Jakobson elaborated on the terms *metaphor* and *metonymy*.

(a) In metaphor one sign is substituted for another, entailing a transfer of meaning between two unrelated domains. An example would be the use of the words “jealous” and “green”. Here to “go green” commonly implies the state of being jealous. However, there is no logical or semantic link between the two. That is, the two words/ideas of the emotive state and the colour are actually unrelated.

(b) In metonymy, one sign is *associated* with another, where it utilizes a term that is property of the key-word, or is related to it contiguously (example: "sail" or "ship," since the sail is a part of the ship). In poetry, the metaphor is used more often than metonymy because the stress in poetry is on similarity and/or startling opposition. Metaphor, therefore, involves a transfer of *sense*, whereas metonymy involves only a transfer of *reference* (part for a whole, but not a totally unrelated term/domain).

Selection and substitution constitute the metaphoric pole and combination and contextualization the metonymic pole (Nayar: 30).

Let us use an elaborate example to understand this concept. We often declare that on our roads the 'traffic crawls along'. Now, 'crawl' is a term used to describe the relatively slow movement of creatures, like worms, snakes and insects. How does it describe the vehicular movement on the road? What the image does is to posit equivalence between the patterns of movement of the vehicles with that of the insects. It assumes a *similarity* between the two. We could have picked ‘bustles’ or ‘races’ or ‘goes’, but we selected ‘crawls’ from this *vertical* list of possible descriptives because we think the movement of vehicles is *akin* to that of the insects. What we have, therefore, is a term that provides a *metaphor* for the vehicular movement. It is possible to visualize vehicular movement as the movement of insects through this metaphor. We have

substituted insects for cars and vehicles. Metaphor is an act of substitution through *selection* and *association*, in this case, the association or analogy between the movements of cars and insects.

Another form of language use is metonymy. Metonymy is when a part is substituted for the whole. For example, we say, 'the orders were issued by Rashtrapati Bhavana'. Now, the building, that is, Rashtrapati Bhavana does not issue orders. It is the President of India, who lives in the Bhavana, who issues orders. Here the building is taken to be the equivalent of its resident by the principle of contiguity. One word is placed next to another as being contiguous. Here we choose a word that is seen as adjacent to another. This is the principle of *combination.*

Selection and combination are the two ways of language operation. We can select any word from a storehouse of words, and then use these words in combination to generate a sentence.

Drawing on this, Jakobson contends in *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* (1956) that linguistic messages are constructed by the combination of a horizontal movement that combines words, and a vertical movement which selects the particular words from the 'inner storehouse' of language. In a 1958 paper entitled *Linguistics and Poetics,* he declared. ''The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.'' His main argument was that poetry is essentially metaphoric, while prose is essentially metonymic. In the same paper, he proposed a poetics of both poetry and prose based on the differential, oppositional functioning of metaphor and metonymy.

Expanding upon the metaphor/metonymy model, Jakobson could characterize whole periods of literature in the manner of Russian Formalists, where either functioned as 'dominant'– historical development from romanticism through realism to symbolism is an alternation of style from the metaphoric to metonymic back to metaphoric. In recent times, David Lodge has followed Jakobson's model and qualified it by pointing out that changing context can change the figure from metonymy to metaphor and vice versa. Summing up what we have learned, we can see that metonymy works diachronically and metaphor, synchronically.

UNIT 2

Unit 2 (a): Mikhail Bakhtin and Dialogism

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)

This Russian thinker was "discovered" by the West decades after he wrote groundbreaking books in the 1920s and 30s. He is well-known principally for his books on Dostoevsky and Rabelais. Publishing under the name of his friend, V.N. Voloshinov, Bakhtin was the first thinker to provide a full critique of Russian Formalism in his book *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*.

i) Bakhtin targets Saussure's emphasis on the formal aspects of language rather than the social parole. Language for Bakhtin was inherently *dialogic*. Language and words made sense only in its communication/orientation directed towards the Other. The Sign was not, as Saussure argued, a stable unit but an active component of speech in certain social contexts. The sign, therefore, was the scene of struggle and contradiction since societal conditions were always amorphous and heterogeneous with conflicting interests.

ii) Bakhtin focused on parole rather than langue, arguing that one cannot analyze texts as though they were independent of the context. Language is essentially a matter of utterances rather than of sentences. This eventually leads Bakhin to formulate the idea of the chronotope. Thus for Bakhtin, all language was embedded in social, economic, political and ideological systems.

Bakhtin and Dialogism

Bakhtin proposed dialogue as the intrinsic feature of the language. While Bakhtin himself never used the term *dialogism* it has been associated with his work and is the most recognizable concept from his oeuvre. In order to understand his work on the novel (i.e., narrative), it is

important to look at his notions of dialogue. There are a few key terms in Bakhtinian thought that have to be understood, namely, *dialogue, heteroglossia, chronotope*, and *carnival.*

Dialogue

Dialogue is a differential relation, and dialogue always implies a *relationship.* In any conversation, the speakers are different from each other. But what is interesting is that these differences are *retained* in the conversation. Dialogue is imposed upon us; we do not set out to engage in dialogue. Dialogue, therefore, is a concept that gestures at the *mutual difference* at the heart of all conversation, it asks us to pay attention to relations in language. It is, Bakhtin believed, the existence of mutual difference that enabled dialogue. Bakhtin was, therefore, focusing on the self/other aspect of all language where there is always the 'other' within my speech. In fact, my speech anticipates and prepares for the other's response.

Bakhtin's emphasis on dialogue means that his focus was almost entirely on *the utterance.* Utterance takes place between speakers, who are located in a *social* context. Speakers have to assume that their values are shared by the others (the audience). Dialogue is the central feature of all speech. What Bakhtin does is to underscore the novel as a form that explicitly foregrounds this dialogic aspect of speech and everyday communication. Bakhtin begins by assuming that literary texts, especially novels, are utterances in a given context of the text's production. Dialogism has already told us that meaning in any utterance is based on the social context. Indeed the context is what makes us understand the words themselves. For example, when I hear a sentence like 'The ball is in the box', I immediately understand that it refers to *this particular box* and *not* to any box anywhere in the world, even though the sentence itself does not clearly specify which box.

Heteroglossia

In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin introduced the idea of the polyphonic novel. He proposes that novels are a prime example of what he calls *heteroglossia.* Heteroglossia is the simultaneity of many levels of dialogue and language. The subject, about to make an

utterance, can pick one response out of the mass of languages around him/her. It would be impossible to systematize the mass and variety of languages because of the sheer heterogeneity. The other's voice is given as much importance as the self's. In the case of the novel (Bakhtin's example is Dostoevsky), the many voices are given equal importance, thereby showing the novel as a site of struggle, carnival and subversion. Working-class discourses, women's language, the language of ethnic minorities are all represented alongside that of the dominant one. Even if these other voices do not overthrow the dominant one, their very existence suggests that the main voice is not overwhelming or unchallenged. He emphasized the "*unfinalisability*" of works, as embodied in his famous statement: "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is still open and free, and everything is still in the future and will always be in the future."

In the case of a novel, every novel refers to other works, other discourses. The novel is a genre that gives space, very consciously, to other works. This is what is now called *intertextuality*, and is a feature Bakhtin was particularly fond of in the novel. A novel refers to the discourse of history, of literary texts, of social conditions like poverty, of philosophy and theology. This leads Bakhtin to suggest that the novel embodies other voices. In fact, it gives space to the other, the different. For example, in a realist novel like that of Dickens or Balzac's, the narrator controls the lives of his characters very firmly. Yet, even these authors sometimes slip into phrases like 'I think' or 'I suppose'. What does this mean? It means, simply, the novelist is unsure of the moral stance he or she has taken. The characters and their situations are not as rigidly controlled as one perceived. The main moral stance in the novel is, therefore, undermined by the other voices and opinions that circulate through the text. This is *heteroglossia.* Later, critics like Julia Kristeva built upon this notion of intertextuality. The novel is constituted by the dialogue between discourses. What is clear, and important, is that the novel's dialogism even breaks down the distinction between literary and non-literary or extra-literary.

Chronotope

Bakhtin further proposed that a novel often renders in an artistic way the interconnectedness of spatial and temporal relationships. Space and time are interconnected in plots and are central

to the narrative/plot. This interconnected aspect is what he terms *chronotope.* Chronotopes are recurring, structural features of the narrative. Using the example of Greek romances, Bakhtin shows how time and space are both *fluid.* Every age has its own notions of space and time, and therefore chronotopes are rooted in their *local* conditions. In the twentieth century, after Einsteinian science and the developments in physics, we have a different sense of space and time. Chronotopes in science fiction today, therefore, suggest multiple worlds whose time zones are also multiple. The simultaneity of worlds and times is also connected with the globalized geopolitical world where radio, telephone, television and now the Internet and call centers functioning in a different time zone (the USA and Europe) have altered our concepts of space and time.

Rushdie's novels slip between past and present, while also having fantasies woven into them. Ben Okri's fiction, especially texts like *The Famished Road*, does not allow us to know with certainty whether the world depicted is real or in the imagination. 'Magic realism' in postcolonial texts from South Asia, Africa and South America today generates chronotopes that are about multiple times–spaces co-existing next to each other, simultaneously, and is the effect of the twentieth century's historical developments of theories in physics and communication–transportation technologies. Bakhtin, as we can see, is keen on showing how the novel as a form is inherently heteroglossic, giving space to many voices. The novel resists monologic and situates languages and discourses alongside each other.

Carnival

Bakhtin evidently was attempting to find literary examples where power was subverted. In order to do so, he outlined a concept of the *carnival* via a reading of the works of Rabelais. The carnival was laughter, the bodily, parody, the ugly, the grotesque and the so-called 'low'. The carnival, the site of laughter, is ambivalent. The laughter is not sanctioned by the power strictures like the government or the institutions. It resists such control, and is, therefore, politically subversive. Bodily functions are a part of the carnival because they do not find expression in official cultures. The carnival embraces "lowness", incorporating bodily functions (including the "dirty" ones: copulation, urination and defecation). The body is an essential part of the carnival's ambivalence. Clowning, again not part of the official culture, is also a key element in the carnival. Carnival figures like the Clown cannot be theorized about

because they resist any academic discussion by existing on the border between art and life — they are rooted in the everyday life of the people. The mask used by the clown, unlike the mask of the Renaissance period which symbolized hypocrisy and deception, is here the "distorting" element. It plays with contradiction (I am me and the mask, am I the mask? Or is the mask someone else? Does it make me someone else?) The mask is thus transition, metamorphosis, the transgression of natural boundaries.

The carnival is thus the subversive and the ultimate *other.* It is what escapes classification, theorization, and control. The carnival is a useful mode of discussing popular or mass culture because Bakhtin is essentially speaking of the need to subvert and interrogate established/institutional authority over meaning. Carnival logic undermines academic discourses because the carnival resists the academic repression of ambivalence. We see instances of the carnival in the writings of Salman Rushdie. Rushdie shows how the serious discourses and political themes of nationalism, patriotism and identity are often taken far too seriously. Rushdie inverts their significance by showing how these notions are accidental, highly personal and often limited. In *Midnight's Children*, for example, Rushdie's protagonist Saleem believes that the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 happened because he *imagined* it. Here Rushdie is reducing a massive event to a single individual's fantasy. There is nothing remarkable in the situation of war—it all exists in the person's mind. This is carnivalesque because it subverts a so-called national event and transforms it into a mundane act of daydreaming and adolescent fantasy.

Margaret Atwood creates a heroine, Marian McAlpin, who cannot accept the ideal form of the fiancée that society wants of her in *The Edible Woman* (1969). Her anxiety over the changes she is expected to make results in an eating disorder. Her body— the epitome of identity and looks in the consumer society she lives in—is what she takes as the site of the battle for identity when she goes on eating binges or fulfills her culinary cravings. In a later novel, *Lady Oracle* (1976), Atwood creates a bored housewife, once an overweight teen, who abandons her quiet life for a wild one. In both these novels, Atwood creates heroines who do not fit the model of the quiet, amenable (and of course slim) fiancée or housewife. She is questioning the ideal of beauty itself: Does slimness alone constitute beauty? Does it matter that it is a *woman* who is fat? Atwood poses these questions when her heroines' fat and grotesque body inverts the traditional stereotype of the 'heroine'. This is another example of the carnival.

Unit 2 (b): Structuralist Narratology

Structuralist criticism enabled the development of a rigorous model of reading, breaking up the text into its constituent elements to uncover the method by which the text constructs meaning. *Structuralist narratology* developed from an appropriation of linguistic models to narratives (Selden: 59-61; Eagleton: 104) has benefited a great deal from structuralist insights of important exponents on the side of the French: Gérard Genette, Claude Bremond, A.J. Greimas and Roland Barthes. However, the way towards structural narratology was being paved from Russia, as far back as 1928 by a Russian Formalist, Vladimir Propp.

The work of the Russian Formalist school reached the western world through Victor Erlich's *Russian Formalism: History Doctrine* (1955). This movement emphasized the autonomous nature of art, its freedom from external data such as socio-cultural background or the writer's biography, and concentrated on an empirical analysis of the text's form and composition at different analytical levels. Their structural analysis of narrative took two main directions, along with Boris Tomashevsky's distinction between 'fabula' and 'syuzhet'. This distinction pertains to the difference between the raw material that an author has at his or her disposal *(fabula)* and the way that he or she arranges this material in a literary text *(plot).* Thus, the *plot* or *syuuzet* has bearing on the literary text. Propp took an interest in the *plot* of Russian fairy tales to develop a narratology that was eventually modified by Greimas. He reduced all folk tales to *seven spheres of action* and *thirty-one basic functions* (Eagleton: 104).

Following the *reductive* principles of Propp, Greimas in 1966 simplified the units of *narratology* even further by acknowledging only *six actants* - *actants* do not refer to characters of narratives but are merely *structural units.* These are Subject-Object; Sender-Receiver; and Helper Opponent. But it was Gérard Genette who elaborated extensively on the Formalists' distinction between *fabula and syuzhet* and suggested a narrative should actually be divided into three levels: *histoire, récit* and *narration.*

A.J. Greimas (1917-1992)

One of the earliest practitioners of structuralist narratology was Algirdas Julien Greimas, whose work in *Semantique Structurale* (1966) built upon Saussure's idea of binary oppositions to develop what has been called *structural semiotics.* he built the model of narrative by positing "actants" as fundamental structural units. The actant is neither a specific narrative event nor a character. For Greimas, there are SIX actants paired as binary opposites: subject/object, sender/receiver, Helper/opponent. The subject is paired with the object h/she seeks, the object is sought by the subject, the sender sends the subject on the quest for the object, the receiver of the object to be secured by the subject, helper of the subject, and opponent of the subject. These actants describe and carry out three basic patterns in any narrative:

i. desire, search, aim (subject/object)
ii. communication (sender/receiver)
iii. auxiliary support or hindrance (helper/opponent)

In many cases, the categories might merge. For example, the Sender actant might very well be the Receiver. According to Greimas, a formula for the narrative can, therefore, be as follows:

- Contract or prohibition where the Subject is sent out on a quest or mission.
- The Subject might accept the contract or disobey the contract. If the Subject accepts then we have *the establishment of the contract.* If the Subject declines or disobeys we have *a violation of the contract.*
- If the Subject accepts we have rewards (from Sender-Receiver) if the Subject violates we have punishments.

The whole process can be read under three main *structures* or *syntagms*, that are common (according to Greimas) to all narrative.

1. *Contractual Structures*: Where the 'hero' (Subject) is given a task by a Sender, sent on aparticular mission, seeks an Object, is offered a contract, or prevented from doing something. Contractual structures launch the plot.

2. *Performative Structures*: Here the Subject undertakes the tasks, battles obstacles aided by the Helper or thwarted by the Opponent, is lured into traps, is faced with trials and tribulations, loses heart, finds courage and hope. This is the 'action' in the narrative.

3. *Disjunctive Structures*: These are moments of arrival, departure and movement in the narrative when the Subject leaves the palace or the home, arrives at the Opponent's den or the palace. These are interludes in the narratives where the scene for the next action is set. For example, in Hindi films, the hero swears vengeance and races out to the villain's house/den—here there is a gap between the scene of the swearing and the next one, where the hero wrecks vengeance. This gap is the disjunctive structure that enables a shift between scenes and brings in new actants. From a scene involving a hero-actant, we now have one with the villain-actant too.

Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017)

Tzvetan Todorov coined the term 'narratology' in *The Grammar of Decameron* (1969). Todorov, like Greimas, builds on the notion that there is a definite grammar to all texts. He assumed, like Saussure, that language is the 'master code' for all signifying systems, and that the human mind and the universe share a common structure – that of language. He applied this idea to assimilate the 'story' and 'discourse' approaches in his analysis and isolates three specific components of texts:

- *semantic*: which would be the form
- *syntactic*: the arrangement of structural units, the relation between events
- *verbal*: words and phrases through which the story is told, the narrative mode

Todorov's interest lies mainly in the syntactic arrangement of units within a narrative. He identifies two key structural components of all texts: *propositions* and *sequence.* Propositions are the basic actions in a narrative. In a novel like R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*, the basic propositions may be listed as follows:

Raju meets Rosie

Rosie and Raju fall in love
Raju encourages her in her art
Rosie becomes popular
Raju ‘betrays’ her trust
Raju goes away
Raju is transformed into a saint by accidentHe decides to accept his 'sainthood' and fulfills his vow.

Now, these propositions have to be arranged in a sequence to generate a story. There can be many sequences in a text. Propositions can be arranged in any of the three sequences:

1. *Temporal*: where there is a sequence in time (this happened and then this happened).
2. *Logical*: where there is a cause-effect sequence (this happened and therefore this happened).
3. *Spatial*: where the plot has many sub-divisions (this happened meanwhile this other thing also happened).

Unit 12 (c): Gérard Genette’s Narrative Discourse

The most important of the structural narratologists, Gerard Genette (1930-2018), has argued for the autonomous nature of the literary text. Genette's work on narrative discourse has spread across many areas. His contributions include studies of narrative voice, levels of narration, and, more interestingly, on what he calls ‘paratexts’.

Genette identifies three levels of narrative:

a. *histoire*, or story, which is the set of real actions that happened and needs to be told
b. *récit*, or narrative, which is the telling of the story, either in oral or written form
c. *narrating*, the larger process of recounting that produces the *récit*

A commentator on Genette, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, suggests that these are equivalent to *story, text* and *narration* respectively (1983: 3). Genette's scheme can now be elaborated as follows:

1. Story *(histoire)* is the larger set of narrated events, arranged in chronological fashion, no matter how they are presented in the text. *The story is what we understand and interpret even without particular details from the storytelling.*

2. Text *(récit)* is the organization (or what Genette calls 'narrative discourse') of the events for the purpose of storytelling. It can be in the spoken or written form. *The text is what we read or listen to.*

3. Narration is the act of producing the text, either by the speaker or the author. This can be a fictional narrator inside the text who delivers the story or it can be the 'real' author.

The analysis of the narrative has been Genette's abiding concern. Here we shall look at the important notions of the narrative suggested by Genette.

Narrative Voice: Genette identifies three elements that make up narrative voice:

i. *Narrative Instance*: This refers to the actual moment and context of narration. This is the setting of the narration or utterance itself and crucial to understand the meaning of that utterance.

ii. *Narrative Time*: This is the time indicated by the tense (the verbs - past, present, future) in the narrative. When we read a sentence like 'they would never see her again', it suggests a future. Here the narrative is in the future.

iii. *Narrative Levels*: It refers to the relation of the acts narrated to the act of narration itself and is based on *who* is doing the narrating (first-person or third-person). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* opens with Walton's letter to his sister in which he recounts meeting Victor Frankenstein, who, in turn, narrates his story. Thus, the novel's main narrative level is that of Walton's letter. All other narratives are embedded within this level.

***Narrative Levels*:** Genette discerns four important categories in the analysis of narrative levels. They are:

a. *Order*: It is the *sequence of events* in relation to the order of narration. An event may have taken place before the actual narration *(analepsis*, or commonly, flashback). It may not yet have occurred but is anticipated or predicted by the narrative *(prolepsis).* Very often the story's sequence is not the sequence of the plot. For example, in *Frankenstein*, the story is Walton's discovery of Frankenstein. But the plot is the story of the scientist and the monster. Walton's order of events is not necessarily the order in which the plot of Frankenstein-monster moves. This is called *anachrony.* But *Frankenstein* also exhibits another level. It breaks up Frankenstein's story to give us something from Walton. Here the narrative moves between the two stories or narrative levels. This is *metalepsis,* a movement between one narrative level to another.

b. *Duration*: This is the rhythm at which the events take place. There are following four speeds of narration:

i. *ellipsis* : infinitely rapid, with quick shifts in time, space and plot
ii. *summary* : relatively rapid
iii. *scene* : relatively slow
iv. *descriptive*: no progress in the story.

c. *Frequency*: It refers to the extent of repetition in a narrative. This is the question captured in 'frequency': 'How many times has an event happened in the story?'

d. *Mood*: It is distinguished by Genette into two further categories:

i. *Distance*: This is the relationship of the narration to what it narrates. This distance may be *diegetic* (a plain *recounting* of the story), or *mimetic*, or *representing* the story (or character, situation, event).

ii. *Perspective*: This is commonly called 'point of view' or focus. Narrative focus alternates and shifts throughout the narrative and may be of two kinds:

paralipse: where the narrator withholds information from the reader that the reader *ought to receive* according to the prevailing focus. This is a frequent device in detective stories where the narrator deliberately or unconsciously withholds information.

paralepse: where the narrator presents information to the reader that the reader according to the prevailing focus *ought not to receive.*

Narrative *Perspective or Focalisation* :

Genette favours "focalization" over the traditional "point of view." Types of focalization may be based on TWO criteria: (a) position of the narrator relative to the story and (b) degree of persistence. Focalization also includes TWO aspects – the subject or the focaliser (one whose perception orients the presentation) and the object or the focalized (what the foclaiser perceives/presents to the readers).

Jean Pouillon and Todorov had prepared a typology of narrators according to their degree of knowledge with respect to characters. Genette improved upon this when he classified three sorts of narrative on the basis of seeing or focalization:

(a)Non-focalized narrative (zero focalization), as in the omniscient narrator of realist fiction, where the narrator sees all.
(b)Internal focalization, which may be fixed (partial), variable (shifting viewpoints) or multiple (as in epistolary fiction).
(c)External focalization, where 'seeing' is done by the reader.

The narrator, for Genette, has five main functions:

- *Narrative*: to tell the story
- *Directing*: when the narrator interrupts the storytelling to describe the process of narration, her/his sources, organization of the story.

- *Testimonial*: where the narrator affirms the truth of the story s/he is about to narrate. It also involves, in many cases, a description of the narrator's responses (emotional, intellectual, and political) to the events s/he is narrating.
- *Communicative*: a frequent feature of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narrative where the narrator addresses the reader directly with a 'dear reader'.
- *Ideological*: where the narrator uses the story to generalize, speculate, philosophize about universal matters, make moral comments and so on ('such is the fate of women', for example, would be an ideological comment that steps out of the text to describe a general condition).

The kinds of narrators are based upon their position relative to the story they narrate. Genette develops a whole classification of narrators. In order to understand the typology of narrators, we need to first look at the levels of narratives.

The *first* level of a narrative based on who is doing the telling is the *main text of the novel.* This is *extradiegetic*, over and above the story to be told, it frames the story to be narrated. The *second* level is the *intradiegetic* level and contains the events or stories being narrated. If the narrator is *inside* the *story-level* s/he is narrating it is a *homodiegetic* narrator. This narrator may narrate the events unfolding but *may not be a part of the events*, a kind of silent *witness* or camera who is reporting or recording. This is often called a *first-person narrative.* And, if the narrator is telling her/his own story we have an *autodiegetic* narrator. Narrators in the autobiographie*s* are *autodiegetic–homodiegetic* narrators: They are inside the story and the story is about them. A narrator who is outside the story s/he is narrating is a *heterodiegetic* narrator. This generates what Genette terms *zero focalization*, which is indeterminate and above everything that happens. It also means that the narrator knows more about all the characters. This is the *third-person* or *omniscient* narrative. Now, sometimes a *heterodiegetic* can function as an *intradiegetic* narrator too, and narrate a story about *other characters* but from the inside of the story (that is, narrate a story that is *not* about himself/herself).

Unit 2 (b): Roland Barthes (1915-1980)

Barthes is an interesting figure in literary theory because he is located at the intersection of structuralism and poststructuralism. His early work is inspired by structuralist ideas and later works on the "The Death of the Author" gesture at his post-structuralist sympathies.

Barthes in his *The Structural Analysis of Narrative* (1977) and *S/Z* (1970) developed a detailed model of narrative. Like the structuralists, Barthes believed that one can break up a narrative into its constituent elements and discover how they combine with each other. Reading a short story by Balzac, Barthes identified 561 units of meaning, or what he called 'lexias'. Barthes proposed that we could organize the lexias into five main groups, all working in combination in a narrative. That is, the five groups, or *codes* as he called them, are the narrative's modes of organizing the units so that meaning is generated. These codes, argued Barthes, are common to all narratives.

1. *Proairetic Code*: This is the most visible aspect of a narrative, and refers to the *sequence* in which the events of a story unfold. It is often a temporal sequence: This happened and *then* this happened. This code governs our *expectations* of a narrative: If this happened, then this must certainly happen.

2. *Hermeneutic Code*: This is the code that informs our *interpretation* and the questions we ask
of the narrative: What happened? How? Why? By Whom?

3. *Cultural Code*: This is the code that narratives assume we all share. Cultural codes are those elements of common knowledge that we share as a community and therefore do not require a glossary. This can be medical, literary or even symbolic knowledge. An example would be a narrative that uses a sentence like 'during the Raj things were very different'. Most Indians would immediately understand the term *Raj* without any glossary or explanation. It is the cultural code in the narrative.

4. *Semic Code*: This is the code that draws upon, like in the cultural code, a common set of stereotypes that are self-descriptive and self-evident. When, for example, we see a man in white clothes and wearing a Gandhi cap, we know immediately that he is a politician. The

stereotype is well in place for all readers and, therefore, does not require explanation. On the other hand, like the cultural code, semic codes require explanations to a person coming from outside the community.

5. *Symbolic Code*: This is very similar to the semic code. It extends beyond the immediate icon or stereotype to refer to something larger. For example, a horror film thrives on the images of darkness. A shot of the moon and treetops (or streets) automatically functions as a code for night (this is the semic code). But, because we are aware of the significance of night in horror films (and here we are drawing upon our previous experience of such films), we expect something dangerous or evil to happen. This shifts the code from the *semic* where we understand it is night from the signs of the moon and empty streets to the *symbolic* where we know that something evil is about to happen. We move beyond the ordinary day/night semic code to a notion of good/bad that is equivalent to or corresponds to day/night in a process of semantic expansion (that is, the meaning of day and night is expanded to mean good and evil respectively). We have invested the day/night pair the symbolic meanings of good/bad.

Structuralism after Itself

Structuralism represents a shift in literary criticism from content to form, from meaning to organization. The meaning of individual cultural signs like literary texts emerges only in opposition to other signs – it exists in the sign's differential position. Accordingly, the structuralist critic attempts to find the underlying grammar governing all individual signs by identifying their functions – a practice extending from language and literature to all communicative systems and events. This causes a shift of attention from historical and concrete messages of the text, turning to a play within interconnected structures. Focusing on this system that produces the only tenable meanings, structuralism signals the effacement of the author, replaced by the creative reader. Yet, pointing out the provisionality and arbitrariness beneath all seemingly concrete significations, structuralism probably initiated the attack on logocentrism that was to become the heart of poststructuralist theories. Originating in general

linguistics, structuralism offered to cultural studies and literary criticism a model of functional analysis based on a binary opposition between signs. The model soon came to be used in fields as diverse as anthropology and political theory and the basic functioning of computers, with practitioners aiming at an understanding of governing principles of the system. Literary uses include the genetic structuralism of the Marxist Lucien Goldmann, the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, the structural feminism of Julia Kristeva and New Critical analyses in the United States. Semiotics and structuralism together have opened up modes of analysis capable of exposing hidden ideological positions in modern capitalist societies, as Roland Barthes's work on bourgeois myths in French daily life shows. Barthes and Genette have been especially important in emphasizing the essential arbitrariness of all processes of signification and relativity of all discourse. This has prepared grounds for deconstruction and critiques of logocentrism as well as pointed to the questionable nature of constructions of history and socio-political ideology, culminating in the works of Michel Foucault and the New Historicists. Poststructuralism begins by attacking structuralist notions of immanent structures and deep-laid mental patterns rigidly determining signification and opts for a free play of meaning. Yet Barthes's essay *The Death of the Author* (1977) marks much of this transition of structuralism into its own critique, and *The Pleasure of the Text* notes the jouissance (bliss) that comes of 'vertical' reading.

Suggested Readings

1. Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism*.
2. E. M. Thompson, *Russian Formalism*.
3. P.M. Medvedev and Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*.
4. Peter Stainer, *Russian Formalism*.
5. Pramod K. Nayar, *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory from Structuralism to Ecocriticism*
6. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*.
9. Fredric Jameson, Marxism *and Form*.
10. Peter Barry, Beginning Theory
11. H Porter Abbot, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*.

12. Jonathan Culler – *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature.*
13. Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics.*
14. Lodge, David (ed.) – *Modern criticism and Theory: A Reader.*
15. Todorov, Tzvetan (ed.) *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*

Assignments

Essay type questions

1) Evaluate the fundamental assumptions of the Sassurrean model of linguistics?
2) What are langue and parole? How are they related?
3) Trace the growth and development of Russian Formalism as a literary theory.
4) Comment on the major features of Russian Formalism.
5) Bring out the limitations of Russian Formalisms as a literary theory.
6) In what way does Russian Formalism bring out the 'literariness' of literature?
7) Evaluate the validity of the model of literary analysis provided by Russian Formalism.
8) Discuss Roman Jakobson's model of communication.
9) How does Jakobson differentiate metaphor and metonymy?
10) How would you analyze Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of Dialogism?
11) What is Gerard Genette's contribution to narratology?
12) Analyze the five "codes" of a narrative developed by Roland Barthes.

Short-answer type questions

1) Explain the following:
    a. Langue and Parole
    b. Signifier and Signified
    c. Literariness

d. Defamiliarisation
e. Heteroglossia
f. Chronotope
g. Carnival
h. Focalisation

2) What do you know of Boris Eichenbaum's theory of *Skaz*
3) Write a short note on the Prague School.
4) What, according to A.J. Greimas, are the three *syntagms* of every narrative?
5) Analyze the "narrative levels" in Gerard Genette's model.

BLOCK I

SUB-UNIT I

SCHOOLS OF CRITICISM

READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 3 (a) : An Introduction To Reader-Response Criticism

Unit 3 (b): Major Exponents Of Reader-Response Criticism:

(i) Stanley Fish
(ii) Wolfgang Iser
(iii) Hans Robert Jauss

Unit 3 (c): Defining Readers and their Types

Unit 4 (a): Different Modes Of Reader-Response Criticism:

(i) Transactional Reader-response Theory
(ii) Affective Stylistics
(iii) Subjective Reader-response Theory
(iv) Psychological Reader-response Theory
(v) Social Reader-Response Theory

Unit 4 (b) Implementing Reader-Response Theory in Studying and Teaching Literature

Unit 4 (c): A Study of Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* and Its Readers

Conclusion

Works Cited

Suggested Reading List

Assignments

UNIT 3

Unit 3 (a): An Introduction To Reader-Response Criticism

Reader-response criticism, as its name implies, focuses on readers' responses to literary texts. Attention to the reading process emerged during the 1930s as a reaction against the growing tendency to reject the reader's role in creating meaning, a tendency that became a formal principle of New Criticism that dominated the critical practice in the 1940s and 1950s. The New Critics believed that the timeless meaning of a text is ingrained in the text alone. Its meaning is not a product of the authorial intention, neither does it change with the readers' responses. Gaining its impetus in the mid-1970s, Reader-response criticism is concerned with the relationship between the text and the reader and vice versa, with the emphasis on the varied ways in which a reader participates in the course of reading a text and the different perspectives which arise in the relationship.

Louise Rosenblatt's "Literature as Exploration" (1937) is often believed to have initiated a shift from the text and the author to the role of the reader in producing meaning. The focus on the reader from the text and its author is also stimulated, in a way, by Roland Barthes's famous proclamation in his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) that, " To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing." Instead, he argued that in order to "give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth; the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author."

Fundamentally, a text, whatever it be (poem, short story, novel, essay, scientific exposition), has no real existence until it is read. Its meaning lies *in potentia*, so to speak. A reader contemplates its meaning by reading it. The reading is complementary; it "actualizes" potential meaning. The reader, therefore, does not have, as had been traditionally perceived, a passive role. On the contrary, the reader is an active agent in the creation of meaning.

Thus, Reader-response criticism maintains that a text cannot have its complete meaning alone; and the theorists of this school, s proposed by Lois Tyson, share two beliefs:

a) That the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature, and

b) That readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text.

Reader-response critics believe that a single text can be read and interpreted in diverse ways. In fact, even the same reader who is reading the same text on two different occasions will probably produce different interpretations, because so many factors contribute to our understanding of the text.

Unit 3 (b): Major Exponents Of Reader-Response Criticism:

i) Stanley Fish

"…it is the structure of the reader's experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description."

- *Interpreting the Variorum* (1976)

One of the pioneering theorists of Reader-response criticism, Stanley Eugene Fish was born April 19, 1938, at the state of Rhode Island in the New England region of the United States. A Jewish by origin, his father had migrated from Poland in his youth and had wanted his son to be educated in the proper way. On his father's motivation and endeavour, Fish became the first member of his family to have a formal education, completing his Undergraduate course in 1959 from the University of Pennsylvania, and Masters from Yale University in 1960.

On earning an M.A. from a reputed American institute, Fish started his academic career as a Lecturer at the University of California, where he was entitled to teach John Milton in class. An amateurish in the field of early modern English literature, the teaching assignment opened new horizons of interpretation for the young Fish, who offered new modes of studying the cult text in his phenomenal work *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1967). The book reconciled two contradictory claims regarding Milton (one which believed that Milton was the "devil's party" without knowing it, and the other which viewed him sympathetically as the one who aimed to deliver "the ways of God to men") and produced a single overarching thesis that *Paradise Lost* is a poem about how it came to be

the way they are - that is, fallen—and the poem's lesson is proven on a reader's impulse every time he or she finds a devilish action attractive or a godly action dismaying. His next work *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (1972) emphasises upon the importance of words in the reading process and the reader's understanding of such "self-consuming artefacts" as Plato's Phaedrus, Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, John Donne's *Death's Duel*, Sir Francis Bacon's *Essays*, John Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress*, John Milton's *The Reason of Church Government*, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*.

In his subsequent essay "Interpreting the Variorum" (1976), Fish introduced his idea of "interpretive communities", which he elaborated in his book *Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Com*munities (1980). Taking its cue from the "Variorum" edition of the poems of John Milton, Fish argues that the reader's activities should be "the center of attention, where they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as having meaning." These activities, which include the making and revising of many kinds of decisions, are already interpretative by nature, hence a description of them will be an interpretation.

Fish is argument is centred on a particular kind of reader, whom he calls the "intended reader", whose education, opinions, concerns, linguistic competences . . . make him capable of having the experience the author wished to provide." He believes that it is the reader's experiences of the text which produces meaning, and this formation of meaning, Fish perceives, to be the primary goal of readers: "the efforts of readers are always efforts to discern and therefore to realize (in the sense of becoming) an author's intention."

Fish's argument, therefore, directly contradicts the opinion of the New Critics and the Formalists who viewed the text as the prime factor in generating meaning. Rather, he views the readers as prime agents of generating meaning, who become part of "interpretive communities" and contribute to the meaning-making process.

ii) Wolfgang Iser

Against a narrow focus on "the text itself", Reader-response theorists and critics of the 1970s turned to consider the role of the reader. The "Constance School" in Germany was the most prominent in advocating the "aesthetics of reception".

Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007), a prominent member of the "Constance School", focused primarily on the ways in which texts are actively constructed by individual readers through the phenomenology of the reading process. Iser believed that "central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient."

According to him, a literary work has two poles – the artistic and the aesthetic. While the artistic pole belongs to the author, the aesthetic pole is the reader's pole. The work or text is situated between these two poles.

Following the psychological structures of communication suggested by the Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing, Iser talks about the dyadic relationship between the text and the reader. He argues that the lack of ascertainably and defined intention brings about the text and the reader; and in this sense, it is linked with social interaction. It is these 'gaps' which constitute the fundamental asymmetry between the text and the reader that gives rise to the communication in the reading process.

In his book *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (1972), Iser argues that the literary texts provide the foundation for the interpretation, but they also imply the action of the reader. Reading, as Iser proposes, is not a passive exercise, but is a process of discovery. The reader questions, negate, and revises the expectations that the text establishes, filling in the "blanks" or "gaps" in the text and continually modifying his or her interpretation.

Similar to Fish's idea of "intended reader", Iser proposes the notion of an "implied reader" who is firmly rooted in the structure of the text. In *The Act of Reading* (1978), Iser states, "…we must allow for the reader's presence without in any way predetermining his character or his historical situation. We may call him, for want of a better term, the implied reader…he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader." Iser further argues that text provides "sets of instructions" or a "repertoire" that the reader must

assemble so that the interpretation depends on both the text and the response, producing the "virtual text".

While addressing the question in the article "Do I Write for an Audience?"(2000). Iser clarifies, " Reception theory was a reaction to what appeared to be a stalemate in literary studies. Of paramount concern for this theory was the impact a piece of literature has on its readers and the responses it elicits. Instead of asking what the text means, I asked what it does to its potential readers…. The message (of the text) that was no longer to be ascertained triggered interest in what has since been called text processing—what happens to the text in reading. This is undoubtedly the decisive shift in literary theory; it is a shift from meaning to the aesthetic processes constituting it. " Consequently, aesthetic response, as the hallmark of reception theory, is to be conceived in terms of interaction between text and reader. I call it aesthetic response because it stimulates the reader's imagination, which in turn gives life to the intended effects."

iii) Hans Robert Jauss

Another prominent figure of Reader-response Criticism, Hans Robert Jauss (1921-1977) was also a member of the "Constance School", and has received critical acclaim for his contribution towards the history of reception in literary interpretation. Influenced by phenomenological ideas like Iser, Jauss viewed the literary work as an event rather than a fixed object.

In his essay "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" (1970), Jauss examines the history of reception. He proclaims the importance of literary history while criticising its accepted forms, which centres on individual authors, genres, or current ideas. Traditional models of literary history like those offered by the Modern poet and critic T.S. Eliot, and later by Harold Bloom, focus on the genius of individual authors in the lineage of great works. Jauss, on the other hand, argues for expanding literary history to encompass the context and the recipient of a work. He believed that it is only through a rigorous study of the history of a work's reception, that one can fully understand it. To expand his ideas, he presents seven key theses:

First Thesis: Jauss argues in favour of the removal of historical objectivism with the insistence that the focus should be on the aesthetics of reception and influence: "The historicity of literature rests not on an organisation of 'literary facts'…but rather on the preceding experience of the literary work by its reader."

He relates the "coherence of literature" with the "horizon of expectation" of the readers, critics, authors and their posterity. The possibility of comprehension and representation of the history of literature depends upon the objectification of the horizon of expectations.

Second Thesis: According to Jauss, if the literary experience of the reader is described within the "objectifiable system of expectations", it may help in avoiding the psychological drawbacks. This objectifiable set of expectations include an understanding of genres, forms an themes of previous works and a cognition of difference between poetic language and practical language.

Third Thesis: Jauss argues that the aesthetic value of a work can be determined by the way in which it effects the "horizon of expectations". When the horizon of the audience changes, and adapts itself to the aesthetics of new work, it results in the "horizontal change". If the work fulfils the horizon of expectation, then no "horizontal change" will take place and the audience will enjoy it according to the prevalent norm of the aesthetics.

Fourth Thesis: Jauss believes that when a work is created, reconstruction of the audience's "horizon of expectations" helps to envisage how the reader could have constructed the meaning and encounter the meaning posited by the text. As he states: "It brings to view the hermeneutic differences between the former and the current understanding of work, it raises to consciousness the history of reception…that its objective meaning determined once and for all, is at all times immediately accessible to the interpreter."

Fifth Thesis: The theory of aesthetics of reception serves two purposes: first of all, it conceives the meaning of a work in its historical context, and secondly, it helps in serializing the literary work to recognise its conspicuousness in the context of the experience of literature. The transition the history of reception of works to eventful history of literature renders the author's passivity. To put it in a simple way, the subsequent work can solve the problems presented by the previous work and simultaneously confront new problems.

Sixth Thesis: Jauss talks about the linguistic usage of diachronic-synchronic relationship which is helpful in overcoming the diachronic perspective in literary history. For him, the focus must be on :heterogenous multiplicity of contemporaneous works in equivalent, opposing, and hierarchal structures, and thereby to discover an overarching system of relationships in the literature of historical moment."

Seventh Thesis: in his final move, Jauss argues that diachronic and synchronic systems are not sufficient to represent literary history. A visualization of "special history" in relation to "general history" is also required. Jauss refers to the relationship of the reader with literature and reality, the "horizon of expectations" and the reader's understanding of the world which subsequently affects his social behaviour. Therefore, literary history should be connected with the reader's real world.

Jauss views literary history not as a series of unchanging 'objective" facts, but as a record of 'trans subjective" experience of readers. He is in favour of the opinion that interpretation does not evolve out of the reader's experience, but from an "objectifiable" set of expectations provided by a consensus of actual historical readers. This idea is similar to Stanley Fish's proposal that interpretation derives from an established consensus of the readers joined in "interpretative communities". But while Fish's conception has been criticised as being historical and static, Jauss accounts for the historical construction of and change within such communities.

Unit 3 (c): Defining Readers and their Types

Before moving on to the discussion of diverse aspects of Reader-response Criticism, we need to understand different categories of readers who play a vital role in deciphering the meaning of a text. As Tyson observes, some reader-response theorists refer to "readers" while others refer to "the reader." When theorists discuss actual readers whose responses they analyse, as Norman Holland and David Bleich do, for example, they refer to them as "readers" or "students" or call them by some other name that denotes real people. Many theorists, however, analyse the reading experience of a hypothetical ideal reader encountering a specific text, as we saw, for example, in our examination of affective

stylistics. In these cases, references to "the reader" are references to the critic analysing his or her own carefully documented reading experience of a specific text according to specific reader-response principles. Because the experience of hypothetical readers may or may not correspond to the experience of actual readers, some hypothetical readers have been given names that describe the reading activity they represent. Thus, in Fish's practice of affective stylistics, he refers to the informed reader: the reader who has attained the literary competency necessary to experience the text as Fish himself does, in the fullness of its linguistic and literary complexity, and who conscientiously tries to suppress the personal or idiosyncratic dimension of his or her response. Of course, there is a variety of informed readers because the informed reader of, say, Emily Dickinson's poetry may or may not be the informed reader of Richard Wright's fiction. Other terms you may run across that refer to similar hypothetical readers include the educated reader, the ideal reader, and the optimal reader. Analogously, Wolfgang Iser uses the term implied reader, by which he means the reader that the text seems to be addressing, whose characteristics we can deduce by studying the style in which the text is written and the apparent "attitude" of the narrative toward the reader. Thus, the implied reader of a Harlequin romance is quite different from the implied reader of a philosophical novel like Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) or the implied reader of a psychologically intense, historical novel like Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Other terms you may encounter that refer to readers implied by the text include the intended reader and the narrator. The point here is that critics who use hypothetical readers are trying to show us what particular texts require of readers or how particular texts Reader-response criticism works to position readers in order to guide their interpretations. Whether or not readers accept that guidance or are even aware of it is another matter. Of course, there are many more reader-response concepts than the ones discussed above. Our purpose here is merely to introduce you to the main ideas, the general principles you need to know in order to read reader-response theorists and literary critics with some understanding of the issues they raise. Naturally, some literary works will seem to lend themselves more readily than others to reader-response analysis or at least to certain kinds of reader-response analysis. And unlike many other theories addressed in this textbook, a reader-response analysis of a literary text is often an analysis not of the text itself but of the responses of actual readers. Mary Lowe-Evans, for example, analysed the oral and written responses of college juniors and seniors in her literature class in order to learn how students today form attitudes toward a specific literary text and how those attitudes determine their interpretation of it. The text she used was Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein (1818), and she mapped the ways in which the following factors influenced students' interpretations of the novel: film versions of the novel (which created students' preconceptions of the text), her own interpretive prompts (whose story is this? what does the novel mean? is the narrator reliable?), and the determinate and indeterminate meanings in the text itself. Among other findings, Lowe Evans confirmed the reader-response notion that interpretation is an ongoing process that evolves as readers use different interpretive strategies to actively work their way through a text. She also learned that preconceptions created by film versions of the novel, in which the monster is very different from Shelley's monster, facilitated certain interpretations of the story while frustrating others. Analogously, particular textual elements, such as the formal style of the tale's "Preface" and the epistolary format that opens the narrative (the story is presented as a series of letters from the narrator to his sister), counteracted the students' expectations of a superficial, entertaining monster story. Whatever kind of analysis is undertaken, however, the ultimate goal of Reader-response criticism is to increase our understanding of the reading process by investigating the activities in which readers engage and the effects of those activities on their interpretations.

UNIT 4

Unit 4 (a): Different Modes Of Reader-Response Criticism

i) Transactional Reader-response Theory

Often associated with the work of Louise Rosenblatt, the Transactional Reader-response theory analyses the transaction between the text and the reader. Rosenblatt doesn't reject the importance of the text in favour of the reader; rather, she clarifies the importance of both in producing meaning. She differentiates among the terms *text,* which refers to the printed words on the page; *reade*r; and *poem*, which refers to the literary work produced by the text and the reader altogether.

Regarding the process of transaction, Rosenblatt argues that when we read a text, it acts as a *stimulu*s to which we respond in our own way. In addition to it, while we read the text at various points, the text acts as a *blueprint* that we can use to correct our interpretation when we realise that it has gone too far from what written on the page. This process of correcting our interpretation as we move through the text usually results in our going back to reread earlier sections in light of some new development in the text. Thus, the text guides our self-corrective process as we read and will continue to do so after the reading is finished if we go back and reread portions, or the entire text, in order to develop or complete our interpretation. Thus the creation of the poem, the literary work, is a product of the transaction between text and reader, both of which are equally important to the process.

For this transaction between text and reader to occur, however, our approach to the text must be, in Rosenblatt's words, aesthetic rather than *efferent*. When we read in the efferent mode, we focus just on the information contained in the text, as if it were a storehouse of facts and ideas that we could carry away with us. Lois Tyson cites the example of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) which is a play about a traveling salesman who kills himself so that his son will receive his life-insurance money" is an example of an efferent stance toward the text. In contrast, when we read in the aesthetic mode, we experience a personal relationship to the text that focuses our attention on the emotional subtleties of its language and encourages us to make judgments. "In Death of a Salesman, Willy Loman's plight is powerfully evoked by the contrast between his small house, bathed in soft blue light, and the large, orange-coloured apartment buildings that surround it" is an example of an aesthetic stance toward the text. Without the aesthetic approach, there could be no transaction between text and reader to analyse.

Following Wolfgang Iser's idea, one might explain what Rosenblatt refers to as the blueprint and stimulus functions of the text in terms of two kinds of meaning: determinate meaning and indeterminate meaning. Determinate meaning refers to what might be called the facts of the text, certain events in the plot or physical descriptions clearly provided by the words on the page. In contrast, indeterminate meaning, or indeterminacy refers to "gaps" in the text – such as actions that are not clearly explained or that seem to have multiple explanations – which allow or even invite the readers to create their own interpretations.

The interplay between determinate and indeterminate meanings, as we read, results in a number of ongoing experiences for the reader: retrospection, or thinking back to what we've read earlier

in the text; the anticipation of what will come next; fulfilment or disappointment of our anticipation; revision of our understanding of characters and events; and so on. For what at one point in the work appears to be determinate meaning will often, at a later point in the work, appear to be indeterminate, as our point of view shifts among the various perspectives provided by, for example, the narrator, the characters, and the events of an unfolding plot. Thus, for Iser, though the reader projects meaning onto the text, the reading activities through which we construct that meaning are pre-structured by or built into, the text. In other words, Iser believes that the text itself guides us through the processes involved in interpreting (projecting meaning onto) it.

According to transactional theorists, different readers come up with different acceptable interpretations because the text allows for a range of acceptable meanings, that is, a range of meanings for which textual support is available. Thus, transactional critical analysis relies heavily on the authority of the text, as done by the New Critics, while also ringing the reader's response to the forefront.

ii) Affective Stylistics

The idea of "affective stylistics" is formulated by Stanley Fish who has felt that a literary text is an event that occurs in time – that comes into being as it is read – rather than an object that exists in space. The text is examined closely, often line by line or even word by word, in order to understand how it (stylistics) affects the (affective) reader in the process of reading. Although there is a great deal of focus on the text (that is why some theorists consider this approach as transactional in nature), many practitioners of affective stylistics do not consider the text as an objective, autonomous entity – it does not have a fixed meaning independent of readers – because the text consists of the results it produces, an those results occur within the reader.

To elaborate it further, when Stanley Fish describes how a text is structured, the structure which he describes is the structure of the reader's response as it occurs from moment to moment, not the structure of the text as we might assemble it after we've finished reading. He himself has produced some finest examples of this procedure. For example, let us have a look at the following sentence:

> "That Judas perished by hanging himself, there is no certainty in Scripture: though in one place it seems to affirm it, and by a doubtful word hath given occasion to translate it; yet in another place, in a more punctual description, it maketh it improbable, and seems to overthrow it" ("Literature" 71).

Fish argues that the passage about Judas moves the reader from certainty to uncertainty. The first clause, "that Judas perished by hanging himself", is an assertion that can be accepted as a statement of fact. The readers begin to have a feeling of certainty that leads them, rather unconsciously, to anticipate a number of possible ways the sentence might end, all of which would confirm their certainty that Judas hanged himself. Fish offers these three examples of the kinds of endings the first clause leads us to expect.

1. That Judas perished by hanging himself is (an example for us all).
2. That Judas perished by hanging himself shows (how conscious he was of the enormity of his sin).
3. That Judas perished by hanging himself should (give us pause) ["Literature" 71].

But, with the presence of the three words "there is no" arise doubt in the reader's mind, and makes him feel that "there is no certainty". Now the fact of Judas hanging himself, upon which our understanding of the sentence has rested, becomes uncertain. Thus, the reader is involved in a completely different activity. As Fish puts it, " Rather than following an argument along a well-lighted path (a light, after all, has gone out), [the reader] is now looking for one." ("Literature" 71). In such a situation, the reader will tend to read on in hopes of finding clarification. But as we continue to read the passage, our uncertainty only increases as we move back and forth between words that seem to promise clarity—"place," "affirm," "place," "punctual," "overthrow"—and words that seem to withdraw that promise: "though," "doubtful," "yet," "improbable," "seems." Uncertainty is further increased by the excessive use of the pronoun it because, as the sentence progresses, the reader has more and more difficulty figuring out what it refers to.

In addition to an analysis of the reading activities that structure the reader's response, other kinds of evidence are usually gathered to further support the claim that the text is about the experience of reading. For example, most practitioners of affective stylistics will cite the responses of other readers—of other literary critics, for example—to show that their own analyses of the reading activities provided by a particular text are valid for readers other than

just themselves. A critic might even cite an extreme divergence of critical opinion about the text to support, for example, the contention that the text provides an unsettelling, decentring, or confusing reading experience. This wouldn't mean that the text is flawed but that by unsettling the reader it demonstrates, say, the fact that interpretation of written texts, and perhaps of the world, is a problematic endeavour from which we should not expect to achieve certainty.

Although many practitioners of affective stylistics believe that the text, an independent object, disappears in their analysis and becomes what it really is – an experience that occurs within the reader – their use of thematic evidence, as we've just seen it, underscores the important role played by the text in establishing what the reader's experience is.

iii) Subjective Reader-response Theory

In stark contrast to the principle of affective stylistics and to all forms of transactional reader-response theory, subjective reader-response theory does not call for an analysis of textual cues. For the subjective reader-response critics, led by the work of David Bleich, reader's responses constitute a text in itself, both in the sense that there is no literary text beyond the meanings created by the reader's interpretations, and in the sense that the text which the critic analyses is not the literary work, but the written responses of the readers.

David Bleich makes a distinction between what he calls *real objects* and *symbolic objects*. Real objects are physical objects, such as tables, chairs, books, and the like. The printed pages of a literary text are also real objects; however, the experience created when someone reads these printed pages, like language itself, is a symbolic object, because it occurs not in the physical world, but in the conceptual world, that is, in the mind of the reader. This is why Bleich calls reading - the feelings, associations, and memories that occur as we react subjectively to the printed words on the page – symbolization: our perception and identification of our reading experience create a conceptual or symbolic world in our mind as we read. Therefore, when we interpret the meaning of a text, we are actually interpreting the meaning of our own symbolization. Thus, Bleich calls the act of interpretation *resymbolization*. Resymbolization occurs when our experience of the text produces in us a desire for explanation.

Bleich, whose primary interest is pedagogical, offers us a method for teaching students how to use their responses to learn about literature, or more accurately, about literary responses. Subjective criticism an what he calls the subjective classroom are based on the belief that all knowledge is subjective. While treating the classroom as a community, Bleich's methods help students to learn how communities produce knowledge an show the individual member of the community can function as a part of the process.

Although Bleich believes that, hypothetically, every response statement is valid within the context of some group of readers for whose purpose it is useful, he stresses that, in order to be useful to the classroom community, a response statement must be negotiable into knowledge about reading experiences. By this, he means that it must contribute to the group's production of knowledge about the experience of reading a specific literary text, not about the reader or the reality outside the reader. Response statements that are reader-oriented substitute one's reading experience. They are confined largely to comments about the reader's memories, interests, personal experiences, and the like, with little or no reference to the relationship between these comments and the experience of reading the text. Reader-oriented response statements lead to group discussions of personalities and personal problems that may be useful in a psychologist's office but, for Bleich, do not contribute to the group's understanding of the reading experience at hand.

In contrast, the response statements Bleich promotes are experience-oriented. They discuss the reader's reactions to the text, describing exactly how specific passages made the reader feel, think, or associate. Such response statements include judgments about specific characters, events, passages, and even words in the text. The personal associations and memories of personal relationships that are woven throughout these judgments allow others to see what aspects of the text affected the reader in what ways and for what reasons. Bleich cites one student's description of the ways in which particular characters and events in a text reminded her of her sexuality as a young girl. Her response statement moved back and forth between her reactions to specific scenes in the text and the specific experiences they recalled in her adolescence.

In addition, the experience-oriented response statement is analysed by the reader in a response-analysis statement. Here the reader

(1) characterizes his or her response to the text as a whole;

(2) identifies the various responses prompted by different aspects of the text, which, of course, ultimately led to the student's response to the text as a whole; and

(3) determines why these responses occurred.

Responses may be characterized, for example, enjoyment, discomfort, fascination, disappointment, relief, or satisfaction, and may involve any number of emotions, such as fear, joy, and anger. A student's response-analysis statement might reveal that certain responses resulted, for example, from identification with a particular character, from the vicarious fulfillment of a desire, from the relief of (or increase of) a guilty feeling, or the like. The goal here is for students to understand their responses, not merely report them or make excuses for them. Thus, a response-analysis statement is a thorough, detailed explanation of the relationship among specific textual elements, specific personal responses, and the meaning the text has for the student as a result of his or her personal encounter with it.

iv) Psychological Reader-response Theory

A leading Psychoanalytic critic Norman Holland also believes that reader's motives strongly influence the process of reading. He focuses on what reader's interpretations reveal about themselves, not about the text. He believes that we react to literary texts with the same psychological responses that we bring to events in our daily lives. The immediate goal of interpretation, like the immediate psychological goal of our daily lives, is to fulfil our psychological needs and desires. When we perceive a textual threat to our psychological equilibrium, we must interpret the text in some way that will restore that equilibrium. Imagine, for example, two readers who, at some point in their lives, have felt victimized—perhaps "picked on" by siblings, rejected by peers, or neglected by a parent—for reasons beyond their control. s, rejected by peers, or neglected by a parent—for reasons beyond their control. These readers' defences probably would be raised by the character of Pecola in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) because they would perceive her as a victim as they themselves had been. In other words, reading about Pecola would probably remind them of their own painful childhood isolation. The first reader might cope with this textual threat by interpreting the novel in a way that condemns Pecola instead of the characters who torment her: for example, Pecola instigates

her own victimization by behaving in such a passive manner and refusing to stand up for herself. In this way, the reader identifies with the aggressor, rather than with the victim, and temporarily relieves his own psychological pain. The second reader for whom victimized characters threaten to stimulate painful childhood memories might cope with Pecola by minimizing the character's suffering, focusing instead on some positive quality Pecola retains intact: for example, Pecola is the only character in the novel who never hurts anyone, and she will remain forever in a state of childlike innocence. This reader denies Pecola's psychological pain in order to deny her own. Other readers upon whom victim figures have a personal psychological impact would have to cope with Pecola, too, and they would do so in the same ways they cope with their relationships to victimization in their own lives.

Holland calls the pattern of our psychological conflicts and coping strategies our identity theme. He believes that in our daily lives we project that identity theme onto every situation we encounter and thus perceive the world through the lens of our psychological experience. Analogously, when we read literature, we project our identity theme, or variations of it, onto the text. That is, in various ways we unconsciously recreate in the text the world that exists in our own mind. Our interpretations, then, are products of the fears, defences, needs, and desires we project onto the text. Interpretation is thus primarily a psychological process rather than an intellectual one. A literary interpretation may or may not reveal the meaning of the text, but to a discerning eye, it always reveals the psychology of the reader. The reason why the psychological dimension of our interpretations is not readily apparent to ourselves and others is that we unconsciously couch it in aesthetic, intellectual, social, or moral abstractions to relieve the anxiety and guilt our projections arouse in us. For example, the two hypothetical readers who react to Pecola as described above might interpret the character—respectively, as the representative of self-destructive human frailty, like the biblical Eve, or in contrast, as the representative of spiritual innocence—without realizing that their interpretations emerged from their own unconscious psychological conflicts. Holland's definition of interpretation can thus be summarized as a process consisting of three stages or modes that occur and recur as we read. First, in the defence mode, our psychological defences are raised by the text (for example, we find Pecola threatening because she reminds us of our own experience of victimization). Second, in the fantasy mode, we find a way to interpret the text that will tranquilize those defences and thus fulfil our desire to be protected from threats to our psychological equilibrium (for example, we minimize Pecola's pain by focusing on the childlike innocence that will remain forever hers). Third, in the transformation mode, we transform the first two steps into

an abstract interpretation so that we can get the psychological satisfaction we desire without acknowledging to ourselves the anxiety-producing defences and guilt-producing fantasies that underlie our assessment of the text (for example, we decide that Pecola represents spiritual innocence). Thus, in the mode of transformation, we focus on an intellectual interpretation of the text in order to avoid our own emotional response to it, and we ignore the fact that our intellectual interpretation grew out of our emotional response.

Holland's definition of interpretation can, therefore, be summarised as a process of consisting three stages or modes that occur as we read. First, in *defence* mode, our psychological defences are raised by the text. Second, in the *fantasy* mode, we find a way to interpret the text that will tranquilize those defences and thus fulfil our desire to be protected from threats to our psychological equilibrium. Third, in the *transformation* mode, we transform the first two steps into an abstract interpretation so that we can get the psychological satisfaction we desire without acknowledging to ourselves the anxiety-producing defences and guilt-producing fantasies that underlie our assessment of the text.

For Holland, the purpose of such an analysis is an empathic merger with the author. Whether we're analysing a person or a literary text, every act of interpretation takes place within the context of the interpreter's identity theme, which, as we have seen, sets up defences against as well as a desire for such a merger. It is therefore the interpreter's task to break through the psychological barriers that separate self from others. Understanding an author's identity theme, Holland believes, allows us to fully experience, as a "mingling of self and other" (132), the gift the artist offers us.

v) Social Reader-Response Theory

While the individual reader's subjective response to the literary text plays a crucial role in the subjective reader-response theory, for social reader-response theory, usually associated with the later work of Stanley Fish, there is no purely individual subjective response. According to Fish, what we take to be our individual subjective responses to literature are really products of the interpretive community to which we belong. By interpretive community, Fish means those who share the interpretive strategies we bring to texts when we read, whether or not we realize we're using interpretive strategies and whether or not we are aware that other people share

them. These interpretive strategies always result from various sorts of institutionalized assumptions (assumptions established, for example, in high schools, churches, and colleges by prevailing cultural attitudes and philosophies) about what makes a text a piece of literature—instead of a letter or a legal document or a church sermon—and what meanings we are supposed to find in it. An interpretive community can be as sophisticated and aware of its critical enterprise as the community produced by the followers of a specific Marxist critical theorist. Or an interpretive community can be as unsophisticated and unaware of its interpretive strategies as the community produced by a high school teacher who instructs his students that it is natural to read literature in search of static symbols that tell us the "hidden meaning" of the story. Of course, interpretive communities aren't static; they evolve over time. And readers can belong, consciously or unconsciously, to more than one community at the same time, or they can change from one community to another at different times in their lives. In any case, all readers come to the text already predisposed to interpret it in a certain way based on whatever interpretive strategies are operating for them at the time they read. Thus, while Bleich believes his students produce communal authority through a negotiation that occurs after they've read the text, Fish claims that a multiplicity of communal authorities, based on the multiplicity of interpretive communities to which students already belong, determines how students read the text in the first place. In other words, for Fish, readers do not interpret poems; they create them. He demonstrated this point rather dramatically when he taught two college courses back to back. At the end of his first-class, he wrote an assignment on the board that consisted of the following list of linguists' names his students were studying.

Social reader-response theory doesn't offer us a new way to read texts. Nor does it promote any form of literary criticism that already exists. After all, its point is that no interpretation, and therefore no form of literary criticism, can claim to reveal what's in a text. Each interpretation will simply find whatever its interpretive strategies put there. This doesn't mean, however, that we are left with the anarchy of unconstrained interpretation. As Fish notes, interpretations will always be controlled by the relatively limited repertoire of interpretive strategies available at any given point in history. By understanding the principles of social reader-response theory, however, we can become more aware of what it is we're doing when we interpret a text and more aware of what our peers and students are doing as well. Such awareness could be especially useful to teachers by helping them analyse their students' interpretive strategies; helping them decide if and when to try to replace those strategies with others, and helping them take responsibility for the strategies they choose to teach instead of hiding behind the belief

that certain ways of reading are natural or inherently right because they represent what's in the text.

Unit 4 (b) Implementing Reader-Response Theory in Studying and Teaching Literature

Based on the nature of the Reader-response theory, Ririn Kurnia Itsnawati argues, it is believed that readers are the ones that shape and become the core source of learning a particular literary text. Hence, studying and teaching literature using the Reader-response approach could not be more interesting and interactive. If teaching literature is to accommodate the students' role in making an interpretation, it is supposed to place them as active readers to interpret and shape the meaning of that particular literary works. The alternative of studying and teaching literature is not preaching or directing them into a specific meaning decided previously any longer. Studying literature is not based on the teacher's "ideology" or interpretation prepared before she enters the classroom. Teachers will have to give students opportunity and space to develop their opinion and argumentation to shape and define what a particular text means to them as students are active readers. Besides, the procedure of applying Reader-response theory will make readers more engaged in the understanding of the literary Journal of English and Education, work, mingle with other readers, and leam various opinions, responses, and insight from the readers/students instead of a single interpretation only from the teacher.

In her report on "Implementing Reader-Response Theory: An Alternative Way of Teaching Literature", Itisnawati (2009) states that the concept of students/ learners-centered learning or Learners-Center Classroom(LCC) has been recognized as an advancement of teaching and learning theories and approached since the first half of the twentieth century. The premise of this approach/ teaching method is to place and to encourage learners to be active and enthusiastic in the classroom. This is due to the fact that the former teaching method, especially language and literature subjects, has made students/learners reluctant to be active. It is when teachers have become the sole center attention and have played a dominant role as the source of knowledge and interpretation. As a result, this condition discourages the activeness and optimism of the students and leads to hampering the spirit of leaming in the long run. Further, in this case, according to McCombs and Whisler (1997:9), LCC has been defined as the

perspective that couples a focus on individual learners(their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs) with a focus on learning (the best available knowledge about leaming and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, leaming, and achievement for all learners). It gives a further understanding that LCC is a combination of focus among students by considering their various backgrounds and interests involved within and during the teaching and leaming process in order to achieve a certain level of knowledge and understanding. This brings further impacts that by employing LCC the roles of teachers will be a bit different from those of the previous method of teaching e.g. they will function as a guide and or facilitator. Here, students will be the readers and the active learners whereas teachers will be the moderator, guide, and facilitator of creating and shaping the meaning and responses upon that particular literary piece. By vocalizing various responses, opinions, and interpretations, students are constructing and presenting the earlier knowledge of the text's interpretation. Students will interact with each other by giving and asking opinions; therefore, they will be actively engaged and involved. Students will not directly gain knowledge from their teachers; they will transfer the knowledge from their fellow students. Hence, the outcome is having active, interactive, and autonomous students with their deep and independent learning ina very cooperative and collaborative classroom. Furthermore, the resonance between reader-response theory and LCC carries on the several terms exercised in the implementation of LCC. If LCC-is implemented, some other benefits can be taken into account. They are related to psychological principles in LCC e.g. metacognitive and cognitive, affective, developmental, personal, and social as well as individual differences. McCombs and Whisler (1997:5) have defined them deeper. Metacognitive and cognitive psychological principles justify the nature of LCC. In a learner-centered classroom, there is a seeking of knowledge process which is active, personal, and meaningful. Students' cognitive power is also exposed in a way that they have to think about knowledge and interpretation of the literary work, and it requires significant higher-order thinking. As a result, students have to facilitate themselves with creativity and critical thinking in the teaching and learning process as well as achieving the interpretation of that literary work.

Unit 4 (c): A Study of Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* and its Readers – by Ririn Kurnia Itisnawati

Ririn Kurnia Itisnawati (2009) undertakes a study of Booker T. Washington's Up from Slavery from the perspective of Reader-response Theory. It is an autobiography written by one of the best African-American literary figures. This masterpiece consists of several chapters depicting how Washington had undergone his life as a slave in Franklin County, Virginia, had been a sporadic student to achieve fundamental literacy, and had gained success as an educator for Black people, eventually. This sequence of life, issues on slavery, oppression, and racial discrimination are the major theme that is depicted throughout the autobiography. This is one of the universal issues that worth analyzing and gaining attention from its readers. Therefore, this work was chosen though there was no prior information about the theme of the autobiography. It means that readers/ students were given the work to read without telling them what it was about. This is one part of consequences to employ the Reader-response theory i.e. readers are not guided by some preconceptions that later might influence them in a way responding and giving an interpretation of the autobiography. Hence, readers were free to assume the context and the theme of the work. The readers or the students are some students joining the Elite-Club. They were students of the first year and the third year. There Were no special requirements to join the club and no limitation on the number of club members. The students actively participated in this club were about 6 (six) students. The club ran for one month only as the writer gained and collected the data. The students' activities were receiving the text and were given a week to finish the given text-only some chapters of the autobiography; in addition, they read individually and then gathered in a classroom to discuss the work after a week. They were also writing their responses and commenting on others' responses and interpretations of the work. This activity has remarked the application of Reader-response theory in the study of a literary text. Further, for several meetings, students were gathering, transferring knowledge on their responses and opinions, and learning each other, too. At this point, they placed themselves as the source of information. Until in the last meeting, the gathering was purposely to discuss the final interpretation as the main meaning of that particular autobiography. Meanwhile, the writer that happened to be the moderator of the club and the teacher of the classroom was playing her roles as facilitator and guide. She only gave comments and contributions when the discussion was out of the topic and when the students asked her for confirmation and new information. This situation has been in line with the nature of the learners-centered classroom. Besides, in order to undergo the valid data collection, she did that on purpose meaning that she intentionally gave fewer contributions and involvement

on the teaching and learning process on the discussion of Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery*.

Conclusion

Since its emergence in the 1970s, Reader-response theory has been an influential mode of analysis. Taking its cue from the Poststructuralist tradition, the literary school firmly established the reader's role in interpreting or analysing literary texts. The Reader-response critics claimed that the text comes alive only with the readers' active participation in and interaction with the text. Each 'transaction' is a unique experience in which the reader and the text continuously act, and are acted upon by each other. A written work does not have the same meaning for everyone, for each reader brings his/her individual background knowledge, beliefs, and subjective understanding into the reading act. In Rosenblatt's view, the reader/readers ensured that every book yielded many interpretations through the reader response initiative. In recent years, the Reader-response critical approach is useful in reading works of fiction, novels and short stories alike to produce varied interpretations of literary texts.

Reader-response theory is based on an effort to illuminate the relationship between the reader and the text. The underlying idea is that "literary texts frequently contain social dilemmas and conflicts. Such reading demands personal responses from readers" (Yang, 2002, p. 50). In order for readers to make sense of these literary texts, the theory tends to focus on a range of different roles readers should adopt when they are engaged in the process of reading. Reader response theory is grounded upon the assumption that in a reading experience readers act a part as much as the text to make an interpretation. Reader response theory rejects new criticism, which is based on the idea that meaning is solely generated by the text, and can only be discovered by improved analytic skills. By privileging them as experience builders in attempting to construct meaning, Reader-response theory considers readers as active agents who deal with the creation of meaning. As part of their engagement with texts, readers endeavour to arrive at an interpretation by drawing on their background knowledge and experiences. In this process, readers assume a highly active role in meaning construction. In focusing on the mutual relationship between the text and the reader, Reader-response theory posits that meaning can

be negotiated only after the convergence between the reader and the text. In other words, a literary text is brought into existence by means of a transactional process, in which a reciprocal bond between the text and the reader is created because “the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or the realization of the text but in fact must lie halfway between the two” (Iser, 1972, p. 269).

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Assignments

Essay-Type Questions

1. What are the basic tenets of Reader-response Criticism? Discuss with suitable references.

2. Who are the main propagators of Reader-response Criticism? Briefly state their contribution to the field.

3. How does the interaction between the text and the reader generate the reading process?

4. Comment critically on the role of the reader in deciphering the meaning of a particular text.

5. How did Hans Robert Jauss contribute to the development of Reception theory? Briefly discuss his seven key theses.

6. How can the Reader-response theory be implemented in reading and teaching literature? Discuss.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. How is a particular kind of reading experience an important theme in the text?

2. How, exactly, does the text's indeterminacy function as a stimulus to interpretation?

3. What are the basic tenets of the Social Reader-response theory? Discuss briefly.

4. Write short notes on the following:

   a) Implied Reader

   b) Affective Stylistics

   c) Transactional Reader-response Theory

   d) Subjective Reader-response Theory

   e) Psychological Reader-response Theory

   f) Interpretive Communities

BLOCK II

SUB UNIT II

SCHOOLS OF CRITICISM

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 5 (a) : Introduction: Defining the terms "Colonial" and "Postcolonial"

Unit 5 (b): Some major Postcolonial theorists and Critics:

(i) Aimé Césaire
(ii) Frantz Fanon
(iii) Edward Said
(iv) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
(v) Homi K. Bhabha
(vi) Ngugi Wa Thing' O

Unit 5 (c): Some Key Terms Related to Postcolonialism:

(i) Imperialism
(ii) Third World
(iii) Hybrid Identities
(iv) Subaltern Studies

Unit 6 (a): A Psychoanalytical Approach to Postcolonialism

Unit 6 (b): Third World or Postcolonial Feminism

Unit 6 (c): Postcolonial Criticism and Literature

Conclusion

Works Cited

Suggested Reading List

Assignments

UNIT 5

Unit 5 (a) : Introduction: Defining the terms "Colonial" and "Postcolonial"

The last couple of decades have witnessed the publication of a vast number of cultural critiques of empire and its aftermath, designated under the category of "postcolonial". Before addressing the term "Postcolonialism" and its relevance in the field of literary criticism, we need to understand what "Colonialism" was.

In general terms, "Colonialism" was a process of settlement by Europeans in non-European (roughly Asian, African, South American, Australian) countries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it meant violent exploitation and appropriation of native races and spaces by the European powers. Colonialism often destroyed native cultures or altered them significantly often producing new (hybrid) forms. The term "Postcolonial" generally refers to the culture/writing of people/nations which were once colonised by the European powers. Postcolonial theory looks at the coloniser's strategies of representation of the native; the writing of colonial histories; the feminisation, marginalisation and dehumanisation of the native; the rise of nationalist/nativist discourse; and the psychological effects of colonialism on both the coloniser and the colonised. One of the leading postcolonial critics Homi K. Bhabha defines postcolonialism as "that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonised Third World comes to be framed in the West."

The postcolonial theory attempts to uncover the colonial ideologies implicit in European texts about the Other i.e. the native/the non-European. Pramod K. Nayar notes:

> Postcolonial theory looks at colonialism's strategies of representation of the native; the epistemological underpinnings of colonial projects; the ―writing‖ of colonial histories; the feminisation, marginalisation and dehumanisation of the native; the rise of the nationalist and/or nativist discourse; the psychological effects of colonialism on both the coloniser and the colonised; the role of apparatuses like education, English studies, historiography, art and architecture in the 'execution' of the colonial project and the 'transactive' or negotiatory structure of postcolonialism. (Nayar 165)

Postcolonial theory is concerned with exclusion, denigration and resistance under colonial power. Elleke Boehmer in his essay "Postcolonialism" states, "…the term postcolonialism addresses itself to the historical, political, cultural, and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the West and the non-West, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day." (Boehmer: 340) Thus, postcolonial studies are concerned with the responses to colonial oppression. It is not only a critical theoretical approach in literary and cultural studies but "designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority…", notes Boehmer. (340) It questions, topples, and refracts colonial authority, and by challenging the structural inequalities, it aims at social justice. It also seeks to understand how the colonised reacted to, adapted, or resisted 2 the domination and the effects of colonialism. It analyses identity formations of the colonisers and the colonised in the literary and cultural texts. To quote Peter Berry in this regard, "If the first step towards a postcolonial perspective is to reclaim their own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued." (Berry: 186)

However, it is important to note that the terms "Post-colonial" and "Postcolonial" do not imply the same thing; they have completely different connotations. The term "Post-colonial" is a temporal marker, referring to a specific historical period after the erstwhile colonies gained independence from the European hegemony. The term "Postcolonial", on the other hand, is a tool of study, a theoretical model of analysing the discursive phenomenon.

The critical part of a definition of "postcolonial" concerns the prefix "post", which signifies two different meanings in one compound word. Theorists such as Ashcroft et al (1989:1-4), Slemon (1995:45-52), Young (1996:67-68; 2001:1-10) and Moore (2001:182-188) have tried to address this issue. Slemon (1995:100) admits that one of the most "vexed areas of debate within the field of postcolonial theory has to do with the term 'postcolonial' itself." According to Moore (2001:182), such a conception of "post(-)colonial" can be viewed as "naïve, inadequate, or utopian". By contrast, Slemon (1995:101) argues that colonialism comes into existence within the concept of imperialism, "a concept that is itself predicated within large theories of global politics and which changes radically according to the specifics of those larger theories."

Unit 5 (b): Some major Postcolonial theorists and Critics

i) AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

Aimé Césaire, a Martinican intellectual, a politician, and a distinguished writer was the founder-figure of the Negritude movement. The concept of Négritude emerged as the expression of a revolt against the historical situation of French colonialism and racism. The particular form taken by that revolt was the product of the encounter, in Paris, in the late 1920s, of three black students coming from different French colonies: Aimé Césaire (1913–2008) from Martinique, Léon Gontran Damas (1912–1978) from Guiana and Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001) from Senegal.

The proclamation of Negritude would be done when the three friends founded the journal *L'Etudiant noir*, in 1934–1935 where the word was coined by Aimé Césaire. It was meant to be (and, above all, to *sound* like) a provocation. *Nègre*, derived from the Latin "niger", meaning "black", is used in French only in relation to black people as in "art nègre". Applied to a black person it had come to be charged with all the weight of racism to the point that the insult "*sale* nègre" (*dirty* nègre) would be almost redundant, "sale" being somehow usually understood in "nègre". So to coin and claim the word "Négritude" (*Négrité*, using the French suffix *–ité* instead of *-itude* was considered and dropped) as the expression of the value of "blackness" was a way for Césaire, Senghor and Damas of defiantly turning "nègre" against the white supremacists who used it as a slur. In sum, the word was and has continued to be an irritant. Indeed the "fathers" of the movement themselves would often confess how irritated they were too by the word. Thus, Césaire declared at the beginning of a lecture he gave on February 26, 1987, at the International University of Florida in Miami: "…I confess that I do not always like the word Négritude even if I am the one, with the complicity of a few others, who contributed to its invention and its launching" adding that, still, "it corresponds to an evident reality and, in any case to a need that appears to be a deep one" (Césaire 2004, 80). "What is that reality?" Césaire proceeded then asking. That is indeed the question: is there a content and a substance of the concept of Négritude beyond the revolt and the proclamation? In other words, is Négritude mainly a posture of revolt against oppression the manifestation of which is primarily the poetry it produced or is it a particular philosophy characteristic of a black worldview? One of the most eloquent expressions of Négritude as a posture primarily is to be found in an Aimé Césaire's address delivered in Geneva on June 2nd, 1978 on the occasion of

the creation by Robert Cornman of a cantata entitled *Retour* and inspired by the *Notebooks of a Return to the Native Land*. In that address reproduced in *Aimé Césaire, pour regarder le siècle en face*, the poet from Martinique declares:

… when it appeared the literature of Négritude created a revolution: in the darkness of the great silence, a voice was raised up, with no interpreter, no alteration, and no complacency, a violent and staccato voice, and it said for the first time:

> "I, Nègre."
> A voice of revolt
> A voice of resentment
> No doubt
> But also of fidelity, a voice of freedom, and first and foremost, a voice for the retrieved identity" (Thébia-Melsan 2000, 28).

In fact, both answers have been given to that question of the posture of revolt vs. philosophical substance, at different moments and in different circumstances by Négritude writers. Nevertheless, it can be said that Césaire and Damas have put more emphasis on the dimension of poetic revolt while Senghor has insisted more on articulating Négritude as a philosophical content, as "the sum total of the values of civilization of the Black World", thus implying that it is an ontology, an aesthetics, an epistemology, or a politics.

Césaire's attack on European civilization and colonial racism in *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) deeply influenced Frantz Fanon's revolutionary manifesto *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), an examination of psychic, cultural and social damages inflicted by colonialism. Césaire parallels the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized with the relationship between Nazis and their victims. "People are astounded, they are angry. They say: "How strange that is. But then it is only Nazism, it wont last." And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves: It is savagery, the supreme savagery, it crowns, it epitomizes the day-to-day savageries; yes, it is Nazism, but before they became its victims, they were its accomplices; that Nazism they tolerated before they succumbed to it, they exonerated it, they closed their eyes to it, they legitimated it because until then it had been employed only against non-European peoples; that Nazism they encouraged, they were responsible for it, and it drips, it seeps, it wells fro every crack in western Christian civilization until it engulfs that civilization in a bloody sea."

ii) FRANTZ FANON

One of the pioneering thinkers of Postcolonial theory had been Frantz Fanon (1925-61). Born in the French colony of Martinique, and trained as a Psychiatrist, Fanon has dealt with the psychological implications of colonialism in his books like *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; translated in 1963), *A Dying Colonialism* (1959; translated in 1965) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; translated in 1967).

In *Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon* critiques the complex ways in which identity, particularly Blackness, is constructed and produced as a means of subjugating the native. For the coloniser, the most vital area of domination was the psychological domain of the colonised. Fanon argues that the coloniser brings the colonised to the domain of madness by rejecting all his individual claims. The native is made into something less than a human, a nothingness. This was achieved by focusing on the psychic differences where the native's psyche was repeatedly resented and treated as inferior. The native was always viewed and mentioned in terms of his beastly qualities. As he points out, "the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil, insensible to ethics, a negation of values."

As argued by P.K. Nayar, Fanon reworks Lacanian theories to explain the complete dehumanisation process of the native under colonialism. For the black man, the white man symbolises power. He, therefore, tries to be more like the desirable white man by putting on "white mask", which, for Fanon, is the symbol of both imitation and schizophrenia in the native. Fanon also suggests that in their act of domination and governance, the coloniser turns into a "father-figure", treating the native as his child who has to obey the law of the father. After years of unreality, of living under the spell of illusion, the colonised subjects discover reality as they realise that in the process of upliftment, of power politics they have been carried afar of their original cultural roots. They discover the forces of colonisation at work and attempt to revolt against the hegemonic rule to gain complete independence. But, as it is not easy to launch a war against their master, the violence is directed against his own people, as a symbol to work off hatred. By exhausting most of the forces in the tribal feud, the native feels that colonialism does not exist. In this "collective auto-destruction", Fanon argues, "the native's muscular tension is set free". It is a kind of "reactionary psychosis".

Colonialism, Fanon argues, projects itself as self-born and the origin of everything. Nationalism arises as a counter to this. The anti-colonial nationalist struggle in different classes

and groups in the colonies help to prevent the psychological and cultural damages of colonialism. At this stage of decolonisation, the colonised masses mock at the values of the white people. Fanon suggests that a "national literature", perhaps a "negritude" would help in overcoming the psychological damage, and enable the development of a nationalist consciousness.

Fanon's most significant contribution to the field of postcolonial theory lies in his controversial proposition concerning "revolutionary violence" as the most effective mode of opposition to the violence of colonial oppression. "His belief in the cleansing properties of violence was evidently a departure from the strategies of non-violence propounded by Gandhi as a means of exposing the inhumanity of the colonizer." (Boehmer 347). He proposes, on the contrary that it is only through exercising oppositional valence that the colonised 'non-entity' takes history into its own hands, as it were, and so becomes a marker its own future, a historical agent for the first time.

As observed by Boehmer, "In his tripartite schema or 'panorama on three levels' of anticolonial struggle, the keynote postcolonial thinker Frantz Fanon outlines how the first level of colonial assimilation will almost inevitably lead the politicized native on to a second phase of 'disturbance'. This second phase involves, amongst other features, the reconstitution of identity through the reclamation of local cultural traditions. And from this stage, Fanon argues, might eventually emerge a third or 'fighting phase'. In this last phase, the native intellectual, to whom Fanon's theory mainly applies, "after having tried to lose himself in the poeple…will on the contrary shake the people." In other words, through the process of violently seizing freedom, and asserting political power, the native intellectual learns to re-exercise agency and retrieve selfhood that was damaged under colonial oppression. Moreover, Boehmer observes, Fanon's ideas have contributed in the formation of varied interpretations of postcolonial resistance. His book *The Wretched of the Earth* became a "virtual primer" for different movements such as the African American Black Power movement of the 1960s led by Malcolm X; Ngugi wa Thiong'o's revolutionary Marxism in Kenya in the 1970s, and the activist Steve Biko's Black Consciousness movement in South Africa (1960s-1970s).

Fanon's most remarkablecontribution lies in the way he explores the connection between imp erialist domination and mentaldisorder. Fanon's humanism has been criticized by the postcol onial critics who problematise the ideaof humanism itself and explore the nexus between univ ersalism and the colonial enterprise. Fanon'sindebtedness to Western theorists like Marx, Fre

ud ,
and Nietzsche has also been interpreted as animpediment to the growth of radical politics in a non-European social context.

iii) EDWARD SAID

With the publication of his books *Orientalism* (1978), *The Question of Palestine* (1979), *Covering Islam* (1981), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said became a prominent intellectual figure and a critic of colonialist cause. Said borrows his argument from Michel Foucault's idea that power operates through systems of knowledge (gathering of information, cataloging, etc.) and applied to the ways in which authority was exercised in the colonial world. Orientalism, for Said, was a systematic discipline or discourse about the Orient/the East/Palestine, functioned as a "corporate institution" for understanding and controlling other people. As he states,

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon the ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident…Orientalism as a Western-style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient (ii).

The discourse of Orientalism deals with the production of ideas, knowledge and opinions about the Orient. These include various modes of representation of the Orient through "Othering"(where Orient was Europe's 'dark' Other). In an attempt to analyse this discourse, Said reads a wide range of texts, literary, philosophical, philological, administrative, ethnographic and others, which are worldly in the sense that they exhibit the pressures, prejudices and preoccupations around them, thereby arguing that no text is free from the context of its production. It means that knowledge and literary production cannot be considered innocent for they are complicit with the political agenda of colonialism. Certain kinds of ideological assumptions inform these texts and produced stereotypes of the natives – their ignorant nature, their effeminacy and indolence, their oversexed nature, their essential untrustworthiness and the superiority of the Europeans. These stereotypes of the weak, stupid and inferior native helped to justify, even necessitate the presence of the Europeans as the

rational, superior and adult protector. As Said puts it, the Oriental man is first an oriental, and only secondly a man.

Said also makes a distinction between two forms of Orientalism, which he identifies as the Latent Orientalism and the Manifest Orientalism. The Latent Orientalism is the unconscious positivism; here, ideas and prejudices about the oriental backwardness, racial inequality and degeneracy exist. The Manifest Orientalism, on the other hand, is the various stated views about the oriental society, language, culture, and all those things which relegate the Orientals to "a dreadful secondariness." All the changes that occur in the domain of knowledge, takes the form of Manifest Orientalism.

Orientalist discourse, thus, depended on an absolute distinction being made between the dominant colonizing West and other people or "underground selves" , not only "Orientals" as such, but also Africans, Caribbeans, Latin Americans – in fact everyone, who did not conform to the value-laden image of the dominant European self. As Boehmar remarks, "Orientalism inspired the production of a host of spin-off and related studies that developed, refined, and expanded aspects of Said's thinking." The most important among these are Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (1983) on the effeminization of the colonized under colonialism and Gauri Viswanathan's study of the education system in imperial India as a means through which the colonisers attempted to inculcate the superiority of their cultural values in *Masks of conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989). Christopher Miller's Blank Darkness (1985) has also valuably examined the construction of Africa as against the Eastern 'Orient', how it has set up within colonial discourse as a third, unspoken other in relation to the dualism of Europe and the East.

In his later work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said attempts an extensive reading of texts like Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad, Kim by Rudyard Kipling, and A Passage to India by E.M. Forster to demonstrate their implication of imperialistic discourse. Said argues that the colonial resistance is observed in two phases – in the form of actual fighting against the colonial invasion, and also, in the form of ideological resistance to save and restore the community's culture and past tradition. The revival of the emphasis on the national culture and memory, local narratives, spiritual autobiographies, prison memoirs and so, act as a counterpoint to European histories, discourses and panopticon viewpoints. European narratives are replaced by a more playful narrative style (Said cites Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children as an example here). Building on the practice of post-colonial writers like Rushdie and the theories of anti-colonialism as propagated by Fanon, Said locates sources of resistance in the process of reading

and writing against the grain. He identifies this approach as "contrapuntal", implying the postcolonial writers' and critics' ways of addressing the issue of colonial oppression. For Said, as Boehmer argues, the contrapuntal "writing back" involves taking up the techniques and weapons of negation of the West, such as stereotypes of the lazy native or the noble savage, in order first to remake, and eventually to transcend them.

iv) GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the most distinguished thinkers of the twentieth century. Beginning her theoretical work in the 1980s, she has been concerned with the point of *differences*, both pronounced and subtle, which separate and divide the natives or 'the colonized'. Spivak nurtures the belief that there is no "pure" pre-colonial past that we can recover. Rather, every past has been worked over and changed by colonialism. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish the pre-colonial from the postcolonial.

Spivak's early works of the 1980s are closely informed by her interaction with the Subaltern Studies group of Indian Bengali historians, including Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Since the day of its inception, the group aimed to focus on the colonial and nationalist reading of Indian history in order to highlight the misery of the previously marginalised sections of society. The term "subaltern", which has a military etymology, is derived from the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who used it to designate non-elite social classes and groupings like the proletariat. In her most celebrated essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Spivak exposes the irony of an attempt to discover the voice of the politically and historically 'silenced' groups (tribal people, or scheduled castes, untouchables, and most importantly, women). She argues that it is impossible to discover the pure or the authentic voice of the subaltern, that the subaltern cannot speak for himself or herself because the very structure of colonialism prevents speaking. For the colonised woman, the situation is even more difficult because the dual forces of colonialism an patriarchy represses her completely: she cannot represent herself. Using the examples of Sati and the suicide of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri (Calcutta 1926), Spivak argues that the subaltern wrote her own body because there was no other way of speaking.

A similar sort of a silencing occurs when 'First World' feminists investigate the issues involving 'Third World' women, as Spivak explores at length in the essay "French Feminism in the International Frame" (1987). Here, Spivak challenges the role of the Liberal Western feminists in trying to recover (or speak for) the "gendered subaltern". in her reading of Julia Kristeva, Spivak argues that Kristeva is speaking for the Chinese woman in her own identity as a Liberal Western feminist. This is an "epistemic violence", as Spivak views, an authoritative and ultimately colonial knowledge of the Other. In her essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1986), she critiques the canonical novel of Liberal feminism, *Jane Eyr*e by Charlotte Bronte. she argues that eve in a liberal Western feminist text that apparently valourises the individualist and independent woman, the protagonist Jane Eyre, the figure of the "native woman" Bertha Mason (the white creole from the Caribbean) is effaced. Spivak argues that the individual woman's identity is constructed out of the effacement of the native woman, who never figures out as a triumphant in the discourse of feminist individualism. Spivak's attempt has been to reveal the gendered side of the subaltern. the native woman, thus, is doubly colonised because of her relative economic depression and her gendered subordination.

Spivak argues that during colonialism in India, the British undertook the initiative, assumed the authority and prerogative to speak for the native woman 9especially in the colonial discourse of Sati). The construction of the oppressed native woman was necessary to justify their presence as modernised subjects. The native woman "called out" for liberation, which, for Spivak, was the only instance of the subaltern voice. Otherwise, the native women were only "ventriloquised", spoken for. During the era of anti-colonial struggle, the nationalists also took the initiative to speak for the native woman for their own end, but in the discourse of both colonialism and nationalism, the native woman is only spoken for.

Spivak, therefore, suggests that the subject must be treated as discursively created and decentred. The identity of the self is thus never self-present, only deciphered. She rejects the nativist's stress on the "authentic" identity of the colonised, arguing that there is no pure or essentially authentic subaltern voice. Instead, all subjectivity, the subaltern's subject-position is constructed out of the colonial discourse, and it is not possible to distinguish the pure subaltern from it. However, Spivak points out the need to create the narrative of the true subaltern, which will enable a critique of colonial historiography.

v) HOMI K. BHABHA

If Spivak has bequeathed the concept of the Subaltern to postcolonialism, the Indian-based critic Homi K. Bhabha's contribution lies in theorising the *ambivalence* which operates within the apparently binary or "dichotomous" colonial system (Boehmer 354). Bhabha's focus has been on the two particular areas: the first deals with the instabilities and ruptures of the colonial discourse; and the second deals with his concept of in-betweenness, the indeterminacy which lies in the interface between the self and the other. His critique of Said's idea of "Orientalism" and Fanon's stake on colonial resistance has gained greater attention in the past few decades, making him an eminent critic of postcolonialism.

For Bhabha, a major drawback in Said's Orientalism and Fanon's idea of anti-colonial violence is that they tend to posit the entire system of colonialism, and the colonial encounter as one-directional: it views the colonial process as preceding from the coloniser to the colonised. Borrowing from the post-Freudian psychoanalyst and theorist Jacques Lacan's concept of identity as negation, Bhabha, in a series of keynote essays collected in *The Location of Culture* (1995), radically argues that the coloniser's identity s derived from, and exists in an uneasy relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Instead of being uniform and one-directional, Bhabha contends, the colonial discourse is ambivalent, conflictual and ridden with contradictions; and the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is that of negation, not a one-dimensional will to power as the former postcolonial critics have demonstrated. Even the apparently established stereotypes of the colonised are far from being fixed – the colonised may be described as passive and feminine, or wild and masculine, depending on the requirements of the colonial situation, or on how authority is configured.

Bhabha argues, following Poststructuralism and Psychoanalysis, that identities are established only through relations and displacements. Identity, for Bhabha, is a liminal reality, constantly moving between various positions, displacing others and being displaced in return. Bhabha borrows Derrida's argument concerning the idea of "repetition" in producing meaning. Any meaning, in order to be established, needs to be constantly reasserted or repeated. The same is applicable in the context of colonialism. The colonial regime creates a disciplinary gaze of power by creating the stereotypes of the natives as savage, inferior, and lustful. These stereotyping of the native, Bhabha argues, does not indicate the supreme nature of the colonial power, but its fractured nature. Therefore, what is already known or established, has to be constantly confirmed through repetitions. According to Bhabha, these repetitions indicate the

lack of colonial identity itself, and thus, the identity of the colonial master is dependent upon the relationship with the oppositional native or the Other.

For Bhabha, the colonial discourse is fraught with contradictions because it both desire (fetishes) the similarity or the unity with the native, and fears (phobic) the nature of the native as different from the Self, the Other. thus, the colonial discourse appears conflictual and contradictory because the native subject is simultaneously beyond comprehension and yet, totally controllable or knowable as the subject of the colonial power.

In the essay "Of Mimicry and Man" (1985), Bhabha elaborates upon his concept of mimicry to further analyse the fractured nature of colonialism. The colonial power requires that the native would internalise the forms and habits of the colonial master, the native should "mimic" the master. The entire colonial mission is to transform the native into "one like us", a copy of the coloniser. For Bhabha, mimicry is a defence, fraught with a resistance of the native; it produces a subject that reflects the distorted image of the coloniser. What is produced is a hybrid subject, which is half-acquiescent, half-oppositional, and marks the site of the slipperiness of authority. The mimicry of the coloniser is a combination of deference and disobedience (what Bhabha calls "sly civility"), and this marks the beginning of anti-colonial resistance. The resistance, for Bhabha, is the symbol of the failure of the colonial power to effectively control, reproduce and extend itself.

As Elleke Boehmer observes, "…in a crucial nuancing of his typically postmodern celebration of cultural diversity, Bhabha emphasizes at the same time that cultural vocabularies and values do not always translate across the linguistic, religious, and other boundaries dividing communities." Bhabha also argues that the multicultural blending between the European host and migrant communities often only produce conditions of cultural exchange. Indeed, what results from the intermixing may equally be entirely new cultural languages, which may not easily "map back on to" or are not "commensurate" with their original or source languages. "These languages do not therefore facilitate a relaxed cross-cultural interaction between different groups" (Boehmer 356). As Bhabha writes in *The Location of Culture*:

> …the migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the culture's untranslatability; and in so doing it moves the question of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream…towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and difference (224).

vi) NGUGI WA THING' O

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (formerly James Ngugi and known generally as Ngugi) was born in Limuru, Kenya, on January 5, 1938. Educated initially at a mission school and then at a Gikuyu independent school during the Mau Mau insurgency, he went on to attend Alliance High School in 1955-1959 and Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda, in 1959-1964. After earning a B.A. in English he worked as a journalist for Nairobi's *Daily Nation* for half a year before leaving to continue his studies in literature at the University of Leeds in England.

Through his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) Ngugi Thiong contributes to the debate on the choice of language in a post-colonial country. He argues that Africa will be able to break free from the clutches of Western control over its resources and culture only when the use of European languages is replaced by native languages. In the section 'The Language of African Literature', Ngugi discusses the way language is a carrier of culture and how the use of a foreign language alienates an individual from his/her own culture. Ngugi explores how alienation from one's native culture is accompanied with a hatred for it, and a reverence for the coloniser's culture.

According to Arushi Bahuguna, "*Decolonising the Mind* is an attempt to free the natives' minds from the coloniser's control by rejecting his language and adopting one's native language" (1). Ngugi establishes the relation between language and culture by approaching the "aspects of language" from a Marxist perspective. As language is understood to arise from the economic activities people engage in, language gradually defines a community's "way of life". Over time a particular "way of life" gets codified as customs of a specific culture, and hence language is the medium through which one experiences the culture it is a product of. Ngugi argues that the coloniser introduced his language in the colonies with an aim to make the natives' perception of his own culture as inferior and to be forsaken for the superior culture of the coloniser. Ngugi uses the case of a child's learning of the coloniser's language in order to analyse its role in the process of alienating the native from his culture. The coloniser's language is forced upon the native child because it is the medium in which education institutions are run. The spoken language however remains the native tongue, which causes a "break in harmony between the written and spoken word". Due to the close relation between language and culture, not only the coloniser's language but his culture also is forced upon the child. This displacing of the power

that native language held in the child's understanding of the world is not only detrimental to his performance capabilities but is also "disastrous" in the way it sows hatred for one's own cultural roots. The plans and policies implemented in the colonial eras for dominance over the natives' minds seem to be running successfully when one sees the presence of institutions like the Malawi academy, where British not Malawi teachers train children for entry into Western institutions.

Ngugi takes this as a sign of "ultimate success" of the coloniser as the colonised themselves "sing praises" of those who emptied Africa of its material as well as cultural wealth. Ngugi also examines the adverse impact of the coloniser's language on the political functioning of the country. The essay informs us how "patriotic bourgeoisie" has only the support of the bourgeois class but in choosing the coloniser's language, it excludes the working class (the majority of the masses) from actively participating in the political sphere. He also criticises the literature of this bourgeois class which is removed from cultural realities due to its construction of characters like peasants speaking in European languages. According to Ngugi, African literature in European language only exemplifies rather than offers solutions to the problem of cultural identity. The African man torn between two worlds has become a defining feature of this "neo-African literature".

Ngugi critiques the way such literature fails to address identity crisis as it "avoids the issue of language." Ngugi therefore foregrounds his argument that as long as there is not a strong rejection of European languages from Africa's educational, cultural and political sphere, colonisers will continue to control resources and the minds of African "independent" nations. Ngugi highlights the importance of cultural independence from years of colonial control in order to pave the way for independence in other spheres of economic functioning, politics, and also knowledge creation. He argues that Africa will be able to make advancements in various academic fields only when they will be able to express themselves in a language that is of their own culture. He holds dependence on foreign languages as the reason why latest technologies seem foreign. In order to break the trend of everything advanced being foreign, Ngugi suggests that native languages should be allowed to grow so that they can replace foreign languages in all spheres. He considers it the duty of a writer to partake in the creation a literature for the native languages which will help them evolve and replace the "unassailable" position that the coloniser's language holds.

Ngugi directly addresses the community of African writers – "We African writers are bound by our calling to do for our languages what all writers have done for their languages... by

meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them, which process later opens the language for philosophy, science, technology, and all other areas of human creative endeavours." Decolonising the Mind makes compelling arguments for the elimination of the use of European languages. The work is Ngugi's struggle against colonial control over the natives' minds and their production. By making the minds decolonised, Ngugi means making African languages the medium of thought and expression in all spheres of life.

Unit 5 (c): Some Key Terms Related to Postcolonialism

i) IMPERIALISM

A renowned critic of Postcolonialism, Matthew Stephen defines Imperialism as a relationship between societies that leads to the economic, political and social systems of subordinated societies being oriented towards serving the interests of another—has played a fundamental role in the formation of a single global economy and the modern state system.

Imperialism has acquired an indelibly economic connotation, but has been a fundamental concept in the explanation of military, racial, cultural, linguistic, legal, and even ecological hierarchies in the modern world. As such, imperialism is now widely seen as having an almost completely negative connotation, although it was once as likely to be considered a neutral or even positive term denoting a progressive and enlightening force in history.

The meaning attached to the word imperialism has changed over time. The widespread use of the word mostly dates from the later nineteenth century, in reference to the competitive carving up of the world into formal and informal spheres of influence by European powers, the United States and Japan. In this context, it was used almost interchangeably with colonialism. More recently, imperialism is more precisely distinguished from colonialism. Whereas colonialism is associated with population transfer from a metropolis to a colony, and often with the formal transfer of political authority to colonial power, imperialism refers also to a more diffuse and indirect form of relations by which one community comes to dominate another. By this definition, imperialism is a broader category of which colonialism and empire are manifestations.

As a historical process of the modern world, imperialism has traditionally been divided into two major phases, often described as "old imperialism" and "new imperialism."

Old Imperialism The first phase refers to the expansion of European countries into the economic and political systems of other world regions in the period from the mid-1400s, which peaked in the mid-eighteenth century. Sometimes referred to as the old imperialism, this was the process of maritime expansion by which European powers conquered the New World and established overseas trading posts and minor colonies in Asia and Africa.

New Imperialism The second wave of imperialism, the new imperialism, is commonly dated from the 1870s up to 1914. In these four decades, a further one-sixth of the earth's surface was added to formal European control, or perhaps one quarter if informal "spheres of interest" are included, primarily by seven countries: Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United States, and Japan. The preeminent imperial power was Britain, which established an empire that by 1922 covered one-quarter of the earth's land and a similar portion of its population. Japan remained the sole non-European power to successfully transform into an imperial power. In 1885 the "scramble for Africa" was formalized in an agreement that distributed the African continent amongst the imperial powers, and by 1900 virtually no territory in Africa or the Pacific was left to self-rule. The integration of the world under an imperial system ensured that in 1914 most of the world would be drawn into a basically European war. It was in this phase that the first systematic attempts were made to theorize imperialism.

The theoretical approaches to imperialism can be divided into three broad groups. The first of these was the "classical" theories of imperialism and were written by Rudolf Hilferding, Nicolai Bukharin, and (most famously) Vladimir Lenin in the early twentieth century. These drew on the work of the liberal John Hobson, who argued that the rush to imperialism was not inherent in the development of capitalism but a "social pathology" which resulted from the concentration of wealth and power in a capitalist oligarchy, causing underconsumption at home and a search for foreign markets abroad. In contrast to cosmopolitan liberalism, these authors linked capitalism to international conflict and descent into war.

The second group of theories emerged in the 1970s, which reinterpreted imperialism as the process underlying the enormously expanded gap in levels of development and wealth between the industrialized countries and the Third World. Drawing on intervening work by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, Andre Gunder Frank sought to show how what he called the "underdevelopment" of the Third World was not, as commonly thought, a result of marginalization from the world economy. It was instead a direct result of integration into an

unequal world economy in which metropole economies exploit satellite economies. This was later theorized to operate via the mechanism of unequal exchange. Later, the dependency theory was largely overtaken by the world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, which drew on classical notions of imperial super-exploitation. World-systems theory took as its central unit of analysis the world economy, defined by a common international division of labour. Again, unequal exchange leads to the transfer of surplus from periphery to the core (with an intervening "semiperiphery"). This reinforces the power of the core states and growing levels of developmental disparity. Imperialism is thus a function of the world economy and does not rely on political rule.

The third and latest group of theories of imperialism emerged during the post-Cold War phase of globalization and U.S. dominance. Usually, imperialism is seen as an inherent aspect of capitalism, which is now truly global. This literature shares less with Lenin and more with Karl Kautsky, who was a Marxist who argued in 1914 that it would be possible for major imperial states to put aside their rivalries and form a cartel, whereby exploitation of the periphery could continue but without the destructive military conflict of the new imperialism. This argument finds its most extreme articulation in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's empire thesis, which says that no country or group of countries is capable of forming a coherent imperialist project when all political sovereignty has been absorbed into a decentered, global "empire."

ii) <u>THIRD WORLD</u>

The concept of the Third World owes its origin to a French demographer, Alfred Sauvy who used it in an article of *L'observateur* on August 14, 1952. Soon after, its use became fashionable with other scholars. And within a decade of its birth, by the beginning of the 1960s, it acquired the acceptability as a widely used concept in international relations. Since then, its use as a synonym for various phrases such as Underdeveloped Countries, Less Developed Countries, Developing Countries, Former Colonies, and so on, and has been a conspicuous feature of international relations. Its emergence as an entity heralded a new era in international relations. The dyadic balance of world relations was transformed into triadic balance and today, the Third World is considered an essential part, both for the study and conduct, of international relations.

The concept of the Third World was used to describe a group of ex-colonial, economically weak, politically fragile, less industrialised, and technologically deprived nations of the world, geographically spread on the territories of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Almost all the

Third World nations of today were the colonies in their past. They were given the status of independent nation-states in the post- Second World War period. The process of decolonization which was started in the aftermath of the second world war, and which reached to its supposed culmination in the Seventies, resulted in adding a large number of new states, into the community of independent nation-states. These independent nation-states today number about one hundred and thirty constituting two-thirds of the entire international community of nations.

These nations, in contrast to the geographic location of the First and the Second Worlds, are situated in the Southern Hemisphere and in terms of area and population are categorised as mini and macro nations. At present they consist of all nations from Latin America, Africa except South Africa and Asia except Japan, All these nations together, constitute the Third World. And they are called so because almost all of them in their socio-economic development are different from both the First World, consisting of Industrially advanced liberal democracies of the West and Second World, consisting of industrially developed authoritarian socialist democracies of the East, These nations in contrast to the First and the Second Worlds, exhibit a wide range of diversities in their political, economic military and social orientations. The developmental problems and priorities of these nations also differ from the two other worlds.

Whereas the decolonization process led to the emergence and of the Third World as entity in international relations, it also generated transient as well as near-permanent differences and intrinsic sources of political dispute amongst the nascent nation-states. When the colonial rule expanding over centuries ended, it left behind colonial culture, inadequate political systems, economic weakness, technological scarcity, and, above all, artificially created boundaries. The ramifications of all this is that the Third World is full of diverse problems and conflicts.

iii) HYBRID IDENTITIES

Postcolonial theory is developed from anti-colonial philosophy, which in itself is a hybrid construct (Bhabha 1994:112-116; Young 2001:69; 2003:69-90). Homi K Bhabha defines hybridity as “the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)”. It is “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (1994:112).

The mixture of concepts from the past and the present has given rise to a new foundation for socio-political identities. As a result, postcolonial theory, unfortunately, does not reproduce the old native culture, nor does it bring a totally new culture, but it produces a dislocated culture, a mixture of worlds – a "fragmented and hybrid theoretical language" within a "conflictual cultural interaction" (Young 2001:69; cf Loomba 1998:15). Postcolonial culture is an "inevitably a hybridised" phenomenon (Ashcroft et al 1989:195) that involves a dialectal relationship of the "grafted" Western cultural systems and a native ontology, which (re)creates a new local identity. The construction of a new identity is based on this bitter reality of interaction between the colonial hegemonic system and the colonised's perverted peripheries. Young (1996:8; see 1995:1-28) defines hybridity as a mere product of "disruptions and dislocations" of any system. The term hybridity or métissage in Francophone African literature is invoked alongside the Négritude philosophy (Senghor 1964:45-83; Sartre 1976:11). The tools used to construct Negritude were provided by the industrialised cultures. In this way, Negritude became a derivative discourse, which Sartre (1976:59) calls a "dialectic" to enable both Negroes and Whites to read equality and sameness in races.

In the minds of Senghor and his colleagues, as Young (2001:266) analyses their thinking, Negritude was to forge a third option, a new way, a new society where "the antithetical values of racism and anti-racism [would] produce a society without racism and a new humanism". Through this context, humanity would at last be universally defined. Hybridity emerges in the context of compositions of a fluid mixture that undergoes its own initiation of reciprocal translation (Van Aarde 2004:11-12). This mixture of two original (yet different) materials becomes a new material in itself, failing however to identify fully with either of the two. Following Young's (2003:139-146) discussion colonialism, like translation, invades other territories, other cultures and imposes its meaning to dominate the new landscape, thereby "changing things into things which they are not". The indigenous person and his/her whole environment are forced into a subordinated culture of colonial rule. This is why the original culture has to be reconstructed.

iv) SUBALTERN STUDIES

Subaltern studies began as revisionist historiography of peasant movements in colonial India. The Subaltern Studies Group was formed in 1979–80 under the tutelage of historian Ranajit Guha at the University of Sussex in England. The first edited volume of Subaltern Studies was

published in 1982. In the late 1980s, Guha moved to the Australian National University and the project started a new life; since then, a series of 12 edited volumes have been published by the group (Amin and Bhadra 1994). The group consisted of heterodox historians of South Asia, who were critical of the nature of the historiography prevalent at that time because of its elitist biases and "bourgeois-nationalist" and "colonial" mode of history writing. These forms of history distorted the historical portrayal of the subalterns or the "people" and neglected their role in the anti-colonial struggle.

Subaltern studies have been diversely influenced by global Marxist and left-leaning scholarship. With an eclectic but creative conceptualization, Guha and his colleagues borrowed from various sources such as Louis Althusser's structuralist Marxism, Levi-Strauss's structuralism, and Michel Foucault and Edward Said's notion of power and discourses. It was also considerably influenced by the "history from below" school, initiated by Christopher Hill, E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, George Rude, and others (Dhanagare 1993). But it was from the Italian Marxist theorist of the Third International, Antonio Gramsci, that it drew its vital inspiration. The Subaltern Studies Group developed its theoretical apparatuses mainly by reworking the concept of the "subaltern" used by Gramsci. He wrote his prison notebooks from 1929–35, during his period of incarceration in the jails of fascist Italy. In them, he charted an inventory for studying the complex history of the subaltern people. Against prevalent Marxist orthodoxy, Gramsci argued that the rise of bourgeoisie was not only through coercion but through the creation of hegemonic consent to cultural and ideological institutions of civil society established over the people or the subalterns. In the context of southern Italy, which was marked by the presence of a vibrant peasantry active in rebellions, Gramsci criticized the notion of the incapability of the peasantry to revolt, expressed in the Marxian epithet "sack of potatoes" and promoted by European orthodox Marxist theory. Conversely, he suggested that the subaltern consciousness of the peasantry, immersed in traditional religion and popular culture, should be nurtured by "organic intellectuals" to unleash the revolutionary potential in them (Chatterjee 2010).

Colonial capitalism, undoubtedly, changed some aspects of society with coercive force, but a larger space of life and consciousness remained untouched by it. This was a typical instance of "dominance without hegemony." This signifies that the bourgeoisie dominated using a coercive state apparatus but was unable to gain the ideological, political, and cultural legitimacy in society needed to construct a hegemonic "national-popular" rule. Hence much of the subaltern domain remained relatively autonomous from elite politics. Autonomy also originates from the

distinct structure of subaltern consciousness that evolved from the experience of their subjugation and subservience. The evidence of this subaltern consciousness can only be found in the moments of peasant insurgencies. Thus the central focus of subaltern studies has been to unravel the rebel consciousness (Guha 1997).

In Guha's framework, the subaltern is portrayed as a noble savage who possesses “pure” rebel consciousness. History shows that subaltern consciousness is a bricolage of elements drawn from both dominant and subaltern class consciousness. Through experiences of resistance and rebellion in interaction with the state and dominant elite classes, a sort of synthetic develops in it. Thus, the bone of contention was regarding the historicity of the structure of such a resilient consciousness. If according to Guha, the subaltern consciousness is formed within a specific historical configuration of power relations of domination and subordination, it should change with time. The theory needs a spatiotemporal narration of subaltern history so that various historical trajectories and narratives explain the mutating forms of subaltern consciousness (Ludden 2002).

Guha retired from the editorial team of Subaltern Studies in 1988. An anthology titled Selected Subaltern Studies was launched in the same year, which made its formal entry into the higher echelons of Western academia. The initial Subaltern Studies Group was later joined by about another 36 scholars, who contributed in the 12 volumes of the Subaltern Studies series. Through a new paradigmatic shift in 1987–89, subaltern studies more staunchly moved toward the study of fragmentary and incomplete subaltern consciousness.

As these elements of change became incorporated into subaltern theory, a new vista of inquiry opened up whereby the subaltern studies scholars started focusing on all the processes of the modern state, public institutions, and the representation of subaltern classes in its loci. By encompassing these analyses, subaltern studies came closer to postcolonial studies as practiced in American academia. Scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Arnold, and others undertook many such studies, incorporating views from postcolonial theory. Recently, some of the scholars have participated in unearthing the subaltern consciousness of various other marginalized groups like women, minorities, and the so-called lower castes. From the 1990s onward scholars like Gyanedra Pandey, Shahid Amin, Partha Chatterjee, and others have provided post-nationalist critiques of the nation through their celebration of “fragments” and their questioning of the very form of Eurocentric discourses. Currently, subaltern studies has turned into a global field of scholarship. It has inspired the creation of various groups such

as the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group in 1992 (Chatterjee 2010). Its foundational statement (Latin American Subaltern Studies Group 1993) acknowledges the huge inspiration it drew from subaltern studies. It states that the ideology of nationalism is an invention of the elites in Latin America as in South Asia. Accordingly, in a changing global economy, the subaltern functions as a mutating and "migrating" subject both in its cultural self-representation and in the changing nature of its social pact with the state. Hence there is a need to capture the essence of this subalternity in transition. Recently, Chatterjee (2012) has programmatically stated that subaltern studies was a product of its own time and a "new time needs a new project," not a reworking of an old project. He advocates an ethnographic turn in subaltern studies, which might set a future agenda for research in the field.

Unit 6

Unit 6 (a): A Psychoanalytical Approach to Postcolonialism

Self-Consciousness: Frantz Fanon (1986:84) asserts that the problem of colonialism "includes not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions but also the human attitudes towards these conditions." According to Nandy (1983:63), colonialism is first of all "a matter of consciousness", therefore it needs to be defined in people's minds. The war against colonialism and any other forms of oppression must not only be material, it must also equally engage the mental. For Fanon, the use of psychology in the anti-colonial struggle has a twofold purpose: it investigates the inner effects of colonialism on the colonised, and it provides the tools of resistance, "turning the inculcation of inferiority into selfempowerment" (Young 2001:275). Consequently, the process of decolonisation begins with a positive change of mind, a self-consciousness.

A.M.Tolbert (1995: 347-361) grapples with the issue of "Christianity, imperialism and decentering of privilege". Her attempt raises important points concerning the mind of both coloniser and colonised in the process of decolonisation. She highlights three discrete ways in which appropriate reciprocal participation can be achieved, namely listening, reflecting/analysing and acting. Listening in postcolonial theory has to work at the conscience level of those engaged in and affected by imperialism and bring them to the level of

responsibility and accountability. Self-consciousness can refer to a cultural revolution which refuses to remain in a state of subjugation. Consciousness informs about "desire", a spirit of longing, a spirit of want or satisfaction (Isasi-Diaz 2004:340-354). Cabral's (1969:41-43; cf Bhabha 1994:171-197) term "the survival of culture" refers to self-consciousness that is engaged in resistance to gain freedom. Self-consciousness as a means of cultural and personal rebirth is not ashamed of the past, but defies the oppressor's consciousness to see sameness and equality in the other, which henceforth acquires dignity. According to Fanon (1995:154), in the sphere of "psycho-effective equilibrium", self-consciousness brings about change in "the native" and in the oppressor alike. Nandy (1983:63; cf Young 2001:340) emphasises the psychological effects of colonialism in colonial powers as well as colonised cultures. Self-consciousness is a reciprocal revolution that goes from colonised to coloniser and vice versa (Nandy 1980:99-111).

Self-determination: Violent and non-violent approaches From Du Bois to Steve Biko the emphasis on self-determination and consciousness is important. Cabral (1969:89) and Guevara (1996:172) both stress the importance of self-sacrifice in liberation struggles. In a psychoanalytical approach, two dimensions can be discerned based upon the way in which they have been used by theorists and political practitioners. These two approaches, non-violent (passive resistance) and violent (active resistance) are usually regarded as opposites that rarely occur concomitantly. Nevertheless, over the years, they have been interchangeably used in conflicting situations, that is when one approach does not work, the other is switched on, a dilemma that Horsley (1993) deals with. Mariategui (1996:49) states that "the renunciation of violence is more romantic than violence itself ... Unfortunately, a revolution is not made by fasting." The anti-colonial struggle is about violence and it is hard to find any other dialectical discourse to define it. Derrida (1978:30) argues that colonial violence was carried out in the name of pacification, whereas postcolonial violence is carried out in the name of degradation. This infinite passage through violence is what is called history. Fanon argues that colonial violence is a reciprocal dialect that works at the level of history and the individual. In 1961, the manifesto of the African National Congress (Mandela 1994:325-328) enacted the use of force as an alternative in the freedom struggle. In this instance Umkhonto we Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation) was to carry on the armed struggle. Nkrumah (1957:92) who followed in Gandhi's Lazare S Rukundwa & Andries G van Aarde HTS 63(3) 2007 1187 footsteps regarding a non-violent approach, eventually had to lament that freedom had never been "handed over to any colonial country on a silver platter". Self-determination is defined by the

language best understood by those involved in the conflict, and revolution prepares the ground of freedom for those who cannot get it by other means. Although the option of active violence is supported by Fanon and other freedom fighters, Jesus' philosophy for the church is non-violent. There are many forms of non-violent resistance against colonialism and other forms of oppression. Vail and White (1991:41) analyse various forms of local resistance and their modus operandi before the advent of independence movements. In Africa, songs and poetry were important weapons, not only by stimulating the consciousness of the oppressed but also by sending out a clear message of resistance to the oppressor. Connor (1996:107-128) gives a good example of African-American songs that were used in a Christianised manner in the struggle against slavery and racism. Whereas Fanon moved from an analysis of the disabling effects of the "psychological violence" of colonialism to an advocacy of military intervention against colonial regimes, Gandhi combined non-violence and non-cooperation with a more widespread "psychological resistance" (Young 2001:323). Taking Gandhi's example further, hybridisation and alliance begin at home where various cultural and religious beliefs are moulded through psychoanalysis and spiritual energy to form a resistance theory.

Unit 6 (b): Third World or Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminist theory is primarily concerned with the representation of women in once colonized countries and in Western locations. It concentrates on construction of gender difference in colonial and anti-colonial discourses, representation of women in anti-colonial and postcolonial discourses with particular reference to the work of women writers. The postcolonial feminist critics raise a number of conceptual, methodological and political problems involved in the study of representation of gender. While postcolonial theorist struggles against the maiden colonial discourse that aims at misrepresenting him as inferior, the task of a postcolonial feminist is far more complicated. She suffers from "double colonization" (a term coined by Kirsten Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherfold and refers to the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy). She has to resist the control of colonial power not only as a colonized subject, but also as a woman. In this oppression her colonized brother is no longer her accomplice, but her oppressor. In his struggle against the colonizer, he even exploits her by misrepresenting her in

the nationalist discourses. Not only that, she also suffers at the hands of Western feminists from the colonizer countries who misrepresent their colonized counterparts by imposing silence on their racial, cultural, social, and political specificities, and in so doing, act as potential oppressors of their "sisters". In this article, I explore these challenges of a postcolonial feminist, for it is in her struggle against the "postcolonial" and "feminist" theorists that she can assert her identity as a "postcolonial feminist."

Postcolonial feminist theory exerts pressure on mainstream postcolonial theory in its constant iteration of the necessity to consider gender issues. Postcolonialism and feminism have come to share a tense relationship as some feminist critics point out that postcolonial theory is a male-centered field that has not only excluded the concerns of women but also exploited them. Postcolonial feminist theorists have accused postcolonial theorists not only of obliterating the role of women from the struggle for independence but also of misrepresenting them in the nationalist discourses. Edward Said's seminal study Orientalism itself accorded little attention to female agency and discussed very few female writers. Homi K. Bhabha's work on the ambivalence of colonial discourses explores the relationship between a "colonizing" subject and a "colonized" object without reference to how the specifics of gender might complicate his model. Critics such as Carole Boyce Davies who are suspicious of the male-centered bias of postcolonial critique often ask "where are the women in the theorizing of postcoloniality?" (Black Women 80).

Nationalism has historically functioned as one of the most powerful weapons for resisting colonialism, and for establishing the space of postcolonial identity. Nationalist discourses are largely male-centric and control women by capturing them in traditional stereotypes. They are, however, not the only instruments of oppression on the colonized female body. Western feminists, through their representations of colonized women, have also contributed to the oppression of the colonized female body and identity. Postcolonial feminist theory has always concerned itself with the relationship between White feminists and their indigenous counterparts. In their eagerness to voice the concern of the colonized women, White feminists have overlooked racial, cultural, and historical specificities that mark the condition of these women. In so doing, they have imposed White feminist models on colonized women, and thereby, worked as an oppressor. In this section, I analyze two major lacunae, the exclusion of the notion of "race" and the denial of the socio-historical context that characterize the work of Western feminists in their approach toward "Third World" women.

Gayatri Spivak criticizes Gilbert and Gubar's essay "The Madwoman in the Attic" for ignoring the colonial context of Jane Eyre when celebrating Jane as a proto-feminist heroine and questions the role of Western or "First World" feminists in addressing the concerns of "Third World" women. Spivak argues that Jane's journey from subservience to female self-determination, economic security, and marriage on her terms could not occur without the oppression of Bertha Mason, Rochester's Creole wife from Jamaica. She points out that Gilbert and Gubar read Bertha in relation to Jane, never as an individual self in her own right. In their words, Bertha is Jane's "truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self that Jane has been trying to repress" (140). Bertha's lunacy represents the anger that Jane represses in order to be deemed an acceptable woman in a patriarchal world. This reading of Bertha purely in relation to Jane's self leaves out the colonial context of Bertha's imprisonment and fails to examine some of the assumptions concerning Bertha's lunacy and her representation in terms of "race".

In the early 1980s, several critics explored the difficulties Black women faced in working with popular feminist discourses. Helen Carby explores these issues in her influential essay "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood." In identifying and discussing the condition of "Western feminism" in the 1970s, Carby explains that Black and Asian women are barely made visible within their discourses. And when they are addressed, their representation remains highly problematic. Western feminism is criticized for the Orientalist way in which it represents the social practices of other races as backward and barbarous, from which Black and Asian women need rescuing. In Carby's view, Western feminism frequently suffers from an ethnocentric bias in presuming that the solutions which White Western women have advocated in combating their oppression are equally applicable to all. As a result, issues of race have been neglected which has hindered feminists from thinking about the ways in which racism and patriarchy interact. Black feminists have accused Western feminists of reading gender as a monolithic entity and emphasized the need to consider race and class as issues related to questions of gender. Some critics, such as Sandoval have stressed the need to acknowledge the intellectual and political debt that the White feminist consciousness-raising movement of the 1960s and 1970s owing to the Black Civil Rights movement.

Chandra Mohanty in her article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" criticizes hegemonic Western scholarship and colonialism in Western feminist scholarship in particular. In a number of Western radical and liberal feminist writings, Mohanty

detects the so-called "colonialist move" which consists of producing the "Third World" woman as a singular and monolithic subject. This constitution of a colonial Other in these White Western feminist texts on women in the Third World is, according to Mohanty, due to three analytical presuppositions in these texts. First is the assumption of the category of "'Third World' women as a coherent group with identical interests, experiences, and goals prior to their entry in the socio-political and historical field" (121). This Western feminist discourse defines Third World women as subjects "outside" social relations instead of looking at the way these women are constituted through these social structures. Economic, religious, and familial structures are judged by Western standards; the "typical" Third World woman is thus being defined as religious, family-oriented, legal minors, illiterate and domestic. Through this production of a Third World Other, White Western feminists are discursively representing themselves as being sexually liberated, free-minded, in control of their own lives.

Secondly, the model of power which these Western feminist writings imply, namely the humanist, classical notion of men as oppressors and women as oppressed is taken up by these White scholars. This concept is definitely not adequate, says Mohanty, as it implies a universal notion of patriarchy and thus only stresses the binary "men versus women". Furthermore, in not taking into account the various socio-political contexts, women are "robbed" of their historical and political agency. She pleads for a politics of location and a more Foucauldian model of power so that the colonialist move made by some Western feminist scholars can be made explicit as being a discursive institution, and "Third World" women, placed in their own particular historical and political contexts, now can have moments of empowerment with this "diverse, heterogeneous sort of subjectivity". In this way, Mohanty is deconstructing the idea of "First World woman as subject" versus the "Third World woman as object" which eventually leads to an opening up of theoretical space to talk about differences among Third World women, and women in general.

Thirdly, Mohanty criticizes Western methodological practices that are over-simplified and are in fact just trying to find "proof" of various cases of powerless women in order to support the above mentioned classical notion of Third World women as powerless victims. The White feminist concept of "sisterhood" is therefore also criticized by Mohanty, as it implies a false sense of common experiences and goals; as if all women are oppressed by a monolithic, conspiring sort of patriarchal dominance. This idea certainly cannot be fruitful, says Mohanty, as it only paralyses women. Mohanty not only exposes the weakness in Western feminism but also goes a step further to offer some solutions to these lacunae that plague Western feminist's

representation of "Third World" women. Mohanty tries to show the space between the Third World Woman as representation versus real-life (third world) women. Careful studies that take into account historical and socio-political backgrounds of different and diverse third world women will help to empower them. The idea of a politics of location, or "situatedness", is very important with Mohanty. Consequently, she wants to do away with the too-simple model of power which consists of the dichotomy "oppressors (who have something) versus oppressed (who lack something)". By criticizing the White Western feminist scholarship, Mohanty is in fact deconstructing the binary "first world woman versus third world woman" and the binary "men as oppressors versus women as victims".

The dismissal of First World feminism at a stroke because of the problems discussed earlier in this article might risk losing its resources which can contribute to feminist critique. Hence, one needs to think of the possibility of building new, vigilant relations between women across "First" and "Third World" feminism, as is evidenced by a book edited by Susheila Nasta entitled Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia. Nasta states that a creative dialogue is possible where the First World and the Third World voices both contribute and learn from each other. Nasta also acknowledges the problems with the use of English as a father tongue that remains problematic for these women, as it houses both colonial and patriarchal values. She, however, reminds us that we must attend to ways in which women can transform the colonizer's language in order to enable new kinds of representations through which they can speak.

Unit 6 (c): Postcolonial Criticism and Literature

Postcolonial criticism can be appropriately used to interpret literary works of varied national and temporal origin. In general, as Lois Tyson states in *Critical Theory Today* (2006), the postcolonial critics analyse the ways in which "a literary text, whatever its topics, is colonialist or anticolonialist, that is, how the text reinforces or resists colonialism's oppressive ideology (427). For example, in the simplest terms, a text can reinforce colonialist ideology through positive portrayals of the colonizers, negative portrayals of the colonized, or the uncritical representation of the benefits of colonialism for the colonized. Analogously, texts can resist colonialist ideology by depicting the misdeeds of the colonizers, the suffering of the colonized, or the detrimental effects of colonialism on the colonized. Such analysis is not always as

straightforward as this simple outline might lead you to expect, however. The ideological content of literary texts is rarely able to confine itself to such tidy categories. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), for example, is extremely anticolonialist in its negative representation of the colonial enterprise: the Europeans conducting the ivory trade in the Congo are portrayed as heartless, greedy thieves who virtually enslave the indigenous population to help collect and transport the Europeans' "loot," and the negative effects of the European presence on the native peoples are graphically depicted. However, as Chinua Achebe observes, the novel's condemnation of Europeans Postcolonial criticism based on a definition of Africans as savages: beneath their veneer of civilization, the Europeans are, the novel tells us, as barbaric as the Africans. And indeed, Achebe notes, the novel portrays Africans as a prehistoric mass of frenzied, howling, incomprehensible barbarians: "Africa [is a] setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa [is] a [symbolic] battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril" ("An Image of Africa" 12). In other words, despite *Heart of Darkness*'s obvious anticolonialist agenda, the novel points to the colonized population as the standard of savagery to which Europeans are compared. Thus, Achebe uncovers the novel's colonialist subtext, of which the text does not seem to be aware.

There are a few more brief examples of postcolonial interpretations of literary texts. Homi K. Bhabha gives us a wonderful example of the global orientation of much postcolonial criticism when he offers a new way to analyse world literature, not in terms of national traditions, which is how it generally has been studied, but in terms of postcolonial topics that cut across national boundaries. For example, Bhabha suggests that world literature might be studied in terms of the different ways cultures have experienced historical trauma, perhaps such traumas as slavery, revolution, civil war, political mass murder, oppressive military regimes, the loss of cultural identity, and the like. Or world literature might be seen as the study of the ways in which cultures define themselves positively by "othering" groups whom they demonize or otherwise devalue for that purpose. Or we might analyse world literature by examining the representations of people and events that occur across cultural boundaries, rather than within them, such as representations of migrants, political refugees, and colonized peoples. "The center of such a study," Bhabha says, "would neither be the 'sovereignty' of national cultures, nor the universalism of human culture, but a focus on . . . the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present" (12). That is, we might study what world literature tells us about the personal experience of people whom history has ignored—the disenfranchised, the

marginalized, the unhomed—such are found in the works of South African writer Nadine Gordimer and African American writer Toni Morrison.

For example, Bhabha argues that Gordimer's *My Son's Story* (1990) and Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) are unhomely novels in which the female protagonists— Aila and Sethe, respectively—live in the hinterland between cultures. Aila is unhomed because she is imprisoned for using her house as a cover for gun-running in an effort to resist South Africa's racist government; Sethe, because she has killed her baby daughter in order to save the child from the abuses of a cruel slave master. Thus, Bhabha observes, these two characters are doubly marginalized: first as women of color living in racist societies, second as women whose actions have placed them outside the circle of their own communities. In representing the psychological and historical complexities of these characters' ethical choices, both novels reveal the ways in which historical reality is not something that happens just on the battlefield or in the government office. Rather, historical reality comes into our homes and affects our personal lives in the deepest possible ways. Marginalized people may be more aware of this fact because it is pressed on them by violence and oppression, but it is true for everyone.

Another attempt to find a common denominator in postcolonial literature is made by Helen Tiffin, who claims that the "subversive [anticolonialist] manoeuvr[e] . . . characteristic of post-colonial texts" does not lie in "the construction or reconstruction" of national cultural identity, but rather in "the rereading and rewriting of the European historical and fictional record" (95). Tiffin argues that, as it is impossible to retrieve a pre-colonial past or construct a new cultural identity completely free of the colonial past, most postcolonial literature has attempted, instead, "to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained . . . colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world" (95). One of the many ways postcolonial literature accomplishes this task, Tiffin maintains, is through the use of what she calls "canonical counter-discourse," a strategy whereby "a post-colonial writer takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, and unveils [its colonialist] assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes" (97).

Tiffin sees this kind of "literary revolution" (97) in, for example, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by Jamaican-born writer Jean Rhys. Rhys' novel, a postcolonial response to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), "writes back" (98) to Brontë's novel by, among other things, reinterpreting Bertha Mason, Rochester's West Indian wife. Brontë's novel portrays Bertha, the descendent of white colonial settlers, as an insane, drunken, violent, and lascivious woman who tricked Rochester into marriage and whom her husband must keep locked in the attic for her own and

everyone else's protection. In contrast, Rhys' novel depicts Bertha, in Gayatri Spivak's words, as a "critic of imperialism" (Spivak 271), a sane woman driven to violent behaviour by Rochester's imperialist oppression. Rhys's narrative thereby unmasks the colonialist ideology informing Brontë's narrative. And part of Jane Eyre's colonialist ideology, we might add, is revealed when the novel associates Bertha with the non-white native population as seen through the eyes of colonialist Europe: Bertha's face is a "black and scarlet visage" (Brontë 93; Ch. 27; vol. II), and the room she inhabits is "a wild beast's den" (Brontë 92; Ch. 27; vol. II). In other words, according to the colonialist discourse in which Jane Eyre participates, to be insane, drunken, violent, and lascivious is the equivalent of being non-white.

Tiffin notes that similar canonical counter-discourse can be found, for example, in *Foe* (1988), by South African writer J. M. Coetzee, in the way the novel reveals the colonialist ideology of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), an ideology manifest in Crusoe's colonialist attitude toward the land on which he's shipwrecked and toward the black man he "colonizes" and names Friday. And of course, canonical counter-discourse occurs in the numerous modern Carib- bean and South American performances of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), which reveal the political and psychological operations of Prospero's colonialist subjugation of Caliban in the original play. As Tiffin observes, canonical counter-discourse doesn't unmask merely the literary works to which it responds, but the whole fabric of colonialist discourse in which those works participate.

Finally, Edward Said demonstrates how postcolonial criticism of a canonized literary work often involves moving the "margins" of the work (for example, minor characters and peripheral geographical locations) to the center of our attention. This is what he does in his analysis of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). The entire novel is set in England around the turn of the nineteenth century, most of it on the sizable estate of the wealthy Sir Thomas Bertram, who epitomizes the positive image of the traditional English gentleman of property: he is well-bred, rational, honourable, and highly moral, and is the proper patriarchal head of his home and of the overseas agricultural enterprise that financially sustains that home. This enterprise is in Antigua, in the Caribbean British colonies, and it is maintained by slave labour. But things are not going well in Antigua, and Sir Thomas must travel there to take control personally. And take control he does, apparently with the same efficiency with which he rules his home. For having set his "colonial garden" (*Culture and Imperialism* 86) in order, as Said puts it, Sir Thomas returns home to quickly set to rights his household, which, without his paternal guidance, has gotten out of order: his grown children have fought among themselves, engaged

in clandestine courtships, and generally created a domestic uproar. Thus, among other things, Said notes that the novel draws a strong parallel between "domestic [and] international authority" (*Culture and Imperialism* 97). For, the financial well-being of the British estate depends on the success of the colonial enterprise, and the orderly operation of both depends on the guidance of the British patriarch. Although Sir Thomas' trip to Antigua is peripheral to the narration—it is mentioned only in passing and we see nothing that goes on there—it is "absolutely crucial to the action" (Culture and Imperialism 89). In Said's words, *Mansfield Park* [is] part of the structure of [Britain's] expanding imperialist venture. . . . [And] we can sense how ideas about dependent races and territories were held [not only] by foreign-office executives, colonial bureaucrats, and military strategists [but also] by intelligent novel-readers educating themselves in the fine points of moral evaluation, literary balance, and stylistic finish (*Culture and Imperialism* 95). In other words, the colonialist ideology contained in literature is deposited there by writers and absorbed by readers without their necessarily realizing it.

Conclusion

Postcolonial theory is built from the colonial experiences of people who engaged in liberation struggles around the world and particularly in the tricontinental countries in Africa, south and southeast Asia, and Latin America (Rukundwa and Aarde 2009, 1189-1190). It bears witness to constant cultural forces for representation. It allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their negotiating space for equity. In a dislocated culture, the postcolonial theory does not declare war on the past but challenges the consequences of the past that are exploitative. In so doing, postcolonial theory engages the psychology of both the colonised and the coloniser in the process of decolonisation. Those engaged in and those affected by colonisation and imperialism are consciously brought to a level of responsibility because the cultural revolution refuses to endure a state of subjugation. The postcolonial theory raises self-consciousness which revolutionalises the minds of the colonised and the coloniser to build a new society where liberty and equity prevail.

As argued by Bill Ashcroft, Garreth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their *Post-Colonial Studies* (2007),

> …post-colonial theory has been found useful in examining a variety of colonial relationship beyond the classic colonizing activities of the British Empire. The concept of boundaries and borders has been crucial in the imperial occupation and domination of indigenous space. And the question of borders and borderlands has now become a pressing issue in an age of increasingly hysterical border protection. Cultural borders are becoming recognized as a critical region of colonial and neo-colonial domination, of cultural erosion, and of class and economic marginalization (viii-ix).

The field of post-colonial studies now includes the vexed subjects of contemporary neo-colonialism: the identities and relationships of Chicano, Latino, and hybrid subjectivities of various kinds. These subjects, who slip between the boundaries of the grand narratives of history and nation, are becoming an increasingly important constituency for post-colonial studies.

One of the terms emerging from post-colonial studies seems to circumvent some of the perceived problems inherent in descriptions such as 'post-colonial' and diaspora. 'Transnational' as an adjective is growing in use since it extends to migrant, diasporic, and refugee communities not directly emerging from the colonial experience. The increasing flow of populations, the mobility of individuals, the increased crossing of borders, and the blurring of the concept of 'home' have produced a range of transnational literature and other forms of cultural production that extend the field of the post-colonial in productive ways.

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Assignments

Essay-Type Questions

1.Define Colonialism. How would you distinguish Postcolonialism from Post-colonialism?

2. How does Fanon justify the necessity of "revolutionary violence" in achieving freedom from the colonial rule?

3. What was Said's stake on "Orientalism"? Discuss.

4. Comment on the contribution of Spivak to the field of Postcolonial Studies.

5. Why does Bhabha offer a critique of the argument propagated by Fanon and Said? Discuss.

6. In what way is feminism linked with postcolonialism? What are the basic premises of Postcolonial feminism?

7. How can psychoanalytical approaches be applied to the study of Postcolonialism.

7.How can Postcolonial criticism be used to study works of literature? Discuss.

8. Attempt a study of any text of your choice from the perspective of postcolonialism.

Short Answer Type Questions

1.How would you define Imperialism and differentiate it from Colonialism?

2. What are different phases of Imperialism? Describe each of them.

3. Briefly comment on Cesaire's concept of "Negritude".

4. How can language be used as a weapon of rejecting the claims of colonialism?

5. What does the term "Third World" signify?

6. Write short notes on the following: a)Subaltern Studies b) Mimicry

c)Hybrid Identities d) Decolonization

BLOCK II

SCHOOLS OF CRITICISM

MARXISM

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 7 (a): Marxism and its basic assumptions

Unit 7 (b): Background and Origins: Marx and Engels

Unit 7 (c): Practitioners in the Soviet

- i. Leon Trotsky
- ii. V. I. Lenin
- iii. Georges Lukacs
- iv. Mikhail Bakhtin

Unit 7 (d): The Frankfurt School and Brecht

- i. Max Horkheimer
- ii. Theodore Adorno
- iii. Walter Benjamin
- iv. Herbert Marcuse
- v. Bertolt Brecht

Unit 8 (a): Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser

Unit 8 (b): Chief practitioners in England

- i. Christopher Caudwell
- ii. E.P. Thompson
- iii. Raymond Williams
- iv. Terry Eagleton

Unit 8 (c): Relationship with other disciplines

Suggested Readings

Assignments

UNIT 7

Unit 7 (a): Marxism And Its Basic Assumptions

Marxism has undoubtedly been the most influential intellectual "movement" in the history of ideas. Marxist aesthetics is a theory – a way of thinking about literature and its sister arts; but it is also a praxis – a way of understanding the world, and thus of living and acting in it. The basic ideas that comprise the theory were developed out of the works of Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1821-1895). Not being literary critics by vocation, Marx and Engels dealt with the science of structure and change in human societies – envisaging their history and development as an evolutionary series of class struggles and revolutions. For them, these class struggles were determined by socio-economic differences between social groups within bourgeois capitalist society. Therefore, Marx and Engels principally concentrated on the history of politico-economic change and how it might lead to a better, classless society where the social dialectic would be sublimated to higher levels. Nevertheless, such change involved parallel changes in cultural modes, and they were avidly interested in the mechanisms of these reflections. Their extremely sensitive ideas and comments, scattered among other issues in their work, provide the planks of Marxist literary theory, even though much of later practice has gone bluntly contrary.

Writing in the nineteenth century Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels located all forms of 'culture' — music, painting and literature within a social context. Attempting to provide a theory of the industrialized society, Marx and Engels treated art as an important component of human life. However, their main contribution was to locate the so-called 'aesthetic' realms such as art within the contexts of politics, economics and history. The 'Marxist' approach to questions of aesthetics often, therefore, links them with questions of class, economic conditions and power. Marxist thinking has been influential in cultural theory, anthropology, history and literary

criticism. It is one of the most political forms of cultural theory because (i) it links art with actual conditions within a particular culture and (ii) it sees forms of art not as some special realm but intimately linked to the existing power relations within a particular culture. Marxist criticism, therefore, explores power relations embedded and concealed in cultural texts.

Basic Assumptions And General Methods

i) The historical period of mankind (the period since the introduction of writing) is, in essence, the history of class struggles and changing modes of production. The state is inherently an instrument of coercion that is used by a ruling class to control and exploit the rest of society and is therefore incompatible with freedom and justice. The capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production and distribution must result in increasing contradictions, crises, depressions, and impoverishment of the masses.

ii) Literature and culture must be understood in relation to the economic conditions of the age. There is a definite correlation between the socio-economic conditions and the kind of cultural and aesthetic works produced. Literature and art can be fully understood only in relation to ideology, class and economic substructure.

iii) Art is a commodity and shares with other commodities an entry into material conditions of production. Artist production can be seen as a branch of production in general. Literature is the refracted site of class struggle. Thus literature may be the arm of political revolution.

iv) Art should express what is typical about a class or historical condition. According to Engels, this is the *typicality* or art. However, art does have a “relative autonomy”, that art may sometimes transcend its ideological roots, and that the superstructure (art/culture) is determined by economic conditions.

v) Art and literature seek, in general, to implement the ideology of the ruling class. Thus "traditions", "values" which literary texts recommend as "standards" are

always the tradition and values that the ruling class seeks to impose upon society for its own benefit.

vi) Marxist criticism seeks to locate the ideologies implicit in a text. Traditional criticism moves in the realm of consciousness and subjectivity, while ignoring the social conditions that shape this consciousness and being. The absences and silences in a text are places where the real history is embedded. That is, the absences link a text to the history from which it is produced, it effaces instances of class struggle, exploitation and the true dynamics of history. A Marxist reading seeks to uncover the hidden/repressed subtext of the texts. These subtexts are then related to actual material-historical conditions such as class struggle, the transition of the economy (say, feudal to capitalist).

vii) Authors write in social contexts. Both their choice of *form* (genre, style) and *content* are influenced by the author's class position. The Marxist critic relates the context of the work to the author's own class position. It is presumed that the class consciousness and prejudices of the authors ooze into his/her work automatically, but can be made visible through close reading.

Unit 7 (b): Background and Origins: Marx and Engels

The Marxist theory begins in the massive work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. These writings are mainly in the discipline of economics and politics. However, the Marx-Engels analysis of society and the conditions of production generally spilled over into an analysis of culture. By the nineteenth century, nations such as England had become industrialized societies. Marx and Engels undertook detailed studies of the condition of culture, paying particular attention to questions of political power and economic conditions. Noting that in industrialized societies, political power rested with individuals or groups of individuals who controlled the factory or the industry, Marx and Engels noted that **'class'** was the key element in such societies. Developing this theme, they argued that such societies exhibit a battle of the classes where the upper classes (feudal landlords, factory owners, capitalists) sought to

keep the working classes (serfs, factory workers, and proletariat) under their control. This process of domination—or ***hegemony***—within the society becomes the central feature of Marxist thought.

Their oeuvre is too large to summarize. However, we shall look at the relevant features of Marxist thought as selected from the writings of Marx and Engels.

Class

Class, in simple terms, refers to a division within a particular society. The basic definition of class is based on property, exploitation, market behavior and domination. Most frequently, class membership is defined by the ownership or lack of ownership of the means of production. In Marxist thought class refers to the *economic* groups within the society:

i. A class of people controls the factory and the industry (called 'means of production') and
ii. A class of people works in the factory.

In the case of a feudal society, we have the land-owning class and the peasants.

Thus, we have two main classes here: the owner or the capitalist class and the working or the labour class. These two classes are always in conflict because the upper classes, or what Marx and Engels called the *bourgeoisie*, owned the means of production and the working classes owned nothing except their labouring bodies. Marxist thought terms this conflicting relation between classes as the **'social relations of production'**. The dominant classes seek to control the working classes because their profits depend on the efficient management of the working class. Marxism argues that this relation between classes is the one that structures a society itself. The class was, therefore, a matter of hierarchy within society, power and economic privilege. **Class-consciousness** is the awareness of the members of a class that they have a common situation and common interests.

Every class develops particular forms of culture and forms of behaviour—what is often described as 'working-class culture', 'mass culture' or 'middle-class values'. Notice that in each case we are speaking of things that are not strictly about economic conditions. This was the radical contribution of Marxist thinking: It associated religious beliefs, art forms, behaviour, moral codes, and other such non-economic—or cultural—aspects of life with an individual or group's class affiliation. Culture, therefore, is not about truth, beauty, taste or

aesthetics. Rather, culture is a system where particular ideas about truth, beauty and aesthetics are developed in relation to particular classes. 'Taste' becomes a marker of upper-class identity in the nineteenth century when aspects of the working-class 'culture' —the street play, the football match, the comedy, boots and dirt—become classified as filthy, crass, crude, tasteless and ugly. In sharp contrast to these forms of culture visible in working-class sections, there emerged 'high culture': the opera, the art gallery, the novel of ideas. For the Marxist, the very use of concepts of 'quality' and 'taste' suggests a power relation where the upper classes are the ones who define what quality and taste mean. In other words, the dominant classes also possess considerable *social* and *cultural power.* The social here is dependent upon the economic. What we can conclude from the Marxist argument is that social aspects are intimately connected to *economic* ones and class is more than an economic category, it refers to matters of evaluation, ideas about taste and *social* power. The power that proceeds from being a member of the upper class does mean simply economic power. The upper classes marginalize the experiences and aesthetics of the working classes because it is the upper (or dominant) class that does the classifying of art as 'good' or 'bad'. Marxist criticism, following from the above view of culture, seeks to explore the links between a literary or cultural artifact and the social and economic conditions in which the artifact is formed and exists. Terry Eagleton refers to the social-cultural and economic aspects of society in traditional Marxist terms. The economic dimension is the 'general mode of production' while literature and art correspond to the 'literary mode of production'. Eagleton suggests, in classical Marxist terms, what we have proposed so far: "The forces of production of the LMP [Literary Mode of Production] are naturally provided by the GMP [General Mode of Production] itself, of which the LMP is a particular substructure".

Base, Superstructure and the Ideology

At once the most basic and problematic of issues in Marxist criticism is the complex concepts of base and superstructure. Their interrelation has been the subject of debate and variance of critical opinion. The capitalist mode of production justified and naturalized itself through certain patterns of thought. These patterns circulated through the entire society and replicate the unequal relations of labour. This means that the unequal economic relations of the factory or

the feudal economy are carried over into the social realm. The *economic base* influences the *social superstructure.* The social institutions such as education, culture, religion form the superstructure that replicates the inequality of the economic base. The oppressed classes, however, believe this order of inequality as "natural" or "predestined," and do not even recognize that they are being oppressed. This system of thought that helps implement, reinforce, legitimize and naturalize inequality and oppression is termed ***ideology***.

Ideology

This is a key concept in Marxist theory. Marx and Engels argued that the capitalist mode of production justified and naturalized itself through certain patterns of thought or ideas. With social structures such as education, culture and religion the oppressed classes believed that the order of inequality in society is 'natural' or 'preordained', and do not recognize that they are oppressed. This system of thought or representation that helps naturalize economic inequality and oppression is termed *ideology*. It refers to the writings, speeches, beliefs and opinions that assert the "naturalness" and necessity of such practices of inequality. This ideology is, therefore, the "ruling ideas" of the dominant class and essentially an instrument of power.

The seeds of this revolutionary understanding are planted in a famous passage in Marx and Engels's The German Ideology (1845–6): "The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men's material behaviour…we do not proceed from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as described, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at the corporeal man; rather we proceed from the really active man… Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness."

A fuller statement of what this means can be found in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859): "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that

determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."

The passage above leads us to three important realizations —

(a)Man's entry into the relations of production, Marx says, is involuntary. This implies that the relations are formulated by the capitalist minority who own the means of production and imposed upon the majority, violating their freedom of will and natural growth of consciousness. This is a form of exploitation.

(b)Since relations of production depend upon the stage of development of productive forces, it follows that the progress of science and technology will usher in new, changed productive relations. Thus, the relational change could bring on changes in superstructure, and forms of consciousness. The seeds of dynamism and revolution, then, are embedded within both economic base and ideological superstructure.

(c)Marx subtly distinguishes between legal and political superstructure that rises on a one-to-one
basis over the economic base, and forms of social consciousness including art that correspond to them. Modes of production condition intellectual life only in a general, not particular, way; art is not bound to relations of production in the way law or politics is.

The ideology is, therefore, an instrument of power because it helps prop up the dominant classes by naturalizing an exploitative relationship and convincing the working classes that this is how things are. Ideology prevents the recognition of oppression by the oppressed. Thus, it is a blind,
a veil that prevents the oppressed from proper understanding. Hence, Marx termed it *false consciousness*. False consciousness' or ideology is a mode of misrecognizing the true nature of our material lives and social roles when we consume a cultural artifact. It is a system of ideas, values, beliefs that we live by, through which we perceive the world. Ideology is about power because it legitimizes the power of the dominant classes or sections of society. Ideology is
what enables the capitalist class to naturalize these conditions because ideology provides a system of beliefs and ideas that the working classes absorb. In John Thompson's definition 'to

study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination' (1984: 4).

The task of Marxist criticism is to locate the ideologies implicit in any cultural text. For Marxists, ideology is the all-encompassing and invisible presence: there is no escaping it. Ideology is sustained and reproduced through cultural forms such as art. All imaginative production is social production. The social is the matrix within which all other terms are fleshed and shaped. An author *unconsciously* replicates the dominant ideology in his/her works and thus "spreads" it among the readers. Both authors and readers thus come to be assimilated into the dominant ideology. Finally, it is important to understand that ideology is rather the sum total of all the values, images and ideas that people construct, exchange and own in daily social practice. It is continually produced, renewed or rejected, and therefore, always changeable.

KEY CONCEPTS AND THINKERS

Unit 7 (c): Practitioners in the Soviet

The first decade after the Bolshevik Revolution, from 1917 to 1928, was marked by cultural liberalism, giving rise to several literary movements like Futurism, Formalism, Imagism and Constructivism. Later, oppression came on as the Communist Party began to feel the pressing need of subjecting literature as well as other art forms to the political agenda of furthering proletarian struggle. Earlier writers' organizations like the RAPP were replaced by the Left Front of Art (LEF) and the *Proletkult*, cultural wings of the Soviet administration, and prescriptive and restrictive formulas of good, 'positive' art floated by them were the only type admissible. Art turned completely subservient to the Party Line as dissenting voices like the Formalists were silenced. Gorky called for writing that would 'make labour the principal hero of our books', Socialist Realism was made Communist Party Policy and the official literary form of the USSR. The chief mandarins behind this were Nikolai Bukharin, Plekhanov and A.A. Zhdanov with writers like Mayakovsky and the later Gorky. It began with recognizing the *Klassovost*,

the class nature of all art, and demanded of Soviet writers a *Partinost* – a commitment to the cause of the working class. Stalin endorsed this determinist, mechanical cultural policy and forced many to leave the Soviet, and the severe reductionism continued through the Cold War years.

Three tendencies emerged as defining Socialist Realism:
(a) Overemphasis on 'revolutionary' content and total disregard of form
(b) Artificial, stilted and predictable nature of narrative and ideas
(c) A certain, immovable notion of reality based on empirical

In Socialist Realism, art was made to serve other ideological categories like politics, economics and law. Yet, the relative autonomy or distanciation of art from the immediate force fields of economy and ideology had been deemed necessary by both Lenin and Trotsky.

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940)

In his *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937) and his best known *Literature and Revolution* (1924), Trotsky argues that the party can offer leadership only in certain areas. He wrote, "the domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but it can only lead it indirectly." However, Trotsky does not envisage complete freedom of Art and artist. He suggests the need for a "watchful revolutionary censorship and the broad and flexible in the field of art." He recommends a clear set of limits to the mechanism of censorship. While arguing for the complete freedom of all art, Trotsky believes that all true art is revolutionary in nature. He also argues that the proletariat cannot construct a new culture without assimilating the older ones. There is always the need for continuity of creative tradition. As the proletariat dissolves into the socialist community, it will cease to be the proletariat. Thus a "proletariat culture" will eventually be replaced by human culture. Socialist art, he believed, must be a realist but in no narrowly generic sense, for realism itself is intrinsically neither revolutionary nor reactionary, but a philosophy of life.

V.I. Lenin (1870-1924)

In his "Party Organisation and Party Literature" (1905) Lenin argues that literature must become a part of the common cause of the proletariat. He does not support the then prevalent

idea that art must be controlled and suggests that freedom of expression must be complete and unfettered. Yet, like Trotsky, Lenin argues that the party should be empowered to control writing written under its banner i.e. the freedom of expression cannot be fully applied to the party literature. Lenin argues that the writer only believes falsely that he is free. He is actually trapped in the "bourgeois-shopkeeper literary traditions." His essays on Tolstoy (1908- 1911) are occupied with the questions of what the relationship should be between a society undergoing a revolution and the great old literature of its bourgeois past. Since superstructure, especially art, is often loosely linked to the economic base, the attitude of Tolstoy is relatively progressive when viewed in the light of a monarchical and pre-capitalist society even though he foregrounds reactionary feudal landlords instead of the working class. Lenin suggests that not only is artistic creativity the product of class conditions, all interpretations are also conducted within the parameters of class interests. The party is the vanguard of the revolution; it mediates between the intellectuals and the working classes.

Georges Lukacs (1885-1971)

Georges Lukacs is a Hungarian critic who converted to Marxism in 1919, visited Moscow in 1930-31, and finally emigrated to the USSR in 1933. In his early *Theory of the Novel* (1916) Lukacs considered literary form as an expression of a worldview or ideology that originates in economic or cultural relations and the writer's experience of these conditions. The literary form acts as the communication device between the writer and the public, with some scope for misreading. For Lukacs, the genre is the essential unit of literary discourse. Lukacs' later and more important works are *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) and *The Historical Novel* (1962).

Lukacs attacked the stream of consciousness technique and the modernist mode of the novel. Castigating authors like Beckett, Faulkner and Joyce for narrowing the fullness of history into the bleak inner history of absurd existences, Lukacs argues that modernist fiction failed to perceive human existence as a part of a *dynamic historical environment*. He opines that Thomas Mann, Tolstoy, Balzac and Walter Scott must be emulated because they portray society critically, in their portrayal of the tension between characters and the social conflicts of the ages. Lukacs thus recommended *critical realism* as the best mode for a novel. What is needed is that the novel should conduct the reader "towards a more concrete insight into reality". The text, for Lukacs, possesses its own autonomy only insofar as it establishes a correct

correspondence with the immanent meaningfulness of life. The work of art is subordinated to a purposeful design located outside of art. The author is merely the medium through which the laws of history come to expression. Ideology manifests itself in various ways in all stages of life. Lukacs showed that there was a correspondence between the "economic forms of society," the "cultural forms", and the "forms of expression" and its literary forms (an idea adopted by the Frankfurt School.)

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975)

Bakhtin, with Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov, combined Formalism with Marxist ideas. They were influenced by the Marxist belief that language could not be separated from ideology, and literature was part of the social and economic spheres. Bakhtin's works displayed both engagements with Marxist intellectual tradition and hidden indirect resistance to the Soviet government. Viewing language in terms of discourses and dialogues, his theories decode the submerged social critique in early modern texts. In *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and His World* (1940), he provides the idea of polyphony characterized by the multiplicity of views and discourses. In Rabelais, the language of the carnival plays against and parodies most official discourses – exposing the conflict between high and low culture, a class war fought through language. This ideological tussle happens not only between classic and popular texts but also between dialogic voices is within texts, making polyphonic novels playa revolutionary role by foregrounding the subaltern and dissenting voices.

Unit 7 (d): The Frankfurt School and Brecht

The **Frankfurt School** (German: *Frankfurter Schule*) is a school of social theory and critical philosophy associated with the Institute for Social Research, at Goethe University Frankfurt. Founded in the Weimar Republic (1918–33), during the European interwar period (1918–39), the Frankfurt School comprised intellectuals, academics, and political dissidents who were ill-fitted to the contemporary socio-economic systems (capitalist, fascist, communist) of the

1930s. The Frankfurt theorists proposed that social theory was inadequate for explaining the turbulent political factionalism and reactionary politics occurring in ostensibly liberal capitalist societies in the 20th century. Critical of capitalism and of Marxism–Leninism as philosophically inflexible systems of social organization, the School's critical theory research indicated alternative paths to realizing the social development of a society and a nation.

The Frankfurt School's perspective of critical investigation (open-ended and self-critical) is based upon Freudian, Marxist and Hegelian premises of idealist philosophy. The School's sociological works derived from syntheses of the thematically pertinent works of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx, of Sigmund Freud and Max Weber, and of Georg Simmel and Georges Lukács.

In the Weimar Republic (1918–33), the continual, political turmoil of the interwar years (1918–39) much affected the development of the critical theory and philosophy of the Frankfurt School. The scholars were especially influenced by the Communists' failed German Revolution of 1918–19 (which Marx predicted) and by the rise of Nazism (1933–45), a German form of fascism. To explain such reactionary politics, the Frankfurt scholars applied critical selections of Marxist philosophy to interpret, illuminate, and explain the origins and causes of reactionary socio-economics in 20th-century Europe (a type of political economy unknown to Marx in the 19th century). The School's further intellectual development derived from the publication, in the 1930s, of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1932) and *The German Ideology* (1932), in which Karl Marx showed logical continuity with Hegelianism, as the basis of Marxist philosophy.

As the anti-intellectual threat of Nazism increased to political violence, the founders decided to move the Institute for Social Research out of Nazi Germany (1933–45). Soon after Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the Institute first moved from Frankfurt to Geneva, and then to New York City, in 1935, where the Frankfurt School joined Columbia University. In the event, the School's journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* ("Magazine of Social Research") was renamed "Studies in Philosophy and Social Science". Thence began the period of the School's important work in Marxist critical theory; the scholarship and the investigational method gained acceptance among the academy, in the U.S, and in the U.K. By the 1950s, the paths of scholarship led Horkheimer, Adorno, and Pollock to return to West Germany, whilst Marcuse, Löwenthal, and Kirchheimer remained in the U.S. In 1953, the Institute for Social Research (Frankfurt School) was formally re-established in Frankfurt, West Germany.

Some of the most prominent figures of the first generation of Critical Theorists were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, and Eric Fromm.

Max Horkheimer (1895-1973)

In 1930 Max Horkheimer became the director of the Institute for Social Research and it was under his leadership that the members of the Institute were able to address a wide variety of economic, social, political and aesthetic topics, ranging from empirical analysis to philosophical theorization. In the early years of its existence, Horkheimer described the institute's program as "interdisciplinary materialism," thereby indicating its goal of integrating Marxist-oriented philosophy of history with the social sciences, especially economics, history, sociology, social psychology, and psychoanalysis. The resulting "critical theory" would elucidate the various forms of social control through which state-managed capitalism tended to defuse class conflict and integrate the working classes into the reigning economic system.

Horkheimer moved to New York City, where he reestablished the institute and its journal at Columbia University. Throughout the remainder of the decade, he sought to keep the flame of critical theory burning by writing a number of programmatic essays for the *Zeitschrift*. Among the most influential of these works was "Traditional and Critical Theory" (1937), in which he contrasted what he considered the socially conformist orientation of traditional political philosophy and social science with the brand of critical Marxism favoured by the institute. In this work, he defined critical theory as a social critique meant to effect sociologic change and realizes intellectual emancipation, by way of enlightenment that is not dogmatic in its assumptions. The purpose of critical theory is to analyze the true significance of *the ruling understandings* (the dominant ideology) generated in bourgeois society, by showing that the dominant ideology misrepresents how human relations occur in the real world, and how such misrepresentations function to justify and legitimate the domination of people by capitalism.

According to Horkheimer, the traditional approaches are content to describe existing social institutions more or less as they are, and their analyses thus have the indirect effect of legitimating repressive and unjust social practices as natural or objective. By contrast, critical theory, through its detailed understanding of the larger historical and social context in which these institutions function, would expose the system's false claims to legitimacy, justice, and

truth. In 1941, the institute, which had been beset by financial troubles, was effectively dissolved, and Horkheimer moved to Los Angeles. There he collaborated with Adorno on an influential study, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), which traced the rise of fascism and other forms of totalitarianism to the Enlightenment notion of "instrumental" reason. The work's pessimism reflects the defeats that progressive European social movements had suffered since the early 1930s. A more accessible version of the book's argument also appeared in 1947 under the title *The Eclipse of Reason*. In 1950, Horkheimer returned to Frankfurt, where he reestablished the institute and ultimately became rector of the university. His later work displays his enduring fascination with the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and the philosophy of religion. Horkheimer felt that Schopenhauer's pessimistic social philosophy more faithfully reflected the lost prospects for utopia than did the more optimistic social theories of the postwar period.

T. W. Adorno (1903-1969)

Leader of the Frankfurt School since the early 1950s, Adorno took an interdisciplinary approach to literature, philosophy and social theory. His position may be described as that of a Hegelian dialectician, inspired by Marx's critique of capitalism. Adorno argued for art's autonomy from empirical forms of knowledge like science and criticized the Lukacsian dogmatic rejection of modernist artworks – calling it a mere empirically derived view. In the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), he declared that art as a form of knowledge derives "from the realism of the particular ..... the particular being more than a specimen of the universal." He considered traditional aesthetics obsolete because it tended to fetishize totality and form and reified art forms, rendering them into commodities with a value dependent upon other commodities.

Having narrowly escaped the Holocaust, all Adorno's subsequent writing was motivated by the desire to make its repetition less likely. One of Adorno's themes was civilization's tendency to self-destruction, as evinced by Fascism. *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* written in 1944 with his friend Max Horkheimer, critically examines human rationality in order to understand why the

world has descended into barbarism. They opine that the rationalization of human society had ultimately led to Fascism and other totalitarian regimes that represented a complete negation of human freedom. Adorno concluded that rationalism offers little hope for human emancipation, which might come instead of art and the prospects it offers for preserving individual autonomy and happiness. The book is also a critique of what the authors call the 'culture industry'. The culture industry functions by making art another one of the mechanisms in modern societies that develop in terms of the demands of self-preservation of the dominating classes. The point of art is precisely that it resists the reduction inherent in this, and thus offers a more humane form of existence. Even aesthetic innovation can rapidly become assimilated by the market and be made a new commodity.

In his collection of essays called *Notes to Literature,* where he deals with authors like Heine, Thomas Mann, Proust and others, Adorno seek to show how social and historical processes are apparent in the detail of the form and style of a particular writer. Speaking of the writer's identification with his characters, Adorno feels that language in a commodity-based society adds to the process of reductive identification inherent in the commodity form. Only works of art that are as technically advanced as real technology can lay claim to expressing the truth. In the short essay *The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel* (1954), Adorno attacks the 'realistic' novel for just reproducing the facade of a world whose essence lies in the unimaginable. Authors like Kafka, who do not give the reader a stable place from which to understand the world of his stories, bring home the truth of our world more effectively than supposedly realistic narrative. The truly avant-garde work has the power to 'negate' the reality to which they relate: "Art is the negative knowledge of the actual world". Art as an irritant of reality plays the revolutionary role, as Horkheimer said, "By making downtrodden humans shockingly aware of their own despair, the work of art announces freedom which makes them fume". Adorno's other major publications are *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949; *Philosophy of Modern Music*), *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950, with others), *Negative Dialektik* (1966; *Negative Dialectics*), and *Ästhetische Theorie* (1970; "Aesthetic Theory").

The Culture Industry

The term culture industry (German: Kulturindustrie) was coined by Adorno and Horkheimer in the chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", of the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), wherein they proposed

that popular culture is akin to a factory producing standardized cultural goods—films, radio programmes, magazines, etc.—that are used to manipulate mass society into passivity. Consumption of the easy pleasures of popular culture, made available by the mass communications media, renders people docile and content, no matter how difficult their economic circumstances. The inherent danger of the culture industry is the cultivation of false psychological needs that can only be met and satisfied by the products of capitalism. Adorno and Horkheimer theorized that the phenomenon of mass culture has a political implication, namely that all the many forms of popular culture are parts of a single culture industry whose purpose is to ensure the continued obedience of the masses to market interests. The essay is concerned with the production of cultural content in capitalist societies. It critiques the supply-driven nature of cultural economies as well as the apparently inferior products of the system. They argue that mass-produced entertainment aims, by its very nature, to appeal to vast audiences and therefore both the intellectual stimulation of high art and the basic release of low art. The essay does not suggest that all products of this system are inherently inferior, simply that they have replaced other forms of entertainment without properly fulfilling the important roles played by the now-defunct sources of culture.

Horkheimer and Adorno make consistent comparisons between Fascist Germany and the American film industry. They highlight the presence of mass-produced culture, created and disseminated by exclusive institutions and consumed by a passive, homogenized audience in both systems. A center point of the Dialectic of Enlightenment is the topic of "the Enlightenment as the deception of the masses". The term "culture industry" is intended to refer to the commercial marketing of culture, the branch of industry that deals specifically with the production of culture that is in contrast to "authentic culture". Horkheimer and Adorno contend that industrially produced culture robs people of their imagination and takes over their thinking for them. The culture industry delivers the "goods" so that the people then only have left the task of consuming them. Through mass production, everything becomes homogenized and whatever diversity remains is constituted of small trivialities. Movies serve as an example. "All films have become similar in their basic form. They are shaped to reflect facts of reality as closely as possible. Even fantasy films, which claim to not reflect such reality, don't really live up to what they claim to be. No matter how unusual they strive to be, the endings are usually easy to predict because of the existence of prior films that followed the same schemas."

The aims of the culture industry are — as in every industry—economic in nature. All endeavors become focused on economic success. As for discovering the causes of the development of the

culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno contend that it arises from companies' pursuit of the maximization of profit, in the economic sense. However, this cannot be said to be culture, or what culture is supposed to be. It can only be described as being a form of commerce, just like any other kind of commerce. However, for Adorno, the term "culture industry" does not refer to "mass culture", or the culture of the masses of people in terms of something being produced by the masses and conveying the representations of the masses. On the contrary, such involvement of the masses is only apparent, or a type of seeming democratic participation. Adorno contends that what is actually occurring is a type of "defrauding of the masses". Horkheimer and Adorno deliberately chose the term "culture industry" instead of "mass culture" or "mass media". "The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises."

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)

Benjamin's early thought bordered upon Romantic theories and German baroque theatre, and a riding concern with the nature of language in poetry. His interests were varied, including Jewish mysticism and the Romantic philosophy of Novalis and Schlegel, coming to Marxism only after 1924. Like Adorno and Althusser, he maintained that the domination of science obscures the different sorts of truth conveyed by literary texts. Posing against a reductive 'logical
empiricism' Benjamin began to rely on the creation of new, shocking and unexpected contexts as in Surrealism and Dadaism as the true way of revealing the nature of things. In his work on Baudelaire and 19th-century capitalism, he links the notion that words have an arbitrary relation to things and the idea of the commodity – the commodity form makes the value of things arbitrary. Benjamin attacked the conventional literary forms from the bourgeois tradition because and praised Dadaism and other new forms of art ushered in by the age of mechanical reproduction — radio, photography, film. These offered hope of liberation from capitalist culture as they were too new to be part of its ritualistic traditions. With his friend Brecht, he believed that the media of communication in society affect the way in which people order their perceptions.

In his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Benjamin argued that modern technological innovations such as the television, the radio and the cinema

have altered the status of the "work of art." Where it was initially restricted to the bourgeois elite for being "unique," the reproduction of art objects by photography or radio transmission means that they are actually designed for *reproducibility*. Their authenticity was thus lost with their reproducibility: the difference between "original" and "copy" ceased to make sense with the multiple photographs. This divorced art from "ritual" and opened it to the realm of politics by bringing the art-object closer to the mass audience. In order to seize the new technology from the bourgeois, it was necessary for the socialist writers/artists to become *producers* in their own artistic spheres. Here technique plays an important role because, in a field such as photography, the technique is not incidental to the art, but an essential part of the art. Benjamin lauds the democratic potential of the reproduction of "classical" works of art. He rejects the idea that revolutionary art is achieved by attending to the correct subject matter. The artists must revolutionize the *artistic forces of production* of his time. With the possibility of reproduction, a work of art can receive meaning from different contexts.

His later works engaged with notions of history and how the past could transform the present and redeem it. Benjamin thought that this overcoming could occur on a collective level when revolution leads to a new relationship to the traumatic injustices of the past. His chief Idea was the role of allegory in the modern era of capitalism. In bourgeois art, allegory confirmed the myth of history as a structured totality. Critics needed to approach the meaning of cultural history through shocks and dislocations of actual temporal experience. For Benjamin, this subordination of the meaning of history to the destabilizing effect of its most traumatic events exposed its intrinsically political nature. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) and "The Author as Producer" (1934) Benjamin dwelt on Brecht's term *umfunktionierung* (functional transformation) by which the literary artist might serve the class struggle.

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)

Marcuse was associated with the New Left and Youth movements of the 1960s and 70s and participated in the Berlin Revolution at the end of World War I. His commitment to Leftist Politics led him to join the Frankfurt School in 1932, which believed that Russian or Eastern communism was a totalitarian perversion of true communism. His most important work was the *One Dimensional Man,* where he describes the techniques of social control through which

capitalism has produced a “totally administered” society. Marcuse’s thought is close to Althusser and Adorno in as locates reification and consumerism as the heart of this 'total administration' of society. In consumerism, production and consumption of goods become a goal in itself; true human needs are ignored or suppressed while false needs are created, often with the help of mass media and advertising. The result is a "pattern of one-dimensional thought and behaviour” in which ideas, aspirations and objectives that do not fit with the dominant culture are either suppressed or reduced to the logic of that culture. Conventional political resistance to such a programme is extremely difficult, social critics can at most negate the false images of happiness that fuel such a consumer society.

Marcuse hoped that positive social change might be brought about by a coalition of social outsiders somehow alienated by the system. In *Eros and Civilization* and *The Aesthetic Dimension,* Marcuse argues that art embodies the kind of true needs and pleasures that consumer culture inevitably suppresses or transforms. Here, his own theory is that art represents the return of repressed pleasures that had to be repressed as humanity developed the modern work ethic to overcome scarcity and hardship. When culture can be freed from scarcity, art can illustrate the kind of freedom that will allow humanity to reconcile and reintegrate pleasure and reason, thus making a return to the harmony exemplified in ancient Greek art. Art not only revives sensuous pleasures repressed by "totally administered" society but shows how reason can heighten and intensify sensuous pleasures rather than negate them. Marcuse's work, like Adorno’s, is concerned with the revolutionary possibilities of art in a society where capitalist control over ideological state apparatuses (culture being their sum total) has become hegemonic._

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

The only Marxist critic who was also a practicing artist, Brecht is, in many ways, the bridge between Russian ideals about proletarian art and theories prevalent in the Western practices of Marxism. Unlike Soviet critics, he began by declaring art as a field of production where form was not merely a container of content. He criticized them, chiefly Lukacs, for focusing only on novels at the expense of poetry and drama, and demonstrated in his plays how theatre could be used to shock and destabilize bourgeois realism. Inspired by the Formalist theory of ‘defamiliarization,’ he formulated his ‘alienation effect’ – the use of technical devices,

acting methods and plot patterns in such a manner that the audience would be aware of the theatricality and be placed at a critical distance from where objective, rational evaluation of the ideas thrown up by the play is possible. This involved, Brecht wrote, "stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them". To this end, Brecht employed techniques such as the actor's direct address to the audience, harsh and bright stage lighting, the use of songs to interrupt the action, explanatory placards, the transposition of text to the third person or past tense in rehearsals, and speaking the stage directions out loud.

This was designed to break down the illusion of realism built into the bourgeois art forms. The attempt was to establish an 'epic' theatre – one that embodied discourses in their conflict produced multiple viewpoints and offered a truly total view of history in the manner of epics, as against bourgeois-capitalist narratives of history narrowed by class interests. Epic Theatre proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage. Brecht thought that the experience of a climactic catharsis of emotion left an audience complacent. Instead, he wanted his audiences to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognize social injustice and exploitation and to be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change in the world outside.

On the question of realism in art, Brecht was remarkably liberal and sensitive, not subscribing to the Party Line of Socialist Realism. Realism, for him, was a complex affair – “If art reflects life, it does so with special mirrors”— and the special ways of mirroring involved formal innovations. Reality is no fixed, transcendent set of conditions; it has a dynamic, dialectical nature. The artist’s job is to enter the dialectics of the moment, since “a work may be realist in June and antirealist in December.” Brecht took Socialist theatre to an anti-Aristotelian pole when he rejected smoothly interconnected plots and ignored principles like universality or inevitability. Characters and action in his theatre are recognizable yet unfamiliar, distinguished from bourgeois theatre as well as its socialist counterpart in the works of Stanislavsky or Mayakovsky. Like his friend Walter Benjamin, Brecht believed in the potential of new art forms like cinema to disturb the ideological framings of modern capitalism – the work of Sergei Eisenstein, Charlie Chaplin and some others in Hollywood inspired them. Brecht used his poetry to criticize European culture, including Nazis, and the German bourgeoisie. Brecht's poetry is marked by the effects of the First and Second World Wars.

UNIT 8

Unit 8 (a): Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Gramsci has been a major influence on literary theory after the English translation of his *Prison Notebooks* appeared in 1971. He adopted certain fundamental categories for his analysis of culture and society: hegemony, ideology and the division between state and civil society.

Ideology and Hegemony: Gramsci's notion of ideology is the *site* of class conflict. Revolutions are facilitated by shifts in the economic structure and their outcomes are decided on the level of ideologies. He redefines ideology by emphasizing the institutional and cultural bases of ideology. It may be of one form: political propaganda, sermons, folklore, and popular songs. Ideology is not false consciousness, simply because for Gramsci, popular songs and superstitions are themselves *material forces.*

Dominant classes maintain their position not only through acts of *coercion* but also through *symbolic action* which renews and recreates the social order. Hegemony is the all pervasive, weblike system of assumptions and values that shape the way things look and mean. For the majority of people within a culture, hegemony defines reality. Gramsci argues that the generation of ideas and their validity are subjected to capitalist mechanisms of control and domination. Hegemony is the nexus of material and ideological instruments through which the dominant classes maintain their power. Hegemony thus mediates between the ruling ideas and the subjects. The hegemony of the ruling class is maintained through both coercion and consent.

The material sphere is a structure that is allied with a superstructure of ideas. These ideas are institutionalized in the *civil society*: the law courts, the bureaucracy, the religious and educational systems the coercive apparatus is the *state* with its army and police force. A more subtle form of control is to employ intellectuals to naturalize the oppressive order of society. The ruled people must be made to accept things as they are and accept as well as give consent to the oppression imposed on them because they are convinced of its legitimacy. Subordinate classes accept ideologies because they have unconsciously surrendered to the ruler's reality. Literature can, Gramsci believes, foreground the conflict of ideologies and thereby call into question the naturalized conventions of seeing and knowing.

Louis Althusser (1918-1990)

Althusser's "structuralist Marxism" has been a major influence on 20th century Marxists, especially those like Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton. A disciple of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and Antonio Gramsci, Althusser viewed literary works in terms of their relationship to **ideology**. Althusser's concept of ideology is crucial for later Marxists. In a capitalist society and mode of production, ideologies through the ensemble of habits, moralities, and opinions ensure that the work force is maintained in their position of subordination to the dominant class. Ideology provides the framework in which people live their relationship to the social reality in which they are located. Ideology *interpellates* the individuals as *subjects* of the system. It gives them the identity necessary for the functioning of the existing state of affairs while making them feel *as if they are free agents*. It encourages subjects to feel as if they are independent of the social formation. It is a system of *representations* (images, myths, ideas or concepts), endowed with an existence and a historical role at the heart of a given society. Ideology for Althusser pre-exists the individual. When the concrete individual arrives, a predetermined set of roles is already available to which the individual is *interpellated*. Ideology is thus our whole lived experience.

Ideological State Apparatuses: Every economic system seeks to reproduce its conditions of production. The modern capitalist state achieves this through two apparatuses.

1) Ideology always has a material practice and is embodied in an apparatus that has a *material* existence. State power is maintained *through* ***Repressive State Apparatuses***

(RSAs) like the police, the army, law courts and prisons that operate through actual or threats of coercive force/violence.

2) Power is also maintained through the actual *consent* of the subjects. This is achieved through ***Ideological State Apparatuses*** (ISAs): the political groups, the media, the education system, the church and art. These apparatuses instill a set of ideas, an ideology surreptitiously and convince the subjects that they have the right to choose.

For Althusser, Christianity is an ideology because it inserts concrete individuals as subjects/children of God.

Althusser in *Lenin and Philosophy* (1971) and other works took up a long unrealized aim ofMarxist aesthetics – to explain the production of artwork in relation to the production of scientific
knowledge. In *A Letter on Art* (1966) and *Crimonini, Painter of the Abstract* (1966), he does this by explaining that artworks give us a view of ideology to which they allude but from which they are distinguished by presupposing "an internal distantiation". He opines that art is located somewhere between ideology and scientific knowledge. Art makes us see in a distanced way "the ideology from which it *originates*, and from which it *detaches* itself as art and to which it *alludes*." Art achieves a retreat from every ideology that feeds it.

Unit 8 (b): Chief practitioners in England

Christopher Caudwell (1907-1937)

Caudwell was not a literary critic by profession, he wrote on physics, aerodynamics, and literary history. He argues that there is a central illusion that persists precisely because it arises from the defining class position of the bourgeois. The illusion, which Caudwell terms the "bourgeois illusion," takes on different forms in different ages. These forms are projected into works of art. He thinks when capitalism arrived; the human beings ceased to be free and got

trapped by the laws of the market. At every stage in the development of the economy, a new form of the *consciousness* of un-freedom and a new form of the *aspiration* of freedom occurs. In art, this aspiration is in the form of fantasies. Caudwell argues that it is practically necessary to have a world of phantasm in order to embody the emotional and intellectual sources of collective action.

Before his death, while fighting in the Spanish Civil War, young Caudwell published *Illusion and Reality* (1937), a detailed Marxist analysis of the development of English poetry, tracing the shifts of themes and styles across the Industrial Revolution and the capitalist crisis of World War I. In Tennyson's *In Memoriam,* he discovers the modes of capitalist production that foster social disintegration and inordinate individualism viewed in Nature, so that God or socially harmonious forces are nullified and relations binding society is disrupted. Caudwell's later works *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938), *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*(1949) and *Romance and Realism* (1970), all published posthumously, indict the decadence of western European capitalism in a passionate, messianic tone, but have been accused of the 'vulgar Marxist' oversimplification of the relation between literature and ideology.

Raymond Williams (1921-1988)

Since the 1960s Raymond Williams has been synonymous with Leftist writings from the English academy, joined later by Terry Eagleton. Williams' *The Country and the City*, *Keywords*, *Culture and Society*, *Marxism and Literature*, *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, and numerous other works revolutionized literary criticism and helped found the discipline Of cultural studies Williams argued that the key moments which should be of interest to Marxism are (a) the emphasis on language as activity and (b) emphasis on the history of language. Williams stresses the connection and interaction between social and historical processes and language. Active meanings and values are embodied within language, and, in turn, the changing patterns and meanings in language exert a social force. The changes and conflicts of a whole way of life or deeply implicated in that culture's systems of learning and communication. The opponent of Marxism see it as reductive and deterministic but Williams argues that within Marxism the only objective conditions are and can only be the result of human actions in the material world.

Hegemony: the whole social process may be related to specific distributions of power and influence. The sense of an ideology is applied to the actual consciousness of both the dominant and subordinated classes. The dominant class has this ideology in pure and simple forms. A subordinated class has nothing but this ideology in its consciousness, or rather, the ideology *imposed* upon its consciousness. Hegemony constitutes a sense of reality for most people in a society, it saturates their very consciousness. For him the Marxist cultural theory has two basic propositions:

(a) The determining base and determined superstructure
(b) Social being determines consciousness. Superstructure is ideology and culture, which imitates the reality of the economic base.

The base should now be regarded as a *process* and not a static object. The base is not merely the basic industry, but should also refer to men producing themselves (reproduction in real life) and primary production (material production). The traditional base-superstructure model, for Williams, excludes the facts of social intention. Art and thought which have all along been thought of as "natural" and universal actually ratify the dominant ideology. The "theory of culture" is a "study of relationship between elements in a whole way of life."

Ideology is incorporated through educational institutions and the family. A selective tradition is passed off as *the tradition*. From the Archives of the past, certain meanings and images are chosen for emphasis and established as the *standard* or *the tradition*. The present notion of "culture" therefore emerges only around the time of the industrial revolution, as a *critique* of mechanization and industrialization, and to mark a distinction between the illiterate, "uncultured" factory worker and the aesthetically inclined, upper class "cultured" gentleman. However, there are always alternative opinions and attitudes that undermine (or try to undermine) this. Williams proposes a three-tier model here:

(a) Oppositional culture or alternative culture that resists the dominant culture.
(b) Residual culture which is of some previous culture or social formation. Some of the dominant culture also survives through this residual culture.
(c) Emergent culture where new values are being suggested. No dominant culture or mode of production exhausts all human possibilities. Some new ideas may be incorporated by the dominant ideology, or else discarded. What the dominant class discards may be accepted by the rising/new classes.

Thus conceptual terms like creativity, culture, individual, society and institutions / instituted forms such as literacy, the press, education, standardization of the language, the conventions of drama and fiction, must be situated within networks of active social relations that bestow meaning to the terms. Tradition, according to Williams, is always a selective tradition, passed off as *the tradition*. This is always being re-made, with a continuous selection and re-selection, re-interpretation. All this is what constitutes critical activity. Williams argued that we are living through a **long revolution** that is simultaneously economic, political and cultural. This revolution transforms people and institutions as it transforms nature, forms of democratic self-governance and the modes of communication and education.

E.P. Thompson (1924-1993)

Thomson's greatest and best-known work is *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963, and never out of print since). Thompson argued that class is a relationship and not a thing. An individual becomes a member of a class by playing a social role. He states that class was not an automatic response to economic change but was a dynamic and interactive creation between social groups. How the individual got to be in this social role and how the particular social organization got to be there are historical questions. He rejected the idea that the economic base simply determined the superstructure. Rather, Thompson's focus was on culture and consciousness as important factors in the making of the working class.

Thomson's monumental work began with the assumption that between 1782-1832 most English working-class people felt identity of interests between themselves and against their rulers and employees. He charts the history of events leading up to the Jacobin agitation of the 1790s, the grouping of workers during the industrial revolution and their relationship with the Methodist Church, leading up to the plebeian radicalism through Luddism. Writing on the riots and crowds in England he suggests that these were not futile or spontaneous reactions to hunger. Thompson argued that these were attitudes formed within a context of customary expectations and that their actions were a realistic form of direct action within the political system of 18th century England. Thomson's project may best be described as "history from below."

Terry Eagleton (1943 -)

Eagleton's numerous writings are wide-ranging and difficult to summarize. His Marxist works like Criticism and Ideology (1976), Marxism and Literary Criticism (1976), Ideology (1991), The Function of Criticism (1994), The Ideology of the Aesthetic (1990) have been extremely influential. Later in his career, Eagleton moved closer to Walter Benjamin's interest in recent forms like cinema and photography and their capacity to shock, unlike older forms engulfed by bourgeois propaganda. But his most important contribution is the establishment of Marxist criticism in dialogue with feminism, psychoanalysis and poststructural theories through his *Literary Theory: An Introdution* (1983) and *Marxism and Literary Criticism.*

Eagleton thinks all imaginative production is social production. Literature designates a privileged order of values defined and realized within certain institutional discourses. The social is the matrix within which all the terms are fleshed and shaped. In *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), he posits literary criticism in a field distinct from ideology. Unlike criticism, however, literary texts are ideological statements. He differs from Althusser's view that literature can be separated from ideology; he believes it to be a complex reworking of already existing ideological discourses and finally production of one. Eagleton argues that Marxist critics have tried to discover the outline of an in-forming structure of social consciousness in the aesthetics of the text itself. He opines that the text itself always tries to expose its ideological frontiers and allows the critic to identify them. This means that a text, in *saying* one thing, reveals other possibilities that it is ideologically prohibited from realizing. Thus the absences or silences in a text tie it to the history from which it is produced. Text, in Eagleton's views, does not *reflect* historical reality, they work on ideology to convey *the effect of the real*. Ideology is thus defined by Eagleton as the systems of representations (aesthetic, religious, judicial) that shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience.

We need a dialectical criticism conscious of its historical roots and relations, and so capable of interrogating the limits of other critical methods which substitute their own "synthetic totalities" (such as myth, genre) for the founding totality of history itself. That is, against the traditional critical modes which replace the actual dynamics and contradictions of history with its all-encompassing categories like myth or genre, Marxist criticism reveals the fractured bases of tradition, form and aesthetics. Marxist criticism then seeks to understand the "ideological significance whereby certain historical texts are severed from their social formations, defined as 'literary', bound and ranked together to constitute a series of 'literary traditions' and interrogated to yield a set of ideologically presupposed responses.

The role of the contemporary critic is to resist the domination of the late capitalist mode by reconnecting the symbolic to the political. We need to engage with those repressed needs, interests and desired which may then finally emerge as cultural forms with their own collective force. The future should now be defined as a struggle against the bourgeois state. It must break with its "ideological prehistory" and become a science. Eagleton phrases it thus: "The guarantor of scientific criticism is the science of ideological formations." Such a scientific criticism would focus on the general mode of production and the literary mode of production, a general ideology, an aesthetic ideology and then an authorial ideology. All these interact in complex ways that changed through time. Individual authors are seen as the bearers of such categories. The history of the literature may be derived from these interactions.

Unit 8 (c): Relationship With Other Disciplines

Every critical discipline exists in a dialectical relation to other similar disciplines in history. Marxist criticism, coming into being in the late 19th century, had been one of the first critical movements to study literature in a scientific manner, along with Russian Formalism and later Structuralism. Unlike other contemporary or earlier critical theories, Marxism has tended to seeliterature as a system reflecting forms of consciousness along with certain logical principles, and as a field of human discourse inseparably connected to other fields like history, philosophy or politics. As such, it takes a holistic view of literature, paving the way for interdisciplinary and composite cultural studies. Many later critical theories like New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and Postcolonial theory start from Marxist premises, and we will now look at the connection between them.

Marxism and New Historicism

New Historicism evolved from a need to situate texts in their contemporary history and thereby understand power relations in a given culture. Like Marxism, it makes use of a dialectical idea

of
history, seeing the text as a site of conflict over intellectual domination symptomatic of control on material means of production. Although Fredric Jameson accuses New Historicism of lacking a proper theory of history, the historicist approach is common to both. Both disciplines tend to draw literature out of their elitist boundaries into the arena of social and political interaction. This situation in political history enables New Historicists to see patterns of containment and subversion in texts apparently placid – a process close to Althusser's idea about how literature exposes and comments upon dominant ideologies. Louis Montrose's concept of 'subjectification' illustrates the common premise. He feels that on one hand, culture produces individuals who are endowed with subjectivity and the capacity of agency; on the other, it positions them within social networks and subjects them to cultural codes that ultimately exceed their comprehension and control. Montrose here reiterates, in other words, the Marxist insistence on man's forced entry into relations of social production independent of his will, and the totality of material relations that produce his subjective self.

While New Historicism came up in American academia, its British counterpart, Cultural Materialism drew inspiration from Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1965). Its exponents Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield advocate a materialist view of the subject, seeing it as a product of specific historical conditions and social relations, making its links with Marxist aesthetics evident. Moreover, cultural materialism centres on the slogan of anti-essentialism, echoing the Marxist situation of literary works in time-specific contexts of political and philosophical ideas and Walter Benjamin's attack upon the essentialist aura of bourgeois art. Like New Historicism and Marxism, it engages primarily in struggles for power fought in terms of dominant and subversive ideologies, Dollimore's study of *King Lear* finds in it a "general exploration of human consciousness in relation to social being–one which discloses human values to be not antecedent to, but rather informed by, material conditions." Indeed, Cultural Materialism seems to be a neo-Marxist extension, if we take into account Jurgen Habermas' insistence on foundationalism – the search for structures of rational understanding as the basis for criticism.

Marxism and Russian Formalism

The first Formalist critics began to write during the Bolshevik Revolution with intense concentration on language and formal features, and shared with Marxist aesthetics a move

against ‘decadent’ bourgeois culture and passionate egotism of the symbolists. In their joint thesis of 1928, Roman Jakobson and Yuri Tynyanov maintained that the historical growth of a literary system cannot be understood without understanding the way in which other systems impinge on it and partly determine its evolutionary path. The Formalist concept of *defamiliarisation* as the revolutionary function of art, provided by Viktor Shklovsky, had a deep influence on Brecht’s theory of alienation effect. *Defamiliarisation* or ‘making strange’ of automatized reality through art continued to impress certain socialist writers as it provided a scope of foregrounding the ideological polemic and disrupting the ‘politically regressive’ unity of bourgeois discourse. Shklovsky, like Marx, admired *Tristram Shandy* because it was without ‘motivation’– it laid bare its own formal devices. Voloshinov declared that words were active, dynamic social signs capable of meaning differently for different social classes in different socio-historical situations.

Bakhtin’s concepts of carnival and polyphony in fiction brought him closest to Marxist thought. The carnivalesque form enables disruption of a single authority in a text and provides space for alternative voices, laying open the struggle for power. This turns the text polyphonic and valorizes the resistance of the downtrodden, thus playing a progressive role for the proletariat. Formalism, in fact, placed the central Marxist metaphor of class struggle onto language when Bakhtin and Voloshinov recognized verbal signs as an arena of continual class struggle and emphasized that the bourgeoisie tended to reduce meaning and multiplicity of accents and connotations. Socialism then, in the Formalist view, could be the liberation of language.

Marxism and Feminism

Marx and Engels had considered the emancipation of women from their imprisonment in fixed gender roles as a question integrated within the larger issue of class struggles. In *The Origin of the Family. Private Property and State* (1884), Engels recognized that ‘‘the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male,’’ thus equating in a way husbands with the bourgeoisie and wives with the proletariat. The manifold contradictions over gender were not given special status by practicing Marxists who thought oppression on women would end when they entered social and material production and tilted the relations of production to their advantage, and that was possible only in a revolution. Feminist theories attempting to see women's situation in Marxist lights have, however, combined Freudian and

poststructuralist insights with materialist feminism. Finding the classical Marxist attitudes to feminist struggles insufficient, socialist feminists like Donna Haraway, Juliet Mitchell or Michele Barrett in the 1960s, and 70s took into account psychoanalytic theories of sexuality– tending to see women more as individual self than class.

Yet, Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex*: *The case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) saw class struggle as a product of the patriarchal family unit based on sex differences. Much of materialist feminism does this – using the socio-historical premise and dialectical understanding of history in Marxism but shifting the centre of discussion to psychosexual oppression and identity. Mitchell's *Women : The Longest Revolution* (1984) or Barrett's *Women's Oppression Today* make use of Marx, Freud and Lacan's discourses on sexuality to move to the sociological understanding of how gender differences contribute to ideology and literary representation. With Rosalind Coward, Barrett considered the decline of art due to degradation of work under capitalist relations of production by ''workers stripped of mental control over their labour''. Value, for them, is socially produced and endorsed by dominant classes and passed off as natural. Catherine Belsey in *Critical Practice* (1980) pointed out that language was a site of class struggle where male/dominant meanings were only validated, suppressing variety, ''interpellating'' women as willing subjects of their own oppression: Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) accepts the Marxian view of contradiction as central to all history and ideological constructs and wishes feminism to situate patriarchy within this contradictory perception of history. The work of Cora Kaplan, Mary Jacobus, and Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak have focused on the growth of sexual ideologies, in tandem with stages of capitalist development, and differing among classes, and on the urgent need to develop a 'Marxist feminist analysis' of class, gender and race to destabilize capitalist ideologies in this postcolonial era.

Marxism has been the most influential thought in the history of ideas. Historians such as E.P. Thompson, sociologists such as Herbert Marcuse, Max Weber and Jurgen Habermas have variously grappled with Marxists' thought. Raymond Williams and his followers in cultural studies – specifically Stuart Hall and others – have benefited from their adaptation of Marx. Environmentalism in the writings of Ariel Salleh and others has discovered the "emancipator discourse" of Marxism useful for their purpose. Marxist theories have been instrumental to

many thinkers with colonial experience (or postcolonial after World War II) in understanding complex class relations and patterns of social, economic and cultural imperialism, largely carried out through literature and other arts. The Martinican poet and revolutionary Aime Césaire's *Discourse of Colonialism,* the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiongo's theory of cultural liberation, the Indian Aijaz Ahmad's dialogue with Jameson on postcolonial writing are all informed by Marxism's active commitment to change. Moreover, the colonial and postcolonial literary theory makes ample use of the base-superstructure model to understand the uses of ideology through literature in the complex web of neocolonialism, subversion, resistance and cultural aggression. Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* controversially claims a Marxist legacy of deconstruction, with stress on continued interrogation, self-critique and the irreducibility of emancipator potential and the notion of justice.

Suggested Readings

1. Marx, Karl, – *Selected Writings* ed, David McLellan, Oxford, OUP, 1977.

2. Engels, Friedrich, – *The Condition of the Working Class in England,* ed. & trans. WO Henderson & WH Chaloner, Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1968.

3. Lenin, V.I., – *On Literature and Art,* Moscow; Progress, 1967.

4. Trotsky, Leon, – *Literature and Revolution,* New York: Russell, 1967.

5. Eagleton, Terry, – *Marxism and Literary Citicism,* Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1976.

6. Selden, Raman, – *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory,* Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1985.

7. Gramsci, Antonio,– *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* ed., Quentin Hoare & Geoffrey
Nowell Smith, New York : International UP, 1971.

8. Athusser, Louis,– *For Marx* trans. Ben Brewster, New York : Pantheon 1969.

9. Benjamin, Walter, – *Illuminations* ed, intro. by Hannah Arendt, trans. H. Zohn, New York: Harcourt, 1968.

10. Adorno, Théodor, – *Prisms: Cultural Criticism and Society,* trans. Samuel & Sherry Weber, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982.

11. Williams, Raymond, – *Marxism and Literature,* Oxford: OUP 1977.

12. Jameson, Fredric, – *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act,* Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press 1981.

Assignments

Essay type questions

1. What do you understand by Marxism? Explain some of its basic assumptions.

2. How do Marx and Engels define class, class-consciousness and class-struggle?
3. Explain how the dominant ideology is "naturalized" by the ruling class as a weapon to perpetuate their control over the ruled.
4. Attempt a survey of the Marxist critical theory in the USSR. Focus on the works of some of the prominent Soviet Marxists.
5. What shifts of perspectives do we find in the works of the Frankfurt School Marxists? What is their contribution to the tradition of Marxist literary criticism?
6. Evaluate the role of Adorno and Horkheimer in the development of an all-compassing interdisciplinary approach to Marxism.
7. Do you consider Althusser's concept of ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses extremely crucial for later Marxists?
8. Analyze in detail Raymond Williams' contributions to the Leftist writings from English academia.
9. Attempt a survey of the Marxist critical theory in England. Focus on the works of some of the prominent British Marxists.
10. How would you evaluate the relationship between Marxism and other disciplines attempting to create a holistic view of literature and pave the way for interdisciplinary and composite cultural studies?

Short type questions

1. What do you understand by Base and Superstructure?
2. What do you know about the history and activities of the Frankfurt School?
3. What does the phrase "culture industry" signify?
4. Analyze the roles of *defamiliarization* and "epic theatre" in Breachtian terms.
5. What does Gramsci mean by "Hegemony"?
6. What are RSA and ISA as proposed by Louis Althusser.
7. How would you evaluate the relationship between Marxism and feminism?
8. Write a short note on:
    a. V.I. Lenin
    b. Georges Lukacs
    c. Herbert Marcuse
    d. Terry Eagleton

BLOCK II

SUB-UNIT I

"IS THERE A TEXT IN THIS CLASS?"

By

STANLEY EUGENE FISH

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 9 (a): Life and Works of Stanley Fish
Unit 9 (b): The influence of Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" on Stanley Fish

Unit 10 (a): Analysis of the text and its major themes
Unit 10 (b): The concept of the "Interpretive Community"

Suggested Readings
Assignments

UNIT 9

Unit 9 (a): Life and Works of Stanley Fish

Stanley Eugene Fish is an American literary theorist, legal scholar, author and public intellectual. He was raised Jewish. His father, an immigrant from Poland, was a plumber and contractor who made it a priority for his son to get a university education. Fish became the first member of his family to attend college. Fish was educated at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale University. He completed his Ph.D. in 1962, also at Yale University. He has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, Johns Hopkins University, Duke University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Florida International University in Miami. He is

currently the Floersheimer Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law at Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York City, although Fish has no educational degrees or training in law.

Fish started his career as a medievalist. His first book, published by Yale University Press in 1965, was on the late-medieval/early-Renaissance poet John Skelton. But he rose to prominence with the publication of his second book *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1967). Fish explains in his essay, "Milton, Thou Shouldst be Living at this Hour" how he started reading and analyzing Milton by an academic accident. When in 1963 Fish joined the University of California as an assistant professor, he was asked to teach a course on Milton. They had no idea that the young professor had never studied Milton and the result was this book. Here Fish first presented his theory of "reader-response criticism," in which he argues that reading is a temporal phenomenon and that the meaning of a literary work is located within the reader's experience of the text. Fish suggested that the subject of John Milton's masterpiece is, in fact, the reader, who is forced to undergo spiritual self-examination when led by Milton down the path taken by Adam and Eve and Satan. He eventually became an outstanding Milton scholar and wrote, *How Milton Works* (2001) which reflects five decades' worth of his scholarship on Milton.

His *Self-consuming Artifacts* (1972) elaborated and developed the notion of reader response into a theory of interpretive communities, in which a reader's interpretation of a text depends on the reader's membership in one or more communities that share a set of assumptions. In *Is There a Text in This Class?: the Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980), Fish further developed his reader-as-subject theory. This collection of Fish's essays established his position as one of the most influential literary theorists of his day. In his later works, Fish extended literary theory into the arenas of politics and law, writing on the politics of the university, the nature of free speech, and connections between literary theory and legal theory. These works include *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (1989), *There's No Such Thing As Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing, Too* (1994), *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (1995), *The Trouble with Principle* (1999), *How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One* and *Winning Arguments: What Works and Doesn't Work in Politics, the Bedroom, the Courtroom, and the Classroom* were published in 2011 and 2016, respectively.

This American literary critic is particularly associated with reader-response criticism, according to which the meaning of a text is created, rather than discovered, by the reader; with neopragmatism, where critical practice is advanced over theory; and with the interpretive relationships between literature and law. He is best known for his analysis of interpretive communities — an offshoot of reader-response criticism. His work in this field examines how the interpretation of a text is dependent upon each reader's own subjective experience in one or more communities, each of which is defined as a 'community' by a distinct epistemology. Fish is associated with postmodernism, at times to his irritation. Instead he views himself as an advocate of anti-foundationalism.

Unit 9 (b): The influence of Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" on Stanley Fish

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A massive influence on Stanley Fish's development of the Reader-response theory was "The Death of the Author", the famous 1967 essay by the French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes (1915–1980). The essay was first published in the American journal Aspen and later appeared in an anthology of his essays, *Image-Music-Text* (1977). Although Fish does not quote Barthes anywhere in his essay he is actually corresponding to Barthes ideas. Barthes' essay argues against traditional literary criticism's practice of incorporating the intentions and biographical context of an author in the interpretation of a text. He criticizes the tendency to consider aspects of the author's identity – his political views, religion, ethnicity, psychology, historical context, or any other biographical or personal attributes – to distill meaning from his work. In this critical schematic, the experiences and biases of the author serve as its definitive "explanation." Barthes has a problem with this attitude and suggests that the author should not be seen as a divine creator. Barthes agrees that this method of reading may be apparently tidy and convenient but is actually sloppy and flawed: "To give a text an author" and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it "is to impose a limit on that text." Readers must thus,

according to Barthes, separate a literary work from its creator in order to liberate the text from interpretive tyranny.

In the similar fashion of what W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley do in their essay titled “The Intentional Fallacy”, Barthes also warns the reader not to pay unnecessary attention to the authorial intention or the life and background of the author. According to him, the intentions of the author are irrelevant and the work is not an exact replica of his intentions. In the process of giving words to the thoughts, the writer intentionally or unintentionally is involved in a process of meaning-making on which he does not have full control. Thus the pursuit of trying to figure out the authorial intention is both a complete distraction and an unnecessary activity. Even if the author is alive (which is not the case several times as many authors are dead) once cannot be fully certain if the author is being genuine about his intentions. And even if the author is honestly telling his intentions behind what he has written, there is no guarantee that he was successful in depicting the same in his work. Barthes critiques the idea of “originality” and “truth” that one associate with the author. This approach gives the author excessive “authority” over the process of interpretation. This approach has two problems: Firstly, that it falsely assumes, as discussed above, that the reader can uncover the real intentions of the author. Secondly, it imposes a fixed meaning on the text.

By associating the Author with the text, the text is automatically limited. Instead of drawing their own meaning from the text using their own experiences and therefore stimulating their own thoughts of their lives and how it connects with the world around them the reader is then restricted to trying to guess what the author meant. The reader focuses on understanding the Author’s opinions and whether they agree with the Author and don’t focus on their own thoughts and opinions of the piece. In a well-known quotation, Barthes draws an analogy between text and textiles, declaring that a "text is a tissue [or fabric] of quotations," drawn from "innumerable centers of culture," rather than from one, individual experience. The essential meaning of a work depends on the impressions of the reader, rather than the "passions" or "tastes" of the writer; "a text's unity lies not in its origins," or its creator, "but in its destination," or its audience. Therefore, he shifts the focus from the author to the reader. Being, no longer the locus of creative influence, the author is merely a “scriptor” (a word Barthes uses to disrupt the traditional continuity of power between the terms “author” and “authority” The scriptor exists to produce but not to explain the work and “is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, [and] is not the subject with the

book as predicate." Barthes is not interested in the "true meaning" of the text as, according to him, there is no such thing. Both the readers and the author bring with them preconceived knowledge and notions which definitely affects their reading of the text.

So, there could be as different ways of reading and interpreting a text as there are a number of readers. He declares at the end of the essay that "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." Thus he lays the foundation of reader-response theory. This conclusion is important because it provides us with new options for reading a text. Our reading of texts no longer needs to be trammeled by considerations regarding the person who wrote them. The essay had a huge impact on literary theory. Its popularity is made clear simply by the prevalence of its translations. However, Barthes's abstract notion of "the reader" is also different from many other redder-response theorists. Many reader-response theorists, when they talk of readers, mean real readers of flesh and blood. For Barthes, "the reader" simply means the conceptual space where all the many potential meanings of a text are contained.

UNIT 10

Unit 10 (a): Analysis of the text and its major themes

. In his famous article, "Is there a Text in This Class", Stanley Fish argues what constrains the interpretation is not fixed meanings in a linguistic system but the practices and assumptions of an institution. It is not the linguistic system that gives determinacy to the meaning of an utterance but rather the context of the utterance. Fish offers an anecdote about a student in the John Hopkins University who approached a professor, one of his colleagues, on the first day of the semester by asking: "Is there a text in this class?" The professor heard this utterance in one context, assuming the question to be an inquiry about the textbook that might be required for his class. The student's question, however, referred to the concept of textuality as advanced in some modern literary theory. The professor later learnt that the student previously took a class with Fish and understood that the interpretation of a text is open and indeterminate. Fish

turns this dialogue on itself in order to talk about the possibility of a definite interpretation and the relativistic dangers of reader based subjectivity. He uses this example to show that his colleague, having initially heard the question in one context (which includes whatever is associated with "the first day of class"), was obliged to modify this context (to embrace the concerns of modern literary theory) in order to understand the utterance (ITC, 309–311). His point is that "it is impossible even to think of a sentence independently of its context," and that our making sense of an utterance and our identifying of its context occur simultaneously: we do not, as M. H. Abrams and E. D. Hirsch imply, first scrutinize an utterance and then give it meaning (ITC, 313). We hear an utterance as already embedded within, not prior to determining, knowledge of its purposes and interests (ITC, 310). Fish wonders if not having one fixed literal meaning of a text actually means that there are as many "meanings as there are readers"?

In light of the above mentioned argument, let us examine the question: "Is there a text in the class?" what exactly is the normative/literal/linguistic meaning of "Is there a text in this class?" Fish argues that two meanings are possible:

Whether or not there is a required textbook in the class for a particular course?
What is the instructor's position (within the range of positions available in contemporary literary theory) on the status of the text?

Both interpretations are derived from the normal use of language. Here what is important is that the professor and the student are within the established practices and assumptions of an educational institution. Hence their interpretive activities are common. They get their meanings from the practices of the institution and not from the rules and fixed meanings of a language system.
Fish now takes the argument one step further. He classifies both questions thus:
"Is there a text in the class" – (1)
"Is there a text in the class" – (2)

The meaning of question number (1) is immediately available to any native speaker. The meaning is understood in the context of the "first day of class". The meaning of question number (2) will be understood by only the person who is aware of these disputes in contemporary literary theory. This prior knowledge is, in fact, neither prior nor later since it is

activated at one and the same time with the reception of the utterance and its interpretation. Fish holds that the meaning is always constrained "not after it was heard but in the ways in which it *could*, in the first place, be heard". This assertion by Fish echoes with Wittgenstein's famous "the meaning of a word is its use in the language".

But Fish says that one more meaning is possible:

“Is there a text in the class” – (3): It might mean that next morning someone has forgotten to bring the textbook to the class and is asking for one.

This is where critics like M.H. Abrams are afraid of the pluarity of meaning because that might lead to an endless succession of meanings (4), (5), (6) etc. and undermine the normative and the determinate. But Fish says that the example need not be taken in that sense at all. “In all these situations the meaning of the utterance is restricted, “not after it was heard but in the ways in which it could be heard”. “An infinite plurality of meaning would be a fear only if sentences existed in a state in which they were not already embedded in” some situation or other. But there is no such state. Sentences emerge only in situations. Within a particular situation, the normative meaning of an utterance is clear to all native speakers. Another situation may provide the same sentence with another meaning. However one of the above meanings is more common than the other. Most people will understand question number (1) easier than question number (2). In fact, (2) has to be laboriously explained to make someone understand the idea. Fish is arguing that what grants us "protection" against the indeterminacy of signifiers is that they "emerge only in situations, and within those situations, the normative meaning of an utterance will always be obvious or at least accessible". This means that meaning, although determined, is always relative to the situation in which the utterance appears. What enables us to rank interpretations is that norms will almost always favor one over the other.

E.D. Hirsch gives another example of a “verbal meaning” accessible to all speakers of the language. The sentence “The air is crisp”, Hirsch says, has a determinate and sharable meaning. Fish agrees with this argument. Most people will immediately understand the utterance as a rough meteorological description of the local atmosphere. However, Fish turns the same example against Hirsch’s arguments favoring stability of meaning. Fish says that the obvious meaning of the expression is not because of the value of its words. Even this expression is not free from the context. Fish says that we hear the words already embedded in a context. On the

other hand, if we hear the words in the middle of a discussion on music [‘when the piece played correctly the air is crisp’] the same comment would become a comment on the performance. “Thus Hirsch invokes a context by not invoking it: by not surrounding the utterance with circumstances, he directs us to imagine it in the circumstances in which it is most likely to have been produced…” Thus it is impossible even to think of a sentence independently of a context. If there is no context given, we will imagine a context which is usually linked to the utterance.

Fish holds that words do not have meaning which is independent of context since they are always already embedded in contexts. He thinks what promises us the ability to have common meaning is that there is always "a contextual setting and the sign of its presence is precisely the absence of any reference to it". Even if we hear a sentence without any context we will fall back to context in which we are accustomed to hear such utterances. Fish claims though an utterance is already determined by its context that does not mean we cannot misunderstand the language. It is because sometime one may self-consciously try to figure out what an utterance might mean which leads to misunderstanding. But that misunderstanding is not due to semantics and syntax but of context. The professor, when heard the question, assigned it a meaning that was not appropriate. He only assumed the meaning and that was challenged by the student. It was not a syntactical mistake but a mistaken identification of intention. The professor "has not misread the text but mis-pre-read the text". In order to understand the student, the professor had to alter the meaning of her intentions in approaching him, not the meaning of her words which are perfectly clear and intelligible in both cases, just in different ways. People unfamiliar with the literary debate on the determinacy of meaning will have a hard time reaching the proper understanding while people familiar with Fish's position in the debate will immediately recognize the proper meaning, especially when they hear the story coming from Fish himself.

Fish says, “... meanings come already calculated not because of norms embedded in the language but because language is always perceived (from the very first) within a structure of norms. That structure is not abstract and independent but social”. He adds that the structure is “not a single structure” with a special or privileged relationship “to the process of communication as it occurs in any situation”. But it is a structure that changes when one situation (which has a lot of assumed practices, goals, purposes) has given way to another”. He states that "the change from one structure of understanding to another is not a rupture but a modification of the interests and concerns that are *already* in place; and since they are already

in place, they constrain the direction of their own modification". He links this to the question of authority over interpretation which saves us from relativistic subjectivity. Many will say that if norms and standards are context specific, they will bring in infinite plurality of norms and standards with no way to adjudicate between them. To have many standards is to have no standards at all.

Fish says that this counter argument rules out the possibility of a norm whose validity would be recognized by everyone no matter what the situation. But the absence of a situational norm is not of any practical importance or consequence. It does not affect the speaker's/reader's ability to perform. Hence it does not matter. Relativism, according to Fish, is a position we can entertain. But it is not a position we can occupy. To be a relativist we have to keep a distance from our own beliefs and assumptions. Then our beliefs and assumptions will not be authentic for us any more than the beliefs and assumptions of others. However, the individual is never indifferent to the norms and values that enable his consciousness. Any individual acts on the basis of personally held norms and values. He does so with full confidence. When his beliefs change, the norms and values to which he once gave unthinking assent will be demoted to the status of opinions. They will become the object of analytical and critical attention. The individual's old values and norms will then be replaced by another set of norms and values which will remain unexamined for the moment. There is never a moment that one believes in nothing—when our consciousness is free from all kinds of thought. It can be argued that an individual's thought has no public value, and when an individual is trapped in his own thought a shared intelligibility (understanding) will become impossible. The answer to this is that an individual's assumptions and thoughts are never 'his own'. He is not their 'origin'. They are available prior to him. Their prior availability delimits in advance the paths that his consciousness can take. An individual speaks or reasons on the basis of a shared understanding. The categories are his own only in the sense that he is automatically the heir to the institutions' way of making sense; its sense of intelligibility

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Unit 10 (b): The "Interpretive Community"

For social reader-response theory, usually associated with the later works of Stanley Fish, there is no purely individual subjective response. According to Fish, what we take to be our individual subjective responses to literature are really products of the *interpretive community* to which we belong. According to Roland Barthes, the text is broken up or emptied so that the imaginative reader-writer may construct his own estate. But for Stanley Fish, the text is largely an opportunity for interpretations by an academic community bound together by shared assumptions. Among American reader-oriented critics, he has been in the Vanguard as an abolitionist of the independent text and a foremost democratic advocate of the pluralistic interpretive communities as the source of authority. Against the prevailing New Critical orthodoxy that the text is the source of meaning, Fish decided in favour of the reader. He discovered in the course of reading and debate that the idea of a stable, meaningful text did not disappear with the privileging of the reader. Like Barthes, Fish in his thinking about text, has undergone continual change and the change has been in the direction of emptying the text, denying it inherent structure, properties, and intention: it is the reader who comes to realize that text. Fish's conception of the role of the reader has also undergone changes. If the reader is still in a privileged position in relation to the text, he is no longer and isolated entity; he now suffers the constraints of an interpretive community. Properties, structure, and meaning reside neither in the reader nor in the text rather they emerge, from a transaction between the communal reader and the text. It is the community that now provides the constraints which were formally attributed to the text.

Perhaps the best place to begin the understanding of the “interpretive community” is with the story Fish tells in his “Is There a Text in This Class” about a joke he once played on an undergraduate class. One day, he wrote on the blackboard at the end of his first class, the following list of names as an assignment for the next day’s reading:

Jacobs–Rosenbaum
Levin
Thorne
Hayes
Ohman (?)

The first five mean on the least are well-known linguists; the last, Richard Ohmann, is a literary critic. Fish misspelled Ohmann’s name, because he knew he couldn't recall whether it had one

or two n's, so he placed a question mark after it. Fish, his next class, asked the students to interpret it. The class apparently did not suspect anything and went to work applying the critical tools they have learnt in the course. The first student got the ball rolling by identifying the poem as a hieroglyph either of across or an altar. These observations lead to a discussion of specific words. Jacob's was then taken as a reference to Jacob's ladder, a traditional symbol for the Christian Ascent to heaven. The pairing of the word Rosenbaum with Jacobs suggested, however, that in this case, the means of ascent was not a ladder but a Rosenbaum, a rose tree, which the class saw as an allusion to the Virgin Mary. The poem was thus seen to pose the question, "how is it that a man can climb to Heaven by me is means of a Rose tree?" and to provide the answer: "by the fruit of the tree, by the fruit of Mary's womb, Jesus". Fish tells the story not to illustrate critical *tour de force*, but to illustrate the manner of all reading and indeed all human thought as he now understand them.

In the early 1970s Fish had sought to shift the focus of interpretation away from the text, where it had been in the New Criticism, to the reader of the text and to describe the reading process rather than its outcome. Meaning, as Fish's reader-response School of Criticism conceived of it, was dynamic and temporal, rather than Static and spatial. At the same time, fish wanted to avoid one possible implication of is interpretive evolution – the implication that there is no single "correct" reading of a text, that in fact, there are as many interpretations and texts as readers, no one of them superior to another. Fish was caught between wanting to locate the meaning of a text in the reader and wanting to say also that the meaning was not ultimately in the reader but in the text itself. The solution to the problem has come through his new theory of the interpretive community, which he has formulated in a series of essays reprinted in "Is There a Text in this Class" and in his subsequent essays. This new theory has two basic hypotheses. The first involves a rejection of both Fish's earlier views that reader in some sense construct the text through their interpretive activities and that the facts of the text shape their experience. Now reading is seen as a function of neither the text not the reader, but of the reader's particular assumptions about the text and the world, his or her "interpretive strategies". The reader does not first obtain the facts of the text and then deploy an appropriate interpretive strategy; interpretive strategies are always at work *prior* to the act of reading, Fish insists, and determine both the activities of the reader and the facts of the text that the reader will find central or peripheral or even noticeable. The driving force behind the interpretation arrived at by Fish's class was not the words on the blackboard or the students themselves, but the concept

about poetry in general and seventeenth-century poetry in particular that were already in their Minds.

The second hypothesis in Fish's new theory is that the interpreter strategies are the creations of interpretive communities, groups of people who share purposes and goals. Interpreter strategies have social and institutional "interests". A main premise here is that "selves are constituted by the ways of thinking and seeing that inhere in social organizations." We are all conventional down to the beliefs that guide our reading and our lives. It was not Fish's class that actually read the poem on the class board, but the interpretive community into which those students were being inducted through classes like Fish's. In our world an interpretation is not "correct" because it is based on verifiable hypotheses, for such do not exist: there are no facts apart from hypotheses about the facts. Rather an interpretation is "correct" only in the sense that it adheres to the interpretive strategies of the dominant interpretive community at that time. Thus "reader", "author", "text" and "facts" are postulated terms that are useful in discussing perception and interpretation (the two are identical), but that refer in a sense to non-existent entities: interpretive communities create them all.

By interpretive community, Fish refers to those who share the interpretive strategies we bring to texts when we read, whether or not we realize we're using interpretive strategies and whether or not we are aware that other people share them. These interpretive strategies always result from various sorts of institutionalized assumptions (assumptions established, for example, in high schools, churches, and colleges by prevailing cultural attitudes and philosophies) about what makes a text a piece of literature—instead of a letter or a legal document or a church sermon —and what meanings we are sup- posed to find in it. An interpretive community can be as sophisticated and aware of its critical enterprise as the community produced by the followers of a specific Marxist critical theorist. Or an interpretive community can be as unsophisticated and unaware of its interpretive strategies as the community produced by a high school teacher who instructs his students that it is natural to read literature in search of static symbols that tell us the "hidden meaning" of the story. Of course, interpretive communities are not static; they evolve over time. And readers can belong, consciously or unconsciously, to more than one community at the same time, or they can change from one community to another at different times in their lives. In any case, all readers come to the text already predisposed to interpret it in a certain way based on whatever interpretive strategies are operating for them at the time they read. Fish claims that a multiplicity of communal authorities, based on the

multiplicity of interpretive communities to which students already belong, determines how students read the text in the first place.

By now we fully understand the point Fish is trying to make in front of us: every literary judgment we make, including the judgment that a particular piece of writing is a poem, results from the interpretive strategies we bring with us when we read the text. A list of linguists' names, or anything else, can become a poem if a reader or group of readers uses the interpretive strategies required to make it one. That is, the qualities that make a poem a poem do not reside in the text but in the interpretive strategies we've learned, consciously or unconsciously, before we ever encountered the text. Social reader-response theory does not offer us a new way to read texts. Nor does it promote any form of literary criticism that already exists. After all, its point

is that no interpretation, and therefore no form of literary criticism, can claim to reveal what's *in* a text. Each interpretation will simply find whatever its interpretive strategies put there.

This doesn't mean, however, that we are left with the anarchy of unconstrained interpretation. As Fish notes, interpretations will always be controlled by the relatively limited repertoire of interpretive strategies available at any given point in history. By understanding the principles of social reader-response theory, however, we can become more aware of what it is we're doing when we interpret a text and more aware of what our peers and students are doing as well. Such awareness could be especially useful to teachers by helping them analyze their students' interpretive strategies; helping them decide if and when to try to replace those strategies with others; and helping them take responsibility for the strategies they choose to teach instead of hiding behind the belief that certain ways of reading are natural or inherently right because they represent what's in the text.

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Suggested Readings

1. Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author”. In *Image, Music, Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.
2. Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.
3. Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Literature from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974.
4. Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-friendly Guide*. Routledge: New York and London, 2006.

Assignments

1. Estimate the influence of Roland Barthes’ famous essay “The Death of the Author” on Stanley Fish’s development of the reader-response theory.

2. What do understand by the phrase “interpretive community”?

3. Critically evaluate the process of finding the meaning of a text produced by its context as illustrated by Stanley Fish in his essay.

BLOCK III

SUB-UNIT I

"THE READING PROCESS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH"

BY

WOLFGANG ISER

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 11 (a): An Introduction To Wolfgang Iser: Life And Works

Unit 11 (b): Reception Theory of Wolfgang Iser

Unit 11 (c): Iser's concept of Implied Reader

Unit 12 (a): Defining Phenomenology

Unit 12 (b): A Synopsis of Wolfgang Iser's "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach"

Unit 12 (c): A Commentary on Iser's "The Reading Process"

Conclusion

Works Cited

Assignments

UNIT 11

Unit 11 (a) : An Introduction To Wolfgang Iser: Life And Works

"If a literary text does something to its readers, it also simultaneously reveals something about them."

Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting* (1989)

One of the pioneering figures of Reader-Response Criticism, Wolfgang Iser was born on July 22, 1926, at Marienberg in Germany to Paul Iser, a businessman, and Else Iser. As a student, he studied English, German, and Philosophy at the Universities of Leipzig and Tubingen respectively, receiving a doctorate in English literature at the University of Heidelberg in 1950, for his dissertation on the worldview of Henry Fielding (*Die Weltanschauung Henry Fielding*). A year later, he was appointed as an academic instructor at Heidelberg, and in 1952, as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Glasgow. It was there that he started his venture in the pursuit of exploring various facets of contemporary philosophy and literature, which heightened his interest in inter-cultural exchange.

Iser returned to Germany to carry his research forward and made a significant contribution to the foundation of the University of Konstanz in 1966. Together with his colleague and friend Hans Robert Jauss, Iser developed the "Constance School" which looked into the "aesthetics of reception", or which later came to be identified as "Reception Theory". Being a founder member of the "School", Iser focused primarily on the ways in which literary texts are actively constructed by individual readers through the phenomenology of the reading process.

The Constance School draws heavily on the philosophical tradition of aesthetics inaugurated in the eighteenth century Germany by philosophers like Alexander Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, and Friedrich Von Schiller, and it focuses primarily on the affective as well as on the formal dimensions of art. The members of the School are also influenced by the philosophical considerations of hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation, developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Martin Heidegger and others. in particular, Iser's work draws on the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer and the phenomenological literary theory of Roman Ingarden, which examines the process of cognition through which we understand literary works.

The fruits of his research endeavour, his books such as *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (1974), *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978), *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (1989), *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (1993), *The Range of Interpretation* (2000) and *How to Do Theory* (2006) established his reputation as one of the influential critics of Reception Theory, a branch of Reader-response criticism.

Unit 11 (b): Reception Theory of Wolfgang Iser

While addressing the question in the article "Do I Write for an Audience?"(2000), Iser clarifies,

> Reception theory was a reaction to what appeared to be a stalemate in literary studies. Of paramount concern for this theory was the impact a piece of literature has on its readers and the responses it elicits. Instead of asking what the text means, I asked what it does to its potential readers…. The message (of the text) that was no longer to be ascertained triggered interest in what has since been called text processing—what happens to the text in reading (311).

This statement, undoubtedly, marks a decisive shift in the realm of literary theory from meaning to the aesthetic processes which constitute it. He further states,

> Consequently, aesthetic response, as the hallmark of reception theory, is to be conceived in terms of interaction between text and reader. I call it aesthetic response because it stimulates the reader's imagination, which in turn gives life to the intended effects (311).

Borrowing his argument from the phenomenological theory of Roman Ingarden, Iser suggests that in order to have a better understanding of a text, the reader must make active participation in the process of meaning-making, and try to fill in the gaps that are left open, with the given information in the text before him. The whole reading experience thus becomes an evolving process of anticipation, frustration, retrospection, reconstruction, and satisfaction.

As the argument implies, the cognitive faculty of a human being plays a crucial role in deciphering the meaning of a text thereby resulting in a series of varied interpretations. As argued by Terence Wright in "Reader-Response under Review: An Art, A Game, or A Science?" (1995), reader-response refers to "a variety of positions held together only by their concern with what goes on in the mind of the reader when he or she picks up and peruses a book." In the essay, "From Iser to Turner and Beyond: Reception Theory Meets Cognitive Criticism"(2002), Prof. Craig A. Hanulton and Ralf Schneider critically reviewed the work of Wolfgang Iser and Mark Turner, two giant pillars of reception theory and cognitive criticism, and discussed the similarities and differences between lser and Turner. They argue that

cognitive criticism should not ignore its roots in reception theory and suggest how a cognitive reception theory can be constructed.

Unit 11 (c) : Iser's concept of Implied Reader

Across the centuries, theorists and philosophers have made varied distinctions in the category of the reader. For instance, Walker Gibson has provided the model of a "mock reader", Hans Robert Jauss has provided the idea of a "historical reader", Stanley Fish has been instrumental in founding the notion of an "informed reader", whereas Norman Holland has propagated the idea of a "transactive reader". Wolfgang Iser has developed the idea of "implied reader" while foregrounding his theory of reception. In his 1978 book, *The Act of Reading*, Iser defines the implied reader in the following way:

> If, then, we are to try and understand the effects caused and the responses elicited by literary works, we must allow for the reader's presence without in any way predetermining his character or his historical situation. We may call him, for want of a better term, the implied reader. He embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader (34).

In Iser's formulation, an implied reader is defined as both a textual condition and a process of meaning production. "The term incorporates both the restructuring of the potential meaning by the text and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process." The "textual structure" of the implied reader is composed of three basic components: the textual perspectives, their convergent place, and the vantage point of the reader. The convergent place and the vantage point of the reader are to be actualized by the real reader; otherwise, they remain potential in the textual structure. The "structured acts" of the implied reader makes the interpretation fruitful. In Iser's opinion, the text gets its meaning only when it is read; so the literary work becomes meaningful only with the engagement of the reader.

Iser makes a distinction between the implied reader and the actual reader. The implied reader is formed within the text, and he is expected to respond in many specific ways to the "response-inviting structures" of the text. The actual reader, however, with his own personal experiences accumulated little by little, his responses actually are continuously and inevitably changed and reconstructed. Consequently, literary texts always take on a range of possible meanings according to Iser's analysis.

UNIT 12

Unit 12 (a): Defining Phenomenology

Originally derived from the Greek words "*phainómenon* " (meaning, "that which appears") and *lógos* (meaning "study", or "opinion") Phenomenology incorporates a philosophical venture into the structures of experience and consciousness. As a philosophical movement, Phenomenology gained its ground in the early decades of the 20th century by the German philosopher and critic Edmund Husserl and was later expanded to the other parts of the globe. He believed that "The phenomenological reduction is the universal method and radical by which I grasped as pure ego, the life of pure consciousness of my own, living in and through which the whole objective world exists for me, just like that there for me ".

In terms of literature, phenomenology defines reading as an "ontological value" of the literary text. The basic question that the phenomenology of literature asks is: "Does writing require reading?" "Can a literary text as a state of writing exist in its fullness of meaning?" "Is there any difference between an unread and a read text?" and "What does reading do to a literary text that writing cannot do?" In reply to the questions presented above, the Phenomenology of literature posits that there is an absolute and unbridgeable difference between an unread and a read text. It believes that there is an ontological requirement for reading in writing which is built into the mode of existence of writing.

In his 'Preface' to *Surprised by Sin*, Stanley Fish defines Phenomenology and says that " meaning is an event, something that happens not on the page…but in the interaction between the flow of print (or sound) and the actively mediating the reader-hearer." Fish's statement indicates that the subjectivity of the reader continuously shapes his/her mental process. And

thus, what begins as the reader's subjective process, ends up in his achieving the objective of the literary text. In Fish's opinion, a work becomes a text only with the reader's experience. The text controls the reader's activity developing process and leads him to the understanding of meaning generated by the author. Fish here is aiming at a particular kind of "informed reader" who can address the linguistic complexities, literary conventions and make his/her own choice regarding the connotations, implications and suggestions, in the course of the reading. Fish's idea bears similarity with Husserl's idea of phenomenology: that the reader or the critic should empty his/her head of all preconceived ideas and respond directly to the text, thereby discovering the mode of consciousness of the author.

Unit 12 (b): A Synopsis of Wolfgang Iser's "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach"

In a more general sense, Phenomenology is a modern philosophical trend emphasizing the perceiver's central role in determining the meaning. Central to Iser's idea of phenomenology is the concept of the "wandering viewpoint". The "wandering viewpoint" is a means of describing the way in which the reader is present in the text. This presence is at a point where memory and expectation converge, resulting in a dialectic movement that brings about a continual modification of memory and an increasing complexity of expectation.

Wolfgang Iser's ideas concerning readers' responses to a text were initially presented in a 1970 lecture entitled "The Affective Structure of the text", and then anthologised in two book forms, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (1974) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978). While examining a number of English novels written across the centuries in *The Implied Reader*, Iser develops his concept of the reader's reception of a text in the final chapter of the book, which he titled "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach".

Iser begins by pointing out that while considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also "the actions involved in responding to that text." He perceived a literary work as having two "poles" - the "artistic" and the "aesthetic". The "artistic" pole constitutes the text created by the author, and the "aesthetic" pole refers to "the realization

accomplished by the reader". The literary work lies somewhere between the two poles and comes into being only with the confluence of the text and the reader. What Iser implies is that reading is an active and creative process, which brings the text into life, which reveals "its inherently dynamic character".

Iser argues that a literary text is made up of innumerable "gaps" which invites and encourages the reader's response, thereby giving him/her the opportunity to nurture his intellectual and creative impulses. To elaborate his argument further, Iser draws upon Roman Ingarden's idea of "intentional sentence correlatives," according to which, a series of sentences in a literary work does not refer to any objective reality outside itself. Rather, the complex nature of these sentences gives rise to a "particular world," which correlates with the literary world. The text produced by the reader's response offers a "virtual dimension," which converges the "coming together of text and imagination".

Iser talks about two important characteristics of the reading process: the first of which indicates reading as a temporal activity as opposed to a linear one. The readers' perspective is continuously moving and changing according to the way we make sense of the accumulating fictional material. The second feature points at the "gaps" or unwritten implications in the text, which we attempt to search for consistency. This search for consistency, according to Iser, has a number of implications. First of all, it makes us aware of our own capacity, our own interpretative power; thus, we learn not only about the text but also about ourselves. Along with it, by making certain semantic decisions and ruling out others, for the sake of consistent reading, we acknowledge the inexhaustibility of the text, its potential to have other meanings that may not quite fit into our own scheme. Indeed, our desire for consistency involves us to some extent in a world of illusion: as we leave behind our own reality somewhat to enter the reality of the text, we build up a textual world whose illusory consistency helps us make sense of unfamiliar elements. The consistency is illusory because we "reduce the polysemantic possibilities to a single interpretation in keeping with the expectations aroused, thus extracting an individual, configurative meaning".

Following John Dewey's proposition in the *Art as Experience* (1934), Iser argues that in reading a text, the reader undergoes a process of organization similar to that undertaken by the author of the text. In other words, the text must be recreated in order to ascend to the status of being a work of art. This act of aesthetic recreation, says Iser, is not a smooth or linear process, but it actually relies on the continual interruption of the flow of reading. As he states, "We look

forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject; this is the dynamic process of recreation".

Iser opines that two factors govern this process of recreation: firstly, a familiar repertoire of literary patterns, themes, and social contexts; secondly, strategies that are used to "set the familiar against the unfamiliar." It is the "defamiliarization" of what the reader thought she knew which creates the tension between her intensified expectations and her distrust of those very expectations. Hence it is the interplay between "illusion-forming and illusion-breaking that makes reading essentially a recreative process".

The bases of the interaction between the text and the reader, according to Iser, are "anticipation" and "retrospection". In the course of reading, the reader possesses some idea about the proceedings and forms certain assumptions which are affirmed by the text, often turns around. To achieve this level of assumption, the reader often identifies himself/herself with the characters of the fictional world. This idea is derived, in part, from an entitled essay "Phenomenology of Reading" (1969) by Georges Poulet. Taking a cue from Poulet's essay, Iser argues that in reading, it is the reader, not the author, who becomes the subject that does the thinking. Even though the text consists of ideas thought out by the author, in reading we must think the thoughts of the author, and we place our consciousness at the disposal of the text. According to Poulet, consciousness is the point at which the author and the reader converge, and the work itself can be thought of as a consciousness that takes over the mentality of the reader, who is obliged to shut out his individual disposition and character.

Iser then goes on to evaluate the variation of readers, for instance, the concept of "superrader" developed by Michael Riffaterre, the "informed reader" of Stanley Fish, the "intended reader" of Erwin Wolff, and the "psychological reader" of Norman Holland and Simon Lesser. He observes that all these variations are restricted in a way. As opposed to these restrictions, he formulates the concept of an "implied reader". In *The Act of Reading*, Iser further elaborates on the concept of the "implied reader." He argues that when critics talk about literature in terms of its effects, they invoke two broad categories of readers: the "real" reader and the "hypothetical" reader. The former refers to an actual reader whose response is documented, whereas the hypothetical reader is a projection of all possible realizations of the text. The implied reader, Iser feels, is a function not of "an empirical outside reality" but of the text itself. Iser points out that the concept of the implied reader has "his roots firmly planted in the

structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader." He defines the implied reader as "a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him." The implied reader, then, designates "a network of response-inviting structures," which predetermine the role of the reader in the latter's attempt to have a thorough understanding of the text.

Iser's concept of "negativity" is a significant aspect of his analysis of the reading process. He believes that all of the text's formulations, he says, are punctuated by "blanks" and "negations." The former refers to omissions of various elements between the formulated "positions" of a text; "negations" refer to cancelations or modifications or contradictions of positions in the repertoire of the text. These blanks and negations, says Iser, refer to an unformulated background: this fact he calls "negativity." It is the negativity that enables words to transcend their literal meaning and to assume multiple layers of reference. Negativity provides a "basic link between the reader and the text." Iser sees it as characteristic of a work of art that it enables us to transcend our own lives, entangled as they are in the real world. Negativity, then, as a basic element of communication, is an "enabling structure" that gives rise to a fecundity or richness of meaning that is aesthetic in character.

Unit 12 (c): A Commentary on Iser's "The Reading Process"

In the very first chapter of his book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (2002), the renowned Professor and critic Peter Barry has proposed that a literary text contains its own meaning within itself. The best way to study the text, Barry argues, is to study the words on the page without any predefined agenda for what one wants to find there. The critics interpret thee text by going through the words so that the reader can get more out of the reading text.

The esteemed critic to explore the reader's response in reading a text, Stanley Fish deals with the role of the reader in deciphering meaning out of literature. In his book *Surprised by Sin*, he argues that it is through the act of reading that the literary work becomes real or alive to the critic or to the reader. He uses the term "reception" to identify the process. As the reading occurs through time and ages, the reader's perception and ideas alter, and thus, the meaning does not remain the same. In later decades, the renowned German philosopher and critic

Wolfgang Iser has explored the various dimensions of the readers' responses, leading to the development of the branch of 'Reception Theory".

In her "Review of Wolfgang Iser and his Reception Theory" (2013), Dr. Yangling Shi states that "The reception of Wolfgang Iser's work was determined largely by general cultural factors, and to an extent, it parallels the response to Jauss's writings." Being the faculty members of the "Constance School", both Iser and Jauss viewed a literary work as an "event" rather than a fixed object and considered reading as an active and continuous process. However, Iser's ideas differed from that of his colleague and friend Hans Robert Jauss, who dealt with the historical reception of a literary work and how it tempered the reader's expectations and influenced their interpretations. Iser, on the other hand, attempted to focus on the individual process of interaction, the phenomenology, or the cognition of reading, instead of the larger literary-historical concerns of Jauss.

Iser's theory of response or reception differs in degree from that of Stanley Fish, who locates the meaning of a literary text in the rules of "interpretative communities" to which the reader belongs, rather than in the interaction between the text and the reader. Iser adopts a middle position between the formalist theory of literature that assumes a stable object of study and the more radical reader-oriented approaches like that of Stanley Fish. He posits the opinion that a theory of response, "if it is to carry any weight at all, must have its foundations in literary texts." His essay "Interaction Between Text and the Reader" (1980) summarizes the theoretical argument that he has offered earlier in *The Act of Reading*. Iser stresses upon the fact that interpretation is neither subjective, nor objective, but always a result of the dynamic interaction between the text and the reader. The structure of the literary text guides the reader, but the reader continually modifies his or her viewpoint, connecting new segments of the text and filling in the "gaps" of what the text does not mention. Meaning is constantly revised in a process that Iser compares to a feedback loop in communication theory resembling what philosophers call "the hermeneutic circle."

Conclusion

Iser's perception of reader-response criticism, unlike that of Norman N. Holland, does not concern itself with an empirical investigation of the reactions of particular readers to literary texts. For Iser, a given text does not depend entirely upon any particular reader for its meaning but "implies" an ideal reader. Literary meaning, therefore, depends upon a collaboration between the author and the reader.

Iser's attitude is fundamentally phenomenological because it places a reader's reading experience at the center of the literary process. By resolving the contradictions between the various viewpoints which emerge from the text or by filling the "gaps" between various viewpoints, the readers take the text into their consciousnesses and make it their own experience. Thus, to conclude, one can cite the words of Dr. Yangling Shi that, "Iser's works can serve both as a catalyst for a thoroughgoing analysis of the present state of theory as well as a springboard for an overhaul, long overdue, of the model of the mind that still governs most research paradigms in the humanities today" (2003,986).

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Assignments

1. How would you define the ‘Reception Theory’ of Wolfgang Iser? Discuss its basic tenets.
2. Briefly comment on the role of Constance School in Germany in the development of Reception Theory.
3. What is Phenomenology? How does Iser adopt a phenomenological approach in examining a literary text and in deciphering meaning?
4. Write a note on Iser’s concept of an ‘Implied Reader’ and differentiate it from Fish’s concept of ‘Informed Reader’.
5. Comment critically on Iser’s perception of reading as a continuous process.
6. Do you think that the role of the reader is central to the reading process? Justify.

BLOCK II

SUB-UNIT II

"THE STORYTELLER: REFLECTIONS ON THE WORKS OF NIKOLAI LESKOV"

By

WALTER BENJAMIN

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 13 (a): Life and Works of Walter Benjamin
Unit 13 (b): The origin and basic criteria of storytelling
Unit 13 (c): Historical and sociological reasons for the demise of storytelling

Unit 14 (a): The distinction between novel, information and storytelling
Unit 14 (b): The role of personal and collective memory in preserving the story
Unit 14 (c): Who was Nikolai Leskov and where does he fit into all these?

Suggested Readings
Assignments

UNIT 13

Unit 13 (a): Life and Works of Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin was a German-Jewish philosopher, cultural critic and essayist. An eclectic thinker, combining elements of German idealism, Romanticism, Western Marxism, and Jewish mysticism, Benjamin made enduring and influential contributions to aesthetic

theory, literary criticism, and historical materialism. He was associated with the Frankfurt School, and also maintained formative friendships with thinkers such as playwright Bertolt Brecht and Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem. Born into a prosperous Jewish family, Benjamin studied philosophy in Berlin. He settled in Berlin in 1920 and worked thereafter as a literary critic and translator. He became acquainted with Theodor Adorno and befriended Georg Lukács, whose *The Theory of the Novel* (1920) much influenced him. His halfhearted pursuit of an academic career was cut short when the University of Frankfurt rejected his brilliant but unconventional doctoral thesis. Benjamin eventually settled in Paris after leaving Germany in 1933 upon the Nazis' rise to the power. The next year, he began writing for the German newspapers *Frankfurter Zeitung* (The Frankfurt Times) and *Die Literarische Welt* (The Literary World); that paid enough for him to reside in Paris for some months.

In 1936, a first version of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (originally written in German in 1935) was published in French. It was a critique of the authenticity of mass-produced art; he wrote that a mechanically produced copy of an artwork can be taken somewhere the original could never have gone, arguing that the presence of the original is "prerequisite to the concept of authenticity". In 1937 Benjamin worked on "Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire" ("The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire"), met Georges Bataille (to whom he later entrusted the *Arcades Project* manuscript), and joined the College of Sociology. In 1938 he paid a last visit to Brecht, who was exiled to Denmark. He continued to write essays and reviews for literary journals, but upon the fall of France to the Germans in 1940 he fled southward with the hope of escaping to the United States via Spain. As he ran out of money, Benjamin collaborated with Max Horkheimer, and received funds from the Institute for Social Research, later going permanently into exile. In Paris, he met other refugee German artists and intellectuals; he befriended Hannah Arendt, novelist Hermann Hesse, and composer Kurt Weill. Meanwhile, the Nazi régime stripped German Jews of their German citizenship; now a stateless man, Benjamin was arrested by the French government and incarcerated for three months in a prison camp near Nevers, in central Burgundy. Returning to Paris in January 1940, he wrote "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" ("On the Concept of History", later published as "Theses on the Philosophy of History"). Informed by the chief of police at the town of Port-Bou on the Franco-Spanish border that he would be turned over to the Gestapo, Benjamin committed suicide with an overdose of morphine tablets that night,

while staying at the *Hotel de Francia*; the official Portbou register records 26 September 1940 as the date of death.

Perhaps Walter Benjamin's best known essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," identifies the perceptual shift that takes place when technological advancements emphasize speed and reproducibility. He suggests a work of art's aura is in a state of decay because it is becoming more and more difficult to apprehend the time and space in which a piece of art is created. The *Passagenwerk* (*Arcades Project*, 1927–40) was Benjamin's final, incomplete book about Parisian city life in the 19th century, especially about the *Passages couverts de Paris*—the covered passages that extended the culture of *flânerie* (idling and people-watching) when inclement weather made *flânerie* infeasible in the boulevards and streets proper. In this work Benjamin uses his fragmentary style to write about the rise of modern European urban culture.

Walter Benjamin corresponded much with Theodor Adorno and Bertolt Brecht, and was occasionally funded by the Frankfurt School under the direction of Adorno and Horkheimer, even from their New York City residence. The competing influences—Brecht's Marxism, Adorno's critical theory, Gerschom Scholem's Jewish mysticism—was central to his work, although their philosophic differences remained unresolved. The posthumous publication of Benjamin's prolific output significantly increased his reputation in the later 20th century. The essays containing his philosophical reflections on literature are written in a dense and concentrated style that contains a strong poetic strain. He mixes social criticism and linguistic analysis with historical nostalgia while communicating an underlying sense of pathos and pessimism.

Unit 13 (b): The origin and basic criteria of storytelling

"The Storyteller", or "Die Erzähler", is written in 1936, by the German-Jewish intellectual Walter Benjamin and is included in his collection of essays entitled *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt. These essays are the thoughts of a well-established philosopher who devised theories about the development of technology in relation to human progress, as well as broader questions about the nature of human experience, the nature of time and reality, and the nature of language and art. His curiosity (or perhaps concern) with the development of modern technology is clearly discernible in these essays. Interestingly, he has the First World War as an object of reflection, but the essays were published before the outbreak of World War II, so that there is a sense of prophetic insight in his writings. He is particularly concerned with the way the changing world might warp or alter the assumptions that cultures hold around art.

Although the sub-title of this essay suggests that its focus is on the fiction of the Russian writer Nikolai Leskov, what Benjamin actually develops in the essay is a definition of the nature of storytelling – an art which he laments is coming to an end for various reasons. Benjamin begins with a pang of nostalgia for the extinct practice of storytelling: "the storyteller in his living immediacy is by no means a present force. He has already become something remote from us and that is getting even more distant" (83). His pained tone evokes a personal as well as historical sense of gloom. The essay lists what Benjamin considers to be the primary characteristics of the storyteller and examines each one in turn, both in theoretical and historical terms and as evidenced by the fiction of Nikolai Leskov. He examines the sources of storytelling, analyzes its basic characteristics, points out its differences from other similar narrative forms, suggests what in human experience gives it its most basic authority, and laments nostalgically its inevitable passing away in the modern world; consisting on one level, a discussion of the stories of the little-known Russian writer Nikolai Leskov, and on another, Benjamin's views on the division between stories and storytelling, and novels and information.

Benjamin traces the rise of storytelling by exploring the social and economic forces that determined it. He begins by stating that the craft of storytelling is something ancient, deeply rooted inside us. According to him, the storytellers are craftsmen – they take raw experience from themselves and from others to make solid, useful, and unique works from it. And the best storytellers, for him, are those whose work has the quality of being little different from the speech of unnamed multitudes of storytellers. He sees part of the success of the growth of the story in the structures of earlier societies. There were two kinds of people who gained a lot of experience: those who spent much time in the same place, such as the master craftsmen; and

those who travelled a great deal and saw much of the world, albeit in less detail, such as the journeymen. Therefore, for him, the "trading seaman" and the "resident tiller of the soil" (84-5) made for the best storytellers, because the traveler had an adventurous and varied experience to relay while the resident tiller knew the local tales and traditions. For Benjamin, the cross-pollination of these two groups, such as in a blacksmith's home, lead to the exceedingly fruitful combination of "deep" experience with "wide" experience. Storytellers, the essay notes, are often interested in practical matters, and Benjamin makes the point that the best of them are also "rooted in the people", with jobs that fully immerse them into life itself, such as being soldiers, sailors, or other manual workers. Stories emerged, writes Benjamin, during the Middle Ages when the trade structure brought together resident master craftsmen and the traveling journeymen. He writes, "if peasants and seamen were past masters of storytelling, the artisan class was its university. In it was combined the lore of faraway places, such as a much-traveled man brings home, with the lore of the past, as it best the reveals itself to natives of place" (85). Benjamin states, "the storytelling that thrived for a long time in the milieu of work—the rural, the maritime, and the urban—is itself an artisan form of communication" (91). One can infer, therefore, that during a time when experience was varied relative to the modern world, folklore originated in the most ordinary and practical ways when the artisan classes shared common experiences among itself—life took on the form of art. The close association with such a trade eventually spelled the demise of storytelling, for stories died out as the world changed from an artisan and guild structure to an industrial economic model.

Benjamin describes that the first criteria of storytelling is its oral nature. He says among the people who write down stories the best ones are those who most closely stick to a simulation of this oral source. He opines that there are two basic types of oral storytellers – those who come from afar and tell of their adventures (embodied in the figure of the travelling seaman) and those who stay at home and tell of events there (as represented by the stationary farmer). The second characteristic of the storyteller is an orientation toward practical interests; all stories contain something useful. Either the useful information is obvious and on the surface or it is embedded within the narrative in some way. Thus, stories do not derive from idle gossip or even from the need to recount interesting experiences, but rather they spring from a basic human need to recount real-life examples of trying to cope with the mystery of human reality.

The storyteller belongs to the age of the past when experience informed narrative. The modern world has changed the very dynamics of existence so much that experience has lost meaning.

Industrialization has had the effect of removing many daily experiences which used to be common across cultures. In addition, the horrific machine of industrialization has created experiences which writers don't want to revisit. Predicting the rise of the information age, Benjamin also theorizes that the myth and legend of storytelling is too subject to investigation. Even today, Benjamin writes, people still pay attention to the words of a dying man or a woman. In dying we have the same power, place the same demands of silence and thought and memory, as did the storyteller long ago. For stories, as Benjamin hints at, allow us to escape the systems that dominate our lives, most notably capitalism itself. They allow us into a carefree existence of laziness, boredom, and relaxation. They also, unlike novels, draw us closer to other people. Novels, formed by the bourgeois and capitalist system, can never truly escape it. Telling stories, meanwhile, is a permanent act of rebellion, an assertion of our freedom and the value of our experience against a world that tries to tell us we are nothing unless we add to information. Stories are the deepest and greatest treasure that we have.

Unit 13 (c): Historical and sociological reasons for the demise of the craft of storytelling

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Benjamin attributes the end of storytelling to a shift in the value of experience that occurred during the demographic shifts at the advent of modernity: "a generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained the unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body" (84). However, he does not dedicate much room to justify his claims about these social shifts. He brings to our attention that it is not so; rather, "the transformation of epic forms [occur] in rhythms comparable to those of the change that has come over the earth's surface in the course of thousands of centuries" (88). Don Quixote, generally considered to be the first novel, represents an example of this transition, for while it is indeed a novel which recounts the adventures of a hero, it is also interpolated with stories that are essential to its structure and plot. Cervantes forges a new

genre while depending on an old one for coherence and structure in his work. The modern world brought a shift in the daily experiences of people that led to an alienation rendering humans incapable of exchanging experiences. Even though Benjamin bemoans the fall in the value of experience, he concedes that such a shift allows for "the proper distance and the angle of vision" (83) to analyze the genre of storytelling. His reflections accomplish a rigorous genealogical study of literary genres that emerged over time and he outlines the material events in history that brought the development and demise of storytelling. In the modern day, for various reasons, the craft of telling stories is dying out and we no longer seem to have the ability to exchange experiences and Benjamin offers several historical and sociological reasons for storytelling's demise.

i. Benjamin reflects on the formal qualities of the story and how such qualities became less appreciated in modernity. The most basic reason for the death of storytelling is the fact that the communicability of experience itself is dying out. Its defining feature is that the teller gives counsel to his listeners but Benjamin observes that it has no place left in the modern world. Indeed, wisdom itself, which Benjamin defines as counsel woven into the fabric of life and thus which has its origins in storytelling, is dying out. This process, which he links to the increasingly secular forces of history, has gradually removed narrative from the realm of living speech. At the same time, the listener who receives the wisdom/counsel must later be able to deliver it when he assumes the role of the teller. Benjamin cites the fairytale as the supreme example of delivering counsel by looking at the role it plays in shaping the moral development of children. However, the didactic qualities present in stories have led to the end of the genre, "because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out" (87). "Having counsel" begins to have an "old-fashioned ring," because experience has become incommunicable.

ii. Another important factor is that the society, in its industrialized state, is changing so rapidly that experience from the past can no longer have much effect upon the present. He finds examples of this in the horrors of his time: one's experience of the economy becomes useless against the unprecedented nature of hyper-inflation. One's old knowledge of war and battle is deemed useless in the face of the new military technologies like the tank and mounted warfare. As an example he recalls the World War I soldiers who returned from the battlefield incapable of conveying the atrocities they witnessed. He explains: "was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men

returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience". The world had to wait ten years for the soldiers' accounts, but "the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth" (84). Artificial concepts replaced natural experience, "for never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power" (84). Natural accounts of battlefield events, one surmises, would have been conveyed in a direct and unaltered way; rather, the soldiers seemed to want to run away from what they saw, or perhaps the world cared little for their stories or wished to tame their severity by only accepting the contrived "war book." As a result of the truly awful things they have seen in the early 20th century – over-experience, in a word – people no longer wished to talk about what a hundred years before might have made a ballad or a thousand years before an epic poem.

iii. In describing the craftsmanship required of story, Benjamin cites Paul Valery, who notes that nature creates perfection through a long chain of causes; man once imitated nature, says Valery, by elaborating things to perfection, but he does so no longer. Modern man is only concerned with dealing with what can be abbreviated and abstracted. He is no longer concerned with telling stories by the layering of various retellings so that multiple experiences of storytellers can imbue the story with concrete human meaning.

iv. The rise of the novel is one of the primary causes leading to the decline of storytelling, Benjamin suggests. The novel is quite different from the story because it neither comes from the oral tradition, nor does it go into it. Whereas the birthplace of the story is the teller's experience, the novel begins with the solitary self. While the story springs from orality, the novel is bound to the form of a book. Whereas the storyteller takes his story from experience, either his own or what he has heard from others, the novelist is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concern. Whereas the stories always entail "the moral" within themselves the novels do not and cannot be vehicles for the dissemination of wisdom – the instant they do so there arise the allegations and whining of calling it "moralizing", "preachy", and all sorts of other insults.

v. Furthermore, Benjamin says, another form of communication has come to predominate in the modern world which threatens storytelling even more seriously than the novel; that is, "information," by which he means primarily the information of the news media. Information, he writes, "lays claim to prompt verifiability." In the past, intelligence and experience that came from afar was valued, even if it could never be verified that a traveller spoke the truth. But now, due to the ubiquity of the news and information we no longer care for the experience of others. Information, however, "proves incompatible with the spirit of storytelling", and since we are so surrounded by it, it can be hard for us to escape the idea that an informational understanding of the world is the only and best way to understand it. A further problem with information is the way that it is intimately connected to its own time: "the value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new." As time passes, news becomes out of date, explanations for events are improved, and the newspaper becomes good for nothing except scrap paper.

vi. The storyteller is of the same company as that of teachers and sages, says Benjamin, for the storyteller has counsel for many based on a lifetime of experience. The gift of the storyteller is the gift of relating his life, for he is able to fashion the raw material of experience, both his own and the experience of the others, in a solid and useful way. It is therefore unfortunate, says Benjamin, that storytelling, that is, the ability to exchange experiences is being slowly taken away from us. The problem is hidden in the fabric of the modern society which, due to its ever-growing specialization, has shown that "the communicability of experience is decreasing." What an accountant might be able to say usefully to a cleaner at a hotel nowadays is far less than, two hundred years ago, two similar such people might be able to share with each other. Barriers have arisen between us. What could be the use of the wisdom of a banker, unless we want to be a banker? Consciously, or unconsciously, we devalue the wisdom of others more and more and instead rely upon that upstart known as information. Another reason for wisdom's death is that instead of using experience for finding our "truth", we also increasingly use bigger narratives, such as ideologies, cutting out the human element entirely.

UNIT 14

Unit 14 (a): The distinction between novel, information and storytelling

Walter Benjamin, in an attempt to mourn and reiterate the past glory of the craft of storytelling, investigates into other newly-emerged forms, especially the genre of novel and the rise of information. He declares that the novel rose in prominence as the story declined. The novel eventually superseded the story in modern times marking "the earliest symptom of a process whose end [was] the decline of storytelling" (87). Even though elements of the novel could be found back in antiquity, and for much of history it existed alongside other genres, it sprung to privileged status when it captured the attention of a rising middle class during the industrial revolution. It became slated for better commercial success because it depended on the book, a format that rose to prominence after the invention of the printing press. Narration broke away from oral tradition with the emergence of the novel concomitant with industrialization; for the first time, people seemed to want to read the telling of life by an individual imagination, rather than come together to listen to stories held in collective memory and tradition. One can infer from Benjamin's work that the specialized functional roles that arose with capitalism led to the rise of the author, an individual who could produce a very specific product to cater to the needs of a middle class that wished to distinguish itself from the aristocracy. The double role of storyteller-listener collapsed as the best narrators assumed the roles of authors while everyone else turned into the reading public.

Benjamin sees the novels as significantly different from stories because it is completely "dependent on the book". "It neither comes from the oral tradition nor goes into it." Literary criticism is partially to blame for this, but whatever the reason, the plot takes a back seat to forces like form, style, and genre. Novels have their value, of course, in Benjamin's eyes, but that value is one disconnected from the value of stories. Novels for him show the confusion of life, but they do not and cannot be vehicles for the dissemination of wisdom – the instant they do so there arise the allegations and whining of calling it "moralising", "preachy", and all sorts

of other insults. A good and simple way of comparing the division between stories and novels is this: consider the contrast between these two phrases "the moral of the story" and "the meaning of life." A story has its moral and answer, whereas a novel merely searches for an answer to that undoubtedly greater but certainly also more abstract question of "what is it we must do?"

Another difference between the novelist and their work and the storyteller and their own is to do with their relationship to their readers and listeners. Born out of social interactions and experience, a storyteller is a social animal, and so is their work. When the storyteller tells a story, the listener enters into a dialogue with the speaker, able to ask questions, and challenge things. More importantly still, the teller's stories are a mixture of his own experiences and those of others, and when he tells his story, the listener gains a new story for others to tell – storytelling involves building up an individualistic connection and a giving-receiving bond. By contrast, the novelist is isolated, creating alone, for a reader who may not even exist. He is "no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounselled, and cannot counsel others". He doesn't have any advice to give because his experiences cannot create stories. There is a sense of great loneliness implied here. Benjamin adds that stories end with the sense that they can always be picked up and carried on. Novels, however, end without the same kind of feeling that they can just be continued. A novel, once it ends upon a sufficiently good revelation about the meaning of life, stops and digs its heels in. Again, this is also a formal thing – a speaker can carry on, but a novel always arrives as a finished article.

One major difference between the story and the novel takes us to the role of memory in each genre. Benjamin identifies the "perpetuating remembrance of the novelist" compared with "short-lived reminiscences of the storyteller" (98). The novel exalts its subject matter, whether it is a life, an act, or an event, by placing it in memory; the novel forces the reader to remember and reflect on life, it elevates life, and therefore tells of life. The storyteller's objective, on the other hand, is to recount a shared experience or popular tale that has some didactic quality; the story resides in memory and is accessed when it is told. The novel tells of the "profound perplexity of the living" (87) and it incorporates one element not found in stories i.e. time. Benjamin refers to Georg Lukács who finds that the novel is "the only art form which includes time among its constitutive principles" (99). The novel incorporates time because it is not bound to a region, a history, an identity like the story. It takes up as its central issue "the

meaning of life," which, however, does not mean that it ever offers a satisfying explanation to this quandary. Instead, "the quest for it is no more than the initial expression of perplexity" (ibid). Benjamin quotes from Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*: "only in the novel are meaning and life, and thus the essential and the temporal, separated; one can almost say that the whole inner action of a novel is nothing else but a struggle against the power of time… And from this … arise the genuinely epic experiences of time: hope and memory" (ibid). Time delimits the novel, for its boundaries are set with the beginning and end of the life of its hero. The figurative death at the end of the novel becomes the moment when meaning can most clearly disclose itself to the reader. Benjamin states, "the novel is significant … because this stranger's fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields us the warmth which we never draw from our own fate. What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about" (101). And so the reader assumes a post death condition that allows him to remember the life he lived in the novel; through the act of remembering, he can reflect on the life he lived by its character, a privilege which he cannot enjoy in actual life. The listener of a story, on the other hand, derives counsel, learns a moral, and then redelivers the same counsel and moral to future listeners — his function is unselfish. The reader of the novel is greedy by comparison, for he immerses in self-absorption to fulfill an insatiable desire for finding meaning in his life. In the end, Benjamin observes obliquely that the story speaks directly to the listener, teaches him, whereas the novel engulfs him, allows the reader admission into another life.

Benjamin identifies information as a new genre that will supplant the story and probably the novel too. News appeals to its audience by its "verifiability" and the ease with which it is understood. Whereas storytelling always had a kind of validity that required no external verification, information must be accessible to immediate verification. Storytelling differs from information in the way that it does not aim to convey the pure essence of the experience in some distilled way, but rather imbues the story with the life of the storyteller. Aspects of the storyteller cling to the story; this is the reason why many storytellers begin with the circumstances by which they have gained access to the story they are about to tell. While the story is borrowed from the miraculous and took centuries to be composed, news is real, plausible and it delivers its message instantly. Benjamin writes, "The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only in the moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself without losing any time" (90). This distinction between storytelling and information points to one of the primary features – the matter of truth and

factuality. Now the concept of “truthfulness” becomes complicated when it comes to storytelling but in case of information it is the basic requirement. In some forms of discourses as history, sociology, psychology, etc, the aim of the work is to gather abstract knowledge from concrete experience so that a distilled discursive meaning remains. As the stories are communicated and passed on to the next person by a recounting of the concrete experience nothing can be determined as the absolute truth or hard fact.

Whereas story does not demand plausibility or conformity to the laws of external reality, information must be plausible and conform to such laws. When stories come to us through information, they are already loaded down with explanation, says Benjamin. The reader of story is free to interpret things the way he understands them but information cannot offer such freedom of interpretation. Another basic difference between story and information is that whereas the value of information does not survive the moment of its newness, a story is so concentrated that it retains its power for a long time. Moreover, story stays in the memory and compels the listener to tell it to someone. In fact, insists Benjamin, it might be said that storytelling is the art of repeating stories, for when the rhythm of the story seizes the reader he listens in such a way that the ability to retell it comes by itself. As time passes, news becomes out of date, explanations for events are improved, and the newspaper becomes good for nothing except scrap paper. However, Benjamin is also concerned with what gives storytelling its validity, since he insists that, unlike information, it does not require external verification. Instead, the story finds its validity in the awareness of death, says Benjamin. One's wisdom and real life, the very stuff of stories, become transmissible at the moment of death, and thus death is the sanction for whatever the storyteller tells, for death is storytelling's ultimate authority. However, since increasingly modern man has become distanced from the actual experience of death, Benjamin argues, we can see another reason why the art of storytelling is coming to an end. Whereas dying once was a public process for the individual, in modern times, death has been pushed out of the perception of the living. In deriving its ultimate validity from death, Benjamin argues, story faces ultimate reality, not immediate reality; that is, story deals with man's most basic existential situation in the world.

The story has a compactness that defies psychological analysis; in fact the less psychological shading the story has the more the listener will remember it and tell it to someone else later on, says Benjamin. Coming from an age of information, which tries to explain everything through psychological detail, stories do not try to explain things. “The most extraordinary things,

marvellous things, are related with the greatest accuracy", but there are no attempts to offer up a "why" for them. Our own imaginations are left with that task. Information demands an attempt to offer a why, which also means it is bound to what is scientific, verifiable. On the other hand, stories can use any manner of fantastic ideas or miracles, because they are not defined by the pursuit of a "why" or a scientific idea of "truth". You can tell a story again and again, and each time, depending on one's mood, one's station in life, one's age, you will get a different reaction to it. But information is always the same – the work of imagining is impotent before facts and their explanations. Stories "resemble the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up air-tight and have retained their germinative power to this day": each time they are told, they create a new version of themselves, a new experience, within us. Whereas a novel is doomed to being dated – it's psychological framework always bears the brand of its own age.

While the information presented in the news evaporates the moment after publication, "there is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis" (91). Its resistance to engage in psychological analysis insures that the story is retained and thus passed on: "the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it" (91). In contrast, the interpretation of news occurs not with the reader but within the news story itself — all that matters is the gist of the news and the facts it transmits. "psychological shading" of a news story creates a gulf between the story and the reader; the knowledge conveyed keeps the reader at bay by creating a subject-object relation. The story, however, "does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again" (91-2). Benjamin implies that the story is something organic, it is about life while it exists within life; it means to entertain while also to teach its listeners; it reflects the prevalent mores of a region even though it remains timeless through each storytellers contributions. Information's purpose is singular: to deliver knowledge of the world to a mercantile class that sees it as crucial to the furtherance of its interests. Although Benjamin does not delve into an analysis of the political purpose of information, it can be said that the news serves the ideological interests of groups while seeming to be objective and impartial.

Unit 14 (b): The role of personal and collective memory in preserving the story

Walter Benjamin analyzes the role of memory in literature. He asserts that “memory is the epic faculty par excellence,” and he adds that “the record kept by memory … constitutes the creative matrix of various epic forms … its oldest form, the epic, by virtue of being a common denominator includes story and novel” (97). The storyteller exists as the guardian of tradition through a twofold operation: he appeals to both personal and collective memory, narrates the stories present in them, and thereby preserves their place in memory. At the same time, by telling the story in his words he leaves his own mark and thus contributes to the vitality of this tradition by giving it newness. Benjamin sees Scheherazade (a major female character and the storyteller in the frame narrative of the Middle Eastern collection of tales known as the *One Thousand and One Nights*) as the storyteller supreme. According to him, she creates “a chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation” (98). Scheherazade becomes a narrator through her wit and cunning because she unites formerly spread out stories and funnels them into the collective memory of her own tradition; she, therefore, contributes in forging an Arab identity. Scheherazade acts both as a storyteller and as an early novelist. Her role is dual, for she takes from memory, alters it, and returns her version to it. Through the storyteller memory leaves the past to be morphed in the present.

The most basic relationship between the storyteller and the listener, Benjamin argues, is the listener's need to retain the story in his/her memory so that s/he can reproduce it later. There is a crucial difference between the way memory is manifested in the novel and the way it is manifested in the story, Benjamin says. Memory creates the chain that passes the story from one generation to the next, much as a web is created in which one story is tied on to the next. What distinguishes memory in story from memory in the novel is the “perpetuating remembrance of the novelist” as contrasted with the short-lived "reminiscences" of the storyteller. Whereas the remembrance of the novel is bound to one hero and one journey, the reminiscences of the storyteller encompass many diffuse occurrences. Another major

difference between the story and the novel returns us to the role of memory in each genre. Benjamin identifies the "perpetuating remembrance of the novelist" compared with "short-lived reminiscences of the storyteller" (98). The novel exalts its subject matter, whether it is a life, an act, or an event, by placing it in memory; the novel forces the reader to remember and reflect on life, it elevates life, and therefore tells of life. The storyteller's objective, on the other hand, is to recount a shared experience or popular tale that has some didactic quality; the story resides in memory and is accessed when it is told. The novel tells of the "profound perplexity of the living" (87) it incorporates one element not found in stories – time.

Benjamin refers to Georg Lukács who finds that the novel is "the only art form which includes time among its constitutive principles" (99). The novel incorporates time because it is not bound to a region, a history, an identity like the story. It takes up as its central issue "the meaning of life," which, however, does not mean that it ever offers a satisfying explanation to this quandary. Instead, "the quest for it is no more than the initial expression of perplexity" (ibid). Benjamin quotes from Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*: "only in the novel are meaning and life, and thus the essential and the temporal, separated; one can almost say that the whole inner action of a novel is nothing else but a struggle against the power of time… And from this … arise the genuinely epic experiences of time: hope and memory" (ibid). Time delimits the novel, for its boundaries are set with the beginning and end of the life of its hero. The figurative death at the end of the novel becomes the moment when meaning can most clearly disclose itself to the reader. Benjamin states, "the novel is significant … because this stranger's fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields us the warmth which we never draw from our own fate. What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about" (101). And so the reader assumes a post death condition that allows him to remember the life he lived in the novel; through the act of remembering he can reflect on the life he lived through its character, a privilege which he cannot enjoy in actual life. The listener of a story, on the other hand, derives counsel, learns a moral, and he redelivers the same counsel and moral to future listeners—his function is unselfish. The reader of the novel is greedy by comparison, for he immerses in self-absorption to fulfill an insatiable desire for meaning in his life. In the end, Benjamin observes obliquely that the story speaks directly to the listener, teaches him, whereas the novel engulfs him, allows the reader admission into another life.

To return to memory, while the information presented in the news evaporates the moment after publication, "there is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that

chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis" (91). Its resistance to engage in psychological analysis insures that the story is retained and thus passed on: "the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it" (91). In contrast, the interpretation of news occurs not with the reader but within the news story itself—all that matters is the gist of the news and the facts it transmits. Specialists assume the act of telling the news story while the public listens; the news continues when further information presents itself — newness is of the essence — while it dies without follow up stories.

Under the umbrella of memory, Benjamin sees a relationship between epic forms and historiography: "written history [is] in the same relationship to the epic forms as white light is to the color of the spectrums" (95). He adds, "Among all the forms of the epic there is not one whose incidence in the pure, colorless light of written history is more certain than the chronicle". The chronicler is the "historyteller," as distinct from the historian whose purpose is to explain history. But he also sets up a distinction between the chronicler and the historian to clarify his definition of storytelling. Whereas the historian must explain the happenings he describes, the chronicler is content with displaying the events as models of the course of the world. Whereas the chronicler bases his tales on a divine plan of salvation and thus is relieved of the burden of explanation, the historian is bound to the abstraction process that explanation demands. The storyteller preserves the nature of the chronicle, Benjamin says, albeit, in a secularized form. The medieval chroniclers evaded the burden of explanation "by basing their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation" (96). The storyteller resembles the medieval chronicler but in secular form. Just as the chronicler gave a picture of the events of the world in accordance with a teleological and eschatological plan, the storyteller observes the world to create a portrayal of it. It seems appropriate that Prince D.S. Mirsky writes that Leskóv "is generally recognized by Russians as the most Russian of Russian writers and the one who had the deepest and widest knowledge of the Russian people as it actually is" (Mirsky 333). The storyteller belongs to the people and from them he draws his inspiration; his task it to observe and then to compose images. Benjamin writes, "An orientation toward practical interests is characteristic of many born storytellers," and so he refers to Leskóv's view that storytelling is more of a craft than an art: "writing is to me no liberal art, but a craft" (92).

Unit 14 (c): Who was Nikolai Leskov and where does he fit into all these?

Who was Nikolai Semyonovich Leskov?

Nikolai Leskov (1831-1895) was a Russian novelist, short-story writer, playwright, and journalist, who also wrote under the pseudonym M. Stebnitsky. Praised for his unique writing style and innovative experiments in form, and held in high esteem by Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky among others, Leskov is credited with creating a comprehensive picture of contemporary Russian society using mostly short literary forms. His major works include *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1865), *The Cathedral Clergy* (1872), *The Enchanted Wanderer* (1873), and *The Tale of Cross-eyed Lefty from Tula and the Steel Flea* (1881).

As a child Leskov was taken to different monasteries by his grandmother, and he used those early memories of Russian monastic life with good effect in his most famous novel, *Soboryane* (1872; *Cathedral Folk,* 1924). Previously a junior clerk of a criminal court in Orel and Kiev, he left the civil service for good and was hired by an English firm company owned by his uncle. During almost four years of Leskov's work in the company, he has traveled extensively in Russia's provincial cities. It was during these travels that he obtained the material for most of his novels and short stories. In 1861 he left the company and came to Petersburg to dedicate himself to a writer's career. Leskov began his writing career as a journalist. In his first years in Petersburg, Leskov wrote and published articles, but gradually he left journalism and went on to write stories and novels of a purely literary nature. In 1864 he began serializing the novel "No Place" in which he denounced the nihilistic spirits of some of the Russian revolutionaries, although he expressed support for progressive social reforms.

Following the publication of the novel, Leskov lost the support of the left-wing circles of the Russian intelligentsia, which accused him of collaborating with the secret police. As a result, some of the works of that period were not published at the time, including his masterpiece, the novella “Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District”.

Most of his fame is due to the short stories and novels he wrote. Unfortunately, true recognition was won by Leskov only after his death. His unobtrusive religiosity, as well as his outstanding interest in people living in the world of faith, did not contribute to his popularity. Leskov made use of an exceptional Russian language, which deviates sharply from literary norms. He generously used a unique vocabulary derived from colloquial language and in the confusion of words characteristic of such speech. Only at the beginning of the 20th century, when language play, interest in linguistic exoticism and dialects became a literary norm, the attitude towards Leskov was changed. One of the most influential writers of the time, Maxim Gorky, declared that he was a student of Leskov and that he was one of the classic Russian writers – alongside Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

So, where does Nikolai Leskov fit in to all these? The Russian is a modern-day storyteller for Benjamin, though he had been long dead even by the time that Benjamin put pen to paper. Leskov was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, and throughout his life had worked various odd jobs around the country, most successfully for an English firm which paid him to travel all around Russia on behalf of its leaders. Because of this, Leskov had the wealth of experience needed to give his work a story-like quality. He wrote novels, but more often shorter stories and novellas, all of them incorporating the ideas of “story-ness” that Benjamin highlights above. His most famous story, at least in the English-speaking world, is “Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District”, and Benjamin also singles out stories such as “The Deception” and “The White Eagle”.Leskov is not the only storyteller who Benjamin names, though he is the focus. Among the others are Kipling, Poe, and Johann Peter Hebel.

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Suggested Readings

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2. Benjamin Walter and Rolf Tiedemann. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1999.

3. Ferris, David S. *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Assignments

Essay type questions

1. What do you know about the origin of storytelling? What are some of its basic characteristic according to Walter Benjamin?

2. Explain some of the crucial reasons responsible for the demise of the craft of storytelling.

3. How does Benjamin distinguish the ancient art of storytelling from some of the more modern forms like novels and information?

4. What significant role does memory play in preserving the story in individual and collective psyche?

BLOCK IV

SUB-UNIT II

"COUNTRY AND CITY"
BY
RAYMOND WILLIAMS

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 15 (a): An Introduction To Raymond Williams: Life And Works

Unit 15 (b): Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism

Unit 16 (a): A Shift From Agricultural To Industrial Economy

Unit 16 (b): A Synopsis Of Williams' "Country And City"

Unit 16 (c): Conclusion: Commentary And Criticism

Works Cited

Assignments

UNIT 15

Unit 15 (a): An Introduction To Raymond Williams: Life And Works

A prominent Welsh academic, novelist and critic Raymond Henry Williams (August 31, 1921 – January 26, 1988) was an influential figure within the New Left and in the wider culture. His writings on politics, culture, the mass media and literature are a significant contribution to the Marxist critique of culture and the arts.

Born in Llanfihangel Crucorney, near Abergavenny, Wales, Williams was the son of a railway worker who had a political affiliation with the left. As an exceptionally intelligent student, he attended King Henry VIII Grammar School in Abergavenny. His teenage years were overshadowed by the rise of Nazism and the threat of war.

He began his undergraduate degree at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he also joined the Communist Party and met people like Eric Hobsbawm, but interrupted his studies in 1941 to join the British army during the World War II. He offered his service in Europe during the S War as a tank commander, returning to Cambridge in 1946 and completing his BA and MA. He then took a job at Oxford as an adult education tutor, a position he held until 1961 when he was invited back to Cambridge as a lecturer. He remained there until his retirement in 1983, having been appointed professor in 1974. Among his most notable students were Terry Eagleton and Stephen Greenblatt.

His first books were on drama and criticism, but his reputation as a critic of rare insight and distinction was made in 1958 with the publication of *Culture and Society*. In it, Williams explores the changes in the meaning of the idea of 'culture' from 1780 to 1950, arguing that such changes record and reflect the changed conditions of everyday life. He distances himself from the Leavisite model of Practical Criticism, which took pains to avoid any direct reference to society or what Williams describes as 'lived experience'. Eagleton's famous description of him as a 'Left-Leavisite' was perhaps a calculated insult. This book was followed by *The Long Revolution* (1961), which theorizes in detail the relationship between social relations, cultural institutions, and subjectivity, with the aim of showing how progressive political ideas emerge and become established as the norm. He expands the concepts of the Structure of Feeling (introduced in the early work, *Preface to Film* (1954) and of Dominant, Residual, and Emergent to explain the kinds of cultural mood shifts required for ideological change to occur, which he developed further in *Marxism and Literature* (1977).

In the early 1970s, Williams wrote several books that were to have a formative and lasting impact on the incipient field of *Cultural Studies: Communications* (1962), *Television* (1974), and Keywords (1976). However, his most influential book from this period was undoubtedly the *Country and the Cit*y (1973). A prolific author and an engaged public intellectual, Williams was a towering influence on Anglophone literary and cultural studies throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

In his novels, especially the trilogy composed of *Border Country* (1960), *Second Generation* (1964), and *The Fight for Manod* (1979), Williams sought to register and recover lost social alternatives. *Culture* (1981), *Toward 2000* (1983), and *Resources of Hope* (edited by Robin Gable, 1989) are also central to his envisioning of a more viable and integrated sociocultural order. Although never a doctrinaire, he became increasingly engaged with Marxist theory; *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and the essays collected in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980) address a range of questions raised by theoretically sophisticated materialism and its consequences. His sympathetic attitude to Marxism is evident in *Orwell* (1971), the most notable of his critical studies of a single author. Williams was effectively the founder of the movement which came to be called Cultural Materialism, a British, Marxist-inclined relative of the American New Historicism. His interest in other modern media gave rise to *Communications* (1962), *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1970), and the essays of *Contact: Human Communication and Its History* (1981). His widely-read *Keywords* (1976), a concise and thoughtful study of many of the major terms of current intellectual discourse, is a fine instance of a social meditation which has an immediate social use. Among Williams's other critical works are *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (1952), revised as *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* in 1968, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), and *The Politics of Modernism* (1989); his writings as a novelist also include *Loyalties* (1985) and the two volumes of *The People of the Black Mountains, The Beginning* (1989) and *The Eggs of the Eagle* (1990), a treatment of his native landscape and its inhabitants memorable for its imaginative intensity and historical scope.

After his retirement from Cambridge in 1983, Williams spent his last years in Saffron Walden. It was there that he wrote *Loyalties*, a novel about a fictional group of upper-class radicals attracted to 1930s Communism. He was also working on *People of the Black Mountains*, an experimental historical novel about people who lived or might have lived around the Black Mountains, the part of Wales from which he hailed. It is told through a series of flashbacks featuring an ordinary man in modern times, who is looking for his grandfather who has not returned from a hill-walk. He imagines the region as it was and might have been. The story begins in the Old Stone Age and was intended to come right up to modern times, always focusing on ordinary people.

Raymond Williams had completed it to medieval times when he died in 1988. It was prepared for publication by his wife Joy Williams. It was published in two volumes, along with a Postscript that gives a brief description of what the remaining work would have been. Almost

all of the stories were completed in typescript, generally revised many times by the author. Only *The Comet* was left incomplete and needed some small additions to make a continuous narrative.

Unit 15 (b): Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism

Cultural materialism is a theory that views culture as a productive process, focusing on arts such as literature. Within this culture, art is translated as the social use of material means of production. The concept of “literature” is seen as a social development, which according to Williams, only truly developed between the 18th and 19th century, within our culture. The critic explains in his essay Culture is Ordinary, “a culture is a whole way of life, and the arts are part of a social organisation which economic change clearly radically effects” (ii).

As observed by Phil Edwards in his essay “Culture is ordinary: Raymond Williams and cultural materialism” (1999), Cultural materialism was always, for Williams, a Marxist theory - an elaboration of historical materialism. "Latent within historical materialism is ... a way of understanding the diverse social and material production ... of works to which the connected but also changing categories of art have been historically applied. I call this position cultural materialism." Cultural production is itself material, as much as any other sector of human activity; culture must be understood both in its own terms and as part of its society. The implications for cultural work are vast: imagine relating Howard Barker's plots to the contemporary demographics of theatre-going, or setting the rise of Zoe Ball in the context of the economics of the BBC. Cultural studies - a discipline whose existence owes much to Williams - has scratched the surface of this approach to the arts, but following it through is a daunting prospect.

Williams' conception of cultural materialism went further, however. The key question was how the relationship between society and culture was understood. In his 1958 essay "Culture is ordinary" Williams cited the Marxist tenet that "a culture must finally be interpreted in relation to its underlying system of production" and glossed it as follows: "a culture is a whole way of life, and the arts are part of a social organisation which economic change clearly radically affects." The second part of this statement indicates Williams' resistance to the classical Marxist idea of culture as a 'superstructure' which echoes an economic 'base'. The first part suggests

how he would bridge the gap: culture was "a whole way of life". This Williams counterposed to 'high culture' - "this extraordinary decision to call certain things culture and then separate them, as with a park wall, from ordinary people and ordinary work".

Hence, culture is always political. This is not to say that the crimes of the ruling class can be read off from a film or an advertisement, any more than they can from a party political broadcast. Still, less does it imply that work which aims for that level of explicitness is the best or most important. Rather, culture is political because the social process addressed by political analysis is always embedded in culture. Williams reversed the terms of the usual analysis. Rather than being a specialised area in which we see reflections of the political processes governing society, culture is the "whole way of life" which makes up human society; political analysis is a specialised framework that can be used to understand it.

Much writing on culture treats political change as an external force: something which impinges on ordinary people's lives from outside, and which writers may choose to focus on or not. This assumption underpins the tendency of right-wing critics to claim authors for their own - 'apolitical' - perspective. "By the fifties, the trick was being turned that if you thought George Eliot was a good novelist, you had to be against socialism. There was a directly political confiscation of the past that was intolerable."

Radical criticism is often little better. Even the approach of reclaiming 'apolitical' works, re-attaching them to their history - reading the Industrial Revolution into *Wuthering Heights*, for instance, with Heathcliff seen as a dispossessed proletarian - made the same mistake, Williams argued. "Social experience, just because it is social, does not have to appear in any way exclusively in these overt public forms. In its very quality as a social reality it penetrates, is already at the roots of, relationships of every kind ... When there is real dislocation it does not have to appear in a strike or in machine-breaking. It can appear as radically and as authentically in what is apparently, what is actually family or personal experience." *Wuthering Heights* was "central to its time" because of the power of its articulation of emotional experience - an experience which was characteristic of a society which was being torn apart, psychologically as much as socially, under the stress of industrialisation.

Politics for its part is always cultural. The history of the Left and the labour movement is the history of attempts to develop an alternative culture - a long, complex and contradictory process. Williams resisted prescriptive approaches to culture: if it was intolerable for the Right to appropriate George Eliot, it was absurd for the Left to claim that certain art forms were or

were not 'socialist'. "A culture is common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings ... It is stupid and arrogant to suppose that any of these meanings can in any way be prescribed; they are made by living, made and remade, in ways that we cannot know in advance."

The culture of the Left exists on a number of levels. There are continuing and developing art forms, such as the art of banners, flags and quilts. There are the achievements of the continual drive for working-class 'self-improvement' - in fact, a movement of resistance to exclusion from education - from the Institutes of mining villages through to today's WEAs and the Open University. More broadly again, there is the body of collective experience built up through struggle. ("The single most shocking thesis to established liberal opinion in *Culture and Society* ... was that I did not define working-class culture as a few proletarian novels ... but as the institutions of the labour movement.") Marches and demonstrations, strikes and occupations, all create new forms of consciousness and promote awareness of different ways of living; on a more mundane level, they also bring out ordinary people's ability to organise and co-ordinate activity. Williams insisted that those achievements - and resources - should not be forgotten or minimised.

Moreover, the political struggle itself takes cultural forms. The 'DiY Culture' [sic] of squats, anti-roads protests and Reclaim the Streets actions is, among other things, a direct assertion of new cultural possibilities - and of a way of living in which culture, art, pleasure would play a central part. Actions such as these often involve the playful reappropriation of buildings and monuments, symbols of the dominant culture: in Williams' terms, an emergent culture is imposing itself, making itself heard. Predictably, the full armoury of the dominant culture and social order is brought into play to combat it: from "the scum on the front pages of the richer newspapers" (to quote Williams from 1968) through to direct - political - repression. For capitalism has not ceased to be victorious: the space available for cultural or political opposition is continually under attack, from the reappropriation of radical symbols to the literal occupation of social territory through CCTV. And culture cannot substitute for politics - cannot be a short-cut to a larger social transformation, any more than the instrumental model of left politics could function without culture. The complex set of transformations which Williams labelled as 'the long revolution' could only triumph by dispossessing "the central political organs of capitalist society": "the condition for the success of the long revolution in any real sense is decisively a short revolution".

Williams' assessments of the prospects for change were sometimes bleak. He believed that neither the Labour Party nor the union movement had advanced a genuinely reformist project for many years, preferring to manage capitalism and take sectoral gains: "The underlying perspectives of a reforming Labour Party and of a steady bargaining and self-improving trade-union movement - a perspective within which so many major gains have been achieved - suddenly look like and are dead ends," he wrote in 1982. The following year he developed this analysis in *Towards 2000*, in which he analysed the new managerial politics - a politics which he named 'Plan X', in which the only goal is the continued functioning of capitalism and the pursuit of strategic advantage. Williams didn't live to see New Labour, but I'm certain he would have recognised Plan X through the rhetorical fog.

That said, the space for alternatives is never entirely blocked: "no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever, in reality, includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy and human intention". There is always - must always be - space for opposition: for thinking and action directed towards the elaboration of another social order. This refusal of despair was also a refusal of indiscriminate anger and weightless theory, of critiques written in the margins of the dominant order. Its roots were in Williams' sense of loyalty: to class, to community and to history. The sense of community he had known in Wales was crucial to him: his recognition of green issues and the politics of place extended rather than diluting his earlier emphasis on class.

His loyalties gave Williams a quiet steadiness which sometimes made him seem like a placid gradualist - a deeply misleading impression. On other occasions, the impression was more brutal. In 1985 he wrote: "As the [miners'] strike ends, there will be many other things to discuss and argue about; tactics, timing and doubtless personalities. But it is of the greatest possible importance to move very quickly and sharply beyond these, to the decisive general issues which have now been so clearly disclosed." After Williams' death R.W. Johnson recalled this passage, attacking Williams for attempting to forestall a critique of the NUM's 'tactics, timing [and] personalities'. The charge is accurate but irrelevant. Williams deliberately refused to play that game, for reasons which recall his enduringly controversial critique of George Orwell ("while travelling seriously, he was always travelling light"). Of Orwell's "plain style" Williams commented, "the convention of the plain observer with no axes to grind ... cancels the social situation of the writer and cancels his stance towards the social situation he is observing." The miners' strike, Williams believed, created new possibilities for oppositional thought and action, even in defeat; a socialist writer who ignored these possibilities in favour of post-mortem

recriminations would truly be 'travelling light', cancelling out their own social position and political goals.

Three years earlier, Williams had helped set up a group aiming to work on those "decisive general issues": the Socialist Society. The work of the Socialist Society led to the Chesterfield Conferences, the Socialist Movement, and the newspaper *socialist* - eventually reborn as Red Pepper. Several of the people now involved in *Red Pepper* were active in the Socialist Society in the late eighties and early nineties - myself included. With this history in mind, it is worth asking, finally, what directions Williams' work suggests for the Left in 1999.

Firstly, work is still needed on understanding 'New Labour'. While the genuine reforms enacted by this government cannot be ignored, the heart of New Labour is an attempt to graft reactionary and managerial values onto the image, language and organisational resources of the Labour Party. The true dimensions of 'the project', and the weaknesses in Labour which allowed it to triumph, remain to be analysed. The second area in need of reassessment is the Left itself. The bizarre and disastrous positions adopted by much of the Left during the Kosova crisis attest to the work which now needs to be done, to reconnect the Left with its founding humanist - and Marxist - values.

In a small country undergoing rapid change, national identity is another important theme. While trans-European linkages may be beneficial, their uneven development, dominated by the requirements of capitalism, puts the identity associated with the British state under strain - particularly accompanied by Scottish and Welsh political self-assertion. One symptom is the English cultural valorisation, ever since *Trainspotting*, of a curiously regressive image of young Scottish masculinity. The advent of these Celtic rebels without a cause is related to a fourth theme, gender politics: in particular, the recurrent anxiety as to whether feminism has 'gone too far' or 'lost its way'.

Finally, the late nineties have given us two further concerns which Williams could not have foreseen. The Internet has been hailed as transforming the nature of work and even of capital. Serious work is now being done to test these claims; this needs to be complemented by an awareness of the real potential of the Internet as a medium for radical communication and action. Lastly, the nineties have been marked by an extraordinary growth in three inter-related ideologies: 'New Age' beliefs, often associated with alternative therapies; belief in the paranormal and extra-terrestrial life; and 'conspiracy theory'. While the last of these, at least,

has something to offer serious politics, taken together these beliefs indicate a loss of belief in established authority - and a loss of faith in our own ability to reason and act.

Williams never lost that faith. He believed that the Left could understand the dominant order: we faced, not "some unavoidable real world", but "a set of identifiable processes of *realpolitik* and *force majeure*, of nameable agencies of power and capital, distraction and disinformation". But naming the blockages was not enough. "The dynamic movement is elsewhere, in the difficult business of gaining confidence in *our own* energies and capacities." The task was to establish the lines of development for an alternative. "It is only in a shared belief and insistence that there are practical alternatives that the balance of forces and chances begins to alter. Once the inevitabilities are challenged, we begin gathering our resources for a journey of hope. If there are no easy answers there are still available and discoverable hard answers, and it is these that we can now learn to make and share."

UNIT 16

Unit 16 (a): A Shift From Agricultural To Industrial Economy

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Britain experienced a change in all aspects of life, as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Scientific advances and technological innovations brought growth in agricultural and industrial production, economic expansion, and changes in living conditions, while at the same time there was a new sense of national identity and civic pride. The most dramatic changes were witnessed in rural areas, where the provincial landscape often became urban and industrialized following advances in agriculture, industry, and shipping. Wealth accumulated in the regions and there was soon a need for country banking.

Agriculture had dominated the British economy for centuries. By the mid-18th century, population growth and increasing foreign trade created a greater demand for manufactured goods. Mass production was achieved by replacing water and animal power with steam power, and by the invention of new machinery and technology. Among other innovations, the introduction of steam power was a catalyst for the Industrial Revolution. James Watt’s improvements to the steam engine, and his collaboration with Matthew Boulton on the creation of the rotative engine, were crucial for industrial production: machinery could now function much faster, with rotary movements and without human power. Coal became a key factor in

the success of industrialization; it was used to produce the steam power on which industry depended. Improvements in mining technology ensured that more coal could be extracted to power the factories and run railway trains and steamships. Britain's cotton and metalworking industries became internationally important, but the manufacture of glass, soap and earthenware also flourished.

The early mechanization of the textile industry and the applications of new technologies, including Richard Arkwright's water frame for the cotton spinning wheel, revolutionized production in the textile mills. More efficient ways of weaving cotton helped Manchester become the most important British centre of the cotton industry (often called 'Cottonopolis') and the world's first industrial city. Paper money issued in Lancashire shows the importance of the textile industry in the county.

Like Manchester, Dewsbury grew substantially during the 19th century. It became an important centre of the 'shoddy' industry: that is, the recycling of old woolen products for the creation of blankets and other woolen goods of inferior quality. A banknote issued in Dewsbury bears an image of a local cotton recycling factory.

During this period of intense industrialization the landscape of the countryside was transformed. New towns were established and industrial centres became even bigger, crowded with more factories and warehouses. At the same time, the increases in production made necessary the creation of a well-organized system of transport. With the adoption of the steam engine in locomotives, transportation of goods became quicker, easier, cheaper and more reliable. Railways expanded significantly and the new railway connections boosted coastal towns as well as previously remote and isolated provincial towns. Improved roads were built and new iron bridges were erected in areas where previously communication had been difficult. At the same time, navigation through rivers and canals expanded the distribution network of raw materials, livestock and consumer goods, and the major industries consequently benefited greatly from the new advances in communications. The first canals were dug in Lancashire and others soon followed, connecting industrial centres with ports, coalfields and trading centres. Liverpool, for example, was connected by canals to Manchester and its thriving textile industry.

The industrial and economic developments of the Industrial Revolution brought significant social changes. Industrialization resulted in an increase in population and the phenomenon of urbanization, as a growing number of people moved to urban centres in search of employment. The Industrial Revolution, therefore, brought fundamental changes in the British

way of life. Scientific innovations and technological improvements contributed to the advancement of agriculture, industry, shipping and trade and to the expansion of the economy.

Unit 16 (b): A Synopsis Of Williams' "Country And City"

"w*here the meadows are bright green against the red earth of the ploughland, and the first trees beyond the window, are oak and holly."*

In his book *The Country and the City* (first published in 1973), Williams endeavours to explore how the country and city (specifically the English country and city) have been constructed and shaped throughout history and specifically what role literature has played in this process. There is a measurable difference between the country and the city, and Williams avers that "In and through these differences. . .certain images and associations persist; and it is the purpose of this book to describe and analyse them, to see them in relation to the historically varied experience" (2). In *The Country and the City*, Williams realizes his stated purpose and provides his reader with an erudite, yet accessible, tour of the English country, city, and literature and along the way showcases numerous examples of English literary writing. On nearly every page, the reader encounters snippets (and not infrequently longish selections) from poems, essays, and novels that help elucidate Williams' main points. Williams analyses images of the country and the city in English literature since the sixteenth century onwards and shows how these images become central symbols for conceptualizing the social and economic changes associated with capitalist development in England. For Williams, "the contrast of the country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society" (289).

The first essay of the book. "Country and City" begins with the two eponymous words, which Williams goes on to define in the subsequent lines. As he states, "In English, 'country' is both a nation and a part of a 'land'; 'the country' can be the whole society or its rural area" (1). Throughout the ages, Williams observes, there is a deep connection between land and human society in the sense that the land or agricultural production provides man with the means of survival. The agricultural products have also been instrumental in the formation of the 'city', or the 'capital', the large town, which, in his view, is "a distinctive form of civilization" (1).

Williams then talks about the values attached to the ‘country’ and the ‘city”. While the country is associated with the natural way of life, peace, simplicity and innocence, the city is the centre of learning, communication, and light. The city is also the hub of hostility, power, noise, corruption and worldliness, whereas the country is the place of backwardness, ignorance and limitation. Hence, he remarks: "A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times” (1).

The ways of life differ radically in the country than that of the city. The country is the abode of hunters, pastorals, farmers on the agricultural fields, farmers in the factory. People live in different ways, often in tribal ways, or in the manor house. There would be small peasantry to tenant farmers, a rural commune, large plantations of the capitalist enterprise, and the state farm. The city, on the other hand, is the state capital, administrative base, religious centre, market-town, port, mercantile, depot, military barracks, and the modern metropolises are completely different; the only thing they have in common is the name. within the city also, there are divisions – suburbs, dormitory, towns, and industrial estates. Even the idea of a country, or a village, which Williams says, though apparently seems simple, involves a wide variation in terms of their size and character.

In spite of all these differences, there exists a certain kind of relation between the two, and Williams states that “it is the purpose of this book to describe and analyse them, to see them in relation to the historically varied experience” (2). He talks about the role of Industrial Revolution in bringing about significant transformation in the structure and mode of experience in the country and the city: “The Industrial Revolution not only transformed both city and country; it was based on a highly developed agrarian capitalism, with a very early disappearance of the traditional peasantry” (2). In the first phase of industrialization, the nature of economy or the economic mode in both the country and the city got transformed at a quick pace. More people got employment in the factory and imperialistic enterprises, leaving only a restricted number of people for agricultural production. But, in spite of such rapid urbanization, a part of the society remained rural. Even in the Modern era, in the twentieth century, older values, ideas, and experiences still persisted.

Williams then talks about his own perception of the dichotomy between the country and the city. Being born in an : old unsettled countryside”, near the border between England and Wales, he was exposed to the entire process of transformation. on his one side, there was an old city; on the other side, within a few miles, were the industrial towns of South Wales. He also

observed a stark change in the nature of country across the ages. The village in which he was born, was located at the foothills of the Black Mountains, near the Welsh border. The earth was real, the meadows were bright green in colour, and the trees were mostly oak and hollow. The country of his immediate present, which he observed as an adult, was a bit different: the area was flat on the black soil, bearing marks of the eventual transformation.

Thus, he states, "[the] country life has many meanings" (3). The meaning of country has altered in the course of years. Whereas previously, he would be mesmerised by the beauty of greenery all around him, at present, if he looks around, he can only see the iron-furnaces of the industrial South Wales in the south-west, and the lights of Cambridge in the east. Looking at the glowing lights if the city, he remembers Hardy's Jude, who looked at the distant, both attainable and unattainable Christminster. He also visualises Wordsworth coming from the high country to London, an uttering the lines while standing over the Westminster bridge:

"Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air."

The city, as Williams argues, is the place of rush and noise. There are huge buildings (suggesting the progress of human civilization), meeting places, libraries, theatres, towers, domes, houses, streets, and most importantly, the excitement of people. Although different in geographical locations, the cities in all places are the centre, the place of activity and light. And "Indeed this sense of possibility, of meeting and movement, is a permanent element of my sense of cities", says Williams (6).

For Williams, the contrast between the country and the city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience, and of the crises of our society. He views that the country and the city are inextricably related to each other. however, in search of a historically lived form, Williams makes a distinction between two categories: "knowable communities" and " the structure of feeling". Over the centuries, he describes the prevailing structures of feeling – traces of the lived experience of a community distinct from the

institutional and ideological organisation of a society – in the works of the poets and novelists over the centuries. In the same way, Williams considers most works of fiction, particularly novels, as forming "knowable communities" in the sense that the novelists 'offer to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways."

Thus, he writes in the concluding part of the essay: "The life of country and city is moving and present: moving in time, through the history of a family and a people; moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions" (7-8).

Unit 16 (c): Conclusion: Commentary And Criticism

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, published in 1993, Edward Said takes a very polite stab at Williams' argument in *The Country and the City*, countering Williams' claim of when imperialism found its way into English literature, and stating, "It is dangerous to disagree with Williams, yet I would venture to say that if one began to look for something like an imperial map of the world in English literature, it would turn up with amazing insistence and frequency well before the mid-nineteenth century" (82-83) (Said's deference to Williams in his critique goes far to illustrate the impact The Country and the City has had on literary studies). Said makes a valid point here regarding the scope of Williams' work, but it must be remembered that Williams' and Said's projects are different in nature. Said's post-colonial readings of English literature positions his text at a different vantage point from that of Williams.

Speaking of ideological vantage points, Gary Rees states, Williams' Marxist leanings can definitely be seen in *The Country and the City*, as illustrated by lines such as, "I have been arguing that capitalism, as a mode of production, is the basic process of most of what we know as the history of country and city...Seeing the history in this way, I am then of course convinced that resistance to capitalism is the decisive form of the necessary human defence" (302). While sentences like these do appear in the text, the impressive thing about *The Country and the City*, in Rees' view, is that the ideology generally doesn't overpower the ideas and literature Williams is discussing. Williams is able to find a balance between his personal ideology and his readings of literature, and thus does not lose sight of the texts he is explicating. *The Country and the City* is essentially a text about history and literature that incorporates Marxist readings,

not a Marxist text that merely includes a smattering of literary and historical references to bolster political ideology.

One of the few problems encountered in *The Country and the City* is that at times Williams over-simplifies issues in order to fit them neatly into his theoretical framework. A major instance of this truncation can be seen in Williams' discussion of George Eliot. Regarding Eliot, Williams says, "though George Eliot restores the real inhabitants of rural England to their places in what had been a socially selective landscape, she does not get much further than restoring them as a landscape" (168). Williams' statement may be true, but I believe George Eliot accomplishes much more in her novels than merely restoring the rural inhabitants of England to a position of reified landscape. Williams does spend much time discussing the works of Eliot, but the conclusion he arrives at regarding her "landscape" writing appears short-sighted atbest.

Throughout his presentation of English historical and literary development, Williams continually returns to the major theme of "mystification." Mystification, as used by Williams in *The Country and the City*, refers to the process of how contemporary views of the past are misinformed due to a presentation of history that overlooks, or purposefully misrepresents, the "realities" of life for certain social groups (for Williams these groups are specifically farmers and laborers). By looking critically at how contemporary notions of both the country and the city are constructed, Williams believes a "real" history of both of these areas can be ascertained and that humankind can use this knowledge to move forward and attempt to create more just societies, ones where divisions of labour will be erased.

Williams includes a strain of personal commentary that runs throughout *The Country and the City*. Being raised in the country, and having spent much time in the city, Williams' exploration of the construction of these two places seems almost at times to be an exploration of his own life and past. This personal element allows Williams to find embodiment in his text and keeps his theoretical positions from becoming too stodgy or inaccessible. Williams, time and again in *The Country and the City*, shows himself as not just a literary theorist or cultural historian, but as a lover of and a very adept reader of literary texts themselves. Be it a line of 16th century pastoral verse or a 1,000 page Charles Dickens novel, Williams, in *The Country and the City*, provides commentary that is both intellectually challenging and a joy to read.

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Assignments

1. What is Cultural Materialism? Briefly summarise Williams’ contribution to the field.

2. How does Williams compare and contrast country life from that of the city? Discuss.

3. In what way did the Industrial Revolution bring about significant changes in the socio-economic and geographical scenario of Europe?

4. Critically evaluate Williams’ “Country and City” as a classic Marxist text.

POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS) IN

ENGLISH

SEMESTER IV

OPTIONAL COURSE 4

WOMEN'S WRITING: LITERATURE AND THEORY

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI, NADIA, WEST BENGAL

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Director's Message

Satisfying the varied needs of distance learners, overcoming the obstacle of distance and reaching the unreached students are the threefold functions catered by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems. The onus lies on writers, editors, production professionals and other personnel involved in the process to overcome the challenges inherent to curriculum design and production of relevant Self Learning Materials (SLMs). At the University of Kalyani a dedicated team under the able guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor has invested its best efforts, professionally and in keeping with the demands of Post Graduate CBCS Programmes in Distance Mode to devise a self-sufficient curriculum for each course offered by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL), University of Kalyani. Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2017 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal. Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome. During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Sankar Kumar Ghosh, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance. Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PGBOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt thanks is also due to the Course Writers-faculty members at the DODL, subject-experts serving at University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level of the DODL of University of Kalyani. Their persistent and co-ordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through Distance Mode. Self Learning Materials (SLMs) have been published by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, University of Kalyani, Kalyani-741235, West Bengal and all the copyright reserved for University of Kalyani. No part of this work should be reproduced in any from without permission in writing from the appropriate authority of the University of Kalyani. All the Self Learning Materials are self writing and collected from e-book, journals and websites.

Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning

University of Kalyani

OPTIONAL COURSE 4

WOMEN'S WRITING: LITERATURE AND THEORY

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BLOCK I

SUB-UNIT I

THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

By

DORIS LESSING

CONTENT STRUCTURE

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Suggested Readings
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UNIT 1

Unit 1 (a): Life and Works of Doris Lessing

Doris May Lessing (1919-2013) was a British-Zimbabwean (Rhodesian) writer whose novels and short stories are largely concerned with people involved in the social and political upheavals of the 20th century. She was born in Persia (present-day Iran) to Captain Alfred Tayler and Emily Maude Tayler, both British subjects. Her father, who lost a leg during his service in World War I, was later employed as a bank clerk, and her mother was a former nurse. After spending her early childhood in Iran, the family moved to the British colony of Southern Rhodesia (modern day Zimbabwe) in 1925, where her parents owned a farm. There she lived from age five until she settled in England in 1949. In the rough environment of Rhodesia, her mother Emily aspired to lead an Edwardian lifestyle. It might have been possible had the family been wealthy; in reality, they were short of money and the farm delivered very little income.

As a girl Doris was educated first at the Dominican Convent High School, a Roman Catholic convent all-girls school which she left at the age of 13 and was self-educated from then on. She left home at 15 and worked as a nursemaid. She started reading material on politics and sociology that her employer gave her and also began writing around this time. In 1937, Doris moved to Salisbury to work as a telephone operator, and she soon married her first husband, civil servant Frank Wisdom, with whom she had two children, before the marriage ended in 1943. Lessing left the family home in 1943, leaving the two children with their father. After the divorce, Doris's interest was drawn to the community around the Left Book Club, an organization she had joined the year before. It was there that she met her future second husband, Gottfried Lessing. They married shortly after she joined the group, and had a child together before they divorced in 1949. She did not marry again. Lessing moved to London in 1949 with her younger son, Peter, to pursue her writing career and socialist beliefs, but left the two older children with their father Frank Wisdom in South Africa.

Lessing's fiction is commonly divided into three distinct phases. During her Communist phase (1944–56) she wrote radically about social issues, a theme to which she returned in *The Good Terrorist* (1985). Doris Lessing's first novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, as well as the collection of short stories *African Stories*, are set in Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) where she was

then living. This was followed by a psychological phase from 1956 to 1969, including the *Golden Notebook* and the "Children of Violence" quartet. Third came the Sufi phase, explored in the *Canopus in Argos* sequence of science fiction (or as she preferred to put it "space fiction") novels and novellas. Her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, was published in 1950. It is about a white farmer and his wife and their African servant in Rhodesia. Among her most substantial works is the series *Children of Violence* (1952–69), a five-novel sequence that centres on Martha Quest, who grows up in southern Africa and settles in England. *Going Home* (1957) describes her reaction to Rhodesia on a return visit and *In Pursuit of the English* (1960) tells of her initial months in England.

But the work that gained her international attention, *The Golden Notebook*, was published in 1962. It tells the story of a woman writer who attempts to come to terms with the life of her times through her art. It is one of the most complex and the most widely read of her novels. *The Golden Notebook* is considered a feminist classic by some scholars, but notably not by the author herself, who later wrote that its theme of mental breakdowns as a means of healing and freeing one's self from illusions had been overlooked by critics. She also regretted that critics failed to appreciate the exceptional structure of the novel. *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1975) is a prophetic fantasy that explores psychological and social breakdown. A master of the short story, Lessing has published several collections, including *The Story of a Non-Marrying Man* (1972) and *Stories* (1978); her African stories are collected in *This Was the Old Chief's Country* (1951) and *The Sun Between Their Feet* (1973).

In 1982, Lessing published two novels under the literary pseudonym Jane Somers to show the difficulty new authors face in trying to get their work printed. The novels were rejected by Lessing's UK publisher, but later accepted by another English publisher, Michael Joseph. She turned to science fiction in a five-novel sequence titled *Canopus in Argos: Archives* (1979–83). The novels *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *If the Old Could…* (1984) were published pseudonymously under the name Jane Somers to dramatize the problems of unknown writers. Subsequent novels include *The Good Terrorist* (1985), about a group of revolutionaries in London, and *The Fifth Child* (1988), a horror story, to which *Ben, in the World* (2000) is a sequel. In 1994 she published the first volume of an autobiography, *Under My Skin*; a second volume, *Walking in the Shade*, appeared in 1997. *The Sweetest Dream* (2001) is a semiautobiographical novel set primarily in London during the 1960s, while the parable-like novel *The Cleft* (2007) considers the origins of human society. Her collection of essays *Time*

Bites (2004) displays her wide-ranging interests, from women's issues and politics to Sufism. *Alfred and Emily* (2008) is a mix of fiction and memoir centered on her parents.

As well as campaigning against nuclear arms, she was an active opponent of apartheid, which led her to being banned from South Africa and Rhodesia in 1956 for many years. In the same year, following the Soviet invasion of Hungary, she left the British Communist Party. In 2015, a five-volume secret file on Lessing built up by the British intelligence agencies, MI5 and MI6, was made public and placed in The National Archives. The file shows that Lessing was under surveillance by the British spies for around twenty years, from the early-1940s onwards for her political activism. In 2007, Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. She received the prize at the age of 88 years 52 days, making her the oldest winner of the literature prize. She also was only the eleventh woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature by the Swedish Academy in its 106-year history. She died on 17 November 2013, aged 94, at her home in London. By the time of her death, she had published more than 50 novels.

Unit 1 (b): Substantive Text Summary

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is a multilayered novel that centrally concerns the life, memories, and writings of Anna Wulf in the 1950s, during her late twenties and early thirties in London and colonial Africa. The novel alternates between a linear narrative entitled *Free Women*, which is a framing narrative in the third person featuring the lives of Anna and her friend Molly, and Anna's four private notebooks: in the "Black Notebook" she recalls the time she spent in Africa, the novel she fashioned out of her experience, and her difficulties coping with the novel's reception; in the "Red Notebook" she recounts her ambivalent membership in and disavowal of the British Communist Party; in the "Yellow Notebook", she starts a novel that closely mirrors her pattern of unfulfilling relationships in London; and the "Blue Notebook" serves as her inconsistent personal diary, full of self-doubt and contradiction. The novel alternates between describing Anna's life experiences and revealing the content of the different notebooks. It eventually features a section from a fifth notebook: the golden notebook.

Free Women: 1

The novel begins in London, in 1957. Two friends, Anna, a talented but sheepish writer and Molly, the boisterous and "worldly-wise" actress are catching up in Molly's apartment. Molly has recently returned from a trip abroad. While Molly was away, Anna was visited by Molly's ex-husband, Richard. Richard and Molly had been married for a short period of time and have a son together, Tommy. He has since remarried to a woman named Marion and has three sons with her. Richard, a wealthy businessman, now violently disdains the leftist politics that brought them together. He visits to talk about finding a job for their son Tommy, who has spent the last few months brooding in his room. He also wants advice about his current wife, Marion, who has become an alcoholic due to his numerous affairs. Richard and Molly argue, with Richard criticizing the way their son has been raised. Molly, in turn, points out Richard's preoccupation with his business, his ill-treatment towards Marion and his infidelity. Eventually, Richard suggests that Tommy come to stay with him and Marion. Overhearing all these, Tommy comes downstairs to refuse his father's offer and mentions that he might be interested in pursuing writing, referring to a series of conversations he has had with Anna about writing. Molly is surprised to learn that her son has had these conversations with her friend. To change the subject, Anna tells Molly about her waning interest in writing another novel, Richard's attempts to have an affair with her, the state of their communist friends, and her inability to get over her married ex-lover, Michael. Finally, Anna returns to her own flat, where she lives with her daughter, Janet. She takes out the four notebooks she regularly writes in.

The Notebooks: 1

Anna has four notebooks: one black, one red, one yellow, and one blue. In the black notebook, the pages are divided down the middle by a black line. The left side of the line reads "source"; the right side reads "money." The left side is about Anna's novel *Frontiers of War*, and the right is about transactions, money she received from it.

The Black Notebook" begins with a synopsis of her successful first novel, *Frontiers of War,* which she still considers inadequate and naïve. Anna drifts into recounting the events and people that inspired the novel. Deciding to stay in colonized Central Africa during World War II, Anna falls into an eclectic group of white socialists, passing her weekends drinking with them at the Mashopi Hotel and ending up in a long, sexless relationship with the German exile Willi Rodde. The illicit relationship between a white roadsman, George Hounslow, and the African hotel cook's wife, Marie, formed the basis for her novel, but she replaced George with

a version of the charming, arrogant, Oxford-educated pilot Paul Blackenhurst, with whom she eventually elopes on their last day at the hotel, the day before he dies in an accident on the airstrip.

"The Red Notebook" begins with Anna's invitation to the British Communist Party, of which Molly was already an active, if critical, member. Anna recalls her discomfort with the party's ideology and the mounting evidence of the Soviet Union's horrific crimes against political dissidents, the contradictions she encountered visiting East Berlin with Michael, and meeting miserable housewives while canvassing in North London.

"The Yellow Notebook", entitled *The Shadow of the Third*, begins as the manuscript for a novel based on Anna's life. Its protagonist, Ella, works at a women's magazine responding to reader letters that her boss, Dr. West, deems insufficient for his advice column. She is also secretly writing a novel about a man who makes all the requisite arrangements for death before committing suicide, as he realizes that "that's what I've been meaning to do." Ella begins an intense affair with the psychiatrist Paul Tanner, who starts spending every night at her house but pursuing affairs with other women, all the while neglecting his wife. He gradually loses interest in Ella's work and makes it clear that she is just a fling. When Paul abruptly moves to Nigeria, Ella is devastated.

"The Blue Notebook" follows Anna's sessions with her psychoanalyst Mrs. Marks. When Mrs. Marks asks whether Anna writes about their sessions in her diary, Anna's entries about them stop for four years — instead, she compiles newspaper clippings. When she resumes writing about analysis, she feels unable to write because of the violence in the world and believes Michael is about to leave her; when Mrs. Marks again mentions Anna's diary, she decides to stop going.

***Free Women*: 2**

In the next section of *Free Women*, a malicious and sullen Tommy visits Anna, contemplates the differences between her creative work and his father's career, and then starts reading her notebooks, bringing her to "an extraordinary tumult of sensations." He wonders why she compartmentalizes and brackets her thoughts, accusing her of irresponsibility and dishonesty for hiding herself from the world. After he returns home to Molly's house, he shoots himself in

the head and is "expected to die before morning."

The Notebooks: 2

The **"Black Notebook"** covers meetings with film and television executives who want to buy the rights to *Frontiers of War*, but erase racism from the story and move it from Africa to England. In the **"Red Notebook",** Anna contemplates the myths that sustain communists' faith in the Soviet Union. In the **"Yellow Notebook",** Ella's story continues: hopelessly fixated on Paul more than a year after they split, Ella meets an attractive but unrefined American leucotomy doctor. Their mechanical, brief sex makes him realizes his degree of dissatisfaction with his marriage, but Ella feels no better about Paul. In the **"Blue Notebook"**, Michael ends his affair with Anna, and she decides to "write down, as truthfully as I can, every stage of a day. Tomorrow." Her day is full of tension: she must cater to Michael and her daughter Janet's every need and spends all day working at the Party headquarters for no pay, reporting on bad novels she knows her boss John will publish anyway and responding to letters from mediocre writers. Realizing that she is powerless and her work is meaningless, she quits. She puts Janet to sleep and takes great pleasure in cooking dinner for Michael—who never comes, proving that their affair is over. This whole entry is crossed out; she rewrites it in brief, calling it "a normal day."

***Free Women:* 3**

In the third section of *Free Women*, Tommy miraculously survives his suicide attempt, but is left blind. He moves back into Molly's house, which his presence begins to dominate as he spends all his time reading, writing, and visiting with Marion. Anna visits Richard, who goes on one of his usual misogynistic rants, and feels she is beginning to "crack up" on her train ride home, where she has to deal with the new friendship between her boarder Ivor, her daughter Janet, and Ivor's lover Ronnie, who pays no rent and Anna soon kicks out of the house.

The Notebooks: 3

In the **"Black Notebook"**, Anna remembers a pigeon-hunting trip in Africa and describes her relationship with James Schafter, an American who egregiously parodied his way to the top of the literary world. In the red notebook, Anna recounts a year of "frenzied political activity" after Stalin's death, at the end of which her fellow communists concluded that the party was irreparably corrupt. In the yellow notebook's The Shadow of the Third, Ella begins receiving

endless, unwanted attention from arrogant men who assume she will happily become their mistress. She decides not to let men "contain" her desire, and begins planning out short stories to make sense of her frustrations. The blue notebook returns to a lengthy reflection on psychoanalysis. Anna thinks the blue book's "record of facts" feels like a false representation of her experience and feels herself losing the ability to convey meaning through words—she recounts a recurring nightmare in which a figure takes "joy in spite."

***Free Women:* 4**

In the fourth section of *Free Women*, Anna tells Marion, who has been arrested at a protest, about the old revolutionaries she befriended in Africa. The black notebook ends with a single entry: Anna has a dream about a film being made at the Mashopi Hotel, which makes her realize that all her memories of Africa were "probably untrue." The red notebook ends with a story about a teacher dedicated to communism who visits the Soviet Union and realizes his recommendations will not be taken seriously. The yellow notebook breaks with Ella's narrative to list nineteen ideas for short stories or novels, mostly about women taken advantage of by men.

The Notebooks: 4

The blue notebook picks up with Janet going off to boarding school and Anna finding herself with nothing to do. She takes on a boarder, Saul Green, an American writer who proves as sensitive and intelligent as he can be narcissistic and brutish—Anna develops extreme anxiety, which is connected to Saul. Their relationship swings unpredictably between serenity and hatred, political conversations over coffee, and explosive arguments in the bedroom, compounded by Anna's jealousy about the other women Saul visits and decided to start reading his diaries. They both accuse the other, and themselves, of insanity. Not only does Anna realize there are multiple Sauls and multiple Annas, but she starts to see versions of him in her and her in him. Anna begins to see the floor and walls moving, and she cycles through various dreams and personas. One day, Saul suggests she resume writing and she admits her writer's block. She buys a beautiful, golden notebook, although Saul does his best to claim it for himself.

The Golden Notebook

Anna switches to the golden notebook alone. She has a dream about Saul as a tiger and starts moving through her past, but realizes that an "invisible projectionist" is playing it all back for

her—of course, this is also Saul, and they realize that they have each "become a sort of inner conscience or critic" for the other. In the morning, she plans a new story about "free women" and Saul insists that she start writing. In their last days together, they offer one another opening lines: Anna gives Saul the image of an Algerian soldier on a hill that becomes the first sentence of his successful novel, and he gives her the altogether dull sentence "The two women were alone in the London flat," the opening line of Free Women, which turns out to be not an objective account the life Anna recounted subjectively in her notebooks but rather her second novel, her fictionalization of the notebooks' reality: the multiple, conflicting voices Lessing offers in The Golden Notebook all turn out to be Anna's.

***Free Women:* 5**

The last section of Free Women offers a markedly different version of the last two sections: Janet goes off to boarding school, and Anna goes insane pasting newspaper clippings around her room. An American named Milt moves in, makes her feel "protected and cared for," but also insists that he is "a feeder on women." After five days together, he leaves. Ultimately, sometime later after Janet returns from school, Anna decides to work at a marriage counseling center, Molly marries a "progressive businessman," and Tommy ends up "all set to follow in Richard's footsteps."

UNIT 2

Unit 2 (a): Brief Study of the Characters

AnnaWulf

The protagonist of *The Golden Notebook* is a novelist and occasional activist in her early thirties, living in London after spending a portion of her life in colonial Africa. One of the most completely realized characters in modern literature; Anna Wulf represents the New Woman. Doris Lessing's achievement is in tracing the development of such a woman from her early twenties to her mid-thirties. Part of that development is an honest portrayal of the character's

sexual identity. As a young woman, Anna was not fulfilled sexually in her relationship with a young Communist in Africa. It is only after she has moved to London and has established a relationship with Michael, the lover who eventually leaves her that she feels sexually fulfilled. Significantly, it is after Michael has left her that she feels her identity undergoing a crisis. In addition to having a lasting, meaningful relationship with a man, Anna feels the need to make a commitment which will give meaning to her life. Joining the Communist Party was one attempt at making that kind of commitment. A sensitive, highly intelligent woman, Anna longs to bring social justice to the world, and she believes that the Communist Party is the most effective avenue toward achieving that goal. As a girl in the South Central Africa, she witnessed the terrible results of racial discrimination, and she wants to do something to change it. Yet Anna discovers that the Communist Party is not finally the avenue she must follow; it contains inner paradoxes which will not allow her the freedom to experience a more subjective, individual meaning — a meaning she believes she must develop in order to live an authentic life. It is only in her writing, in her art, that she can achieve that sense of meaning. When she turns to the golden notebook, she begins to write the "Free Women" sections of the novel, and thus moves toward the possibility of an integrated, meaningful life.

Anna's relationship with Molly Jacobs allows Lessing to explore the concept of sisterhood, which in the novel becomes a necessary aspect of the New Woman. Both women derive mutual support from their relationship; it enables them to face the loneliness of being without men, to endure the resentment of those people who fear nontraditional lifestyles, and to survive the emotional blows of life — such as Tommy's suicide attempt. Through it all, the two women communicate their inner lives to each other as they share in the bonds of friendship. As a writer and a political radical, Anna exists primarily as a highly developed and troubled child of her age rather than as a woman. She is disgusted with her first novel and torn by the dilemma of writing a second out of a fragmented consciousness. She has become disenchanted with the Communist Party because participating in it has only intensified the split within instead of healing it as she had hoped. Thus, her struggle to satisfy the creative and political needs of her being is not defined, or limited, by her femininity. But some of the consequences of her professional and social commitments draw her into painful awareness of the difficulties of women in a society dominated by men. In the conversation with the television editor who wants to buy the rights to her novel *Frontiers of War*, Anna expresses her opposition to his truth-denying commercialism through an ironic parody of his intentions to distort the story for his own uses. At first her irony is light, controlled; as his hostility deepens, it becomes wilder and

almost hysterical. Of course the editor resents the (human) criticism of his values, but Anna's irony, implying an assertion of her intellectual and moral superiority, is an unforgivable transgression of the established limits of female graciousness, or submissiveness. Coming from a woman, ironic criticism is not simply a challenge – it is an insult, and the editor takes it as such. Afterwards Anna collapses "into depression, then angry self-disgust. But the only part of that meeting I am not ashamed of is the moment when I was hysterical and stupid" (p. 248).

Of course most women never have even the chance to challenge a man on professional, human terms. Much of the work Anna does for the Communist Party brings her face to face with the debilitating existence of the conventional woman. Answering her correspondence and canvassing from door to door, she is struck by the number of bored, guilty women "going mad quietly by themselves, in spite of husband and children or rather because of them" (p. 146). However, as Lessing accurately perceives, not just men but certain types of professional women capitalize on the domestic bondage of the majority of women. The work which gives Ella, the heroine of Anna's novel, the 'purpose in life' to save her from madness is on a magazine called, aptly, *Women at Home*. Aimed at the working class, this publication (like so many American women's magazines, whether geared for the swinger or the homebody) owes its success to appeasing the desires of frustrated women while steering clear of their real and desperate needs.

However, Anna, like so many "free" women, is not emancipated from domestic routine, primarily because of her child Janet. She suffers from “the housewife's disease” – the pressure of worrying over practical details – a tension which creates an inescapable barrier against pleasure, both physical and mental. Much of Lessing's fiction reverberates with the frustration of the emancipated mother as she tries to juggle her personal needs against the needs of her children. This dilemma is complicated, rather than eased, by the woman's conscious desire for children as a joy in themselves and a fulfillment of her own human potential. Anna is not free to discover the essence of her private self - both its creativity and its destructiveness - until Janet leaves for boarding school: "An Anna is coming to life that died when Janet was born” (p. 468).

But while the comparably free woman can identify with Anna up to this point, there may be a disruption in sympathy when sexuality enters the picture. Not only does Anna's lover Michael ignore Janet as a person, failing to join in Anna's positively sensuous enjoyment of the child,

he resents the little girl for depriving him of her mother. Worse, in the early morning while Anna's thoughts are tensely focused on the need for haste in the practical processes ahead, he inflicts himself sexually on her in virtual punishment for her maternal responsibility. Of course the disruption in identification derives not from Michael's behavior but from Anna's response. Neither outwardly nor inwardly will she criticize her lover. Passively, Anna supports the status quo which is demeaning to both sexes. She excuses Michael's petulance about Janet by not only rationalizing, "If I were a man I'd be the same" (p. 286), but also suggesting that her biological role alone is responsible for her involvement with the child. This attitude presents a striking contrast to the extreme feminist position as it can be represented by the 1969 Manifesto of the New York Redstockings, one of the most militant and radical women's liberation groups. The Redstockings see male supremacy as the root of all forms of social exploitation, including those not directly concerned with women. And all men are responsible for male supremacy – "All men have oppressed women." They reject the notion that institutions are sources of oppression because "To blame institutions implies that men and women are equally victimized . . . ." They also "reject the idea that women consent to or are to blame for their own oppression."

The compromise view, so emphatically denounced above - that men and women are equally victimized, with its converse implication that they are also equally responsible for the state of things does not seem foreign to the spirit of Lessing's work and the conscious attitudes of her female characters. The notion of equal responsibility is suggested by the success and self-respect with which many women in her fiction contribute to the aesthetic, psychological and political thought and work of the world. However, in the context of the sexual relationship, Anna's self-respect becomes twisted into self-denial, her voice takes on more than a tinge of sexist submissiveness. Anna curbs her resentment against Michael "because he will spend his day, served by secretaries, nurses, women in all kinds of capacities, who will take this weight off him" (p. 285). Here she becomes so irritating - smugly, she tells herself that the anger she feels is "impersonal." "It is the disease of women in our time. I can see it in women's faces, their voices, every day, or in the letters that come to the office. The woman's emotion: resentment against injustice, an impersonal poison. The unlucky ones, who do not know it is impersonal, turn it against their men."

Molly Jacobs

Molly Jacob is Anna's best (and perhaps only) friend, whom she sees as a sister or even, emotionally and psychologically speaking, lesbian partner. Whereas Anna is shy, small, and artistically talented, Molly is boisterous, imposing, emotionally expressive, and "worldly-wise," comfortable in any room and skilled at dressing to create an impression. Still, many people see the two women as "interchangeable" because they are both unmarried. She is a single mother who considers herself a free woman. Molly believes that Anna is a true artist and scolds Anna for wasting her talents. Molly is a relatively unsuccessful actress and, in the 1930s, was briefly married to Richard Portmain, whom she now openly disdains for his elitism and obsession with money and status, even though he still frequently asks her for advice about his current wife Marion and his and Molly's son, Tommy. At one time, Molly and Richard had common interests; now, Molly abhors most of what Richard stands for. He has a conservative political outlook, and he is only concerned with maintaining his high social status and extreme wealth. Molly even admits that she had married Richard out of a need for security and even respectability. Although Molly recognizes that her "twenties marriage" to Richard was based on a need for security and even respectability and not love, her classification of her current unmarried situation as a source of self respect is not altogether true. Her decision to remain single, while a reflection of her independence, co-exists with her decision to relinquish much of her freedom to Richard and Tommy. Molly is theoretically at liberty to do as she wishes, but both she and Anna allow themselves to be manipulated by men. Molly has many love affairs, though the novel does not provide details. Although she shares many characteristics with Anna, the two women are also quite different. Molly is described as a woman who appears boyish. She is a woman who "took pleasure in the various guises she could use." Anna, on the other hand, is soft and more feminine and prides herself on always looking the same. While Anna tends to rely on men in romantic settings, Molly prides herself on the fact that "she (has) not . . . given up and crawled into. . . a safe marriage." Nevertheless, Anna and Molly both allow Molly's ex-husband (Richard) and son (Tommy) to bully them despite the fact that they are aware that the two men are hurting them.

Molly is more committed to the cause of socialism and women's rights than Anna, and she sticks with the Communist Party longer than Anna does. Molly and Anna talk frequently even after Anna moves out of Molly's apartment, and she often punctuates their gossip by

proclaiming, “it’s all very odd, isn’t it Anna?” Molly spent much of the 1950s as an enthusiastic communist organizer, holding meetings at her house and often lacking the time or energy to have serious conversations with Anna during her busier periods. Nevertheless, she tends to alternate between parroting communist platitudes and declaring her frustration with the Party. She also introduces Anna to many of her friends, including De Silva and Saul Green. At the beginning of *Free Women*, she has just returned from a year traveling Europe and, at the story’s end, she marries a “progressive businessman.” But she plays a much less central role in Anna’s notebooks, and in both narratives Anna increasingly distances herself from Molly as she builds a relationship with Saul Green or Milt—although they ultimately returns to their previous intimacy at the end of *Free Women*.

Richard Portmain

Richard is Molly’s ex-husband, Marion’s current husband, and Tommy’s father. He is an arrogant, impatient, power-hungry, and well-respected businessman who looks down upon Anna and Molly for their left-wing political beliefs (even though he met Molly during a brief socialist phase of his own in the 1930s) and their indifference to marriage and work. He tries to control the lives of everyone in his family, especially Tommy, whom he tries to dissuade from writing and encourage in entering the business world. Richard cheats constantly and openly on Marion with a series of seemingly interchangeable younger mistresses who are often one of his secretaries — he even tries to sleep with Anna and, after she refuses, becomes even more furious and aggressive toward her whenever she dismisses his attempts to control his family. At the end of *Free Women*, he amicably divorces Marion and moves with his new mistress into his house. He scarcely appears in the notebooks, but when he does, he appears to have three daughters rather than three sons, as in *Free Women*. He represents not only the prototypical bumbling, cheating husband but also the classic conservative businessman, who feeds the cycle of accelerating the social inequality under capitalism by prioritizing profit above people, happiness, and character.

Tommy

Tommy is Molly and Richard’s son. He plays a central role in *Free Women* but only appears in passing, as a rather different character, in Anna’s notebooks. In *Free Women*, he is

judgmental and malicious, spending most of his times brooding in his room. While Tommy admires Anna's sensitivity, sense of moral purpose, and refusal to define herself through an occupation, he thinks she is dishonest and hypocritical for compartmentalizing her life in the notebooks out of her fear of chaos, rather than putting forth an authentic and integrated, if messy, version of herself. Anna feels partially responsible for Tommy's suicide attempt which she thinks is related to what he read in her notebooks earlier that day. He survives but is blinded and becomes an ominous presence in Molly's house where his mother feels increasingly uneasy and confined. He soon befriends Marion who comes over to discuss politics with him for hours at a time. Tommy ends up joining his father's company only because he comes to believe that capitalism can change the world for the better. In contrast, in the notebooks, Tommy was a conscientious objector who worked in the coal mines rather than serve in World War II. A few years older than in *Free Women*, Tommy dates a sociology student who converts him to a political ideology Molly considers insufficiently radical. By the end of the blue notebooks, he gets married, gives lectures about coal miners' issues, and considers joining independence fighters in Cuba or Algeria. The two radically different versions of Tommy point both to the questionable facticity of *Free Women* (which is ultimately revealed to be Anna's second novel), but their commonality is that in both versions, Tommy overcomes a state of existential crisis and self-doubt by learning to take concrete actions that balance his moral concerns with practical opportunities.

Unit 2 (b): Critical Analysis of the Notebooks

Anna's notebooks provide the teeming narrative with artistic unity and become a structural device that coherently connects its diverse themes. The four notebooks – black, red, yellow, and blue – become a faithful record of Anna's multi-faceted personality. The black notebook is associated with Anna's years in Africa and the evolution of her novel, *Frontiers of War*. The red notebook becomes her political consciousness and it records her experiences with the Communist Party. The yellow notebook becomes an extension of her creative self as it explores the parallel universe of Ella through the framework of Anna's novel, *The Shadow of the Third*. The blue notebook is designated to be Anna's journal where she records the events of her day-

to-day life and its emotional turbulence. The four notebooks thus become a composite mélange that burgeons into the complex self of Anna Wulf. These notebooks bear testimony to her tormented self which yearns to compartmentalize itself in order to forestall the enveloping chaos. Anna's fragmented psyche finds a release through the notebooks which help her to deal with the complexities of postmodern existence. By highlighting Anna's fragmented self, Lessing seems to be commenting on the larger structure of the society as well. The notebooks thus become chronicles of not just Anna's world but the faithful record of an illusory and shifting world where ideologies are constantly re-moulded.

The majority of *The Golden Notebook* consists of the four colored notebooks in which Anna Wulf records her life, which symbolizes her disjointed and compartmentalized identity. At least two of these colors have obvious significance: the black notebook is about Anna's time organizing with socialist, anti-racist activists in Africa as well as the publication of her first novel, which was about the barbarity of the color line, and the red notebook records her work in the Communist Party. In the yellow notebook, Anna begins a new novel, *The Shadow of the Third*, and works through her real-life relationships by imagining fictional "third" versions of herself and the people she knows. In the blue notebook, Anna records her everyday life and her experience in psychoanalysis. Through her confrontations with Tommy in *Free Women*, Anna learns that she separates her life into these notebooks in an attempt to compartmentalize her identity; she recognizes its multifaceted character but tries to artificially partition the different components of herself into the notebooks, which are themselves fragmented as they are narratively and temporally non-linear. She fears that writing in only one notebook would be "such a mess," opening her to chaos. She also wants her notebooks to stay private—she feels "terribly exposed" when Tommy goes through them and worries about spreading her negative feelings in the world. However, Tommy thinks that Anna must choose between dividing her inner turmoil in the notebooks, so that she can spare herself from seeing the totality of her pain, and revealing her thoughts to the world, which he sees as an act of social responsibility: telling the ugly truth others are afraid to hear.

When Anna finally combines her thinking into the golden notebook, she symbolically makes herself whole, overcoming the sense of alienation and creative paralysis that has plagued her as she failed to find love, independence, or another novel within herself. Indeed, just before the golden notebook, Anna's four notebooks begin to mix, as she often realizes she is slipping into the wrong kind of content. As she begins writing in the singular golden notebook, Anna loses

not only the rigid distinctions between the different parts of herself, which mix in the dreams she describes in the golden notebook, but also the distinction between herself and Saul, who seems to invade her consciousness and dreams. Furthermore, when she eventually writes *Free Women*, the novel's frame story, Anna not only dissolves the artificial divisions she has created in her identity but also makes the totality of her experience public in the form of fiction, breaking her cycle of creative failure and fulfilling the hopes Tommy had in mind when he promised he would give her "another chance" to honestly address and create from her suffering.

The non-linear narrative style is enhanced by the excerpts from the four notebooks. As events pile on one another, there is often an overlap that provides diverse interpretations. The notebooks sustain the logicality of the otherwise chaotic narrative. The yellow notebook constitutes another diegetic level and though it does not become a "mise en abyme", it does closely mirror the events in the main narrative. This meta-fictional strategy becomes all the more interesting as Anna writes the story of Ella and Ella in turn, is composing another literary work. Through this strategy, Lessing is perhaps trying to project the therapeutic effect of writing. Anna writes Ella's story so as to efface the pain of her separation from Michael and in the sub-diegetic level, Ella writes another story to subdue the feelings of hurt and betrayal. Lessing also comments on the constructed-ness of ontological notions like "Truth" and "Reality" when Anna pastes newspaper clippings in her blue notebook. Thus the notebook contains Anna's version of the world and the world as seen from an outsider's perspective. The blue notebook which acts as the repository of Anna's memories and desires is transformed into an objective record of the outside world. However, this objectivity is again punctured by Anna's subjective worldview as she persists in pasting newspaper clippings detailing news of war and death. Lessing seems to suggest that there is no "truth" outside one's subjective worldview. Just as Anna's predilection colour her "selection" of news, other characters also evince a worldview that is predetermined. Anna realizes that objectivity is a mere chimera and she says: ". . . blue notebook, which I had expected to be the most truthful of the notebooks, is worse than any of them. I expected a terse record of facts to present some sort of a pattern when I read it over, but this sort of record is as false as the account of what happened on 15th September, 1954, which I read now embarrassed because of its emotionalism . . ."

As Anna's world comes crashing down and she is unable to fend off the ensuing chaos, she tries to get her life back by re-assembling her thoughts in the golden notebook. The golden notebook symbolizes her frantic attempts to re-establish order and re-group her fragmented

selves. She is initially unaware of what she wants to do with the golden notebook but later it accelerates the process of self-healing. She says, "I'll pack away the four notebooks. I'll start a new notebook, all of myself in one book". Saul Green urges her to rejuvenate her spring of creativity and the notebook offers the promise of healing. The golden notebook is symbolic of a creative principle; one that tries to restore sense out of senselessness and form out of formlessness. However, the promise of rejuvenation is not immediately realized as Anna falls into a psychotic episode, but she soon bounces back. Though she gifts the golden notebook to Saul Green, the four notebooks are never discarded and towards the end, as she peruses them again, she understands that they form an indelible part of her psyche.

UNIT 3

Unit 3 (a): Disillusionment with Communism

The red notebook focuses primarily on Anna's ambivalent relationship to communism, which she agrees with in theory but finds it difficult to support in practice. She finds the British Communist Party unnecessarily dogmatic, stuck in the past, and is unable to cope with communism's transformation into authoritarian terror in the Soviet Union. Many of the novel's communists blindly defend the Party and others become so disillusioned that they lose faith in politics altogether. Anna herself tends to oscillate between these two extremes until she finds a way to toe the line between participating in and critiquing the Party. By the end of the book, she manages to understand the limits of leftist institutions while continuing to believe in the values underlying the leftist politics. Her gradual transformation towards a less radical, but more practical, political orientation mirrors the predicament and trajectory of the Western left at the crucial turning point of the novel's setting, the mid-1950s. Anna becomes disillusioned with politics simply because communism has begun to fail her: it has become untenable in England and openly authoritarian in the Soviet Union. From the 1930s through the 1950s, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin ruthlessly persecuted his political enemies, including many inside his own Communist Party, executing hundreds of thousands of people and sending millions to prison camps in Siberia. As rumors of these crimes reach England, Anna notices that most of her fellow communists simply deny them, insisting that the Soviet Union could not have

possibly been responsible for such atrocities. When these rumors are openly confirmed after Stalin's death, Communist Parties break down throughout the West, where it is already clear that revolution would never occur. Most of all, even in England, Anna notices that communism proclaims a belief in egalitarianism, but communist institutions end up completely anti-egalitarian because of their demand for consensus and centralized power.

Anna and Molly criticize the Party's orthodox support for the Soviets, air of secrecy, strict hierarchy, low editorial standards, and suspicion toward intellectuals. Most of all, there is no remaining space for dissent — everyone who agrees with the Party's ends but disagrees with its means gets shunned, which makes it difficult to reform a political project gone awry. Because Anna and Molly believe that the Communist Party has become anti-communist, they end up "bored" with it and mired in conflicting feelings: they know they should celebrate when Stalin died because the Party will have to change its thinking, but instead they agonize because they recognize that his death threatens the end of communism everywhere. Anna realizes that it is illogical for her to feel more incensed about the Rosenbergs' execution, but she cannot bring herself to feel differently. Because they feel stuck to a party-line they do not agree with anymore, many of the book's communists do nothing political — they dream of a better future but simultaneously lament the failures of the present that their loss of all faith in political actions. Most of Anna's socialist friends in Africa gradually move from planning meetings and protests to mocking their previous revolutionary zeal. They realize that they can do nothing about colonial racism, and the Oxford-educated airmen in the group make fun of Willi's deep commitment to socialist theory—Paul Blackenhurst even openly brags about his future in the business world. Party meetings in London also inevitably lead to internal divisions and ambiguous conclusions — like when the reading group concludes that Stalin's writings on linguistics make no sense, or when the canvassing group uses humor to deflect their question about whether it is better to advance their candidate or to support the Labour Party candidate who is more likely to win the election.

While Lessing believes that blind faith can be a self-sabotaging political attitude, given that reality inevitably fails to live up to leftists' expectations, she also seems to show that a more measured, realistic kind of faith — one that recognizes the improbability of its fulfillment — can both encourage people to pursue incremental progress and make radical social transformation more possible. Anna realizes that the Party "is largely composed of people who aren't political at all, but who have a powerful sense of service," or who are lonely and seeking

community. The happiest party members are not satisfied because of society's progress, but rather because of their everyday personal contributions to the movement. It is accordingly unsurprising that, having been motivated by service rather than community, Anna decides at the end of *Free Women* to campaign for Labour (a progressive mainstream party) and teach children, prioritizing practical, tangible acts of service above the endless, circular discussions and blind hope she finds in the Party. In the golden notebook, Anna and Saul come up with a metaphor from the Greek myth of Sisyphus: the great majority of the leftists are busy pushing a boulder up a "great black mountain" toward the "few great men" at the top, who have already figured out what it means to live in freedom. More practical and less idealistic politics might perhaps achieve only an inch of progress, an incremental advancement in collective knowledge, but it is progress nonetheless. While Anna leaves the Party and Molly marries a businessman, they never stop fighting for justice — regardless of whether they believe in communist revolution or not, they do not confuse radical faith with realistic expectations; they recognize that socialism is fragile and unlikely but still do what is in their power to improve the world.

In the years after she published *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing insisted that she sought to be descriptive, not prescriptive: she wanted to capture the spirit of a time when communists were realizing their project would not be viable in the West, well before it started to seem impossible in the whole world. While she recognizes that the left had to scale down its expectations out of historical necessity, she laments the communists' tendency to give up a notion of the common good altogether because their particular hopes were dashed. Anna and Molly's final and ambivalent political stances in *Free Women* suggest that they were still disappointed by the death of the communist hope for a radically transformed society, but still managed to find more realistic, limited ways to effect change.

Unit 3 (b): Female Bonding and Male Resistance

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is fraught with gendered politics and its myriad nuances. It also foregrounds the theme of sisterhood. Anna's relationship with Molly boasts of an easy camaraderie that is indicative of their mutual trust and concern. Much has been written about the glories of male bonding, however, a close perusal of the annals of literature reveals that the

theme of female friendship is curiously absent from canonical literature. Lessing's depiction of the theme of female friendship becomes all the more relevant because it is showcased as one of the most crucial aspects governing Anna's evolution as a balanced individual. Molly becomes an extension of Anna's self as they live out their separate yet strangely conjoined lives. Lessing problematizes the male resentment towards female bonding through characters like Michael who try to sever Anna's ties with Molly in *The Golden Notebook*. There are no scenes of violence. Instead, men oppress women emotionally. Thus, Doris Lessing describes every minute detail concerning her heroines and scrutinizes their feelings when they are in love, and when they are betrayed or deserted.

Anna's close relationship with Molly is one that is fostered by years of companionship and they draw strength from each other's presence. Though they are drastically different personalities, they share a common worldview. *The Golden Notebook* starts with Molly and Anna introducing themselves as 'free women'. They believe that to be free means to be single, free of marital obsessions, and to have physical relations whenever they want even with married men. *In A Literature of Their Own* (1999), Elaine Showalter comments: "The novel of the 1960s, particularly Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, began to point out in a variety of notes of disillusionment and betrayal, that the 'free women' were not so free after all. Lessing's free women are Marxists who think they understand how the oppression of women is connected to the class struggle, who have professions and children, and who lead independent lives: but they are fragmented and helpless creatures, still locked into dependency upon men. Thus, the title 'Free Women' is ironic because they are not free at all. Being 'not free' is also highlighted through this conversation between Molly and Anna:

> Anna: If we lead what is known as free lives, that is, lives like men, why shouldn't we use the same language?
> Molly: Because we are not the same. That is the point.

Thus, when they become completely aware of their identities they feel that they are not actually free. Also, when Anna looks back at her life, she discovers that her life, as well as Molly's, has not been free from men. On the contrary, they are badly influenced by them:

> "Both of us are dedicated to the proposition that we are tough – no listen, I'm serious. I mean – a marriage breaks up, well, we say, it's not important. We bring up kids without

> men – nothing to it, we say we can cope. We spend years in the communist party and then we say, well, well, we made a mistake, too bad. Now we had to admit that the great dream has faded and the truth is something else that we'll never be any use."

As Ella and her friend Julia – the heroines of the novel inside the novel – are Anna's and Molly's alter egos, they, like Anna and Molly, have the same attitude towards being "free women":

> Ella: My dear Julia, we've chosen to be free women, and this is the price we pay, that's all.
> Julia: Free! What's the use of us being free if they aren't? I swear to God, that every one of them, even the best of them, has the old idea of good women and bad women.

Thus, the attempt to achieve freedom is the main reason behind the heroines' sense of fragmentation. They are trying all the time to get rid of this feeling in pursuit of wholeness. In his book *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change* (1994), Gayle Greene comments: "Lessing demonstrates that both male and female behaviors represent crippling adjustments to a destructive society, but that men are more crippled because they are locked into postures that prohibit change." Being unable to live in a complicated society, men sometimes kill or try to kill themselves like Molly's son, Tommy, who tried to shoot himself but the shot left him blind. Besides, some men try to survive in such a society through trapping women or gaining money like Michael, Anna's lover. However, the main focus in such disintegrated societies is on women who suffer self-disintegration and always try to achieve integration and wholeness. For instance, being a member of the Communist Party is one of Anna's attempts to achieve integration: "…a need for wholeness, for an end to the split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live". However, she gradually discovers that there is a yawning gap between the communists' theories and realities.

All the women in the novel are placed in a society that does not provide women with any sort of freedom. They are treated like second-class citizens, a fact asserted by Anna and Saul:

> Saul: I've always been a hypocrite and in fact I enjoy being boss where women are second class citizen, I enjoy being boss and being fattered.

> Anna: 'Good', I said. Because in a society where not one man in ten thousand begins to understand the ways in which women are second-class citizens, we have to rely for company on the men who are at least not hypocrites.

Male oppression towards females in the novel is represented through Anna's love for Michael who deserted her to marry another woman even after a five-year long relationship. Roberta Rubenstein in *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness* (1979) opines: "The most profound dimension of Anna Wulf's psychic split is generated, however, not at the political but at the emotional level, by the dissolution of a five-year relationship with her lover, Michael, the dynamics of which form the central subject of the yellow notebook." The novel highlights the sterility of the man's emotions and the fuller feelings of a woman's emotions. Even Anna, who attained that sense of integrity and wholeness whenever she was with Michael, was deserted afterward: "The morning when Michael woke in my arms he opened his eyes and smiled at me. The warm blue of his eyes as he smiled into my face. I thought: so much of my life has been twisted and painful that now when happiness flooded over with warm glittering blue water, I can't believe it. I say to myself: I am Anna Wulf, this is me, Anna, and I'm happy." However, this feeling of happiness and integrity changed into a sense of loss when Michael deserted her. She tried to reconstruct her identity by saying: "Anna, Anna, I am Anna,…and anyway, I can't be ill or give way because of Janet, I could vanish from the world tomorrow, and it wouldn't matter to anyone except to Janet. What then am I, Anna?… who am I, Anna?"

Another female figure in the novel who is subjected to male oppression is Marion, the wife of Richard, Anna's ex-husband. Richard's oppression of Marion is summoned in Marion's conversation with Anna:

> “I've been married to him for years and years and all that time I've been wrapped up in him. Well women are, aren't they? I've thought of nothing else. I've cried myself to sleep night after night for years. And I've made scenes, and been a fool and been unhappy and … the point is, what for? Because the point is he is not anything, is he? He's not even very good looking. He's not even very intelligent - I don't care if he's ever so important and a captain of industry. …I thought, my God, for that creature, I've ruined my life.”

It is Marion's fragmentation and her sense of the loss of identity that led her to adopt an odd behavior like deserting her husband and children, moving to Anna's house and becoming Tommy's friend. Anna describes such eccentricity: "My husband's second wife moving into my house because she can't live without my son …I was sitting upstairs quiet as a mouse, so as not to disturb Marion and Tommy and thinking I'll simply pack a bag and wander off somewhere and leave them to it."

In the black notebook, there is another figure who is subjected to male oppression; namely, Marie. During the war, Anna joined a communist group and spent a long time with them at a hotel named Mashopi, owned by the British couple; Mr. and Mrs. Boothby. Paul, a member of the communist group, befriended Jackson, the Boothby's' African cook. However, another member of the group, George Hounslow, had an affair with the cook's wife Marie which resulted in the cook and his wife being sacked by the Boothbys. Jackson found another job in the city, but as his wife and children were unable to stay with him, so he sent them to Iceland. Thus, the only victim was the black-African woman, Marie, who was dispatched from her life at The Mashopi Hotel, as well as from her husband. Besides Marie, there is another character in the yellow notebook named Ella who is Anna's alter ego and the heroine of the novel inside the novel titled *The Shadow of the Third*. Ella greatly suffered due to Paul who deserted her for another woman. After Anna's refection of her relationship with Michael, she identifies herself with Ella by saying: "Paul gave birth to Ella, the naïve Ella. He destroyed in her the knowing, doubting, sophisticated Ella and again and again he put her intelligence to sleep, and with her willing connivance, so that she floated darkly on her love for him, on her naivety … what Ella lost during those five years was the power to create through naivety."

Although *The Golden Notebook* embraces political themes, the gender issue is actually treated more seriously than politics. This fact is admitted by Anna herself as she states: "The blue notebook, which I had expected to be the most truthful of the notebooks, is worse than any of them." Consequently, she thinks that the blue notebook, which records her emotional life and her love for Michael is the most truthful of them.

UNIT 4

Unit 4 (a): Fragmentation

Fragmentation has become one of the popular concerns of postmodern novelists. This concern does not only show itself in the thematic sphere, but also it echoes in the structures of many postmodern novels. In this respect, the Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is quintessential as the novel displays an almost obsessive concern with fragmentation. The book is structurally fragmented. Lessing explores the microcosmic world of the fragmented individual which coalesces into the inevitable fragmentation of the societal macrocosm. The very structure of the novel and the non-linear narration employed is indicative of the fragmentary nature of Lessing's creative cosmos. The characters constantly express their anguish in helplessly living out such a divided existence. Anna tries to decipher her various selves by categorically recording her various "lived experiences" in her notebooks. Thus the four notebooks become the leitmotif in a narrative that highlights the notion of fragmentation in the postmodern world. From the very beginning of *The Golden Notebook*, when protagonist Anna Wulf tells her closest friend and confidante Molly Jacobs that "everything's cracking up," the fragmentation of world and mind emerge as driving forces in the novel. Its plot revolves around Anna's own gradual mental breakdown, or "crack up." Throughout the novel, she writes endlessly about her deep fear of insanity in four different notebooks in different colors that cover four different aspects of her life — her African past (black), her politics (red), her fiction (yellow), and her present (blue) — but realizes that none of them captures the real "truth" of her identity and experience. When she gives up the four books and begins writing everything in the single, titular golden notebook, Anna descends into madness, but she emerges whole, healthy, and able to write.

Instead of blocking out parts of her identity to find a single, consistent truth, Anna only achieves a sense of unity and purpose by confronting the chaos within herself and refusing to partition her mind into different books. For Lessing, identity is never simple or coherent, but rather results from the varied, often contradictory experiences and attitudes that make up any life; anyone who tries to define themselves by one thing (like their job, their family role, their belief system) is far more delusional than someone like Anna, who finally refuses to

compartmentalize herself and finds sanity by embracing, not rejecting, the contradictions in her identity. Lessing, then, experiments with innovative narrative strategies to reflect and stress the complexity of experience. The book's obsessive thematic concern on the fragmentation, that is the breakdown of a blocked writer, is well echoed in the structural and formal characteristics. Lessing divides her book into parts, each associated with a different colour. The first part is titled as "Free Women" which, in Lessing's words "is a conventional short novel, about 60,000 words long, and which could stand by itself". This short novel or novella is divided in itself with four different notebooks – Black, Red, Yellow, Blue – ensuing each Free Women section. There are five “Free Women” sections each followed by these notebooks. Following these coloured notebooks "The Golden Notebook", which is also followed by the last "Free Women" section which operates, physically speaking, like a conclusion part, appears. The protagonist of the novel is Anna Wulf who is a blocked writer. Her 'realist' novel, *The Frontiers of War*, was a success which provided her with an income sufficient to make her living. However, she believes that this novel was just a "lying nostalgia, a longing for license, for freedom, for the jungle, for formlessness". Owing to this dissatisfaction with her first novel which took its place in the traditional stream with its realist bearings, she is in a desperate search for new models to relate her experience in a more truthful manner. Yet, Anna is obsessed with the fragmentation. Her attempts to come up with a suitable and reliable method in order to achieve a kind of wholeness constantly results in frustration. As a matter of fact, it is Anna's attempts to recover from the block that renders the book so fragmented and divided. She wants to impose an order upon the chaos of her life. She admits that the only kind of the book which interests her is "a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life".

However, her attempts only prove that the reality which she struggles to reflect is itself split. "Free Women" is written in the third person omniscient narrative; sections have an objective and authoritarian voice. Its rational voice and ordered structure can be associated with the elements of the conventional realist novel. For instance, "Free Women" achieves an ending unlike notebooks. In a sense, "Free Women" is a parody in its flatness and orderliness when compared to the chaotic and fragmented notebooks. This comparison also emphasizes and stresses the fragmented nature of the notebooks. The "Free Women" sections are crucial for the text since they provide the reader with the necessary information and function as the skeleton for the structure of the novel. However, there are differences between the notebooks and the "Free Women" sections. For instance, when compared to the highly subjective first person

account of notebooks, the "Free Women" sections give the sense of a highly controlled narrator with a tight formal structure. Yet, the "Free Women" sections appear dissatisfactory with the lack of a tension and suspense which characterize the notebooks. The first "Free Women" section starts with the sentence: "The two women were alone in the London flat". However, in the inner "Golden Notebook", it is realized that this sentence is offered by Saul Green to Anna, to make it the first sentence of the next novel. Then, unlike the apparent idea, it is clear that the "Free Women" is born out of the notebooks. In other words, the “Free Women” is the fictionalized version of the notebooks. The narrative indeed resembles to Mobius strip as the content of the novel folds back in on itself as the end of the novel takes the reader back to the beginning. In the notebooks, Anna attempts to examine her life in disparate styles and perspectives. The memoirs from Africa constantly haunt her; communism disappoints her; as a woman she is still dependent on a man and is defined in terms of male discourse; as a writer, she is dissatisfied with the common models and suffers from the writer's block. All of these aspects of Anna found their voices in the separate notebooks.

"The Black Notebook" is divided into two columns, headed 'Source' and 'Money' and written in the first person. In it, Anna deals with her past experiences in Africa, mostly her frustration both in the African blacks' internal conflict and the oppressive attitude of the whites upon them. Due to her block, the notebook ends with pastiches and copied materials. In “The Red Notebook”, Anna relates her experience with the British Communist Party. Day by day, Anna's unease with the party grows, and finally, she decides to leave the party. Again, this notebook ends with the newspaper cuttings about violence. In "The Yellow Notebook", Anna writes a novel called *The Shadow of the Third*, which is in fact her fictionalized life. It also bears her comments on the process of writing it. The narration is in the third person omniscient. "The Blue Notebook" consists of Anna's diary writings. It is, in fact, an obvious attempt to keep a factual account of what happens rather than a fictionalized version. Mainly, it deals with Anna's mental break-down, her block and sessions with psychotherapist. Yet, she cannot unify these disparate perspectives of her life in a single piece. Finally, in the golden-coloured notebook, Anna synthesizes the various experiences kept separate in the other books, so that they approximate to a kind of wholeness. Attaining this integration enables her to begin to write again. Anna's major motive in separating aspects of her life is to impose a certain order on chaos. However, in the final part, Anna realizes that by allowing the chaos in, she could create something as an artist. She abandons her notebooks and records events solely in the golden notebook which, in itself, welcomes dissolution and separation. The reader is also taken back

to the beginning as it is understood that the beginning sentence of the "Free Women" would be the first sentence of Anna's next novel. Thus, in a cyclical manner, Anna turns back to fragmented beginning.

Unit 4 (b): Gender Politics

The Golden Notebook has often been hailed as a feminist text that focuses on the interminable "war of the sexes." The novel's female characters are seen by some critics as the champions of the feminist ideology who chose to dispute the traditional gender roles assigned to them. However, Lessing deliberately refutes such an interpretation as she believed that the novel's primary theme was one of self-healing. She says in her preface, "But this novel was not a trumpet for Women's Liberation. It described many female emotions of aggression, hostility, resentment. It put them into print". Thus while Lessing skillfully delineates the trajectory of feminine experience, she does not project it as a battle cry for the feminist revolution. However, this does not mean that Lessing is in any way belittling the notion of female empowerment. Through her works she demonstrates how women have to wage a savage war to preserve their individuality.

When Anna and Molly describe themselves as "free women," they are being consciously ironic — they do not feel "free," they are not actually "free" from social pressures and attitudes that constrain their potential and define them in terms of their relations to men, and because they are unmarried, men see them as sexual objects, "free" for the taking. Yet Lessing's early readers were right to see these characters' ability to recognize and reject the oppressive gender roles as an important, progressive, if not entirely revolutionary step in the second wave of western feminism. Anna and Molly recognize that, in the traditional marriages which predominate among their peers, men's economic labor is valued while women's emotional and domestic labor is made invisible — and those women who have begun to enter the workforce in limited ways also find their economic labor ignored. Under this system, women end up isolated, miserable, and unappreciated, living a sort of life Molly and Anna firmly believe they should not be forced to live; while they claim their "freedom" by refusing to do so, their true innovation

is not merely their decision to live as single mothers, but their deeper recognition that this "freedom" is also limited and inadequate without a broader transformation in gender relations.

This book shows how men's labor is always construed as extremely valuable even though it is invisibly supported everywhere by women. Molly's pompous, arrogant, dominating ex-husband Richard denigrates Molly and Anna for ostensibly not working hard enough but never acknowledges his wife Marion for taking care of the kids and spends his days at the office surrounded by secretaries and assistants who do most of the day-to-day work for which he takes credit. Anna, too, supports the men she dates not only materially, by cooking and cleaning for them, but also emotionally, by protecting their egos. In the blue notebook, she chronicles one day of frantically switching from one task to another, caring for her daughter Janet and lover Michael in the morning, working with the Communist Party without payment all day (further showing how her labor is undervalued) and making Janet and Michael a special dinner all night — but Michael never shows up and she ends up alone, in a dress she chose just for him, throwing out the veal she obsessed over making perfectly just to please him.

This unequal division of labor transforms marriage into an emotional and economic cage: women have no choice but to do domestic work yet are compensated neither formally nor informally, and they lose their husbands' romantic interest precisely for doing what the society demands of them. Marion's relationship with Richard attests to this: he has completely ignored her for years yet blames her for her alcohol abuse. She is miserable and tells Anna and Molly how much she wishes she could be "free" like them. However, when she finally grows close to Tommy, the first person to ever offer her serious attention and affection, she stops drinking, finds a passion for politics, and declares herself "free," to Richard's chagrin. Meanwhile, Anna's fictional alter ego Ella works at “Women at Home” magazine, the extraordinarily limited scope and style of which depresses her — her job is to write letters to neurotic housewives, who are driven mad by their confinement but not mad enough to be deemed properly "medical" by the womanizing Dr. West, who (absurdly enough) runs the women's advice column. The magazine's self-help angle is designed to help women accept their subordinate role rather than challenge it. When Ella visits her lover Paul Tanner's house, she finds that his wife — with whom he has scarcely spent a night in years — is an avid reader of the magazine. Paul is proud that his wife so openly embraces the role of a traditional housewife, but both he and Ella recognize that she is miserable because he has essentially abandoned her. So, even when Anna and Ella's affairs with men fail, they do not seek out marriage for their own sake, because they

know that their relative "freedom" saves them from the suffering of women like Marion and Paul's wife.

Ultimately, while Anna and Molly recognize that they are in no way "free" from patriarchy, by choosing divorce over unhappy marriages, they still avoid being held "prisoner." They also offer an important example for women like Marion, who decides to follow their path and finds herself to be perhaps the book's happiest character by its end. And, of course, Anna's relationship with Molly also serves a function similar to a kind of marriage (she even describes Ella and Julia, fictionalized versions of herself and Molly, as "Lesbian, psychologically if not physically"). The last time Anna describes a psychoanalysis session with Mrs. Marks, she decides to refuse others' expectations and "walk off, by myself, Anna Freeman." Crucially, at this moment, she uses her maiden name "Freeman," both referencing her previous freedom from marriage and playing on the title “Free Women”, which she soon reveals is her second novel, proof of her eventual ability to create and freedom from her emotional paralysis. While Mrs. Marks insists that women have always been able to, and will always be able to, live freely, Anna points out that claiming this freedom usually requires women to live like men — to become "Freeman" rather than Free Women — which does nothing to resolve the broader problem of women's subordination to men. This explains Anna's ultimate decision to become a marriage counselor at the end of “Free Women”, suggesting that solidarity among women can offer them the chance to live on their own, fulfilling lives, with or without men.

While many (mostly anxious male) critics complained that Lessing's characters hated, rejected, and dominated men, switching the gender hierarchy to put themselves on the top, the fact is that Lessing deliberately chose to show the opposite: Anna and Molly's freedom from marriage does not free them from patriarchy. Men continue to treat them as disposable and subordinate, and they remain stuck in unpaid domestic labor (Anna continues to organize her life around caring for her daughter Janet and serve as a metaphorical "welfare worker" for those around her, like Tommy). Lessing's feminism, while in many ways archaic and essentialist by today's standards, is the most radical in her recognition that women cannot simply achieve "freedom" by turning away from men, but must rather work to change the entire set of social relations that render their work, love, and humanity invisible to the men with power over them.

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Suggested Readings

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Assignments

Essay Type Questions

1. Compare and Contrast the characters of Anna and Molly.

2. Write a note on the issue of fragmentation in the novel *The Golden Notebook*.

3. Do you consider both Anna and Molly as “free women”? Substantiate your answer with proper textual references.

4. Comment on the significance of four different notebooks Anna maintains throughout the novel and show how they contribute to the postmodern narrative technique of the novel.

5. Through the characterization of Anna and Wulf Lessing actually tries to portray decline and disillusionment of Communism in the world. Do you agree? Discuss with close reference to the text.

6. Do you think female solidarity can help the women sustain their existence in the ruthlessly patriarchal world? Elucidate your argument providing illustrative textual references.

Short-Answer Type Questions

1. Write a short note on the characterization of Richard.
2. Illustrate how the job of writing novel proves therapeutic for Anna.
3. Comment on the treatment of women in the hands of men in the novel *The Golden Notebook*.
4. Critically comment on the psychological crisis of Tommy.
5. Write a short note on the parent-child relationship of the novel.

BLOCK II

SUB-UNIT II: POETRY

"TO THE POET COLERIDGE"

By

MARY ROBINSON

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 5 (a): Life and Works of Mary Robinson
Unit 5 (b): Estimating Mary Robinson as an Early Feminist Thinker

Unit 6 (a): Robinson and Coleridge: Literary Contemporaries
Unit 6 (b): "Kubla Khan" and "To the Poet Coleridge": A Dialogic Relationship

Suggested Readings
Assignments

UNIT 5

Unit 5 (a): Life and Works of Mary Robinson

Mary Darby Robinson was an English actress, poet, dramatist, novelist, and celebrity figure. During her lifetime she was known as "the English Sappho". She was born to Nicholas Darby, a naval captain, who left her mother and took on a mistress when Mary was still a child.

Without the financial support of her husband, Mary's mother Hester Darby started a school for young girls and somehow managed the household consisting of her five children. Hester also encouraged Mary to accept the proposal of Thomas Robinson, who claimed to have an inheritance. Though she was initially against the match, after seeing Robinson taking care of her family, Mary agreed to marry him out of gratitude. Unfortunately, her husband lied about the inheritance and had several mistresses. After Thomas squandered all their money, he was imprisoned for debt in the Fleet Prison where she lived with him for many months. It was in the Fleet Prison that Robinson's literary career really began, as she found that she could publish poetry to earn money. Her first book, *Poems by Mrs. Robinson*, was published in 1775. In prison, she also wrote a long poem, *Captivity*. After their release from prison, Robinson decided to return to the theatre. Her performances as Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It* won her extensive praise. During the next four years, she would appear in nearly 40 plays. But she gained immense popularity by playing the role of Perdita (heroine of *The Winter's Tale*) in 1779. It was during this performance that she attracted the notice of the young Prince of Wales, later King George IV of the United Kingdom. He offered her twenty thousand pounds to become his mistress. It took Robinson a considerable amount of time to decide whether to leave her husband because she did not want her public image to be tarnished. She eventually agreed to the proposal. However, the affair ended unhappily for Mary as the Prince lost interest after a year, and the money was never paid.

Robinson also began to experience severe health problems during this time. Although a definite cause has never been assigned to her sudden illness - it has been attributed to everything from rheumatic fever to a miscarriage to even a virulent venereal disease. Robinson was bedridden for six months and remained partially paralyzed from 1783 on. Motivated by financial necessity, Robinson, who returned to England with her daughter in 1787, began to write in earnest in the late 1780s. Although considered a fallen woman, the public's interest in the scandalous Mary Robinson had not ebbed, and her work, for the most part, sold well. From the late 1780s, Robinson, striving to separate herself from her past scandals, and life as a theatre actress, turned to writing as a full-time career Her ability to produce poetry can be seen furthermore in her poems titled "Sappho and Phaeon". She was given the name "the English Sappho" by the press. In addition to poems, she wrote eight novels, three plays, feminist treatises, and an autobiographical manuscript that was incomplete at the time of her death.

Like her contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft, she championed the rights of women and was an ardent supporter of the French Revolution. During the 1790s, Robinson was an ardent admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft, an established and influential feminist writer of the period. But to Robinson's surprise, her intense feelings were not reciprocated by Wollstonecraft. In 1792 Robinson published her most popular novel which was a Gothic novel titled, *Vancenza; or The Dangers of Credulity.* The books were "sold out by lunchtime on the first day, making it one of the top-selling novels in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Lastly, in 1800, after years of failing health and decline into financial ruin, Robinson wrote her last piece of literature during her lifetime: a series of poems titled the *Lyrical Tales*. This poetry collection explored themes of domestic violence, misogyny, violence against destitute characters, and political oppression. Robinson's main objective was to respond to *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge. *Lyrical Tales* provides a "powerful critique of the division of duties and privileges between the sexes. It places Robinson firmly on the side of the 'feminist' thinkers or 'modern' philosophers of the 1790s. She was named by her friend Coleridge "as a woman of undoubted genius."

While most of the early literature written about Robinson focused on her sexuality, emphasizing her affairs and fashions, she also spoke out about woman's place in the literary world, for which she began to receive the attention of feminists and literary scholars in the 1990s. In *A Letter to the Women of England*, Robinson includes an entire page dedicated to English women writers to support her notion that they were just as capable as men of being successful in the literary world. Her closest professional relationship was probably with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, her fellow contributor to the *Morning Post* newspaper. Besides being good friends, they would carry on a poetic conversation that profoundly influenced both of their careers. Although Robinson's output remained constant, her health declined steadily throughout 1800 and she died in the same year. Her reputation as a poet would continue for the next several decades, largely due to the efforts of her daughter.

Text of the Poem

RAPT in the visionary theme!
SPIRIT DIVINE! with THEE I'll wander,

Where the blue, wavy, lucid stream,
'Mid forest glooms, shall slow meander!
With THEE I'll trace the circling bounds
Of thy NEW PARADISE extended;
And listen to the varying sounds
Of winds, and foamy torrents blended.

Now by the source which lab'ring heaves
The mystic fountain, bubbling, panting,
While Gossamer its net-work weaves,
Adown the blue lawn slanting!
I'll mark thy sunny dome, and view
Thy Caves of Ice, thy fields of dew!
Thy ever-blooming mead, whose flow'r
Waves to the cold breath of the moonlight hour!
Or when the day-star, peering bright
On the grey wing of parting night;
While more than vegetating pow'r
Throbs grateful to the burning hour,
As summer's whisper'd sighs unfold
Her million, million buds of gold;
Then will I climb the breezy bounds,
Of thy NEW PARADISE extended,
And listen to the distant sounds
Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

SPIRIT DIVINE! With THEE I'll trace
Imagination's boundless space
With thee, beneath thy sunny dome,
I'll listen to the minstrel's lay,
Hymning, the gradual close of day;
In Caves of Ice enchanted roam,
Where on the glitt'ring entrance plays
The moon's-beam with its silv'ry rays;

Or, when glassy stream,
That thro' the deep dell flows,
Flashes the noon's hot beam;
The noon's hot beam, that midway shows
Thy flaming Temple, studded o'er
With all PERUVIA'S lustrous store!
There will I trace the circling bounds
Of thy NEW PARADISE extended!
And listen to the awful sounds,
Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

And now I'll pause to catch the moan
Of distant breezes, cavern-pent;
Now, ere the twilight tints are flown,
Purpling the landscape, far and wide,
On the dark promontory's side
I'll gather wild flow'rs, dew besprent,
And weave a crown for THEE,
GENIUS OF HEAV'N-TAUGHT POESY!
While, op'ning to my wond'ring eyes,
Thou bidst a new creation rise,
I'll raptur'd trace the circling bounds,
Of thy RICH PARADISE extended,
And listen to the varying sounds
Of winds, and foaming torrents blended.

And now, with lofty tones inviting,
Thy NYMPH, her dulcimer swift smiting,
Shall wake me in ecstatic measures!
Far, far remov'd from mortal pleasures!
In cadence rich, in cadence strong,
Proving the wondrous witcheries of song!
I hear her voice! thy sunny dome,
Thy caves of ice, loud repeat,

Vibrations, madd'ning sweet,
Calling the visionary wand'rer home.
She sings of THEE, O favour'd child
Of Minstrelsy, SUBLIMELY WILD!
Of thee, whose soul can feel the tone
Which gives to airy dreams a magic ALL THY OWN!

Unit 5 (b): Estimating Mary Robinson as an Early Feminist Thinker: An Investigation into the Eighteenth Century Literary Scene and the Problematics of Female Subjectivity and Authorship

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In the last decade of her brief 42-years life, Mary Robinson published four collections of poetry, seven novels, a play, two political tracts, a translation, and countless individual poems which appeared pseudonymously in contemporary newspapers (according to her Memoirs, she penned seventy-four poems in the last year of her life alone). She began publishing poems in newspapers under pseudonyms like 'Laura,' 'Laura Maria', Sappho' and 'Tabitha Bramble' to hide her identity. While the male poets of her day rarely lowered themselves to indulge in the "debased genre of the novel", women writers flourished in the form. Both Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson turned to novels. It is extremely unfortunate that in the contemporary eighteenth-century society and the literary scene, her reputation was cemented not on this amazing literary productivity but on her publicized stories of sexual promiscuity. Her posthumously published autobiography suggests that she was never entirely successful at detaching her writing from her erotic body. But Robinson's ultimate triumph rests, perhaps, in somewhat transforming her public image as a courtesan into the image of a true 'Woman of Feeling'. In her *Memoirs*, she blames the men in her life for her sorrows - from her father's abandonment of the family for a mistress, her husband's lack of loyalty, the desertion of the King himself to her lover of fifteen years, Barnastre Tarleton's leaving her, two years before her death for a younger wife.

Place in the Politics of the Period

Robinson's sexual life became a debated political issue during that period. To conservative supporters of the social order, she was an emblem of female immodesty, an example of the dangers posed to Britain by radical change. Richard Polwhele attacked her along with Wollstonecraft as “female Quixotes of the new philosophy." His phrase saw them as self-deluding knights, seduced by the romance of radical French ideas when they should have been innocent damsels. Similarly, the *Annual Review* reminded the women readers of her sexual past to deny her the power to speak for them and influence them. The journal proclaimed that Robinson wielded a 'pen of vice'. But the opposition Whigs and radicals viewed Robinson differently: to them, she became a symbol of the injustice perpetrated by the aristocratic establishment which they were seeking to change. Her status as a victim of royal libertinism was sealed by the fact that she was, in fact, suffering from a paralyzing disease.

As an Early Feminist

Her writing shows that she was an early feminist thinker and author. She showed deepest sympathies for the Queen of France who she felt had been wronged like herself. Thus, her poems, “Marie Antoinette’s Lamentation”, and the tract “Impartial Reflections on the Present Situation of the Queen of France” demonstrate compassion and empathy for the Queen. Her novel *The Natural Daughter* problematizes the late eighteenth century notions of femininity. It suggests the need for women to escape the rigid confines of a culturally constructed and assigned identity—defined by passivity, obedience, and virginity/chastity and to write out a different conception of female identity. Her intellectual friendship with William Godwin led to Robinson’s acquaintance with Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, both writers and early feminists. In her relations with the radicals, Robinson’s philosophical and intellectual abilities flourished extensively; abilities which she knew had been compromised by her sexual reputation and physical beauty. As she challenges in her feminist polemic, “why the graces of feminine beauty are to be constituted emblems of a debilitated mind?” Her philosophical knowledge and rhetorical skills are apparent in this polemic, published in 1799 under the name Anne Frances Randall but later reprinted with her own name as “Thoughts on the Condition of Women”. The text is heavily influenced by Wollstonecraft’s and Hays’ earlier feminist polemics as Robinson makes similar arguments: she calls for female education, decries the sexual double standard which places too much emphasis on the female chastity, argues for the equality of the female mind and against male tyranny in marriage, and then provides a series of well-researched descriptions of exemplary women in history (from ancient Rome to Islam to contemporary England). She asks: “Let me ask this plain and rational question, - is not

woman a human being, gifted with all the feelings that inhabit the bosom of man?" The rhetorical question makes a reasoned argument about women's feelings demonstrates her status as an early feminist thinker.

Arguments in favour of female authorship and claiming her body

The eighteenth-century definition of femininity included stereotyped qualities of chastity, passivity, compliance, gentleness, sympathy, submission, modesty, reserve, innocence, etc. Alongside these standard assumptions of female virtue, the eighteenth century understood a woman's identity primarily in terms of her body. As Vivien Jones points out, authors of the period's conduct-book literature constructed and solidified these standardized feminine assumptions and circulated the same for public consumption. Ty suggests these eighteenth-century ideologies/constructions of femininity also rendered it difficult for Robinson to adopt a position outside of these preconceived notions of what a woman should be. Robinson presents feminine self-authorship, especially in the form of literal authorship, as a strategy for challenging pervasive stereotypical notions of femininity. For her, authorship is a means of escaping the sexualized body—of escaping the limitations of eighteenth-century conceptions of the female body by refusing the logic that locates a woman's identity primarily by way of her virginity and her supposedly non-intellectual nature. Instead, Robinson seeks to ground feminine identity in women's authorial capacities.

A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination (1799) shows that Robinson not only exposes and undermines these eighteenth-century standards of feminine definition but also constructs an image of woman-as-author in opposition to that script. This political stance of hers obviously stemmed from personal suffering. Robinson's brief affair with George, Prince of Wales, initially launched her into the public eye, and she fought the rest of her life to shake off the dubious narrative of the fallen woman. In her *Memoirs* and elsewhere, Robinson circulated several counter-narratives that challenged the demeaning public representation of her as a whore. Anne K. Mellor concludes that these counter-narratives suggest "that Mary Robinson consciously created what we now call a 'postmodernist subjectivity,' a concept of the self as entirely fluid, unstable, and performative. Robinson's Letter is, in her own words, a reminder to her "enlightened country-women that they are not the mere appendages of domestic life, but the partners, the equal associates of man; and, where they excel in intellectual powers, they are no less capable of all that prejudice and custom have united in attributing, exclusively, to the thinking faculties of man" (41). The Letter is, then, an

argument in favour of the “mental equality” of the sexes (41). It challenges the myth of feminine passivity and is overtly hostile to the myth of female desirelessness. She laments at one point: “woman is condemned to bear the drudgery of domestic life, to vegetate in obscurity, to love where she abhors, to honour where she despises, and to obey, while she shudders at subordination” (45). In framing her argument in these terms, Robinson announces her opposition to the desireless, self-effacing identity that her culture assigns to women.

Robinson endeavours to make the case for women’s “mental equality” and to define women in terms of their intellectual abilities. She had already made a similar point about women’s literary capabilities in her preface to *Sappho and Phaon*, in which she paid “tribute to the talents of [her] illustrious countrywomen; who, unpatronised by courts, and unprotected by the powerful, persevere in the paths of literature, and ennoble themselves by the unperishable lustre of MENTAL PRE-EMINENCE!"(27) Robinson's Letter, as Ashley J. Cross has shown, can be read as "a defense of women's equal place, as well as her own, in the 'Tribunal of British Literature. The literary woman thus challenges patriarchal boundaries that deny them access to the public intellectual sphere. Her writing proves her alertness to the systematic exclusion of women from the emerging literary canon. This "erasure" of literary women is, in essence, only symptomatic of the patriarchal policy of enforcing the "erasure" of women's subjectivity in general by insisting on defining a woman’s identity in terms of a set of values that are ultimately rooted in her body. In asserting themselves as intellectual beings through authorship—implying not only authorship of texts but also, as we have seen, self-authorship—women could gain some control over their scripted selves and write themselves out of the cultural codes that insist on locating women’s identities primarily by means of their bodies.

UNIT 6

Unit 6 (a): Robinson and Coleridge: Literary Contemporaries

Throughout her literary career, Mary Robinson consistently affiliated herself with many powerful male figures, doing so politically with statesmen such as Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, professionally with newspaper proprietors and publishers such as John Bell and

Daniel Stuart, and culturally with contemporaries like William Godwin, Robert Merry, Joshua Reynolds, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The period of Mary Robinson's greatest literary productivity was the decade of the 1790s which makes her the exact contemporary of the first generation of poets credited with ushering in a new literary movement. Unfortunately, she has not, until very recently, been positioned alongside Blake, Coleridge or Wordsworth in anthologies, academic courses, and scholarship devoted to the romantic era.

Much has been written about the relationship, both poetic and personal, between Mary Robinson and her contemporary, the canonical poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. By the 1790s Robinson was a well-known writer and poet but was viewed harshly by contemporary society owing to her public image as a fallen woman. Regardless of the public opinion, Robinson continued writing and eventually (January 1790) became the editor of *The Morning Post*, a popular literary magazine at the time. Through *The Morning Post*, Robinson was able to search for a contemporary that she deemed worthy of "the sacred intercourse of the soul" and communicating through poetry. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the individual who rose to Robinson's challenge. But it was not until the year of Robinson's death that Coleridge and Robinson officially met. The account of meetings between Robinson and Coleridge is recorded in William Godwin's diary that he had tea at Robinson's in the company of Coleridge on January 15, 1800. After that date, Coleridge and Robinson dined together again on Jan 18th and Feb 22.

Although Robinson and Coleridge did not meet until 1800, their correspondence began in the late 1790s. Coleridge was a huge admirer of Robinson's literary works and functioned as a continuous source of support. Often writing anonymously or outright, Coleridge played an active role in the endorsement of Robinson's writing. Frequently, he wrote in response to Robinson, under the pseudonym "Francini". Robinson reveled in the praise of "Francini" and used this promotion as a way to further her writing. Coleridge also used Robinson's poetic style to advance his own early writings. One of the most acknowledged correspondences between Coleridge and Robinson began with the publication of her poem, "Ode to a Snow-drop" which appeared in Robinson's novel *Walsingham Or, the Pupil of Nature*. In response to this poem, Coleridge published his own poem, using the same imagery but elaborating further upon it. Robinson was so pleased with this praise that she published an outstanding response in praise of Coleridge's poem, "The Apotheosis or the Snow-drop". Through the employment of similar

imagery, settings, and published critiques of the other's literature, Coleridge and Robinson gravely influenced each other's literary style.

Both of them were frequent contributors to the *Morning Post* newspaper, and there carried on a poetic conversation during the last decade of Robinson's life. According to Susan Luther, Coleridge appeared to be sympathetic to her status as a marginalized figure and imagined himself in the role of both protector and friend. Lisa Vargo identifies at least four poems of Coleridge which were directly the result of his friendship and literary exchanges with Mary Robinson: "A Stranger Minstrel," "The Solitude of Binnorie," "Alcaeus to Sappho," and "The Snow-Drop." This is hardly a disputable claim. Aside from internal evidence within the poems themselves, there are also Coleridge's own explicit statements. "A Stranger Minstrel" is subtitled "Written to Mrs. Robinson, a few weeks before her death." Coleridge prefaced "The Solitude of Binnorie" with a statement announcing that the meter of the poem was borrowed from Robinson's "The Haunted Beach". This preface also refers to Mary as Sappho and himself as Alcaeus, evidence pointing to the fact that "Alcaeus to Sappho" refers to their relationship. Finally, the manuscript for "The Snow-Drop" bears the heading "Lines written immediately after the perusal of Mrs. Robinson's Snow Drop."

Coleridge thought enough of her to share with her an early version of his masterpiece, the famous poem "Kubla Khan". Interestingly, Coleridge shared this poem with Robinson even before he shared it with Southey, Lamb, or at last Byron, who encouraged him ultimately to publish it. Even more remarkable, she wrote a poetic response to it, "Mrs. Robinson to the Poet Coleridge", just a few months before her death in 1800. This poem appeared in print in 1801, a decade and a half before the publication of "Kubla Khan" in 1816. Her poem to Coleridge reveals, moreover, that Robinson understood the aspects of "Kubla Khan" that no one else, at least in print, would begin to understand until John Livingston Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu* in 1927. Robinson was the first to understand and appreciate "Kubla Khan" as a poem about the poetic imagination.

Coleridge's most innovative poems at this time, "Kubla Khan," "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," and "Christabel", clearly demonstrates his interest in the gothic. Robinson's adaptation of the gothic for similar purposes surely appealed to him. She validated an aesthetic interest in the supernatural that neither Wordsworth nor Southey shared with Coleridge around the time he was working on his dream poems. Robinson certainly knew "The Rime of the

Ancyent Marinere," which influenced such poems as "The Lady of the Black Tower," "Jasper," and "The Haunted Beach." The fantastic meters Coleridge and Robinson composed share a foundation in English practice and in the human psyche, and thus their lines sound enough like the ancient folk ballads—a cultural collective unconscious. Coleridge's interest in Robinson's "Jasper," the unpublished poem he provided for inclusion in Southey's *Annual Anthology*, is primarily stylistic. It is another supernatural metrical romance of guilt, madness, and isolation—and is undoubtedly the result of Robinson's reading of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere".

Coleridge was mesmerized by her ability to create pleasurable sound through the arrangement of syllables, words, lines, and rhymes and to present these features in stanzaic form. In the two letters to Southey, which he wrote in praise of Robinson's metre, he mentioned three poems: "The Poor Singing Dame," "Jasper," and "The Haunted Beach." In these poems, Robinson achieves her metrical effects through the construction of her own unusual nonce forms. A nonce form is an original form that a poet constructs for a particular poem, which is then recognizable as peculiar to that poem or poet. When the nonce form is appropriated by subsequent poets, it becomes eponymous as a received form. Coleridge was looking out for the preservation of Robinson's poetry in the *Annual Anthology*. He felt that "The Haunted Beach" was too good to perish and requested Southey to include it in the Anthology. In the letter, he also added that Robinson was flattered by this idea because she had always idolized Southey and his literary activities. The Haunted Beach," combined with its violent imagery, bears some similarity to the 1798 "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," as well as the poem's themes of crime, guilt, and punishment.

The friendship between Robinson and Coleridge lasted only a few months and through several dinner parties. In July of 1800, Coleridge moved with his family to Keswick and never saw Robinson in person again. The poetic exchange continued, however, with her "Ode, Inscribed to the Infant Son of S. T. Coleridge, Esq.," his reply "A Stranger Minstrel," her "Mrs. Robinson to the Poet Coleridge". Her "Ode, Inscribed to the Infant Son of S. T. Coleridge, Esq." celebrates the birth in Keswick of Derwent Coleridge on 14 September 1800. The "Ode" confirms Robinson's familiarity with Coleridge's 1798 poems "Frost at Midnight," "The Nightingale," and "The Rime of Ancyent Marinere." The "Ode" paints the Lake District to which Coleridge has removed. After her death, he carried on a correspondence with her daughter, Maria Elizabeth, and he advised her on the difficult task of preserving her mother's

reputation as a poet. His own personal statements about Robinson were for the most part complimentary: "She overloads everything," he wrote, "but I never knew a human being with so full a mind--bad, good, & indifferent, I grant you, but full, & overflowing."

Unit 6 (b): "Kubla Khan" and "To the Poet Coleridge": A Dialogic Relationship

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According to Thomas De Quincey, the poetics of Romanticism were organized around a gender opposition: 'the Sublime in contraposition to the Beautiful' grew up on the basis of sexual distinction—the Sublime corresponding to the male, and the Beautiful, it's anti-pole, corresponding to the female'. The principal proponent of these gendered poetics was Edmund Burke, for whom the sublime was characterized by the masculine traits of power, terror, strength, greatness, and the beautiful by the feminine qualities of softness, sympathy, beauty and feeling.[1] Burke's view of the feminine was criticized by the contemporary feminist Mary Wollstonecraft because it rendered women helpless and ill-educated beings [2]. Coleridge was briefly a friend of Wollstonecraft and he was, in the 1790s, a political enemy of Burke. But he was not a feminist. Despite his political differences to the Reflections on the Revolution in France, he viewed the feminine in a way somewhat similar to its author. And, according to some recent critics, he adopted a Burkean view of the feminine in his poetry. Tim Fulford opines that his poetry and poetics, borrowed from the gendered view of sublime and beautiful, to empower the masculine and disapprove the feminine. The male poet, it is argued, became sublime, whereas he the female a beautiful but subordinate muse.

For Mary Jacobus, this poetic power was gained at the expense of the feminine. For Anne K. Mellor, the silencing of the Abyssinian maid is paradigmatic of the procedure of the male Romantics: absorption of the feminine and the women who feature in their works—'cannibalised and enslaved'.[5] The male Romantics, in other words, far from being opponents of the gender inequality which Burke, and the social order he defended, perpetuated, were complicit with his defense. They were not, in this area, radicals. Coleridge also participates in this cannibalization and enslavement of the feminine. Feminist critics argue that 'Kubla Khan' is produced through the adoption of the gendered sublime and the beautiful. It features a male figure of power, the Khan, who is a sublime genius—a warrior, a statesman, a master-builder.

It also features a poetic genius, sublime in his capacity to command awe, who also builds domes in the air or the imagination. Each of these figures is associated with a female: the Khan with the 'woman wailing for her demon-lover', the poet with the Abyssinian maid, who sings rather than wails.[11] For many critics, Coleridge found a poet prepared to act as his Abyssinian maid in Mary Robinson.

But Robinson did not allow her to become silenced or cannibalized. She was not satisfied by being the ever-lauding reader or a passive character featuring in a literary work. She offered herself as a powerful muse and an equal literary figure. In her "To the Poet Coleridge," Robinson declares herself not only as an enthusiastic admirer of Coleridge but also positions herself as a fellow lyricist, as a woman whose song inspired and responded to Coleridge's words. Here Robinson offers herself as the delighted viewer of and believer in Coleridge's poetic landscape and her own verse appears as the offspring of his fertility, his ‘ever-blooming mead’. She hears the Abyssinian maid's song along with Coleridge and then gives him a poem of her own inspired by it. After reading "Kubla Khan”, she is inspired to write, rather than reduced to being the wailing victim of a demon lover.

In 1802, Coleridge, in a letter, rebuked Robinson’s daughter for planning to publish in a collection of her mother’s works a poem of his own alongside ones by Moore and ‘Monk’ Lewis. Coleridge stated that he wished to save Robinson’s posthumous reputation from the notoriety of these writers. But he also wished to save himself. Faced with the prospect of publicly appearing in the company of those libertine men who were associated with her, Coleridge was afraid for his reputation. No longer able to see himself as her private literary protector, he panicked. He also wished to avoid having his verse seem to be indebted to a poetic muse known for her loose morals and the bad company she kept. Coleridge was undoubtedly not a feminist. He needed to be the lord of his own utterance.

For many readers of Christabel and Other Poems (1816), “Kubla Khan” was merely “nonsense,” as Charles Lamb reportedly declared to William Godwin (Reiman 890). And none of the volume’s contemporary viewers seem to have made any effort to understand the poem. William Hazlitt, for example, wrote in The Examiner that the poem “only shows that Mr. Coleridge can write better nonsense verses than any man in England.” Remarkably, Robinson demonstrates in her poem such an appropriate understanding of Coleridge’s poem which was lost on almost all of its contemporary reviewers. In her poem, Robinson thrice refers to

Coleridge's "sunny dome" and "caves of ice," which appear in quotation marks, and offers to "trace / Imagination's boundless space" with him. She proves that she fully comprehends Coleridge's "visionary theme" on poetic imagination. She picks up and responds to all the major images and motifs in "Kubla Khan": the river, the fountain, the "sunny dome," the "Caves of Ice," the gardens, even the damsel and her dulcimer. She recognizes, moreover, the poem's implicit sexuality and its association with poetic creativity. She writes that the dulcimer at the end of the poem shall awake the poet herself "in extatic measures! / Far, far remov'd from mortal pleasures," such as those suggested by lines 12–28 in "Kubla Khan"

The poem depicts how she is touring the landscape of "Kubla Khan" with the author himself as her guide. In the first stanza, Robinson is basically lauding Coleridge and saying that his writing inspires and motivates her in various ways. In the first line, she addresses Coleridge as the "spirit divine" and imagines herself wandering with him through his "new Paradise". With Coleridge, she follows the meandering sacred river (2–4); combing the verdant hills, investigates the dome itself (9–26) and explores the enchanted caves of ice (29–44). She looks at the ever-blooming meadow at dawn and by night, admiring its "more than vegetating power", indicating thus the magical quality of this landscape which was not created by nature but in the poet's imagination. In the third stanza, Robinson imagines herself listening to "the minstrel's lay" "beneath thy sunny dome" and roaming "in caves of ice", where the rays of the sun, reflected by the stream, illuminate a temple decorated with all the riches of Peru. She pauses to hear "the moan/of distant breezes" and gathers wildflowers on "the dark promontory's side" to weave a crown of "wild-flow'rs" for the inspiring poet as a tribute (45–58). She awards him not a classical or Petrarchan laurel but a specifically English accolade, the uncultivated flowers a sign of primitive, untouched nature and the genius it inspires. The "Nymph" in the fifth stanza is the same damsel that plays the dulcimer in Coleridge's poem. She is described as an "Abyssinian maid, and on her dulcimer she played, Singing of Mount Abora." Like "Kubla Khan," Robinson's poem also ends with the damsel singing and playing her dulcimer, but here she reminds Coleridge of the substance of the damsel's song, which, in "Kubla Khan," he claims to have forgotten.

Robinson's poem mimics some of Coleridge's metrical devices: like "Kubla Khan," it seems to adopt the contorted, unusual ballad form while masquerading as an irregular ode. The only difficulty for Coleridge and his theories of poetry is that, as he delineates the process of poetic creation, Robinson suggests that style and substance, meter and matter, diverge into separate

issues that do not necessarily reconcile (as Coleridge insists they should in *Biographia Literaria*). By not only appropriating his images, motifs, and language but also by fitting them into a more obvious structure in order to mimic and highlight the structure of "Kubla Khan," Robinson suggests what critics of the poem failed to see for more than a century—that Coleridge's poem is not a fragment at all but rather a carefully constructed and complete statement on the poetic imagination. Coleridge's most significant clue is the metrical structure of the poem.

Robinson was able to read "Kubla Khan" on two levels: as a poem about the imagination, and as a poem about the arbitrary nature of poetic form and its inherent pleasures. She was confident enough to avoid imitating Coleridge's metrics and to invent her own, while suggesting that at least one reader recognizes the surprising formality of "Kubla Khan." The poem opens with Robinson offering to wander with Coleridge as her guide, but she makes it clear that, while his poem initially meanders to achieve its metrical effect, she is off to a running start. The words connote a tribute, but the meter also clearly announces a contest. Robinson easily could have imitated "Kubla Khan," but she understood the substance and style of the poem well enough to answer its imaginative challenge. In effect, Robinson's poem suggests a metrical deconstruction of Coleridge's poem. The poem shows that she is interested in creating her own structure and sense of completion rather than giving a false impression of fragmentariness and improvisation. In "To the Poet Coleridge," she matches many of the metrically acrobatic moves Coleridge makes and adds a few of her own. In so doing, Robinson proves that she recognizes his innovative blending of poetic forms and praises him for it. She shows that she understands the metrical structure of "Kubla Khan" by mimicking it in her poem while adding her own unique flourishes. Mary Robinson asserts her own poetic authorship and refuses to be cannibalized by any male counterpart.

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Assignments

1) Critically estimate the role of Mary Robinson as an early feminist thinker.

2) Reproduce in your own words the relationship and poetic exchanges between Robinson and Coleridge and how they influenced each other.

3) Do you think Robinson was able to display an appropriate understanding of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" in her poem "To the Poet Coleridge" which was lost on the contemporary reviewers?

BLOCK II

SUB-UNIT II: POETRY

"THE FARMER'S BRIDE" by CHARLOTTE MEW AND "VALENTINE" by CAROL ANN DUFFY

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 7 (a): Life and Works of Charlotte Mew (1869-1928)

Unit 7 (b): "The Farmer's Bride": The Poem

Unit 7 (c): "The Farmer's Bride": Analysis

Unit 7 (d): Mew's "The Farmer's Bride" and Flaubert's Madame Bovary: A Comparative Study

Unit 8 (a): Life and Works of Carol Ann Duffy (1955 -)

Unit 8 (b): "Valentine" by Carol Ann Duffy: The Poem

Unit 8 (c): "Valentine" : Analysis of the Poem

Unit 4 (d): "Valentine": A Few Observations

Works Cited

Assignments

Unit 7 (a): Life and Works of Charlotte Mew (1869-1928)

"There is something horrible about a flower;
This, broken in my hand, is one of those
He threw it in just now; it will not live another hour;
There are thousands more; you do not miss a rose."

— Charlotte Mew, *Collected Poems*

One of the greatest English poets and short story writers to witness the turn of the century, Charlotte Mary Mew had lived an apparently tragic life. Born in the year 1869 at the Bloomsbury area of London to a prosperous Architect, Mew was the eldest daughter of the seven children in the family. Instead of enjoying her childhood in cheerful innocence, she had to witness the death of her three brothers. While she was on the verge of adulthood, two of her siblings, a brother and a sister became prey to psychological imbalance and were sent to an asylum to spend the rest of their life there. Only two of the seven children remained in the family residence, Charlotte and her younger sister, Anne. Both the sisters, because of the history of mental illness in the family, took the vow of spinsterhood, never to get married since they feared that the traits of insanity would be passed on to their children. The distressing and traumatic issues Mew grappled with in her childhood and adolescence – mental illness, death, loneliness, and disillusionment – became the prominent themes of her poems and short stories.

An extraordinarily gifted child, Mew started writing in her adolescent years. Her first work of creation, a short story titled "Passed" appeared in the journal *Yellow Book* in 1894. Based on her own experiences of a voluntary social worker, the story is narrated by a woman who encounters an unexpected incident while visiting a Church. A desperate prostitute leads her into a room where another woman, the prostitute's sister, lies dead. The narrator tries to comfort the grieving woman for a while until fear causes her to flee back to the security of her own home. Trying hard to forget the awful experience, the narrator is unexpectedly confronted by it again when she sees the same woman on the street wearing a red dress and accompanied by a man. The moment causes the narrator to break down because she can no longer turn a blind eye to the social ills all around her.

After the death of her father in 1898, the family met with an acute financial crisis, and they had no other option than giving the top floor of the family in rent. Despite the critical situation, Mew continued with her creative activities, and published her short stories sporadically in journals like the *Yellow Book, Temple Bar, Englishwoman,* the *Egoist,* and the *Chapbook* over the next decade or so. However, it was after the publication of her poem "The Farmer's Bride" in the *Nation* in 1912, that she received the attention of the critics and became a part of the London intellectual circle. Having previously published only seven pieces of poetry in various journals, this work established her literary reputation. The narrative poem tells the story of a farmer and his young wife. While the farmer is determined to win the love and affection of his hesitant bride, they become even more isolated from each other. The poem ends with none of the farmer's desires fulfilled, and he is left lonely, with an insatiable yearning for his wife.

As she was introduced to the literary circle and eventually started receiving invitations to participate in reading and other intellectual activities, she received the attention of the renowned literary figures of her day, such as, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf and Siegfried Sassoon. Moreover, her unusual style and mannerisms which turned the heads of many. In terms of appearance, she was a tiny woman with short hair who wore tailored men's suits and always carried a black umbrella. She was even thought to have had lesbian tendencies though there was no full-proof evidence of her sexual relationships with other women. Her entry into a circle of writers did, however, incite the most prolific period of poetry writing in her career. Most notable from this time are the poems "Madeleine in Church" and "The Fete," published in the *Egoist* in 1914. The latter centers on a sixteen-year-old boy, who narrates the life-altering experience he had of spending a night with a circus performer.

These poems works were later anthologised in Mew's first collection of poetry titled *The Farmer's Bride,* published in a small edition by Harold Monro's *Poetry Bookshop* in 1916. Though the mere five hundred-volume book in printed form took years to sell out, it nevertheless won Mew praise from the literary community, most notably from Siegfried Sassoon, Sara Teasdale, Ezra Pound, Thomas Hardy, and Virginia Woolf who called Mew "the greatest living poetess." In 1921, the collection was enlarged and reprinted under the title *Saturday Market* for distribution in both England and the United States. This edition received considerably more attention and was praised by critics like W. S. Braithwaite, who wrote in the *Boston Transcript,* "The very tight intellectual web of these poems takes nothing from the beautiful and impressive imagery with which they are packed. This expanded edition . . . is precious with the freight of a promise that is going to make the arrival of genius."

Though Mew's first collection of poems, *The Farmer's Bride*, was a huge success, it did not earn her enough money to live on, and in the same year that it was published, the house where she lived with her mother and sister, was condemned. The Mew family of three women was forced to evacuate the house, an experience so exhaustive and traumatic that it affected the physical health of her sister Anne and she fell sick. Observing her financial difficulties, several of Mew's influential literary friends took it upon themselves to recommend her for a government pension in 1923. In 1926, Anne was diagnosed with cancer, and Charlotte took on duties of nursing her sister nearly, devoting her entire time. However, she couldn't win over death, which took her dear sister Anne in the following year. The last remaining member of her once large family, and especially close to Anne, Charlotte gradually sank into despair. Becoming delusional, she entered a nursing home in 1928 for treatment but ended up committing suicide there later the same year.

After Mew's death, her friend Alida Monro (wife of Harold Monro, who released Mew's first book) took the initiative to collect and edit Mew's poetry for publication. Her next collection of poems, *The Rambling Sailor*, which appeared in 1929, brought together her early work with her more mature and successful poetry from the teens and twenties. One of the renowned critics of his time, Humbert Wolfe praised the often overlooked merit of Mew's poetry in his review of this volume for the *Observer:* "She has no tricks or graces. She is completely mistress of her instrument, but she does not use it for any but the most austere purpose. . . . All that she wrote had its quality of depth and stillness. No English poet had less pretensions, and few as genuine a claim to be in touch with the source of poetry."

Unit 7 (b): "The Farmer's Bride": The Poem

Three summers since I chose a maid,
Too young maybe—but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human;
Like the shut of a winter's day

Her smile went out, and ’twadn’t a woman—
More like a little frightened fay.
One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

“Out ’mong the sheep, her be,” they said,
’Should properly have been abed;
But sure enough she wadn’t there
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.
So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down
We chased her, flying like a hare
Before out lanterns. To Church-Town
All in a shiver and a scare
We caught her, fetched her home at last
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house
As well as most, but like a mouse:
Happy enough to chat and play
With birds and rabbits and such as they,
So long as men-folk keep away.
“Not near, not near!” her eyes beseech
When one of us comes within reach.
The women say that beasts in stall
Look round like children at her call.
I’ve hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he,
Straight and slight as a young larch tree,
Sweet as the first wild violets, she,
To her wild self. But what to me?

The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,
The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,

A magpie's spotted feathers lie
On the black earth spread white with rime,
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.
What's Christmas-time without there be
Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,
The soft young down of her, the brown,
The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!

Unit 7 (c): "The Farmer's Bride": Analysis

The poem "The Farmer's Bride" was written by Charlotte Mew towards the end of the nineteenth century and was first published in 1912 in the *Nation*. The poem, along with a number of others by Mew, was anthologised in a volume under the same title and published in the *Poetry Bookshop* in 1916.

Written in the form of a monologue, "The Farmer's Bride" is a poignant lament by a farmer whose conjugal relationship with his young wife eventually turns bitter as the wife becomes fearful of him, and expresses her reluctance in accepting him wholeheartedly, resulting in mutual isolation.

As the poem opens, the farmer informs the reader that "three summers" have passed since he has "chose[n]" a maid to be his wife. The word "chose" is reflective of the prevalent dominance of patriarchy which gives authority only to a man to "choose" his companion. Further, the word "maid" bears the connotation of chastity which was considered as the prime virtue to be possessed by women in Victorian England.

The very next line of the poem, "…more's to do/At harvest-time than bide and woo," contains an inherently sexual innuendo as the farmer views his wife merely as an instrument of reproduction. The word "harvest" brings in a direct comparison between the earth and the woman, both of whom are to be tilted and planted with seeds by the farmer. It also indicates the farmer's practical and unromantic approach to marriage.

However, the young girl "turned afraid" after the wedding – which would mean that the farmer, in some way or the other, was responsible in generating a sense of fear in her mind, which is reflected in her apprehensive attitude not only towards her husband but also towards all things human, which anticipates her comparison to animals that will soon follow. Thus, as the light of a "winter day" fades within a short time, her smile disappeared from her face all of a sudden. Her appearance gradually becomes similar to that of "a little frightened fay", who, having lost her parents, is always anxious about the forthcoming danger. Unable to bear the tremendous pressure of agony and guilt, she "runned away."

The news of the elopement of the "farmer's bride" (as she has been identified in the absence of her real name) spread quickly all over the village. On his friends' advice and with their help, he carries on the rigorous search through the field until he is able to locate her and bring her back to his house. It is interesting to note that, in the entire episode the bride is compared to a hare who was running all over the place to escape from her oppressed status. The entire act of searching the wife has been compared to the act of hunting and taming wild animals. Ultimately, she has to submit herself to the hunters, who "caught her, fetched her home at last/ And turned the key upon her, fast." It might appear strange to the readers that the husband does never enquire about the reason behind her appearance, neither does he try to convince her to return, but simply brings her back in her shed, as he does to his domestic animals.

The situation does not alter even in the third stanza, as the wife becomes more traumatised after captured by her husband. Her movement is compared to that of a "mouse". The lack of communication between the husband and the wife becomes apparent as she finds solace in the company of "birds and rabbits" which are tamed domestic creatures like her. However, her response takes an alarming turn with the approach of any man, as her eyes would contain the plea of not to come near her close proximity. Her weird attitude generates an amount of wonder and fear even among the women folks of the village who would suspect the presence of an evil force in control of her body.

The next stanza reflects the farmer's note of admiration for his wife despite her clear show of reluctance to carry forward the conjugal relationship. Being enchanted by her beauty and innocence, he describes her as being "sweet as the first wild violets". But he deeply mourns the fact that in spite of his profound affection for her, she doesn't show any concern for him apart from fulfilling her domestic duties in utmost silence.

In this stanza of *The Farmer's Bride*, the farmer describes the seasons as they change, allowing the reader to understand that time has passed by with the farmer and his wife in this estranged relationship. Though time passes, the farmer never becomes aware of his own doing in his wife's estrangement. Rather, he continues to feel self-pity. He asks himself what the point of Christmas is if he doesn't have anyone to share it with. He specifies that there is no one in the house but he and his wife. He is possibly wishing for children and a family. It does not seem that he will have such things since there is hardly any possibility that his wife will ever let him come near her. Still, he does not seem to take any initiative to mend the relationship, or to help her in overcoming the mental trauma. Rather, he feels sorry for himself.

Time runs floating by, the years change as do the seasons. But the gap in the relationship between the farmer and his wife does not bridge. They continue to survive in an estranged relationship. At the turn of the year, when nature even decorates herself up in its utmost beauty to welcome Christmas, their house and their life remain shabby in the absence of a child's chatter. Thus, he voices his lament:

"What's Christmas-time without there be
Some other in the house than we!"

The last stanza of the poem bears a note of agony as the farmer laments over the fact that their conjugal relationship is at a stake due to the shocking coldness of her attitude:

"She sleeps up in the attic there
Alone, poor maid."

The fact that there is only the unbridgeable gap of a staircase that remains perpetually between them, barring him to go near her. However, he cannot ignore her presence, or think of having another wife because of the indifferent affection that he possesses for her. Therefore, he still

dreams about her, describing her as "soft" and "young". He describes her brown eyes, and obsesses over her brown hair, but leaves the reader with no hope of any reconciliation between the two. For his wife is yet a frightened child, and the farmer is unable to look past his own emotions in order to be concerned with hers. This causes a great divide that will not be able to be bridged until the wife seeks to overcome her fears, or until the husband seeks to understand and comfort his wife, thereby helping her to gain an understanding of him as a living feeling human being, rather than just the creature that has brought her much pain.

Unit 7 (d): Mew's "The Farmer's Bride" and Flaubert's Madame Bovary: A Comparative Study

Mew's poem, "The Farmer's Bride", therefore, follows the narrative of a man and his wife. The wife is depicted as a young woman who is afraid of and cold towards her husband. There are multiple comparisons of the wife with animals such as sheep, a hare, and a mouse, which demonstrates the dehumanized [or de-domesticated, perhaps] view men treated women with during this time. After the wife tries to run away, the narrator explains how, "we caught her, fetched her home at last / And turned the key upon her, fast" (Mew, 60, 18-19). The woman in the poem is treated as if she is a possession of the man, or rather a piece of livestock. "She sleeps up in the attic there / Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair / Betwixt us. Oh! My God! The down, / The soft young down of her, the brown, / The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!" (42-46). The woman is treated as livestock, yet in the last stanza she is also shown as an object of desire. The farmer treats her as a possession, yet also longs to be close to her. The repetition and emphasis of her young, brown eyes and hair makes it seem as if the man views her as a pet almost. It was a social norm for men to treat their wives as their possessions to care for the home, produce children, and to please and obey their husbands. Mew's narrative here shows how inhumane and unjust this treatment is, offering an explanation as to why wives feel trapped and unaffectionate in their marriages.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Mew's young bride's side of the story, we can try to give her a voice by means of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. The novel's protagonist, Emma, is a young girl living in the country with her father when she meets Charles Bovary, a doctor from town. Charles is a simple-minded man who is almost always satisfied with his lot in life. Emma,

perhaps like Mew's young bride, sees marriage as an escape from her simple life on the farm. She quickly figures out, however, that the sensational accounts in the romance novels she voraciously reads have little validity in real life: "Before marriage she thought herself in love; but …the happiness that should have followed failed to come… Emma tried to find out what one meant exactly in life by the words *bliss, passion, ecstasy,* that had seemed to her so beautiful in books." (Flaubert, 30). Emma realizes that she has trapped herself in a marriage with a stranger and produced a child with whom she has no sentimental connection. Throughout the novel, she attempts to escape her marriage and role as a mother in a number of ways. She has several affairs with younger men, accrues her and her family an inescapable amount of debt with constant shopping, and even tries to give purpose to her life by re-embracing her religion and daughter. The novel ends when Emma kills herself after all her failed attempts at finding a cure for her boredom with life.

The feminine discontent with existence Emma experiences throughout *Madame Bovary* is a theme that also pervades Mew's "The Farmer's Bride". This sentiment is a symptom of the changing times, and as Elizabeth Goodstein writes in her book, *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*:

> … [T]he prevalence of 'ennui' among [a broad] social spectrum is grasped as a significant social problem and a spiritual symptom of the material and political transformations wrought by modernization... The discourse on boredom that flourished, paradoxically, as the pace of change accelerated is both symptom and product of disenchantment. It belongs to a world in which social thought cultivates statistics, in which medicine and psychology speak not of the soul but of the body. (108-109)

In other words, the disenchantment and dissatisfaction with life both Mew's young bride and Flaubert's Emma Bovary experience is a common occurrence in not just women, but all those who are living during this metamorphic period in history. Urbanization brings with it a feeling of exhaustion with provincial life. There is a desire to move from rural landscapes to urban settings bustling with energy and new promise. For men, this dissatisfaction may be easier to deal with as they are allowed to occasionally voice it. Alternatively, it is not acceptable or appropriate for women, especially young women, to say they are not happy with their position in their family or society. As Emma Bovary describes, "A man, at least, is free…. But a woman is always hampered… she has against her the weakness of the flesh and legal dependence. Her

will, like the veil of her bonnet, held by a string, flutters in every wind; there is always some desire that draws her, some conventionality that restrains" (Flaubert, 86). This is a sentiment Mew's young bride shares, as well. In her attempt to break free from this conventionality, she runs away. Only to have reigned back in and according to her husband's recount, acts, "Sweet as the first wild violets, she, / To her wild self. But what to me?" (32-33). The girl is prisoner to her husband and subject to a life which she has no real say in.

Flaubert tells readers his young and disconcerted Emma Bovary's fate is suicide. The countless failed solutions to her modern boredom only serve to complicate her life and her family's life to the point where she feels she has no other choice, but to end it. The farmer's young wife's fate is not so certain to readers, but by looking at Charlotte Mew's personal story we may be able to predict the young girl's ultimate demise. Charlotte Mew's adult life was plagued with uncertainty and defiance. She is often cited as an advocate for the New Woman, wearing pants and never marrying. Many historians believe her to have been a lesbian, and this fact created much conflict and distress for her living in a time when that was not in the least socially acceptable. Mew's fear of judgment and persecution due to her sexuality can be seen in this line from "The Farmer's Bride": "So long as men-folk stay away. / "Not near, not near!" her eyes beseech / When one of us comes within reach." (24-26) This line also indicates a fear of sexual intimacy and a negative view of consummation. Poetry Nation's "Mary Magdalene and the Bride: The Work of Charlotte Mew" states of the poet, "Many of her poems intimate the tensions of a strong emotional nature submitting to restraints in which although there is some element of choice, the mind or conscience dictates a negative" (Warner). This line perfectly relates to Charlotte Mew's personal beliefs with the young bride in her poem and Flaubert's, Emma Bovary. All three women technically have a choice not to marry or stay married, but societal constraints on their psyches pressure them to either consent to marriage or become an outcast, as Mew herself does. Mew eventually ends her own life in 1928. If we are to assume that Mew's personal beliefs played a major role in her poetry, we may consign her young bride to a similar and unfortunate demise.

Charlotte Mew's "The Farmer's Bride" is a poem that speaks to a young woman's struggle to deal with failed expectations of marriage and provincial life. Though narrated by her husband, we recognize the girl's fears and anxieties by supplementing Gustave Flaubert's protagonist's language from his novel *Madame Bovary*, and other texts on the time period and Charlotte Mew. We can see now that the young bride shares sentiments with Emma Bovary

and Charlotte Mew herself of fear, disenchantment, boredom, depression, and perhaps even, a crisis of sexual identity. By using cross-literary connections and author analysis, we brought whole new meaning to Mew's poem that we may not have arrived at originally. Interpretation of a text prolongs and re-emphasizes the legacy of its message. By revisiting the literary works of an author we preserve its significance, honor the writer's memory, and give purpose to their life's work even after they have passed on.

UNIT 8

Unit 8 (a): Life and Works of Carol Ann Duffy (1955 -)

One of the prominent poets of the present era, Carol Ann Duffy was born on December 23, 1955, to a Roman Catholic family at Glasgow in Scotland to Frank Duffy and his wife Mary. When Carol was six years old, the family moved to Staffordshire in England. As a child, Carol did her schooling from Stafford at Saint Austin's RC Primary School (1962–1967), St. Joseph's Convent School (1967–1970), and Stafford Girls' High School (1970–1974). she graduated in Philosophy from Liverpool University in 1977. Since then onwards, she has worked as a freelance writer in London and Manchester. Her debut collection of poems, *Standing Female Nude* (1985), announced her interest in the dramatic monologue, in which she frequently used the voices of the outsiders – the dispossessed, the insane, and those, especially women, ignored by history. Her interest in the speaking voice led her to a demotic and to a supple, distinctive grammar with frequent use of short sentences, italics, and slang. In the next collection, *Selling Manhattan* (1987), her subtle rhythms, marked by assonance and internal rhymes, began to be used in more personal verse and in love poems as well as in monologues; "Wearing her Pearls", with her intricate preoccupations with class, sexuality and obsession, is outstanding, and justly well-known. The themes of nostalgia, desire, loss and memory, the search for "first space and the right place," began in that volume, came to predominate in her subsequent publications, *The Other Country* (1990) and *Mean Time* (1993), which contain several of her much-anthologised love poems and lyrics, as well as Duffy's characteristic satire, politics, and narrative. Her next volumes, *The World's Wife* (1999), *Feminine Gospels* (2002), and *Rapture* (2005), brought her critical acclaim, and also a form of popularity beyond the usual reach of

poets. All are also poetic sequences in which central preoccupations – marriage's women's experiences, and the intensity of love and it's ending – are reflected in different perspectives and varied forms. *The World's Wife*, in particular, which – extraordinary for a volume of contemporary poetry – became a bestseller, and employs the dramatic monologue technique in newly ironic and satiric modes. Each of the poems in the collection is delivered in the 'voice' of an imagined female partner of one of the acclaimed men of history or mythology, usually to deflationary, and sometimes, to a devastating effect. Another of her collection, *New Selected Poems* came out in 2004.

In May 2009, Carol Ann Duffy became the first woman to be appointed as Poet Laureate, and she held the post until May 2019. About Duffy, Charlotte Mendelson writes in *The Observer*:

> Part of Duffy's talent – besides her ear for ordinary eloquence, her gorgeous, powerful, throwaway lines, her subtlety – is her ventriloquism. Like the best of her novelist peers ... she slides in and out of her characters' lives on a stream of possessions, aspirations, idioms and turns of phrase. However, she is also a time-traveller and a shape-shifter, gliding from Troy to Hollywood, galaxies to intestines, sloughed-off skin to department stores while other poets make heavy weather of one kiss, one kick, one letter ... from verbal nuances to mind-expanding imaginative leaps, her words seem freshly plucked from the minds of non-poets – that is, she makes it look easy.

Unit 8 (b): "Valentine" by Carol Ann Duffy: The Poem

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring,
if you like.
Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

Unit 8 (c): "Valentine" : Analysis of the Poem

Originally published in her poetry collection *Mean Time* in 1993, "Valentine" bears a reflection of Carol Ann Duffy's poetic oeuvre. As its title suggests, the poem revolves around the themes of relationship, love and violence.

The title itself is illusory as it challenges the conventional notion of love. The very first line of the poem, "Not a red rose or a satin heart" dismisses the stereotypical valentine gifts, that lovers gift each other on special days. Though it is apparent that the speaker is addressing a romantic

partner, she gives somethings really unexpected: an onion, which is loaded with metaphors and innuendoes. The speaker compares it to "a moon wrapped in brown paper" – here, the moon incorporates romantic connotations, but the reference to "brown paper" gives the impression of normalcy, without any special feature. this, in turn, connects the poet's idea of real love, that true gift is something that doesn't require any embellishment. Further, the poet reflects that her gift bears the promise of "light", which is an optimistic emblem. The reference to light connotes optimism at the beginning of a relationship, that requires a "careful hand". The phrase "careful undressing of love" bears an explicit sexual innuendo of undressing a partner before love-making.

The second paragraph begins with a one-word sentence, "Here" to suggest the simplicity or straightforwardness, that should be maintained in an affectionate relationship. The poet further addresses her lover, in a tone of warning, that "It will blind you with tears like a lover", which means that the partners have to accept the truth, no matter how bitter it might appear. The relationship does not sustain on the basis of happiness and perfection, it might also hurt you, like the scent of the onion, often creates a burning sensation in your eyes, and bring tears. The last two lines of this stanza, *"It will make your reflection/a wobbling photo of grief",* contains a metaphor, referring to a person's reflection in the mirror with his/her eyes filled with tears.

The third stanza, like the previous one, begins with a single statement: "I am trying to be truthful", reflecting the speaker's desire to remain honest and keep things simple and realistic. Her disapproval of petty romantic gifts becomes apparent, like that of the very first line of the poem, in her refusal to offer "a cute card" or a "kissogram" to her partner as a gift. Moreover, the alliterative words like "red rose" and "cute card" might also indicate Duffy's sarcasm in the use of those things in any love relationship. Instead, she would prefer to gift "an onion" to her beloved, which will leave its scent or stench on their lips after a "fierce" passionate encounter, or an act of betrayal and dishonesty. The speaker even, offers her cynicism over the sustenance of their romantic relationship; instead of making a promise of an everlasting relationship, she states that their relationship will sustain as long as it works, or as long as they choose to remain together.

The poem maintains its direct tone in the subsequent lines, with the first short sentence "Take it", hinting at the speaker's desperateness, foreshadowing her anxiety that her gift will not be

accepted by her lover. She also states, as if in a tone of warning, that further one gets deeper into a romantic relationship, the more serious it becomes, ultimately ending up in marriage, which might bring restrictions in a person's movements. By the word "lethal", the speaker gives another reminder that love might often become dangerous, bringing in destructive consequences. As an "onion" may be destroyed by the "knife", their relationship might also have destructive consequences.

The poem "Valentine" by Carol Ann Duffy is written in free verse – a from that aptly captures the act of "undressing" of an onion or the unfolding of layers of a romantic relationship. In doing so, the poem brings in the negative aspects of a conventional romantic relationship. Though it might be considered as a blessing by someone, it can also be restrictive to an individual. Nonetheless, any form of affection, be it love or compassion, if it is true and honest, is something worth pursuing.

Unit 4 (d): "Valentine": A Few Observations

The poem, on the surface, is about the giving of an unusual present for Valentine's day, but it is really an exploration of love and the nature of relationships between two people. The poem is universal: it could be any lover to any beloved as there is no indication of the sex of either the 'I' or the 'you'. This is a good poem to write about because it has a single central image, which is developed throughout the poem: the onion is an extended metaphor for love.

The most important thing to mention and refer to when discussing this poem is that it is an extended metaphor; the poet compares her love and the relationship to an onion, this image is extended throughout the whole poem drawing similarities throughout. The speaker of the poem offers her lover an onion as Valentine's gift. This is clearly not a conventional gift like satin hearts or roses; nevertheless, she gives an onion because it represents her love in many different ways. She continues through the poem comparing different aspects of the onion to different aspects of her love.

The structure of a poem is the way in which a poet chooses to set the poem out, this includes rhyme schemes, rhythm patterns, word or sentence patterns, and the way the lines are laid out.

Duffy wants the receiver of her onion to know that she has chosen it because she feels that it is the best and most genuine declaration of her love. Duffy rejects the traditional symbols of love because she feels that they have become meaningless. The ‘satin hearts, ‘red roses’, ‘cute cards’ etc are not acceptable to Duffy because each has ceased to be original, they are stereotypical gifts which have been sent so many times that they have become superficial and insignificant.

It is interesting to note how Duffy structures these lines to emphasis that she does not approve of these types of gift: ‘Not a red rose or satin heart’ And ‘Not a cute card or a kissogram’ In both cases the word ‘not’ is stressed because it appears first in the line (notice it is also the very first word of the poem). Duffy adds impact to her point by repeating the structure of the lines, which is identical, and also by having these lines standing alone in the poem. Also, Duffy is making a very personal and direct declaration of love. The message is sent from the speaker to the intended lover with real clarity in the way that the words ‘I’ and ‘you’ are used throughout the poem. Furthermore, Duffy uses short lines to emphasise the emotional plea; you can almost hear the speaker’s voice as they offer their gift of love in the lines ‘Here’, ‘Take it’, ‘I am trying to be truthful’.

The entire poem is written in free verse, which means that there is no obvious rhyme scheme or rhythm. This is an important choice because it echoes the naturalness of speech and also highlights that love and relationship have no order or pattern.

What does the tone of the poem reveal about the poet’s attitude? The tone is the way a speaker would say/read the poem. The tone can reveal a great deal about the speaker’s attitude towards the subject, in this case, Valentines' and love. The tone is established through the language and structure. Thus in this poem, the tone is direct and sincere. The poet is making a heartfelt declaration of love to her lover, which begins in a positive manner but develops and more sinister feel as the potential failure of the relationship is considered. Think about how the poet is rejecting stereotypical Valentine’s presents because they do not convey the true strength of the relationship. Thus the poem has a powerful feeling as the poet explains all the reasons that the onion is a more appropriate gift.

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Assignments

Essay-type Questions

1) Would you consider Charlotte Mew's "The Framer's Bride" as a commentary on the status of contemporary women after marriage?

2) Comment on the role of the poetic voice in Mew's poem.

3) How does Carol Ann Duffy posit a challenge to the conventional, stereotypical idea of a romantic relationship?

4) Critically comment on the use of metaphors in Duffy's "Valentine".

Short Answer-type Questions

1)What does the title of Mew's poem indicate? Briefly justify its significance.

2) **Comment critically:**

"When us was wed she turned afraid

Of love and me and all things human;"

3) Do you think that the title of Duffy's poem is ironical?

4) **Comment critically:**

"I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are."

BLOCK III

SUB-UNIT I

A SERIOUS PROPOSAL TO THE LADIES

By

MARY ASTELL

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 9 (a): Life and Works of Mary Astell

Unit 9 (b): An investigation into the Problems of Women: Causes and Cures as Proposed by Astell

Unit 9 (c): Astell's Views on the Need for Promoting Women's Education and Her Idea of an All-female Academic Institution

Unit 10 (a): An Estimation of Mary Astell as a "Proto-feminist" Writer

Unit 10 (b): An Assessment of Mary Astell as an Early Feminist Philosophical Thinker in Light of Her Understanding and Exploration of Cartesian Metaphysical Principles

Suggested Readings

Assignments

UNIT 9

Unit 9 (a): Life and Works of Mary Astell

Mary Astell (1666-1731) was a philosopher, rhetorician, an English proto-feminist writer, and an advocate for women's studies. Her advocacy for equal educational opportunities for women earned her the title “the first English feminist.” Few records of Astell’s life have survived. She was born in Newcastle upon Tyne on 12 November, 1666, to Peter Astell and his wife Mary (Errington) Astell. Her parents had two other children, William, who died in infancy, and Peter, her younger brother. Her family was upper-middle-class and lived in Newcastle throughout her early childhood. Her father was a conservative royalist Anglican who managed a local coal company. As a woman, Mary received no formal education. Her paternal uncle, an ex-clergyman named Ralph Astell whose alcoholism prompted his suspension from the Church of England, educated her in philosophy that he had studied at Cambridge. Though suspended from the Church, he was affiliated with the Cambridge-based philosophical school which taught philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Pythagoras. She also learned French and Latin. Her father died when she was 12 years old, leaving her without a dowry and Ralph Astell died when she was 13, leaving her on her own in pursuit of further education. During her teenage years, she continued to read many subjects, kept abreast of the political debates of the day, and began an in-depth study of political philosophy. With the remainder of the family finances invested in her brother's higher education, Mrs. Astell moved with her daughter and son Peter to the home of Mary's aunt, thus allowing the family to avoid poverty. Still, finances were severely constrained from this point on, particularly after Mrs. Astell's widow's pension was curtailed in 1679. Such circumstances made it unlikely that Mary would be a suitable wife for someone of her social class, as her dowry prospects were dim. Perhaps it was this knowledge that spurred the intelligent young woman's interest in intellectual pursuits.

In 1684, Astell's mother died, and within a few years, Mary moved to the Chelsea district of London. A relatively rural suburb, Chelsea was home to many artists and intellectuals, as well as to wealthy families who sought to escape the stress and dirt of the city. Fortunately for Astell, she was befriended by Lady Catherine Jones, who introduced the budding intellectual to many women inside her educated and high-born social circle. She proved to be a charming

companion whose well-reasoned, challenging conversations made her popular, and she made several friends whose discussions helped her to hone her thoughts regarding philosophy and the status of women in society. Gradually she became acquainted with a circle of literary and influential women, including Lady Mary Chudleigh, Elizabeth Thomas, Judith Drake, Elizabeth Elstob, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. After moving to London in her early twenties, she struggled to support herself as a writer, depending on financial backing from patrons and admirers of her publications and projects. These helped develop and publish her work, as did William Sancroft, previously the Archbishop of Canterbury. He provided financial support and an introduction to her future publisher; Astell later dedicated a collection of poetry to him. She was one of the first English women, following Bathsua Makin, to advocate the idea that women were just as rational as men, and just as deserving of education. First published anonymously and signed "By a Lover of her Sex" in 1694, her *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* presents a plan for an all-female college where women could pursue a life of the mind. In 1697 she published part 2 to her *Serious Proposal "*Wherein a Method is offered for the Improvement of their Minds". In 1700, Astell published *Some Reflections upon Marriage*. She wittily critiqued the philosophical underpinnings of the institution of marriage in 1700's England, warning women of the dangers of a hasty or ill-considered choice. Astell argued that education will help women to make better matrimonial choices and meet the challenges of the married state. She warned that disparity in intelligence, character, and fortune may lead to misery, and recommended that marriage should be based on lasting friendship rather than short-lived attraction.

She withdrew from public life in 1709 to become the head of a charity school for girls in Chelsea, funded by two wealthy philanthropists, Lady Catherine Jones and Lady Elizabeth Hastings. Backed by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, Astell designed the school's curriculum and it is thought to be the first school in England with an all-women Board of Governors. When she was 60 years old, Astell went to live with Lady Catherine Jones, with whom she resided until she died in 1731. She died a few months after a mastectomy to remove the cancerous right breast. In her last days, she refused to see any of her acquaintances and stayed in a room with her coffin, thinking only of God.

In addition to many pamphlets, she wrote the following books:

A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Parts I and II. Wherein a Method is offer'd for the Improvement of their Minds (1694, 1697)

Letters Concerning the Love of God Between the Author of the Proposal to the Ladies and Mr. John Norris: Wherein his late Discourse, shewing That it ought to be intire and exclusive of all other Loves, is further cleared and justified (1695)

Some Reflections upon Marriage, Occasion'd by the Duke and Duchess of Mazarine's Case; which is also considered (1700)

The Christian Religion, As Profess'd by a Daughter Of the Church of England (1705)

Astell is remembered for her ability to debate freely with both contemporary men and women and particularly for her groundbreaking methods of negotiating the position of women in society by engaging in philosophical debate (Descartes was a particular influence) rather than basing her arguments in historical evidence as had previously been attempted. Astell promoted the idea that women, as well as men, had the ability to reason, and subsequently, they should not be treated so poorly: "If all Men are born Free, why are all Women born Slaves?" *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* was widely discussed in her day. Published anonymously, it was a text that began to construct the attitude that later historians would call feminist. Astell was convinced that the main reason for women's reputation for frivolity and lack of intellectual heft was the result of their being denied access to the same education as men, rather than inferior ability. She urged women to learn and to aspire for a life of the mind; arguing from her own experiences, she affirmed that education would be far more fulfilling than the passing fads of fashion and social advancement. She argued that learning and knowledge would be the best preparation for success in marriage where mutual respect and equality could be enjoyed. She encouraged women to reject unions where their husbands ruled as tyrants.

Astell proposed establishing a place of retreat where women could study and contemplate and enjoy each other's company, a place where they could stay temporarily or live as an alternative to marriage. She engaged actively in the political, religious, and philosophical debates of the day. Her strategy was not to look to history for exemplary women; she was involved and engaged publicly with leading philosophers and influential members of society. Astell remained a controversial figure throughout her life, publishing a number of ripostes to her most

strident critics. She was an important model and inspiration to other eighteenth-century women writers and intellectuals such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Mary Chudleigh, Elizabeth Elstob, Elizabeth Thomas, Sarah Chapone, and the bluestockings of the following generation. Women's education was her lifelong concern. As one of the earliest English authors in the modern age of printing and mass dissemination to write what would now be called feminist analysis, her ultimate influence on the history of the English-speaking women's movement is incalculable.

Unit 9 (b): An Investigation into the Problems of Women: Causes and Cures as Proposed by Astell

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is established in the popular imagination as the "first feminist," but another philosopher provided a systematic analysis of women's subjugated condition and a call for female education nearly a century before Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Often referred to as a proto-feminist, early modern English philosopher and rhetorician Mary Astell wrote about gender equality at a time when society tightly constrained female agency. Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest by a Lover of Her Sex, Parts I and II* (1694, 1697) is a philosophical text that argues that women are living in an inferior moral condition compared to men, analyses the causes of this problem, and presents a two-part remedy. Her ideas should be situated in feminist, historical, and philosophical contexts. It should also be assessed the degree to which she can be considered a "feminist" in light of her adherence to Cartesianism, Christian theology, and Tory politics. We should explore the philosophical underpinnings of Astell's outspoken advocacy for the autonomy and education of women; examine the intricacies underlying her theories of power, community and female resistance to unlawful authority; and reveal the similarities between her own philosophy of gender and sexual politics and feminist theorizing today.

Part I of the book begins with Astell's fundamental concern that the women are unjustly oppressed by the patriarchal society and they lack some basic human as well as societal rights. In an effort to elaborate on this problem she argues that their *selves* are corrupted, that most women lack autonomy – internal freedom and self-mastery – and are instead governed by the

whims of their emotions. The difficulty for women is that they have been culturally conditioned to value themselves on accidental properties such as their looks and their clothing. They have acquired a mistaken sense of self-esteem because they have not been encouraged to value themselves as rational, thinking beings with freedom of will. To cultivate justified self-esteem, according to Astell, women must be permitted to train their reason and to study philosophy and religion. She thinks that Christianity in particular facilitates the cultivation of generosity because it teaches them that what is truly valuable does not depend on the transient things of this world. Astell claims that rather than exercising the rational capacities that all human beings possess to make accurate judgments on the way things are, women tend to pay attention to appearances instead. They believe that material things such as their bodily beauty or wealth are extremely important, rather than their immortal souls. They fall into the predominantly feminine vices of pride and vanity, measuring their worth on the basis of some established but wrong criteria. Women generally concern themselves with the impression that they give to men, estimating themselves according to men's appreciation of them. Though she points out all these limitations in women Astell does not believe that women are *by nature* inferior. This being so, she goes on to account for women's particular subjection to certain common vices. She talks a fair amount about feminine vanity and why girls value outward appearance so much. As children, the girls are taught that their looks are their greatest assets. Girls during the Renaissance were treated like objects; they were groomed for profitable marriages and instructed that it was their responsibility to attract suitors. Therefore as adults, women continued to cultivate their physical image only, because they believed it was the source of their value. Astell gently reminds the ladies that the mind is far more beautiful than the body and that they are only demeaning themselves by not searching for or cultivating things of actual substance. Astell lectures ladies that they should rise above superficial beauty by embracing intrinsic worth which never dwindles.

Astell uses several symbols to emphasize the insignificance of external beauty that women cherish. She says, "Be like a garnish'd Sepulchre, which for all its glittering, has nothing within but emptiness or putrefaction." The body of an uneducated woman is referred to as an Egyptian tomb. A tomb is generally gilded and highly decorated, its beauty hints at it being a container for something extravagant, but inside there is either emptiness or death. In other words, a woman with a beautiful outward appearance may have nothing of substance inside her mind. She also asks "how can you be content to be in the World like Tulips in a Garden, to make a fine *shew* and be good for nothing". The purpose of women's life is compared to a garden of

tulips in this simile. Tulip is a pretty flower, but that is the origin and the extent of their worth. Flowers lead stationary lives and have little practical use, and the same could be said for the Renaissance era, uneducated women. She alludes to a paradise where "no Serpents to deceive you, whilst you entertain your selves in these delicious gardens. No Provocations will be given in this Amicable Society, but to Love and to good Works, which will afford such an entertaining employment, that you'll have as little inclination as leisure to pursue those Follies, which in the time of your ignorance pass'd with you under the name of love, altho' there is not in nature two more different things, than true Love and that brutish Passion which pretends to ape it." The serpents are emblematic of the hindrances which deter women from finding utter pleasure. Deterrents expose women to cruel passions which are projected to emulate candid love. Women have the capacity to resist the captivation that is integral in the repressive passion which converts them to slaves of passion.

The key causes of women's defects, according to Astell**,** are poor education and custom. Women are prevented from learning appropriate things – their true natures, the nature of God, etc. Simultaneously they are educated in mistaken principles, such as the importance of men's opinions of them. She writes, "Women are from their very Infancy debar'd those Advantages, with the want of which, they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those Vices which will hereafter be upbraided to them" (60). Astell links women's ignorance with certain vices: since they are not taught *how to think*, they lack the "Judgment and Skill to discern between reality and pretence" (62), and so end up valuing themselves on their beauty or money. Astell opines that *custom* is responsible for "all that Sin and Folly that is in the World" (67). It involves both the formation of *habits* that are difficult to break and *societal forces* that are difficult to counter. By being repeatedly vain and foolish and failing to exercise powers of rationality, women "spoil the contexture and frame of our minds" and "render our selves incapable of any serious and improving thought" (68). Women who act counter to prevailing customs and habits are subjected to strong social disapproval – "all the Scoffs and Noises of the world" (95) – which function as a strong motivator against self-improvement. Perhaps the most important theme in *Proposal* is nature versus nurture – the discrepancies between the potentials the girls are born with and the opportunities they are given to achieve that potential. It was believed that girls were inherently weaker and less competent than men and it was Astell's mission to prove this false assumption wrong in such a way that was easy for the readers to understand. She shows that ignorant and dependent women are the byproducts of a system that was created by men to oppress them. Girls were told that their purpose in life was to be

attractive enough to lure in a high-quality suitor who could provide for them. Once they had attained that goal they would teach the same thing to their daughters, thus continuing a vicious cycle. Astell sought to empower women to recognize the potential of their minds if they put their energy into studies and causes of substance and if they were allowed a proper education.

Astell does not only highlight the problems with women and their causes, but she also recommends some solutions for the same. The first part of Astell's cure is her best-known proposition: the establishment of an all-female educational community. She urges the women of her day to understand the need to develop a monastery solely for the betterment of women themselves. According to her, this place will help to keep women away from sin and allow them to grow in knowledge and Godliness, in the company of other women only. The seclusion will shield them from the ethical dangers of the everyday world, which tempts them toward vanity, inconstancy and pride. They can develop their own, positive habits which will guide the development of their characters toward virtue. Realizing this will help women to abandon their excessive concern with fashion and external beauty. Astell also recommends that the ladies should strive for the unqualified validation of "Good men and Angels" rather than the adulation of insincere admirers. She alludes to 'Mother Eve' to stress the exaltation which all the women deserve. The glory would elicit explicit pleasure in women's life spans. The result of Astell's method won't be a societal change that provides women with rights and opportunities: rather, it takes the form of individual women's internal transformation. She maintains that "Men therefore may still enjoy their Prerogatives for us, we mean not to intrench on any of their Lawful Privileges, […] our only endeavour shall be to be absolute Monarchs in our own Bosoms" (233-4). By following Astell's method, her female reader will attain autonomy, no longer subject to her own shifting emotions or societal customs.

Astell wishes to liberate women from the confines of solely learning what society will allow. She dreams of a world where women can learn useful things that can make them able enough to contribute to the society they are living in. She also believes that women should become experts on fewer subjects rather than knowing very little about many subjects. She strongly believes if women were created with the ability to become intelligent, then it is against God to not nurture this intelligence. She believes that it is essential for women to build their knowledge and become even more intelligent. She fears that without nurture, they will lose their God-given ability to discern right from wrong. Women must be equipped to be wiser. A knowledgeable and wise woman will be able to stay away from the follies of others. She will

be able to be good and worthy of Heaven. The French women should be emulated because Astell considers them to be wiser. She also advises the women of her time to read French philosophy instead of wasting time on French Romances. She is confident that her women readers will surely agree with her contentions, however, she is unsure of how the male readers will feel. She says that they will not want to share the ability to be learned. She wants to defend her sex as strongly as the men have protected theirs for ages. She believes that she has the approval of the Holy Spirit for this work, and that is all which she needs in her endeavour.

The book received a fair amount of backlash and criticism for the views expressed throughout. Some condemned the influence of Catholicism which seems to have reflected on Astell's plan and the institutions described in the text. Others, however, simply rejected Astell's feminist views and the idea of offering equal educational opportunities to women. Writers such as Jonathan Swift and Richard Steele seemed to reject both aspects. They attacked *Proposal* in their *Tatler* by mocking Astell's views and the nunnery-style institution she proposed to serve as a college for women.

Unit 9 (c): Astell's Views on the Need for Promoting Women's Education and Her Idea of an All-female Academic Institution

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Mary Astell elaborates in her *Proposal* different modes of intelligence, defining the differences between faith, science, opinion, moral certainty, and sensation. She suggests that some of these types of intelligence require more knowledge to attain, and thus many women are denied access to these higher orders of thinking due to inadequate education. She goes on to make the case that women in England are educated informally and subsequently, they do not gain information in a systematic fashion. This tends to produce innumerable women who know a little about many topics but do not have scholarly mastery of any one subject. To Astell, education is an essential component of being a good Christian. Knowledge allows people to identify moral conundrums and reason their way to the best possible solution. Without being able to understand their experiences and make informed choices, women do not have the same

opportunities as men to get into Heaven. There is this prevailing sense that education allows women to be better judged by God. Astell argues that our earthly "habitude and temper of mind" carries over into the afterlife, ad that those who have reflected upon "noble and sublime truths" will be better prepared for Heaven (23). She then appeals to God's final causality in order to bolster her arguments for women's education. In her writings, she repeatedly emphasizes that an infinitely perfect being like God does nothing in vain; there can be no feature of his intelligent design that is redundant or superfluous in nature. It follows that if God has bestowed rational minds upon women, then they ought to be permitted to use their minds toward the best ends. When a woman is taught that her duty is to serve a man or to live a life devoted solely to bodily and material concerns, she is taught to disregard her sacred duty to God. A woman must, therefore, be educated to use her reason to raise herself toward perfection, just as her creator intended. Astell supports this claim by pointing out the egalitarian root of Christian values. "Being the soul was created for the contemplation of truth as well as for the fruition of good," she writes, "is it not as cruel and unjust to exclude women from the knowledge of one as from the knowledge of the other?" (23). This line of reasoning is rhetorically brilliant because of its multi-audience appeal; on one hand, it speaks to women about the unjustness of being denied education, on the other, it appeals to the men of the time by its appeal to Logos. As the argument progresses, the intended audience seems to shift further toward males.

She supports this position by drawing from Descartes' writings on mind-body duality. Astell argues that women have an equal capacity for knowledge as men. The influence of Descartes (whom she later mentions) is apparent in her treatment of mind and body as separate entities. "For since God has given women as well as men intelligent souls, why should they be forbidden to improve them?" she writes, "since he has not denied us the faculty of thinking, why should we not employ our thoughts on himself their noblest object?" (22). This statement is the crux of Astell's argument and was probably its most controversial, the assertion that both sexes have equal intelligence would have been highly disputed. If women, like men, have the ability to reason, then women should not be treated poorly or disallowed the right to exercise their skills. Astell points out that the education of women would benefit not only the women themselves, but those who have to spend time with them. The line "learning is therefore necessary to render them more agreeable and useful in company" (23) suggests that uneducated women are not very good conversationalists, and are likely to tend toward insipid or banal subjects. Astell argues that the view that women are concerned only with vapid, frivolous issues is merely the

result of ignorance and that with better education; they would be more relatable and easier to talk to.

Since its first publication in 1667, Milton's *Paradise Lost* has continued to exert its influence over literature. The use of the Bible as an inspiration and basis for the poem awarded Milton's text an authority, and thus his detailed portraits of Adam and Eve became particularly influential in discussions about the nature of men and women generally, having sprung from these two 'parents'. It is through Eve's weakness of pride and vanity that mankind comes to *Fall* in the Bible and the poem. However, for women writers living in the late seventeenth, and through the eighteenth century, political climate opened up a physical and imaginative space in which they had an opportunity to challenge these gendered perceptions. Eve's admiration of her own reflection draws immediate parallels to the classical myth surrounding Narcissus, who met his end through very similar vanity, leads one to imagine that had 'a voice' not warned Eve of what she was doing, she may similarly have carried on looking vainly at herself forever. Astell does not oppose this vanity trope, but instead picks up on the inescapability of the paradox women face:

> "she who has nothing else to value her self upon, will be proud of her Beauty, or Money, and what that can purchase ; and think her self mightily oblig'd to him, who tells her she has those Perfections which she naturally longs for. Her inbred self-esteem and desire of good, which are degenerated into Pride and mistaken self-love, will easily open her ears to whatever goes about to nourish and delight them"[12].

Returning to the concept of the *"original sin*" Astell investigates into a major external force (actually the lack of it) which left a prominent impression on Eve and her actions. In her allusions to Milton's poem, Astell reframes the focal point of Eve's temptation and the subsequent *Fall*, pointing out neglect in not providing Eve with all the same knowledge as Adam, instead of nourishing her sense of beauty and vanity. Women writers like her imply were Eve really afforded all the education and knowledge Adam was allowed, she may have been better fenced against the forces of temptation. Consequently, a significant thematic concern of *Proposal* is – vanity versus piety. Astell was under the impression that the fatal flaw of women was an excess of vanity resulting from the way girls were taught to value their looks. She believed that knowledge and religion were the opposite of vanity, and by embracing piety one can become a more substantive person. "My earnest desire is, That you Ladies, would be as perfect and happy as 'tis possible to be in this imperfect state; for I love you too well to

endure a spot upon your Beauties, if I can by any means remove and wipe it off," (13-14). Astell refers to lack of education as a spot or blemish on the beauty of a girl, and was one of the first to publicly refer to ignorance in a girl as an imperfection in a time when women were meant to be seen and not heard.

It is noteworthy that she does not only highlight the problems with women and their causes, she also recommends some solutions for the same. The first part of Astell's remedies is her best-known proposition: the establishment of an all-female educational community. She urges the women of her day to understand the need to develop a monastery solely for the betterment of women themselves. According to her, this place will help to keep women away from sin and allow them to grow in knowledge and Godliness. This refuge would be a new society for women to avoid the earthly sins and return to the state in which Eve lives. There would be no competition among the dwellers of this monastery, except for the love of God. The book outlines Astell's plan for an all-female college where women would receive religious and philosophical education on par with that of their male counterparts. Her intention is that women should retreat from the world and devote themselves to *education* and *virtue* in the company of other women only. The seclusion will shield them from the ethical dangers of the everyday world, which tempts them toward vanity, inconstancy and pride. They will also be protected from the inimical effects of *custom*. Instead, they can develop their own, positive habits which will guide the development of their characters toward virtue. They will have the *time and space* for reflection and acquisition of self-knowledge. And, of course, they will be "kept secure, from the rude attempts of designing men" (102). She proposes that without the distraction of having men around, women will be able to concentrate more intensely on their studies and focus on refining their souls and becoming more moral people. Astell also outlines the method for self-improvement and self-cultivation that her women readers should follow; this is the regimen in which women inside the community would be instructed. It involves meditation, reading, philosophical reflection, and emotional self-control. By meditating on philosophical topics using the method Astell advocates, drawn largely from *Logic: or the Art of Thinking* (1662), women will develop their powers of rational thought – and also realize how best to govern their lives. For instance, the philosophical reflection will bring women to understand that they have an immaterial, immortal soul and that the material world and their bodies are unimportant in comparison. Realizing this will help women to abandon their excessive concern with fashion and external beauty. She also maintains that from this strong foundation women can go on to become scholars in any topic they desire.

Therefore, Astell addresses herself directly to women readers, encouraging them to study and gain knowledge in order to better serve God and become more productive friends and companions to their husbands and families. As a means to this end, she outlines a detailed plan for this aforesaid religious community of women. Astell maintains that the seventeenth-century system of education relegates women to a state of ignorance in which they are "Tulips in a Garden," useful only "to make a fine show and be good for nothing." Accordingly, in Astell's view, a healthy disengagement from worldly things is an important first step toward the attainment of clarity and distinctness. Toward this end, in both her *Proposals*, she argues for the necessity of an academic retreat for women, so that they might withdraw from the hurry and noise of the everyday world (temporarily, at least) and focus their attention on nobler subjects. In the excerpt titled "A Religious Retirement" – she outlines her argument for the erection of this "monastery" dedicated to women's education (18). This monastery, or institution, as she calls it (deliberately avoiding the word convent), is suggested to be a kind of seminary where women would be taught things like literature, philosophy and "Christianity as professed by the Church of England" (22). She says that such an institution will have two purposes: to keep women "out of the road of sin" (19), and to "expel that could of ignorance which custom has involved [women] in" (21). That it would function as both an isolated retreat, where women would be kept innocent and uncontaminated, and as an academy, where useful knowledge could be feasted upon. Importantly, she is not so concerned that women acquire knowledge for its own sake, but rather as a means for them to attain enduring happiness in both this life and the next. Astell stresses quality over quantity. In true Anglican fashion, she boldly (or, perhaps, naively) envisions a perfect educational ideal. [The retreat] "will be introducing you into such a paradise as your mother Eve forfeited, where you shall feast on pleasures that do not disappoint your expectations," she writes, "[which] will make you truly happy now, and prepare you to be so perfectly hereafter" (19). However, the book also makes a strong argument for the material gains which equal education can afford to women. She suggests that work opportunities beyond being a wife or a nun should be opened to women. If women become educated, it would be wrong to deny them the ability to apply their knowledge either through advanced scholarship or the opportunity to do useful work for society.

In June and again in September of 1709 the popular *Tatler* included essays by writers Jonathan Swift and Richard Steele that attacked Astell's idea of a women's school. Dubbing Astell "Madonella," the essays satirized her so-called "Order of Platonics" by imagining this order of reclusive, fragile nuns hiding while their nunnery is rudely entered by a group of rough

gentlemen. Flattering Madonella by praising her writing skill, the men gain mastery over the situation; in short, they hold these educated women to their "inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary Will." The proposal for a quasi-religious college for women that Astell first outlined in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* was revived in *The Christian Religion as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England,* a plea for furthering women's education that was addressed to England's Queen Ann, who had taken the throne in 1702. Although because of this work the school was reported to have been at least considered by Anne, it never came to fruition due to rumors by Anne's Protestant advisors that it would result in the re-establishment of the Catholic nunneries.

UNIT 10

Unit 10 (a): An Estimation of Mary Astell as a "Proto-feminist" Writer

Mary Astell's revolutionary advocacy of equal educational opportunities for women, as well as her belief that women are the intellectual equals of men, has earned her the title of one of the world's first feminist writers and, according to some, the title of the "first English feminist." *Proposal* was unique in its time. Astell hoped that her claim would ring true to the literate upper to middle-class ladies she focused on. Despite her commitment to women's moral and societal improvement, Astell's position as a feminist has been doubted and debated. Unlike later feminists, she does not really argue for women's access to equal rights in every sphere, and nor does she seem interested in transforming the fundamental patriarchal structures of society. Her attention is on individual self-improvement, not on any communal resistance to oppression. However, in her view that men and women are fundamentally equal in terms of intellectual and moral capabilities, her systematic analysis of how women come to lack autonomy in society, and her advocacy of women's education, she goes beyond many prior proto-feminist writers. Her use of philosophical argument to these ends establishes her as a key forerunner to feminist philosophy today. Her basic argument is that the women have as much potential as men but are being held back by society's standards and expectations of them as well as by the insufficient amount of education and opportunities they receive. Secondly,

women are often treated as fundamentally *sinful* creatures, but most of their *sins* come out of ignorance, and increased education would actually make women more faithful to their religion. It is also worth mentioning that she most likely suggested women learn in church convents because the church was the one area that the women were expected to be passionate about, and men were most likely to support a woman getting an education to increase her career opportunities. Finally, she emphasized that women are not living up to their full potential and could be taking steps to rectify this. Astell's first *Proposal* is essentially an exercise in consciousness-raising, for the purpose of bringing about the moral and intellectual reformation of early modern women. The "proposal" of Astell's title is an all-female academic institute, where like-minded scholars of a similar age and social status might live and study together for some years. Although a wealthy gentlewoman expressed interest in funding Astell's proposal, an academy never materialized in her lifetime—possibly due to the suspicion that it sounded like a Catholic nunnery. In this regard, Astell might be read as prefiguring twentieth-century feminist separatist movements. Such movements saw women's total removal from institutions and social structures built and maintained by men, as well as from men themselves, as a strategy for personal growth and liberation.

In the 1600s women had very few opportunities outside the home, and even the wealthiest girls were often given only a courtly education (an education that consisted mostly in studying classic literature, art, instruments, and dancing). In other words, women were only taught things that would make them useful wives. In one of the few metaphors in *Proposal*, Astell compares girls to crops. She says that the soil in which the crops are grown can only do so much for the crops, and can only be held responsible for how the crop turns out to. The rest of the plant's quality is due to its tending via its farmers. If weeds are allowed to grow, even encouraged, the farmer has no one to blame but himself for the bad harvest. In terms of people, it means that if you make a conscious choice to raise half your children poorly based on something like gender difference, you have no right to degrade them when they are less successful than the other half that you provided advantages to. She says that men cannot say that women are a burden to them because the men before them chose to raise their daughters in a way that makes them ignorant and dependent. "These, tho' very bad Weeds, are the product of a good Soil, they are nothing else but Generosity degenerated and corrupted," (14-15). Soil is representative of the gifts, abilities and potential each human has at its birth. Farmers represent the parents in the soil analogy; good soil can have a bad harvest because of neglectful farmers or bad farming techniques. A girl can grow up disadvantaged because she was parented as a burden to be

prepared only for marriage. Astell also pointed out that women are taught religion but not the meaning of the sentences written in the Holy Scriptures under the assumption that the Biblical concepts are beyond their understanding and comprehension. She suggests if women were taught the meaning behind what had been preached to them, they may have been more eager to embrace piety and the teaching of the church.

During the course of her debates and defenses of *Proposal*, Astell developed a new method for negotiating and defending the position of women in society. Rather than argue from a historical precedent, as her predictors had attempted, she approached the question of women's roles and potential with a philosophical bent, drawing support from Descartes and other contemporaries in the world of philosophy. Astell's philosophical concept of the self as a thinking thing informs her feminist thought. She advises her fellow women that they must learn the value of proper *self–love* and *self-esteem*: the love and esteem of their souls and not their bodies. Throughout her works, Astell appeals to different philosophical ideas to argue that women should receive a higher education and to undermine the belief that women are naturally and intellectually inferior to men. To challenge the idea that women are mentally inferior, Astell's historical predecessors traditionally pointed to empirical evidence or famous instances of exemplary women. By contrast, Astell appeals only to an inward consciousness of thought. In her view, the fact that women are thinking beings needs no proof or argument; a woman simply has to turn within herself and see that she is capable of exercising her mental faculties. It simply requires the capacity to discern the truth for oneself, and the freedom to affirm or deny the ideas of the mind. In terms of their capacity for rational judgment, Astell says, women are no different to men; they are on a par. While Astell never articulates the *cogito* (Descartes' famous insight that "I think therefore I am"), she does rely on similar logic. She relies on the idea that if a woman is capable of entertaining a thought in her mind, then it is true that she thinks; it cannot be denied. To improve their reason, according to Astell, women need only familiarize themselves with their own internal "natural logic." Can they reason about the everyday management of household affairs, can they make informed judgments about the course of a romance or the design of a petticoat? If so, then this provides indisputable evidence of their ability to reason. If women exhibit any defect in reasoning, Astell says, this defect is acquired rather than natural and can be corrected through proper training and meditation. They can improve their reasoning skills by following simple Cartesian rules for thinking.

The belief that not only men but also all women can master clarity of thought is an important element in the most reactionary of Astell's writings, *Some Reflections upon Marriage, Occasion'd by the Duke and Duchess of Mazarine's Case,* published in 1700. This work was ostensibly a response to Hortense Mancini's much-publicized separation from her abusive and unstable husband, the duke of Meilleraye. Although Astell regards marriage as a sacred institution ordained by God, she complains that in her day it has greatly degenerated from its original blessed state. In the *Reflections,* her explicit purpose is to analyze why this degeneration has occurred and to see how it might be rectified. She traces the core problem to the moral failings of human beings—but to the failings of men in particular. She highlights the fact that most men do not marry out of love or benevolence toward women but rather from base and selfish motives, such as lust and greed. Marriage would be a happy state, she insists, if only human beings were guided by their reason and not by brutish passions. Astell warns her fellow women to be extremely wary of entering into marriages in the first place. She points to the fact that a wife is expected to offer blind submission to her husband, even when he does not deserve it. This expectation of submission might lead a woman to ignore the dictates of her reason, the law of God, and to act in terms of worldly self-interest instead. As a result, an unhappy marriage to a vicious man could lead to the destruction of a woman's soul. She argues that a sound education is a requirement for any woman wishing to enter a healthy marriage. While economic necessity and social constraints might force a woman into such an injurious institution as marriage, according to Astell, a sound education would arm her with the skills necessary to turn the situation to her favor. In the Appendix of this work is her most-quoted line among feminists: "If all men are born free, how is it that women are born slaves? as they must be if the being subjected to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary Will of Men, be the perfect Condition of Slavery?" As a remedy, Astell once again highlights the necessity of a good education for women, to fortify their reason and to cultivate their virtue.

Astell has been widely interpreted as a critic of Locke's political thought and as a vocal opponent of the Whig theories of liberty, toleration, and resistance. For some commentators, it is puzzling that Astell could be both a feminist and a High-Church Tory. At first glance, her support for women's freedom of judgment seems to be incompatible with her support for a political party that opposes freedom of conscience. To dispel these tensions, scholars have highlighted the fact that Astell's feminism is founded on philosophical principles, not progressive political ideals, and this partly explains why Astell does not call for full political equality for women in her time. Her ideas seem to have had the greatest impact on other

eighteenth-century defenders of women, such as Mary Chudleigh, Elizabeth Thomas, the writer known as "Eugenia," Mary Wortley Montagu, and Sarah Chapone. Her influence as a feminist can be discerned right up to the suffragist movement of the late nineteenth century, especially in the writings of English suffragette Harriett McIlquham. In recent history, there have been two revivals of academic interest in Astell as a feminist: the first from the 1890s to the early twentieth century; and the second from the mid-1980s to the present day, facilitated to a great extent by Ruth Perry's authoritative biography, *The Celebrated Mary Astell.* Perry claims that Astell would be surprised at the history of her reception as a feminist pioneer—Astell thought of herself more as a metaphysician and philosopher than a political reformer.

For the period, Astell's writing was groundbreaking. In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* and in *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, Astell continues her early feminist examination of gender politics. The rigidly gender-biased climate that Astell lived in made her writing seem radical at the time, but modern feminist critics may recognize that Astell's version of feminism was particularly conservative in comparison to modern feminism. While Astell was very much in favor of some degree of female autonomy, her writing demonstrates a clear influence from the overpowering patriarchal views of her environment that weakens her position as a feminist by modern perspectives. Some aspects of Astell's argument on gender demonstrate an incredibly forward way of thinking for the 17th century and 18th century. Astell blames societal customs for the subjugation of women and the women's acceptance of their subjugate roles and this exploration of the source of gender bias is very much aligned with modern feminist ideology. There is still a modern belief that societal customs, such as the sexual objectification of women, continue to impact the perception of femininity and the role of women in society. Like modern feminists, Astell recognizes the role that societal norms play in a woman's ability to be seen as equal. But she was not necessarily meaning to be a proponent of radical women's equality. Astell, a supporter of the Church of England, only wished to encourage women to seek the same comprehension skills as men so that the women could understand their religion on a deeper, more spiritual level. By modern feminist standards, it could be argued that Astell was slightly misogynistic in her perception of women being base and currently incapable of critical thought. Modern feminists may recognize that, although Astell seems to be in favor of some form of equality, her ideology is based on patriarchal assumptions of women. For Astell to believe that women need improvement, she is acknowledging the belief that women are, like patriarchal ideals suggest, insufficient in their current form and have something to improve upon. Astell's "proto-feminism," as it is branded by William Kolbrener in *Mary Astell: Reason,*

Gender, Faith, was certainly much more accommodating to the existing notion that women were inferior or flawed, whether from inherent corruption or societal influence than modern feminism allows. Indeed, Astell's feminism is so notably different from modern feminism that it necessitates a new word to describe it. "Proto-feminism" perfectly describes Astell's ideology. While Astell did produce feministic concepts, they are truly conservative by today's standards. Astell's staunchly conservative religious and political views were in disagreement with any of her feminist ideals, and this weakens her position as a feminist, at least by modern perspectives. In conclusion, Mary Astell's position as England's first feminist is secure, but her feminism is very conservative in comparison to modern feminism but some of her ideology conflicts with a modern feminist perspective. Astell's writing demonstrates shortcomings in its feminist assertions, and this can be attributed to her religious and political convictions and the predominant view of female inferiority that existed in her society. Although Astell was a supporter of female autonomy to some extent, the effects of patriarchal ideology pervade her writing and weaken her feminist stance.

Unit 10 (b): An Assessment of Mary Astell as an Early Feminist Philosophical Thinker in Light of Her Understanding and Exploration of Cartesian Metaphysical Principles

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Mary Astell is widely known today as an early feminist pioneer, but not so well known as a philosophical thinker. Her feminist reputation rests largely on her impassioned plea to establish an all-female college in England, an idea first put forward in her *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. She is also remembered for her harsh but witty indictment of early modern marriage in her *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (1700). Underlying Astell's feminist ideas, however, are strong philosophical foundations in the form of Cartesian epistemological and metaphysical principles. These principles play an important strategic role in her writings: to raise awareness among women of their inherent ability to bring themselves to moral and philosophical perfection – to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps," so to speak – regardless of their external circumstances. Toward this end, Astell urges her fellow women to embrace Rene Descartes' "clear and distinct ideas" as the hallmarks of truth and certainty. Her *Proposal* was heavily indebted to the ideas of Descartes and his followers Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole.

In accordance with Cartesian rationalism, she teaches her readers that all knowledge can be founded on reason rather than the senses, and she urges them to practice Cartesian rules for thinking in order to attain knowledge of both moral and metaphysical truths. As a dualist, she encourages women to regard their souls as thinking substances distinct from their bodies and as capable of attaining mastery over bodily sensations and passions. Astell is an unorthodox Cartesian, however, insofar as she breaks from a number of Descartes' classic doctrines, such as his theory of innate ideas and his views about the essence of the soul. And while Astell is indebted to Descartes' ethical theory of the passions, her moral-theological viewpoint also closely resembles the Augustinian outlook of her English contemporary John Norris and the French thinker Nicholas Malebranche. In all her major writings, these philosophical themes are so prevalent that Astell might be justly regarded as one of the earliest feminist philosophers of the modern age. Together with the *Letters*, the first and second *Proposals* made Astell something of a minor celebrity in London. She was publicly celebrated for her wit and eloquence, and openly commended by the likes of John Evelyn and Daniel Defoe.

Astell's guidelines on how to attain knowledge are distinctly rationalist in nature. She regards knowledge as founded on reason alone and denies that sensory experience can be trusted as a reliable guide to truth. Her strict definition of knowledge is "that clear Perception which is follow'd by a firm assent to Conclusions rightly drawn from Premises of which we have clear and distinct Ideas" (149). Like Descartes in his *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), Astell regards a perception as "clear" when it is accessible to the mind's eye and the mind's attention is firmly fixed on it. Astell claims that we can attain knowledge by affirming only those ideas that are clear and distinct. To do so, we must learn to regulate the will, the mind's active faculty of affirming or denying the ideas of the understanding. The will is to blame when we fall into erroneous judgments. We only go astray because the will foolishly assents to more than it perceives; instead of carefully attending to the ideas of the understanding, it hurries on and makes rash judgments, beyond the scope of its ideas. We cannot successfully regulate the will, according to Astell, until we have learned to moderate our passions or emotions. Certain emotions, such as pride and vanity, can prevent us from properly engaging in the search for truth. Accordingly, in Astell's view, a healthy disengagement from worldly things is an important first step toward the attainment of clarity and distinctness. Toward this end, in both her *Proposals*, she argues for the necessity of an academic retreat for women, so that they might withdraw from the hurry and noise of the everyday world (temporarily, at least) and focus their attention on nobler subjects. To attain both truth and happiness, a woman must follow reliable

rules for thinking. Astell's six rules bear a notable resemblance to Descartes' own set of rules in his *Discourse on the Method* (1637), as well as those of his followers Arnauld and Nicole in their *Logic, or the Art of Thinking* (1662). She states that in any given inquiry -

(i) We must acquire a distinct notion of our subject and a precise understanding of any key terms.

(ii) We must avoid straying into any unnecessary or irrelevant subject matters, and conduct our thoughts in a natural, logical order.

(iii) We must examine the simplest subjects first, before progressing to the study of more complex matters.

(iv) We must take care to examine our subject thoroughly, according to each of its parts, and be sure not to leave any part unexamined.

(v) We must keep our focus firmly fixed on the subject at hand.

(vi) Finally, and most importantly, we must not judge any further than we perceive, and we must not affirm anything as true unless it is incontestably known to be so.

Though Astell discusses minds as if they are sometimes isolated from bodies, she maintains that human beings are mind-body unions. She notes that we cannot comprehend the connection between the mind and the body because the nature of this union is mysterious. Though we "know and feel" it, we do not have perfect knowledge of it or of how the mind and the body interact causally. Her more common view, however, is a rationalist one, according to which bodies impede minds from having perfect ideas: "For did we consider what we Are, that Humane Nature consists in the Union of a Rational Soul with a Mortal Body, that the Body very often Clogs the Mind in its noblest Operations, especially when indulg'd" (210). Astell, like other rationalists, valorizes the mind over the body.

> "Whereas the body has merely an 'instrumental' role with respect to the mind, the mind has 'dominion' over the body, and a governing role over the passions. Humans should correctly employ their minds and bodies so that they do not degenerate into brutes, or conduct their lives as if they were angels."

Astell's account of the mind-body union allows her to argue against the popular view of the period about women, according to which women do not demonstrate the same kinds of intellectual abilities as do men because women are inherently more closely united to their

bodies than are men. Equipped with the rationalist account of the mind-body union, Astell shows that the uniformity of women's inabilities is rooted not in their natures, but arises because of social practices. Thus the difference between the abilities of women and men should be explained not metaphysically, but epistemologically. In presenting this account of the real distinction between the mind and body in *Christian Religion*, Astell demonstrates first that the mind is immaterial and then that it is immortal. She maintains that the mind is immaterial in that it has no parts, and so is indivisible. Given that it is indivisible, it is incorruptible and so immortal. Astell holds that the mind has two faculties: the understanding and the will. The understanding is the capacity to receive and compare ideas, and the will is the power of preferring and directing thoughts and motions (205). Each faculty has a proper object: the proper object of the understanding is truth and the proper object of the will is to do good, which is God's will.

Astell does not hold a "traditional" account of knowledge as a true, justified belief. Rather, on her view knowledge and belief are ideas that are distinguished by origin, clarity, distinctness, and the means by which they are affirmed. What follows is a reconstruction of her discussion of these issues in *Serious Proposal* (146–153). Given the finitude of the human mind, it is limited with respect to its reach, and it is diverse in its modes of thinking. Astell states the following about the reach of the mind:

> "Truth in general is the Object of the Understanding, but all Truths are not equally Evident, because of the Limitation of the Humane Mind, which tho' it can gradually take in many Truths, yet cannot any more than our sight attend to many things at once…." (146)

Astell's account of the modes of thinking is related to her view about how we come to hold truths, of which there are two ways. The first is marked by passivity: some truths are delivered to us. She opines that they can be delivered to us by our own understandings, that is, by intuition; or they can be delivered to us by an authority. When truths are delivered by intuition, we have ideas that are clear and distinct, self-evident, indubitable, compel the will, and serve as first principles. When they are delivered by the authority they are dubitable, confused, and lack self-evidence. The second way we come to hold truths is marked by activity: such truths are drawn by a demonstration from other truths. Science is our mode of thinking when we intuit a truth and when we hold that truth because we have derived it (by reasoning and deduction) from an intuition. In the latter case, we hold "objects of science." In both cases, we have

"knowledge." Faith is also our mode of thinking when we hold a truth given to us by authority and when we derive additional truths from such truths. In both cases we hold "objects of faith" and we have "belief." Then "Moral certainty" is our mode of thinking when we draw ideas by a demonstration from premises that are a mix of knowledge and belief; "opinion" is our mode of thinking when we hold ideas drawn either by bad argument or by an argument in which confused ideas serve as premises. According to her, ideas attained through intuition are the highest form of knowledge. For Astell, the will, which is involved whenever we hold a truth, is moved in different ways depending on the situation and the kind of truth involved. When we hold a self-evident truth, our wills are compelled by the clarity and distinctness of the idea: we "see" the truth so clearly and distinctly that we cannot doubt it; that is, we cannot but assent to it. On the other hand, when a truth is delivered to us from an authority, and we do not have a clear and distinct perception of the truth, then our wills are not compelled by the idea. In such cases, if we are to affirm the idea, we must move our wills ourselves. What is striking about Astell's view is that she maintains that we are as certain when we move our wills to affirm objects of faith as when our wills are compelled to affirm intuitions and objects of science.

One thread running throughout rationalism is the coupling of an analysis of what prevents the novice from having true knowledge with the development of a method to lead the novice from confusion to knowledge. Astell, too, provides an explanation of the novice's initial confusion and offers a method that can be employed to resolve the condition. Astell's position on these issues is especially interesting because she examines the female novice, theorizing an explanation of what is specific about her initial confusion and constructing a method tailored specifically for her. As Astell sees it, the problem that faces the female novice is that she has a diseased mind as the result of social conditioning. This diseased mind makes her skeptical about her nature, for she believes God made her with a degraded reason. She adopts the prejudice that she is incapable of improvement because she is naturally proud and vain (58, 62). Gripped with this skeptical predicament, she has no desire to improve her mind, and she lacks an ability to understand her perfections, which would otherwise guide her in living a virtuous life (80–1, 200, 202, 228). Astell explains that because women are not provided with rich metaphysical educations they do not develop the knowledge of what they truly are (their wills and nature), nor do they develop the resolution to use their wills well. Instead, they focus on creating physical perfection and also on the praises that accompany it. Thus they develop vanity and pride, the "feminine vices" (62–64). Ultimately, women's salvation is at stake. Astell's overall project concerning education is designed to address this problem of salvation.

If a woman does not learn to separate her mind from her body while on earth—that is, if she does not learn to perfect her rational capacities by forming clear and distinct perceptions, thereby polishing her innate ideas and ordering them correctly—she will not be able to separate her mind from her body when she dies, and so her soul will not reach heaven. In this way, Astell's rationalist education remedies a very practical problem of the individuation of the body and soul at death. This elucidates the kind of education Astell promotes: it is not preparation for a career as a doctor, lawyer, curate, or scientist, nor is it the precursor to what we today call a "liberal education"; instead it is an education that teaches women how to cultivate intellectual enjoyment and perfection, and ultimately generosity and virtue.

The late seventeenth century is known as a time of religious devotion. Though the Church of England's monopoly on Christian worship was coming to an end, its ideological influence remained. Throughout the scientific revolution and into the enlightenment, many notable thinkers (i.e. Newton, Descartes, and Spinoza) shaped the intellectual landscape while remaining devout in their faith. Despite the obvious challenges their discoveries yielded, the groundwork for modern science and philosophy was set in Christian values. Astell was a deeply religious writer. Her Tory Anglican views helped persuade the highly devout and conservative aristocracy in advocating the establishment of academic institutions for women, which otherwise may have been dismissed as radical. In her *Proposal*, Astell aims to promote women's education by appealing mainly to Christian values.

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Suggested Readings

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3. Ferguson, Moira, *First Feminists: British Women Writers 1578–1799,* University of Indiana Press, 1985.
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Assignments

Essay Type Questions

1. What, according to Mary Astell, are the problems of women and the causes behind those? Point out the remedies that she recommends to triumph over those problems.

2. Reproduce in your own words Astell's radical views on the need for promoting women's education.

3. Critically analyze Astell's unique idea for establishing all-female academic institutions and her advocacy for the benefits of such a "religious retirement" as she calls it.

4. Estimate the popular claim that Mary Astell was a "proto-feminist" writer.

5. Critically evaluate Astell's understanding and application of Cartesian philosophical principles in her religio-feminist works.

BLOCK III

SUB-UNIT II

A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN

By

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 11 (a): Life and Works of Mary Wollstonecraft

Unit 11 (b): *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: An Introduction

Unit 12 (a): A Synopsis of Chapter XII: "On National Education"

Unit 12 (b): *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: Reception and Criticism

Conclusion

Works Cited

Suggested Reading List

Assignments

UNIT 11

Unit 11 (a): Life and Works of Mary Wollstonecraft

One of the early precursors of feminist literary theory, Mary Wollstonecraft was born on April 27, 1759, in Spitalfields, London, as the second of the seventh children of Edward John Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Dixon. As a child, she briefly attended a day school in Beverley but was largely self-tutored. Her childhood days were spent in unhappiness owing to her father's lack of knowledge of the material aspects which terribly affected the family's financial condition. Moreover, her father was a violent man by nature who would beat his wife in a drunken state, and Mary had to play a pivotal role in protecting her mother from being physically abused. The sorrow of her unhappy childhood was lessened in the close proximity of her two friends, Jane Arden in Beverley, and Frances(Fanny) Blood in Hoxton.

After years of unhappiness, Mary opened a school with her sister and Fanny Blood at Newington, which was then occupied by a community of Dissenters, and made the acquaintance of Richard Price and other eminent Dissenters. It was during this time, she wrote "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters," a conduct book that offered advice on the importance of education of women to the emerging middle class. It came out in 1787; by that time, Wollstonecraft had left England for Ireland as a governess of Lord. She returned in 1788 with the aim of becoming a writer and worked under the radical publisher Joseph Johnson, who published her works, both fiction and non-fiction alike. Moreover, her dearest friend Fanny Blood's death in 1785 devastated her mental health, at the same time, provided inspiration for her first novel *Mary: A Fiction*(1788), which chronicles the tragic of the titular character's successive "romantic friendships" with a woman and a man. The novel, though generated controversy in the critical circle, was immensely successful, strengthening the ground for the emerging female creativity. In the same year, her *Original Stories from Real Life*, the first and only complete work of children's literature, based on her experiences as a governess of the Kingsborough's children, was also published.

During these years, she was introduced to leading intellectuals of Johnson's literary circle, including William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft,, and Henry Fuseli in London. A romantic relationship developed between Mary and Fuseli, the artist, despite the fact that Fuseli was a married man. She was, as she wrote later, enchanted by his genius, "the grandeur of his soul,

that quickness of comprehension, and lovely sympathy." She even proposed a platonic living arrangement with Fuseli and his wife, but Fuseli's wife was appalled and he broke off the relationship with Wollstonecraft. After Fuseli's rejection, she was heartbroken and decided to travel to France to escape the humiliation and to participate in the revolutionary events that she had celebrated in her recent *A Vindication of the Rights for Men*. Written in response to Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (November 1, 1790), Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights for Men* (published on November 29, 1790) was a political pamphlet which attacked the hereditary privilege and the ruthlessness of French aristocracy and advocated republicanism. The pamphlet made her famous overnights, and Wollstonecraft was compared to the leading intellectual figures like Joseph Priestley and Thomas Paine, whose *Rights of Man* (1791) would prove to be the most influential piece to critique Burke's argument in *Reflections*. However, she developed her ideas, outlined for the *Rights of Men* further in her next work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which is considered to be the most influential of all her literary creations as it advocated the necessity of education for women.

In December 1792, she went to Paris, and met Gilbert Imlay, an American adventurer and writer, and fell passionately in love with him, and gave birth to his daughter, Fanny in 1794. In the same year, she published her 'View' of the French Revolution, expressing the utter disillusionment of her republican ideals. In 1795, she travelled through Scandinavia, accompanied by her maid and her infant daughter, a journey which produced her remarkable and observant travel book, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, published by Johnson in 1796. She returned to London in 1795, where Imlay's neglect drove her to two suicide attempts. However, after a period of recovery from psychological stress, she reintroduced herself to William Godwin, who had a great appreciation of her intellectual capacity. Their affair developed at a rather slow pace, and the couple decided to get married after Mary became pregnant with Godwin's child. Their marriage in 1797 revealed that Mary was never married to Imlay, and as a result, both she and Godwin grew distanced from the intellectual circle. After the birth of their daughter, who was named after her mother, Wollstonecraft died of septicemia on December 10, 1797. In the following year, Godwin published his *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; edited her *Posthumous Works* (which included her unfinished novel, *The Wrongs of Woman*) in the same year, and portrayed her in his novel, *St. Leon* (1799).

Unit 11 (b): *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: An Introduction

If one aims to look at the history of feminism in Europe, (s)he must trace back to the eighteenth century, in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft. In an age where the labour of men (be it in the field or in literature) was privileged over that of women, Wollstonecraft provided the first major theoretical exploration of gender inequality. In her famous treatise, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792, Wollstonecraft attacks the educational restrictions imposed upon women, and "mistaken notions of female excellence," that kept women in a state of "ignorance and slavish dependence."

Divided into thirteen chapters, the treatise is dedicated to Charles M. Talleyrand-Perigord, the former Bishop of Autun, also an influential French political figure in the new regime, whose views on women's education were derogatory, and hence, became an object of criticism for Wollstonecraft. In the preface addressed to Talleyrand, she explains that she "pleads for her sex – not for myself [and out of] affection for the whole human race" (65). While recognizing that France was at the time in advance over other European nations in terms of knowledge she reminds Talleyrand that Revolutionary France remains behind England by not trying to change the sensually marked relationship between French women and men. The latter are remnants of a residual aristocratic ideology of gender relations that stands as a flagrant contradiction to the emancipation project that legitimates the new French regime. In other words, Wollstonecraft elevates rational morality for both women and men as the prerequisite for the realization of political ideals sustained by philosophical rationalism. It is implied that rational morality cannot be obtained without allowing women the right to exercise their reason and achieve that autonomy necessary for proper conduct in the domestic and public spheres. She hopes that Talleyrand and some other "enlarged minds who formed your constitution" will accept to amend that constitution once they understand that educated women "would advance, instead of retarding the progress of those principles that give a substance to morality"(65). The Introduction to this treatise sets out her view the prevailing situation of women in society is largely that of subjugation, and it has happened because of their lack of education.

The major thrust of Wollstonecraft's treatise is "civilization". In the first chapter entitled "The Rights and Involved Duties of Mankind Considered", Wollstonecraft asks three rhetorical questions to evaluate the principles on which civilization rises and falls. The first question is related to reason as a distinguishing mark that makes for the pre-eminence of civilized and

rational men over brutes. The second question concerns the criterion of excellence among people, which she identifies as the acquisition of virtue. The third question is linked to the reason why God has "implanted passions" in man, which she answers by saying that experience shows that they are there to be struggled with so that they can "attain a degree of knowledge denied to the brutes (Wollstonecraft 76)". It is in light of these principles that Wollstonecraft seeks to assess the state of civilization in the Enlightenment period. Her main conclusion is that the "civilization of the bulk of the people of Europe is very partial" (Wollstonecraft 77).

It is in this civilization that reason is prostituted by being employed to rationalize imbibed or acquired prejudices instead of acting as a principle for the "conduct of understanding." "Intellectual cowardice" has made people shrink from the task of rooting prejudice, "or only do it by half. (p.77)" Its principles are sacrificed at the altar of expediency to such an extent that "truth is lost in the mist of words, virtue in forms, [and] knowledge rendered as sounding nothing." Through prescription, this corrupted civilization has "deprived men (or women) of their natural rights" (77).

In the course of the subsequent chapters, Wollstonecraft rejected the established view that women are naturally weaker or inferior to men. The unequal nature of gender relations, she proposed, was because of the lack of education that kept women in a secondary position. Since women are trained to rely upon their beauty, conduct and manners, they turn into unpalatable human beings for others to notice and desire. Women's lack of education has resulted in intellectual barrenness, as she states,

> One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creature, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistress than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by their specious homage, that the civilized woman of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

Wollstonecraft argued that women must be treated as equal to men, because they played a crucial role in society, namely in the bringing up of children. Women themselves should strive to become "companions" rather than mere wives to their husbands. For this change in status and role, women should acquire an education.

Wollstonecraft argues that girls are forced into passivity, vanity and credulity by a lack of physical and mental stimulus., and by the constant insistence on the need to please men. She attacks the "unmanly, immoral" theories of education propagated by Enlightenment philosophers like Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield and Jean Jacques Rousseau (who, in her view, made false discriminatory distinctions in his approach to the sexes in Emile), concluding that, "From the tyranny of man…the greater number of female follies proceed." Wollstonecraft closes her debate with Rousseau about the state of civilization by sorting out three main positions: "Rousseau exerts himself that all was right originally; a crowd of others that all is right now; and I, that all will be right. (p.79)" Hence, what she proposes for salvaging civilization is a project of a future enlightened society propped by a rational political system and a rational morality based on a well-reflected educational system. Rousseau is of the Enlightenment philosophers who laid down the ideological basis of the Revolution in France, so indirectly Wollstonecraft's critique of his political philosophy is also meant as a constructive critique of Revolutionary France in its constitutional discrimination against women. That's why after having settled accounts with Rousseau over the issue of civilization versus the primitive state of nature, she turns to the issue of education with the main emphasis on the French author's educational prejudices against women. One of the major arguments in Wollstonecraft's arsenal is that character taken in the large sense of selfhood, subjectivity, or identity is the result of nurture and culture rather than nature. In other words, character is a cultural construct largely determined by the political, social, economic, and cultural environment. Wollstonecraft's deconstruction and re/construction of character were thought over mostly in an analogical manner intersecting public politics and the politics of sexuality.

Thus, Wollstonecraft astutely unpacked the stereotype of the woman as a creature of sentiment when she argued that women prone to excessive emotion abandoned rationality. it was this tendency, Wollstonecraft argued, that kept women subordinated. Influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, Wollstonecraft suggested that rationality and reason must be given importance over sensibility and feeling.

UNIT 12

Unit 12 (a): A Synopsis of Chapter XII: "On National Education"

In this chapter, Wollstonecraft voices the urgency of a sound system of education,as that has become a "grand national concern." The development of a child is never complete without education, therefore, children should be given an opportunity and encouraged to expand their mental and intellectual faculties and think for their own wellbeing. This can only be achieved when children are put together on the same plane, and be educated in the same subjects.

Wollstonecraft expresses her strict anguish over formal education in schools, especially private boarding schools, as she thinks, "At schools, boys become gluttons and slovens, and instead of cultivating domestic affections, very early rush into the libertinism which destroys the constitution before it is formed; hardening the heart as it weakens the understanding." On the other hand, if they are educated alone at home by their parents, though the plan of study might be more "orderly", they can become imperious and spoiled by the over-affectionate nature of their mothers, and thus, would become "vain and effeminate."

The most appropriate form of education, according to Wollstonecraft, would be that which combines the public and private education. In her opinion, the "country day school" is the most significant example of this; the boys who attended this type of schools learn to respect and revere their school as well as their home. At the same time, they would hardly ever recollect with fondness their days spent in the confines of the boarding school, where "the relaxation of the junior boys is mischief; and of the senior, vice." There is also an established practice of tyranny, as well as an intrinsic attitude of laziness, amongst the boys, and ignorance of duty. Moreover, while remaining under a liberal form of governance, they often ignore the ceremonial prayers and worships, and eventually develop a feeling of contempt over those.

A major drawback of education in public schools is that their false advocacy of religion, as it is reflected in their "irksome ceremonies and unreasonable restraints." Moreover, these educational institutes are housed by a "dogmatical or luxurious set of men," the teachers, whom Wollstonecraft considers as "pedantic tyrants" in their acts of negligence and hypocrisy. Hence, it is not a matter of surprise that under the leadership of such tyrannical teachers, the boys would naturally become "selfish and vicious."

Therefore, a proper mode of education is required for the development of a child's intellectual faculty and a sense of morality. Public education should be accessible to every member of the society and should be aimed at forming true human beings. This goal cannot be achieved unless a certain degree of affection is instilled in the child's heart since infancy. As she states,

> Public education of every denomination, should be directed to form citizens; but if you wish to make good citizens, you must first exercise the affections of a son and a brother…for this is the only way to expand his heart; for public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character.

The growth of this affection should begin from his family, in his show of affection towards his parents and siblings, because, Wollstonecraft believes, no one can have affection for mankind unless he affection for his father, mother, sister, brother and siblings.

The common day schools, Wollstonecraft advocates, must be made into national establishments. The boys must get out of the shackles of the masters who "are dependent on the caprices of parents." This creates a very bad effect on the young boys who have nothing to reflect upon other than the things that they have memorised blatantly without a clear understanding of the subject, and are compelled to recite them in front of their parents just to impress them. The situation becomes irreversible since the teachers remain dependent on the guardians for their income, and there sustains an invisible completion among the schools for the increase of students and funds.

Thereafter, Wollstonecraft goes on to discuss the nature of education of girls in different public schools, who are "more restrained and cowed than boys" and "speak of wearisome confinement which they endured at school." Owing to their femininity, they are subjected to more restrictions, are not allowed to step out in the garden, or stroll over the grassy path, as that would curb their chastity. While remaining in such a confined status,

> …the pure animal spirits, which make both mind and body shoot out, and unfold the tender blossoms of hope are turned sour, and vented in vain wishes, or pert repinings, that contract the faculties and spoil the temper; else they mount to the brain and sharpening the understanding before it gains proportionable strength, produce the pitiful cunning which disgracefully characterizes the female mind –and I fear will ever characterize it whilst women remain the slaves of power!

Moreover, the over-imposition of strict rules on women might result in the stagnation of intellectual and rational faculty, they might become stupid; or, they might eventually turn towards achieving a certain degree of cunningness. Wollstonecraft also marks a stark distinction in the status of men and women in society. She observes, " Women have been allowed to remain in ignorance, and slavish dependence, many, very many years…" She argues that this dependence has created a negative impact upon the minds of the ladies, who can not think themselves beyond the domestic walls and believe themselves to be the objects of pleasure to satisfy the needs of their husbands.

While women, Wollstonecraft observes, are viewed as paragons of chastity, men rarely pay attention to the preservation of that virtue. Rather, at schools, the boys would inevitably lose that decent "bashfulness" and often take recourse to laughter and ridicule as a means of upholding their superiority and dominance.

As an attempt to uphold the "national education" of her country, Wollstonecraft suggests certain measures to be adopted by the government. First of all, every child, aged between five to nine years, regardless of his or her social rank and sex, must attend schools and pursue their academic courses together: "…day schools for particular ages should be established by government." The teachers should be selected from the community, rich or poor alike, and should adhere to the same rules and dress themselves up in the same way. In terms of academics, they should be taught a number of subjects, including Arithmetic, Natural history, natural philosophy, Religion, history, politics, Botany, Mechanics, and astronomy. Apart from academic exercises, students should also be encouraged to involve in physical activities and must exercise daily for a substantial amount of the day in the adjoining playground, which Wollstonecraft perceives as an intrinsic part of the institution.

After nine years of age, boys and girls who are destined to pursue their career either in mechanics or domesticity, should attend other schools and receive instruction according to their desired areas of employment. Both sexes will be educated together in the morning, but in the afternoon, girls should attend another school where "plain work, mantua-making, millinery, etc. would be their employment."

The young pupil of superior ability or fortune would then be taught in a separate school and be acquainted with the "dead and living languages" along with some scientific measures, history, and politics (including political literature). At this stage as well, girls and boys will still be together. It would enhance the scope of mutual understanding, and might even result in "early

marriages," from which, Wollstonecraft believes, "the most salutary physical and moral effects naturally flow."

Therefore, Wollstonecraft advocates a system of education that would combine elements of both private and public education, and which will be shared by all children, irrespective of their sex, rank and social position. In this mode of education, students would get the opportunity to continue with their education while living at home, not in boarding schools, only going out to attend the school in the course of the day, and return by the evening. "These would be schools of morality" where boys are not be trained to be debauched or selfish, and the girls to be weak, vain and frivolous. If women are taught to respect themselves, they would properly attend their domestic duties while fully embracing their intellectual and active minds. Moreover, it would also create a healthy conjugal relationship, since women would become companions to their husbands in the truest sense of the term, and not merely wives, or machines of reproduction. As she states,

> Nay, marriage will never be held sacred till women be being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions, rather than their mistresses; for the mean doublings of cunning will ever render them contemptible, whilst oppression renders them timid. So convinced am I of this truth, that I will venture to predict, that virtue will never prevail in society till the virtues of both sexes are founded on reason; and, till the affection common to both are allowed to gain their due strength by the discharge of mutual duties.

The true purpose of education, according to Wollstonecraft, is to attain the overall development of the human mind, to achieve liberty from the narrow shackles of domesticity, and to achieve the height of intellectual expansion by means of reliance on one's rational faculty. A truly proper form of education would benefit the entire society as a whole. In her treatise on the need of education, woman forms a focal point of interest because she has to perform a very significant role in her family, as well as in society, that of motherhood. And no woman can become a good mother unless she is equipped with a proper form of education since education alone could bring about social and intellectual enlightenment. Therefore, Wollstonecraft proposes, "Let men take their choice, man and woman were made for each other, though not to become one being; and if they will not improve women, they will deprave them!"

Unit 12 (b): *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: Reception and Criticism

The publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792 led to an unprecedented amount of debate regarding the necessity of education of and for women, and their status in society. According to the historians, the treatise had generated a sheer amount of shock, disbelief, cynicism and marvel, and had to undergo a continuing misclassification. One of Wollstonecraft's biographers, R. M. Janes in "On the Reception of Mary Wollstonecraft's: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" (1798), avouched that Wollstonecraft's work was positively received especially by those who implored for social, educational, and political reformations. The Gentleman's Magazine, the most successful of the eighteenth-century periodicals, observed the imparity between Godwin's version and Wollstonecraft's treatise:

> The readers of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, will perhaps be surprised when he is informed, that, during her last illness, no religious expression escaped the author's lips. In that work, the grand principle is, that woman is not inferior of man, but his equal in moral rank, walking along with him the road of duty, in which "they are both trained for a state of endless improvement.

Moreover, many felt that the *Vindication* was addressed to the female audience only; but, in fact, Wollstonecraft believed that women could not perform the revolution alone, which indicates that men are also needed to effect the change. In other words, as argues by Amy Elizabeth Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft addressed readers of both genders to accomplish her aims in the Vindication. Indeed, Mary Wollstonecraft has specifically mentioned about the middle-class women as her target audience when she claims:" the instruction which has hitherto been addressed to women, has rather been applicable to ladies…but, addressing my sex in a firmer tone, I pay particular attention to those in middle-class because they appear to be in the most natural state. "(quoted in Smith 556-557). Therefore, Wollstonecraft wants to recreate a dynamic relationship and a mutual feeling of liability between men and women.

The scholars and critics of Wollstonecraft put a great interest in Wollstonecraft's style and language, and they have intrinsically remarked that illustrations and aesthetic tropes are predominantly used in her *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft herself asserts this in the advertisement she presented for her treatise:

> When I began to write this work, I divided it into three parts, supposing that one volume would contain the full discussion of the argument which seemed to me to rise naturally from a few simple principles; but fresh illustrations accruing as I advanced, I know present only the first part to the public (Wollstonecraft xv).

As observed by Inna Volvoca, and cited by Amina Benladghem, Wollstonecraft's polemics are mainly supported by examples and simple principles in a broad sense to be more relevant to audience perceptions, by this she tends also to teach readers observation skill. Furthermore, Mary Wollstonecraft's style of writing is distinguished from those sentimental letters of cry words, divisively, her literary work seems to be more rimmed and factual, in which she came close to the serious matters in society. The fact that she was more limited to exact rules does not mean that she was exempted from the harsh critics, her choice of arguments and style is almost described as signs of misogyny by the contemporary critics, for this reason, she sought to avoid such stereotypes by defending her style.

Recent critics also are directed to Wollstonecraft's style and themes and the subject. The American philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer propounds three fundamental themes involved in the Vindication, namely - reason, women's inferiority, and educational opportunities. On the other hand, the American literary critic Mary Poovey reprehends Wollstonecraft because she puts herself in a separate position from women instead of recognizing them as allies. Additionally, Poovey refers to Wollstonecraft's failure in describing women's state out of ideological notions. Similarly, from a linguistic perspective, the renowned French feminist Luce Irigaray argues that language in Wollstonecraft's book is not so adapted to women's ignorance, "It is to resubmit herself... .to ideas notably about her elaborated in and through a masculine logic but to bring out by an effect of playful repetition what was to remain hidden: the recovery of a possible operation of feminine in language".

In later years, European Feminist thinkers started their movements in the nineteenth century asking for women's equality in social and political matters taking Mary Wollstonecraft as a model. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was wholeheartedly accepted by American women's moral reformers in particular, like Angelina and Sarah Grimke who spoke publicly about the abolition of certain restrictions on women and other quandaries. On the same wave, the French Women's newspaper *La Femme Libre*, ascribed to Jeanne Deroin, one of the eminent thinkers in French feminist movements who condemned the way women were oppressed in choosing their partners, thereto, the article reported, "Let us refuse as

husbands any man who is not sufficiently generous to consent to share his power; we want no more this formula, ...we demand equality in marriage."

Conclusion

Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* encourages women to rely on their rational faculty. As Charles Taylor points out, "Reason is the capacity to see and understand." Wollstonecraft sincerely believed that women must absorb their own identities from knowledge, education and reason. Moreover, her observation on society's structure is used to push woman inside society as an individual, and to overturn the traditional rudiments in which, " women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind." By this Wollstonecraft aims to draw an appropriate way in order to involve women in public, and she does not deny the difference between woman and man at all, but sometimes she blames women who directly follow sensibility and passion instead of reason.

Wollstonecraft was one of the first thinkers to propose that gender roles are not natural, but social. While Wollstonecraft was radical in seeking education as a means of "improving" women's position in society, she was hesitant to upset the gender hierarchies. Education, as Wollstonecraft saw it, was about "improvement", not considering it, however, as a means of overturning power. Rather, she believed that education would definitely instil a love for domestic life.

Therefore, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as Gariti and Zerar argue, "completes *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* in the work of ideological deconstruction of femininity. If the latter chastens the aristocratic figure of Burke and celebrates in Price the surrogate tamed or civilized father that Wollstonecraft had never had, the former gives ample room to the mother envisaged both as a human figure (an immanence) and a metaphysical representation of freedom (transcendence). So we shall argue that looked at from the perspective of the two works together, Wollstonecraft's Gothic feminism, contrary to Hoeveler's conclusion, is not concerned with the "gendering of the civilization process." What emerges from the two works is that European civilization can be redeemed only if gender inequality is dislodged. The slippage from text to author in both works gives the picture of a redefined civilized family

wherein sexual and sociological roles are adjusted according to the rules of reason and rational morality" (33).

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Assignments

1. Would you consider Mary Wollstonecraft as a precursor of feminist literary movement? Discuss.

2. How did Wollstonecraft challenge the opinion of the Enlightenment philosophers and intellectuals on the necessity of education for women?

3. What was Wollstonecraft’s stake on “national education”? Discuss reference to Chapter XII of *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*.

4. Make a critical estimate of Mary Wollstonecraft’s major propositions in *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*.

BLOCK IV

SUB-UNIT II

AURORA LEIGH

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 13 (a): Life and Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Unit 13 (b): *Aurora Leigh*: Introduction and Summary

Unit 14 (a): Aurora Leigh Book V: Commentary and Criticism

Unit 14 (b): Formation of a Feminine Identity in *Aurora Leigh*

Unit 14 (c): *Aurora Leigh* as a Feminine Love-story

Conclusion

Works Cited

Suggested Reading List

Assignments

UNIT 13

Unit 13 (a): Life and Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning

"Knowledge by suffering entereth;

And Life is perfected by death."

The above-quoted lines, extracted from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "A Vision of Poets" bear a reflection of her poetic genius and hail her as one of the greatest female poets of the Victorian era. Born in County Durham in 1806, Elizabeth was the eldest of twelve children of Edward Barrett Moulton, a plantation owner, and his wife Mary. Her childhood days were spent at Hope End, where the family moved into in 1809, in Herefordshire, and was educated at home under the tutorship of Daniel McSwiney. An extraordinarily gifted child, she started writing verses at the age of four and even started reading novels shortly thereafter. At the age of eight, she got entranced by Pope's translations of Homer, began her Greek lesson at the age of ten, and wrote her own Homeric epic, *The Battle of Marathon: A Poem*, at the age of eleven. Her father published the work at his own expense in 1820, calling her the "Poet Laureate of Hope End". It was followed by her exhaustive piece, *An Essay on Mind* (1826), which was also privately published.

Her individual voice started to develop during the 1830s as she wrote ballads including "The Poet's Vow" and "The Romaunt of the Page". Her creativity is nurtured in correspondence with Uvedale Price (1747-1829) and the blind scholar Hugh Stuart Boyd (1781-1848) both of whom were her neighbours. She became well versed in the Classics and prosodic theory and later published a translation from ancient and Byzantine Greek poetry. Her work, *Prometheus Bound, Translated from the Greek of Aeschylus, and Miscellaneous Poems* (1833), as the production of a self-educated young woman, prompted critical acclaim. Mary Russell Mitford, whom she met in 1836, described the young poet as "a slight delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on each side of a most expressive face; large, tender eyes, richly fringed by dark eyelashes, and a smile like a sunbeam."

In 1832, the Barrett family moved to Sidmouth, and in 1835, to London. However, by 1838, Elizabeth fell seriously ill with an unrecognized disease and was sent to Torquay, where, two years later, her eldest brother Edward (known as 'Bro') was drowned, leading her to perpetual

grief. The poems "De Profundis" and "Grief" bear testimony to her everlasting pain. She returned to London, still unwell, in 1841.

During the early 1840s, her health improved, and she continued to write. Following the Royal Commission for the investigation of child empowerment, "The Cry of the Children" appeared in *Blackwood's* magazine in 1843. The prolific creativity of this period culminated in the production of her Poems in 1844, confirming her status as one of the significant poets of the period. Her name was recommended in the nomination for the Laureateship of 1850, along with Tennyson. It was also the publication of her Poems that prompted Robert Browning to write to her for the first time in 1845. The two met in May that year, which eventually developed into a courtship through mutual correspondence, and in marriage in 1846. The marriage was necessarily kept a secret sine her strong-minded father forbade his adult children to marry, and upon his discovery of the union, he disinherited her.

The Brownings left England for Italy in the same year, settling at Casa Guidi in Florence. Though Casa Guidi became their base, the couple paid long visits to Rome, Siena, Bagni di Lucca, Paris, and London and gained huge acclaim. In 1849, after four miscarriages, she gave birth to a son, Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning, whom they called Pen. Upon her husband's insistence, Elizabeth compiled the second edition of her *Poems*, which included her love sonnets. The *Sonnets from Portuguese* (1850) bear eloquent witness to the conflicts and the strength of her love for Browning and was followed by *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) on the theme of Italian liberation. Shortly thereafter, she started writing her famous "novel in verse," *Aurora Leigh*, which appeared in 1856.

Throughout her married life, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's reputation stood higher than that of her husband Robert Browning in public opinion, though her progressive social ideas and audacious prosodic experiments were alarming for some. She had a keen interest in Italian and French politics and was an ardent partisan of Italian unity. She also became fascinated by spiritualism, though this – unlike her political views – played little part in her poetry. The highly political *Poems before Congress* (1860), which concluded "A Curse for a Nation", diminished her popularity; but *Last Poems*, issued posthumously in 1862, contained some of her best-known lyrics. The Brownings were in friendly terms, among others, with John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Tennyson, W.M. Thackeray, and D.G. Rossetti, on all of whom Elizabeth's vivid intelligence made a lifelong impression.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's health started to deteriorate after the death of an old friend, G.B. Hunter, and that of her father. The Brownings moved from Florence to Siena, residing at the Villa Alberti. Upon her sister Henrietta's death in November 1860, the couple spent the winter of 1860-61 in Rome where her health further deteriorated and they returned to Florence in early June of 1861. She became weaker gradually, consuming morphine to ease the pain temporarily. She breathed her last on 29 June 1861, in her husband's arms. Browning later described her last moment, saying that she died "smiling, happily, and with a face like girl's…Her last word was …. "Beautiful". She was buried in the Protestant English Cemetery of Florence. On Monday July 1 the shops in the area around Casa Guidi were closed, while Elizabeth was mourned with unusual demonstrations."

Unit 13 (b) *Aurora Leigh*: Introduction and Summary

Sometime in the year 1844, in her correspondence with Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett had expressed her desire to write a novel on a different theme. Prior to its publication in 1856 (dated 1857), the author explained that she wanted "to write a poem of a new class," and later described *Aurora Leigh* (which is over 11,000 lines long) as a "novel in verse." Divided into nine books, the text chronicles the life story of its eponymous heroine in the first person.

The first book opens with the intimation of the narrator's birth in Italy to an English father and a Tuscan mother. After the sudden death of her mother, the grieving father withdraws to a lonely mountain cottage with his infant daughter and educates her in the classics amid the wonders of nature. However, to increase her misfortune, her father dies when she is only thirteen. The adolescent girl is snatched away from the lap of nature and sent to England to live under the guardianship of a cold-hearted maiden aunt who had never accepted her mother completely. There, Aurora is compelled to have a conventional education, that a girl was entitled to have in Victorian England. In such a suffocating situation, her only comfort lies in her father's books; her cousin, Romney Leigh, and his friend, the painter Vincent Carrington, who talked often about Italy.

As the second book begins, the expectation is on the rise that Aurora and Romney would get married to each other. The sole heir of the Leigh family estate, Romney has expected that

Aurora would join him in his work of social reform, but Aurora believes that she has a right to her own vocational fulfillment and doesn't want to play the role of a mere assistant. She becomes an object of rebuke to both her aunt and Romney who would scoff her artistic ambitions, thinking them of meagre value compared to his noble endeavours. Dismayed by his attitude, Aurora rejects the proposal of Romney. Her response generates the anger of her aunt who dies shortly thereafter, disinheriting her. Aurora heads to London, determined to begin a new life in independence.

The third book opens seven years later, by when Aurora has lost contact with Romney and has pursued a literary career as a writer in London. With a meagre allowance of three hundred pounds a year, she supports herself, working on days as a prose writer and evenings on poetry until her verse gains sufficient reputation to provide a living. During this time, she is visited by Lady Waldemar, a wealthy widow, who tells her that Romney is going to marry Marian Erle, a lower-class woman whom he has rescued from the deathbed. He has found Marian a job as a seamstress and now wants to marry her in a socialist gesture to demolish the class distinctions. Lady Waldemar wants Aurora to stop the wedding, but Aurora refuses to interfere. Instead, she finds out Marian and listens to her story of being abandoned by abusive parents which left her to wander in the lonely streets until a stranger took her to a hospital, where she met Romney, who had paid a charitable visit there.

In the fourth book, Marian tells Aurora how, after a year after their first meeting at the hospital, she encounters Romney again when Lucy, a fellow seamstress, dies. Romney offers a proposal of marriage to her with the hope that she will help him in diminishing the social inequality. Aurora chances upon Romney who clarifies that though he has a likeness for Marian, he is marrying her primarily to make a social statement, keeping his love for humanity on a higher pedestal than his romantic love. Aurora perceives this decision as hopelessly unrealistic and abstract, though she wishes the couple well. She also attends the wedding upon Romney's invitation and finds Romney's friends gossiping insensitively about the marriage. However, Marian fails to show up at the wedding, while sending a note with an explanation that Lady Waldemar has made her believe that the marriage is deemed to be unsuccessful and that she would not make Romney happy. The news of the bride's disappearance creates a stir among the wedding guests, and Aurora gets fainted, only to be carried away by Lord Howe, a friend of Romney's. As Romney gets engaged in a fruitless endeavour to locate Marian, he relies on

Aurora as a confidante. They reconcile as friends but continue to disagree on each other's perspectives on life.

The fifth book opens two years later where Aurora expresses her views on the art of poetic composition. She rebels against the established literary conventions, believing that poetry should change with time, not only in content but also in form. She observes that women artists are often too dependent on a single person, be it a friend or a lover, and are at a disadvantage as artists because of their emotional nature. There is also a recognition of loneliness for the woman poet who foregoes real love to write about love. In addition, she is critical of the quality of the drama of her era and recommends that writers look into the soul instead of the body. Coming back to the present, Aurora has heard the news that Romney has converted his estate into alms-houses, with Lady Waldemar as his constant partner in charity, and that he has decided to marry her unaware of the fact that her efforts are a sincere plot to win him over. Aurora attends a party at the residence of Lord Howe's where she has an unpleasant encounter with Lady Waldemar. In a state of depression and disillusionment, Aurora decides to avoid the wedding and tries to find solace in Italy.

The sixth book encompasses Aurora's journey to Italy through Paris where she happens to meet Marian with a baby. Aurora follows her and learns about the misfortune that has befallen her. Upon Lady Waldemar's advice, she had decided to go to Australia, but the man whom Lady Waldemar had sent to help her, took her away to Paris instead and sold her off to a brothel, where she was drugged and raped. Driven nearly to madness by the realization of her circumstances, Marian had escaped but had to endure a lot of trouble to survive.

The next book continues with Marian's tale of being abused by strangers and finding refuge with a miller's wife, who rejected her when she learned about her pregnancy. Marian had been working as a seamstress since then, supporting herself and her child. Aurora persuades her to come to her in Italy, and thinks of writing to Romney about Marian's present circumstance, but is dissuaded from the act with the belief that he is already married to Lady Waldemar who is the catalyst in bringing about Marian's tragedy. Instead, she writes to his friend Lord Howe and asks him to convey the message to Romney that she has found Marian and is looking after her wellbeing. Thereafter, she writes a scathing letter to Lady Waldemar, tempering it with a promise that she would not avenge for her crime if she takes good care of Romney. As Aurora and Marian settle into a new life in Italy, Aurora begins to think that Romney was right in his opinion that neither art nor a woman could fully comprehend the universal truth or capture the

meaning of life's experiences. She also hears from Vince Carrington, a painter and friend to Romney that her new book is doing well and that Lady Waldemar has nursed Romney through an illness.

The eighth book comprises of Aurora and Romney's meeting in Italy, in the course of which they have a long conversation and admit each other's mistakes and faults, now they have realized their true feeling for each other. However, Aurora holds back her feelings for Romney, thinking that he is already married. Romney tells her that the people he tried to help, turned against him, and burned his estate down. Now that his social reformist endeavours have become a failure, he has understood the value of Aurora's artistic aspirations. Before going away from the place, Romney informs Aurora that he has not married Lady Waldemar.

The news that Romney has not married Lady Waldemar is verified in the final book as the lady sends a stinging letter to Aurora as a reply. However, Romney still preserves a feeling of obligation for Marian and proposes to marry her for the second time. But, Marian stands firm in her declaration that she must devote her life to his child's wellbeing, and to live on her own terms. With this turn of events, Aurora and Romney are freed to admit their love for each other. Aurora says that they have given too little a part to God in their plans. She also realizes that she should have first sought fulfillment as a woman, and then only her creativity would get the full scope to unleash itself. Aurora accepts Romney's proposal of marriage and agrees to work together for the betterment of humankind.

Unit 14

Unit 14 (a) *Aurora Leigh* Book V: Commentary and Criticism

Upon its publication in 1856, the poem became immensely successful and invited diverse range of interpretations from the critics across decades. In her article "Gender and Narration in *Aurora Leigh*," Alison states, "With *Aurora Leigh*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning set out to write what she called a "novel-poem" about the growth of a woman artist." In this sense, the poem becomes a valuable instance of a *Kuntslerroman*. Originally a German term, *Kuntslerroman* refers to a genre of novel which deals with the birth and development of an artist. With a female

artist in the centre, Barrett Browning's poem can be appropriately categorized both as a female *Kuntslerroman* and a "feminine love story", in both of which Aurora acts as a heroine and a narrator. In the former, she confidently traces her intellectual and moral development as an artist in a retrospective mode; in the latter, she reveals to the reader, through twists and turns of her more immanent and less self-aware narration, the self-delusions and misunderstandings which be eventually sorted out by the development of the plot to make possible her reunion with Romney.

The conflict between Aurora's dual literary roles itself represents a deeper tension within the text: that between the impulse to rebel against the restrictions of the traditional role of Victorian womanhood, and the desire to co-opt the ideological power of that role, to form her "perfect artist" on the foundation of a culturally recognizable perfect woman. As argued by many feminist critics, Barrett Browning's novel-poem enacts a triumphant reconciliation of "woman" and "artist," which necessarily rejects many aspects of the conventional Victorian dichotomy between femininity and artistic power.

What begins to emerge from *Aurora Leigh*, then, are two different kinds of stories, which have, in turn, two different kinds of narration. The first, which corresponds roughly with the first four books of the poem, is the *Kuntslerroman*. It is told as a fully-conceived, retrospective narrative, the subject and the form are complacent to each other. In Book Five, the novel shifts both its subject matter and its mode of narration. At the opening of the book, Aurora makes her most forceful and coherent statement of what Art in her age can and should be :

> "Art for art,
> And good for God Himself, the essential Good!
> We'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes erect,
> Although our woman-hands should shake and fail;
> And if we fail . . . But must we?"

She chides fellow poets for preferring a romanticized distant past to the heroism and beauty of the everyday present, speaking as someone confident both of her abilities and her right to judge her fellow-artists. As Aurora expresses her frustration with the shortcomings of her own artistic efforts, complaining that "what I do falls short of what I see," it is clear that this is the frustration of the accomplished artist, who cannot be satisfied with anything less than unattainable perfection. Indeed, even these frustrations, as they force Aurora to "set[herself] to art,"

eventually issue forth in a work which she implies is the long-awaited masterpiece: “Behold, at last, a book.” But if Aurora’s position as an artist is now self-assured as it can be, without casting doubt on her perfectionism, her emotional state is much more unclear. And as she makes explicit in her discussion of her fellow poets, Graham, Belmore, and Gage, the reasons for this have to do with the conflicts between her feminine gender and her role as an artist. While Aurora insists that she has “never envied” the male poets for their “native gifts” or “popular applause”, she confesses her envy for their act of adoring women who provide emotional support for their work and fill out the void in their personal lives.

Aurora herself suggests that the emotional lack she feels is that of orphanhood, but it is hard to see how she has perceived her silencing mother – whose only remembered words are “Hush, hush – here’s too much noise” – or her melancholic intellectual father could provide the kind of self-effacing, unconditional adoration these male poets receive from their mother, lover, or wife. The passage points rather to Aurora’s frustration at the gap her gender creates between her artistic and her emotional self-fulfilment – between the happy ending of a *Kuntslerroman* and that of a love story. Thereafter, she immediately shifts to a forcedly casual mention of the fact that she has “not seen Romney Leigh/ Full eighteen months…add six, you get two years.” The passage thus makes an appropriate transition from one tale to the other – from the quest for artistic achievement and recognition to that for emotional fulfillment.

Unit 14 (b) Formation of a Feminine Identity in *Aurora Leigh*

A close reading of Aurora Leigh affirms the reader’s perception that Elizabeth Barrett Browning had deliberately emphasized upon the protagonist’s identity formation in the poem. In fact, the poem's opening lines prepare the reader to expect a tale that traces the narrator's growth. At the beginning of the first book, Aurora forthrightly presents her motives for writing her story. She says:

> Of writing many books there is no end;
>
> And I who have written much in prose and verse
>
> For others' uses, will write now for mine, -

Will write my story for my better self.

As when you paint your portrait for a friend.

Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it

Long after he has ceased to love you,

Just to hold together what he was and is. (1.1-8)

These introductory lines call attention to the fact that Aurora's story will depict her identity construction. To further set the scene for this developmental journey, Barrett Browning begins book two with Aurora at age twenty-seven retrospectively brooding over her younger years. She recalls:

I stood upon the brink of twenty years,

And I looked before and after,

as I stood Woman and artist, - either incomplete,

Both credulous of completion. (2.2-5)

In the cited lines, Aurora refers to her incompleteness, both as a woman and as an artist. In book one she describes herself as "still what men call young" (9), later she relates that she has "not stood long on the strand of life" (2.325), and shortly thereafter she defines herself as "young" and "weak" (2.250, 251). Aurora looks back on her adolescence with dissatisfaction finding these to be years marked with innocence and naivete. Conversely, these statements also indicate that Aurora does not now perceive herself as this same immature being. In book nine, Aurora proudly announces in a speech that she is "changed since then, changed wholly" (9.671-68). We get the sense that over the years, our narrator believes she has undergone a process of change and maturation whereby she has now accomplished her earlier goal of being a complete woman and artist. In fact, in the end, she reasons, "No perfect artist is developed here / From any imperfect woman" (9.648-49).

As Amy Suzanne Ross argues,

> In *Aurora Leigh*, Barrett Browning chronicles the growth of a young woman into adult maturity. Through Aurora's retrospective lens, we see her change from a Florentine child into a mature English woman confident in her writing ability and ready to accept her 8 cousin Romney Leigh's hand in marriage at the

age of thirty. Along the way she discusses her orphaned childhood, education, surrounding environment, and opinions about love and art (Ross 7-8).

At the age of twenty, she is so enamoured with the act of writing that she proudly fashions herself a mock poet laureate crown and boldly claims that poets are life's real "truth-tellers" (1.859). She expresses her great love of poetry by crying out:

> "O life, O poetry,
>
> - Which means life in life! cognisant of life
>
> Beyond this blood-beat, passionate for truth
>
> Beyond these senses! - poetry, my life" (1.915-18).

The dilemma regarding her profound love for art, independence-dependence, and struggle makes Aurora's situation more critical; certainly Victorian society would have dictated that she could have either one or the other, with a distinct preference given to love and marriage. In a self-reflective moment, Aurora recognizes that she has wrongly privileged art over love and acknowledges that "Love strikes higher with his lambent flame / Than art can pile the faggots" (7.893-94). She confesses her love for Romney, stating, "art is much, but love is more" (9.656). At the end of the verse novel, Aurora strikes a balance between the two and does not have to sacrifice her artistic vocation for love.

Unit 14 (c): *Aurora Leigh* as a Feminine Love-story

The discussion at the opening of Book Five not only marks the transition in subject matter from *Kuntslerroman* to a love story but it also significantly, marks a shift to a different mode of narration. The peculiar account of time in the passage quoted above, with the poet, apparently noting with ellipses the lapse of six months, during which the manuscript had been abandoned literally mid-line – suggests a more immediate relation between the narrator and her tale. Shortly thereafter, Aurora refers to "tonight['s] events, and from here until the end of the novel, her narration approximates most closely to that of a journal, written, as she says at the end, "day by day," sometimes in the immediacy of strong emotion – as when, after discovering Marian in Paris, she has to break off writing because her "hand's a-tremble" – and sometimes

with a degree of calm retrospection. Just as the retrospective narrative of the previous portion of the novel/poem exemplifies the artistic control, the acquisition of which it recounts, so here Aurora's more fragmented narrative reflects a certain lack of control and an absence of conscious purpose appropriate to her problematic relation to the love plot.

The critic Nancy Miller suggests that "implausibilities" of plot in many women's novels represent their efforts to express an "ambitious wish," a "fantasy of power" whose expression is impossible within the patriarchal conventions of the novel, because these conventions permit female heroines to have plots only with erotic wish-fulfillment. As she writes,

> "When these modalities of difference are perceived, they are generally called implausibilties. They are not perceived, or are misperceived, because the scripting of this fantasy does not bring the aesthetic "forepleasure" Freud says fantasy scenario inevitably bring; pleasure bound to recognition and identification, the "agrement" Genette assigns to plausible narrative."

Miller's argument about the conventions which govern "plausible" plots could be extended to cover those aspects which govern "consistent" narration, for, as we have seen, the narrative improprieties of *Aurora Leigh* serve to fold into the work a plot of female ambition. Barrett Browning could not, given the conventions she had taken on writing a novel-poem, throw away altogether the idea of marriage as the required telos of a young woman's story – nor even fully subordinate it to a "higher" aim of artistic achievement. But the mixed narration of the poem did allow the narrator to create a kind of double teleology for the novel, in which the struggle toward artistic success, the plot of poetic "ambition," could be kept relatively isolated from the undermining influence of a traditional love-story, with its emphasis on female passivity and lack of emotional or sexual self-knowledge, its insistence on loving self-abnegation as the proper "end" of female existence.

Conclusion

'Behold! – the world of books is still the world' (I.748), Aurora comments of the books both 'bad and good', and 'some bad and good / At once' (I.779-80) she finds in a 'garret-room / Piled high with cases in [her] father's name' (I.833-4). Since Aurora Leigh remains so vitally

connected to the world of its own 'live' and 'throbbing age' (V.203), as well as to the worlds of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it is not surprising that it continues to provoke debates about the kind of book it is. Margaret Reynolds observes that 'the swings in the critical fortunes of Aurora Leigh are attributable not to any immutable fact relating to the poem or to the poet but rather to changes in the currency of theoretical perspectives on the nature of poetry and the nature of woman' (AL 2).

While these issues are undoubtedly integral to the work in which Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressed her 'highest convictions upon Life and Art', Marjorie Stone observes, so too are many others shaping the diverse ways in which it has been read: class structures and social reform, the politics of nations, modernity and its relationship to the past, the connection between the body and the spirit, religious beliefs and the philosophical question of 'the central truth' (I.800), to name only some. The reflections on poetry pervading her letters suggest that she would have been no more surprised by the 'swings' in the 'critical fortunes of Aurora Leigh' than she was by the polarized opinions that greeted its publication in 1856 in London. 'And have not true poets who have also become popular poets at once, been so for reasons independent of their poetry . . & even of their powers?' she asked Mary Mitford in 1843, pointing to the example of Byron (BC 6:292). As Aurora comments, a poem may be successful or not in its own time. If not, the poem's passed From hand to hand, and yet from hand to hand, Until the unborn snatch it, crying out In pity on their fathers' being so dull, And that's success too. (V.263-7) The key question for Aurora's creator was whether or not the 'office of the poet' is fulfilled 'by analysing humanity back into its elements, to the destruction of the conventions of the hour' (BC 10:101). As she elsewhere observed on the same point, 'poetry is divine' because it 'resembles grief in rending assunder our conventionalities, . . but does so singing instead of sighing. It transfigures the great humanity into the sense of its To-come' (BC 6:219).

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Assignments

1. How does Barrett Browning reflect the crisis and dilemma of an artist and a woman in *Aurora Leigh*?

2. Why do you think Book Five is different from the rest of the book?

3. Write a critical appreciation of Book Five of *Aurora Leigh*.

4. Comment critically on the development of feminine identity in *Aurora Leigh*.

5. To what extent, does *Aurora Leigh* conform to the status of being a *Kuntslerroman*?

BLOCK IV

SUB-UNIT II

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

By

VIRGINIA WOOLF

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 15 (a): Life and Works of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Unit 15 (b): An Introduction to *A Room of One's Own*

Unit 15 (c): Summary of *A Room of One's Own*

Unit 16 (a): A Brief Synopsis of Concerned Chapters from *A Room Of One's Own*: Chapter-2

Unit 16 (b): A Brief Synopsis of Chapter – 5

Unit 16 (c): A Brief Synopsis of Chapter – 6

Unit 16 (d): A Feminist Reading of *A Room of One's Own*

Conclusion

Works Cited

Suggested Reading List

Assignments

UNIT 15

Unit 15 (a): Life and Works of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

In her biography of the renowned Modernist writer, Linda Anderson writes, "Virginia Woolf shaped and defended the modern novel and left nearly 4,000 letters and thirty volumes of a diary. No writer's life can be so fully documented. Yet, the woman's writing remains elusive..." The combination of an extraordinarily fertile mind and a dramatic life paved the way for the perpetration of Woolf's creative genius. Born on 25th January 1882 to Leslie and Julia (Duckworth) Stephen, Virginia's apparently happy childhood was disrupted by the early death of her mother in 1895, followed by her first mental breakdown. The death of her half-sister, Stella Duckworth, two years later further damaged her fragile psychological health. As Gordon observes, "There was, at the age of fifteen, so much against her: the deaths of her two protectors; the emotional withdrawal of her father; and above all the mental illness that now set in, that always threatened to surface, and that often succeeded in these first, most vulnerable twenty years in bouts of varying severity, the last of which coincided with the publication of her first novel in 1915."

In 1898, Virginia met Kitty Maxse, who later became the model for her fictional character Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway. The following year, her brother Thoby entered Trinity College, Cambridge, and developed a friendship with Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and Saxon Sydney-Turner, all of whom eventually became a part of the intellectual circle as they matured. In 1904, upon the death of her father Sir Leslie Stephen, Virginia suffered her second and the more acute breakdown, during which she attempted suicide. The same year, the Stephen family moved to Bloomsbury; shortly thereafter, Thoby started 'Thursday Evenings' at their 46 Gordon Square Residence with his University friends, which marked the beginning of the famous 'Bloomsbury Group'. In October 1907, after her brother, Thoby's death and sister Vanessa's marriage to Clive Bell, Virginia started working on her first novel "Melymbrosia", which was eventually published in 1915 as *The Voyage Out*. In August 1912, she married Leonard Woolf, after an attack of mental illness earlier that year; the following year she fell seriously ill again and attempted suicide by medicinal overdose. However, she began to recover after the publication of *The Voyage Out* in 1915, and in 1917, the Woolfs started the Hogarth Press at home. Woolf continued to write and publish both fiction and prose – *Night and Day*

(1919), *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) and *Jacob's Room* (1922) even as their publishing venture began to flourish amongst intellectuals. 1922 was an eventful year in Woolf's life: she published *Jacob's Room*, her friend Kitty Maxse died, and she met Vita Sackville-West, with whom she was to have a prolonged and dense romantic affair which was not restricted to the boundary of the psychological.

The following years were immensely exhaustive, and at the same time, fruitful for Woolf. Both her works*, The Common Reader* and *Mrs. Dalloway* were published in 1925 and *To the Lighthouse* in 1927. With the development of her relationship with Vita, Woolf started writing *Orlando*, which was published in 1928. The same year, she delivered lectures at Cambridge that were published as *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, followed by the publication of The Waves in 1931. By the mid-30s, however, the strains of her emotional and intellectual struggles began to overtake her. After a rigorous act of labour over *The Years* through 1935-1936, she published *Three Guineas*, another of her political tract besides *A Room of One's Own*, in 1938. In February 1941, though she managed to finish writing her final novel *Between the Acts*, the curtain was about to descend on her own tumultuous life. Upon the rapid deterioration of her mental health, she drowned herself in the River Ouse on March 28. *Between the Acts* was published in the same month in1941.

Unit 15 (b): An Introduction to *A Room of One's Own*

Published initially as "Women and Fiction" in the American journal *Forum* in 1929, *A Room of One's Own* is one of the most significant feminist texts of the twentieth century. The text, chronicling the first literary history of women writers, is radical in the sense that it anticipates many of the concerns of Second Wave Feminism some forty years later. Woolf initially gave a version of the essay in the form of two lectures delivered at the women's colleges of Cambridge University, Newnham and Girton. Denied a formal education herself, and self-educated in her father's library, Woolf stepped into a University in 1928 to address women who had gained access to higher education. By that time, she had excelled in the field of creative writing, and a number of her works had already been published. Her aversion to the male-dominated institution, so familiar to her brothers, her husband, and the male members of

the Bloomsbury group, was fostered by her desire to share her experiences and ideas as a writer with the young scholars. Despite women's presence in the intellectual sphere, Woolf was aware of the oppositions they had to encounter while traversing the apparently untrodden path. It is important to note that Girton was founded by Emily Davies in 1869 and Newnham by Anne Jemima in 1871, but women in Woolf's audience weren't awarded degrees and were required to sit in segregated areas during lectures. In 1932, when Woolf was again invited back to Cambridge, this time to deliver the prestigious Clark lectures in English Literature, previously given by her father Leslie Stephen, she declined. Her dislike of lecturing as a form, of pomp and ceremony, and her refusal to receive honours from an institution which continued to marginalize women, prevented her from accepting. She was convinced, however, of the importance of encouraging young women to work to change the situation.

Unit 15 (c): Summary of *A Room of One's Own*

Woolf begins the essay with a question directed towards her immediate audience – "But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction – what has that to do with a room of one's own " (7). While dealing with the interrelationship between women and fiction, Woolf wonders what would be the topic – will it address the question of what women are like; the fiction women write; the fiction that is written about women; or a combination of the three. Instead, she has come up with "one minor point", that –"a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction " (7). In a tone of clarification, she talks about her use of a fictional narrator whom she calls Mary Beton and who acts as her alter ego, to relate how her thoughts on the lecture mingled with her daily life.

A week ago, the narrator, after crossing a lawn at the fictional Oxbridge university, tries to enter the library and passes by the chapel. She is intercepted at each station and reminded that women are not allowed to do such things without accompanying men. She goes to lunch, where the excellent food and relaxing atmosphere make way for good conversation. Back at Fernham, the women's college where she is staying as a guest, she is served a mediocre dinner. She later talks with a friend of hers, Mary Seton, about how men's colleges were funded by kings and independently wealthy men, and how funds were raised with difficulty for the women's college.

She and Seton denounce their mothers, and their sex, for being so impoverished and leaving their daughters so little. Had they been independently wealthy, perhaps they could have found fellowships and secured similar luxuries for women. However, the narrator realizes the obstacles they faced: entrepreneurship is at odds with child-rearing, and only for the last 48 years have women even been allowed to keep the money they earned. The narrator thinks about the effects of wealth and poverty on the mind, about the prosperity of males and the poverty of females, and the effects of tradition or lack of tradition on the writer.

Searching for answers, the narrator explores the British Museum in London. She finds there are countless books written about women by men, while there are hardly any books by women on men. She selects a dozen books to try and come up with an answer to why women are poor. Instead, she locates a multitude of other topics and a contradictory array of men's opinions on women. One male professor who writes about the inferiority of women angers her, and it occurs to her that she has become angry because the professor has written angrily. Had he written "dispassionately," she would have paid more attention to his argument, and not to him. After her anger dissipates, she wonders why men are so angry if England is a patriarchal society in which they have all the power and money. Perhaps holding power produces anger out of fear that others will take one's power. She posits that when men pronounce the inferiority of women, they are really claiming their own superiority. The narrator believes self-confidence, a requirement to get through life, is often attained by considering other people inferior in relation to oneself. Throughout history, women have served as models of inferiority who enlarge the superiority of men.

The narrator is grateful for the inheritance left her by her aunt. Previously, she was compelled to live on loathsome, slavish odd jobs available to women before 1918. In the present context, since nothing can take away her money and security, she argues, she need not hate or enslave herself to any man. She now feels free to "think of things in themselves", she can judge art, for instance, with greater objectivity.

The narrator investigates the condition of women in Elizabethan England, puzzled why there were no women writers in that fertile literary period. She believes there is a deep connection between living conditions and creative works. She reads a history book, learns that women had few rights in the era, and finds no material about middle-class women. She imagines what would have happened had Shakespeare had an equally gifted sister named Judith. She outlines

the possible course of Shakespeare's life: grammar school, marriage, and work at a theatre in London. His sister, however, was not able to attend school and her family discouraged her from independent study. She was married against her will as a teenager and ran away to London. The men at a theatre denied her the chance to work and learn the craft. Impregnated by a theatrical man, she committed suicide.

The narrator believes that no women of the time would have had such genius, "For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people." Nevertheless, some kind of genius must have existed among women then, as it exists among the working class, although it never translated to paper. The narrator argues that the difficulties of writing--especially the indifference of the world to one's art--are compounded for women, who are actively disdained by the male establishment. She says the mind of the artist must be "incandescent" like Shakespeare's, without any obstacles. She argues that the reason we know so little about Shakespeare's mind is that his work filters out his personal "grudges and spites and antipathies." His absence of personal protest makes his work "free and unimpeded."

The narrator reviews the poetical works of some of the aristocratic ladies of Elizabethan England and finds that anger toward men and insecurity mar their writing and prevents their genius from shining through. The writer Aphra Behn marks a turning point: a middle-class woman whose husband's death forced her to earn her own living, Behn's triumph over circumstances surpasses even her excellent writing. Behn is the first female writer to have "freedom of the mind." Countless 18th-century middle-class female writers and beyond owe a great debt to Behn's breakthrough. The narrator wonders why the four famous and divergent 19th-century female novelists George Eliot, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, and Jane Austen--all wrote novels; as middle-class women, they would have had less privacy and a greater inclination toward writing poetry or plays, which require less concentration. However, the 19th-century middle-class woman was trained in the art of social observation, and the novel was a natural fit for her talents.

The narrator argues that traditionally masculine values and topics in novels such as warfare valued more than feminine ones, such as drawing-room character studies. Female writers, then, were often forced to adjust their writing to meet the inevitable criticism that their work was insubstantial. Even if they did so without anger, they deviated from their original visions and their books suffered. The early 19th-century female novelist also had no real tradition from

which to work; they lacked even a prose style fit for a woman. The narrator argues that the novel was the chosen form for these women since it was a relatively new and pliable medium.

The narrator takes down a recent debut novel called *Life's Adventure* by Mary Carmichael. Viewing Carmichael as a descendant of the female writers she has commented on, the narrator dissects her book. She finds the prose style uneven, perhaps as a rebellion against the "flowery" reputation of women's writing. She reads on and finds the simple sentence "'Chloe liked Olivia.'" She believes the idea of friendship between two women is ground-breaking in literature, as women have historically been viewed in literature only in relation to men. By the nineteenth century, women grew more complex in novels, but the narrator still believes that each gender is limited in its knowledge of the opposite sex. The narrator recognizes that for whatever mental greatness women have, they have not yet made much of a mark in the world compared to men. Still, she believes that the great men in history often depended on women for providing them with "some stimulus, some renewal of creative power" that other men could not. She argues that the creativity of men and women is different and that their writing should reflect their differences. The narrator believes Carmichael has much work to do in recording the lives of women, and Carmichael will have to write without anger against men. Moreover, since everyone has a blind spot about themselves, only women can fill out the portrait of men in literature. However, the narrator feels Carmichael is "no more than a clever girl," even though she bears no traces of anger or fear. In a hundred years, the narrator believes, and with money and a room of her own, Carmichael will be a better writer.

The pleasing sight of a man and woman getting into a taxi provokes an idea for the narrator: the mind contains both a male and female part and for "complete satisfaction and happiness," the two must live in harmony. This fusion, she believes, is what poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge described when he said a great mind is "androgynous": "the androgynous mind transmits emotion without impediment it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided." Shakespeare is a fine model of this androgynous mind, though it is harder to find current examples in this "stridently sex-conscious" age. The narrator blames both sexes for bringing about this self-consciousness of gender.

Woolf takes over the speaking voice and responds to two anticipated criticisms against the narrator. First, she says she purposely did not express an opinion on the relative merits of the two genders--especially as writers--since she does not believe such a judgment is possible or desirable. Second, her audience may believe the narrator laid too much emphasis on material

things, and that the mind should be able to overcome poverty and lack of privacy. She cites a professor's argument that of the top poets of the last century, almost all were well-educated and rich. Without material things, she repeats, one cannot have intellectual freedom, and without intellectual freedom, one cannot write great poetry. Women, who have been poor since the beginning of time, have understandably not yet written great poetry. She also responds to the question of why she insists women's writing is important. As an avid reader, the overly masculine writing in all genres has disappointed her lately. She encourages her audience to be themselves and "Think of things in themselves." She says that Judith Shakespeare still lives within all women and that if women are given money and privacy in the next century, she will be reborn.

Unit 16

Unit 16 (A): A Brief Synopsis Of Concerned Chapters From *A Room Of One's Own*: Chapter – 2

A Room of One's Own might be seen as a kind of cultural odyssey where we experience someone moving past different landmarks towards a settled place, or in this case, a settled opinion. While the first chapter is concerned with the narrator's journey to the fictional Oxbridge University and her varied experiences, leading her to conclude that men and women do not receive similar treatment owing to the societal, stereotypical gendered opinion and prejudices, the second chapter shifts to London as the scope of her journey widens. The narrator pays a visit to the British Museum, where, in a wonderful image, "one stood under the vast dome as if one were a thought in the huge bald forehead." Here, she suggests, one might hope to find "the essential oil of truth (30)," and discover answers to questions like:

- Why men drink wine and women water?
- Why one sex is prosperous and the other poor?
- What effect poverty has on fiction?
- And what conditions are necessary for the creation of a work of art?

In order to find answers to these questions, the narrator looks at books that have been written about women by men.

At the very outset of her enquiry, the narrator wonders, why men write the kind of books that are so full of prejudices and contradictions in terms of their representation of women. She takes a very pertinent question to highlight her argument – are women capable of having an education? – Napoleon says: no; Dr. Johnson says: yes. Finally, she reaches the conclusion that the books written by men on women are mostly unscientific. Usually written by professors, they seem to be written "in the red light of emotion rather than the white light of truth"(36); and their anger seems obvious by their lack of dispassionate argument.

But why men are mad at women, the narrator asks. "How to explain the anger of the professors?", and especially, since England "is under the rule of patriarchy" (37). Woolf argues that the patriarchal agents are angry with women because they realize that women provide an essential psychological function which they are afraid of losing. The function is the insurance of self-confidence. Therefore, the professors and other esteemed men are not concerned with women's inferiority, but instead, what bothers them is their own superiority which has been preserved across centuries. "Women," the narrator states, "have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting man as twice his natural size "(41). Further, she argues that a piece of criticism from a woman is much more hurtful to a man than the same would be if it came from a man. If women tell the truth, she says, the figure in the looking glass shrinks.

However, the truth is valuable in its own right and the narrator claims that with an independent income of the sort that she has, women would be free to relate differently to men and to explore the nature of the sex as theirs is explored. Having complete trust in women to be "magnanimous in their assessments," she suggests that a regular stipend of about five hundred pounds a year would do the trick. With these observations, the narrator concludes her "contributions to the dangerous and fascinating subject of the psychology of the other sex" (42).

In this chapter, the reader is exposed to a version of institutionalized sexism; all the books in the library about women are by men, and frequently men with a chip on their shoulder. The narrator quickly identifies this chip as defensiveness. Men, habituated in feeling superior at the expense of women, grow angry and fearful when their superiority is threatened. Hence, they

cut down women in an attempt to enlarge themselves, as the narrator describes through the metaphor of a "looking-glass".

There are two reasons why this instinctive aggression is harmful. First, it produces many of the social ills the narrator outlines, among them war. In their constant battle for power, men destroy that which they are fighting for. Remember the narrator's nostalgia for the pre-war musical hum of conversation, now replaced by regular conversation.

The second, more subtle, reason men's aggression is harmful relates to freedom of thought. The men are overly concerned with attacking the other sex and so, ultimately, end up concentrating mostly on their gender. Their arguments lose objectivity, as they are not developed "dispassionately," and instead become subjective, easily picked-apart beliefs. Their power does not confer freedom of thought but pigeonholes them into a confined way of thinking.

Woolf does not believe this defensiveness is exclusive to men; she points out that both men and women require "confidence" in life. She will later explore how such defensiveness impairs women's freedom. For now, however, money remains the greatest guarantee of freedom, as the narrator expresses in a well-known passage regarding the personal effects of her inheritance. It is no wonder, then, that she believes money is a greater tool than the right to vote; money eliminates a woman's dependence on a man, whereas the right to vote only gives her the right to choose which man rules over her.

As the narrator says, money has given her the freedom to "think of things in themselves." Woolf is developing an aesthetic ideology with this concept of personal freedom granting objectivity of thought, and we can trace it in her metaphors that revolve around light and refined purity. Here, as she often does, the narrator absorbs the brilliant light of the sky: "a fiery fabric flashing with red eyes." Remember also the "nugget of pure truth", the narrator says, she understands the audience's desires in Chapter One. Perhaps the most important metaphor combines light and refined purity in Chapter One when she describes brilliance as "that hard little electric light."

In the same way, by creating a fictional narrator, Woolf has somewhat removed her own personality from the essay and argued "dispassionately." Though the narrator is obviously based on Woolf and shares her voice, the essay is ultimately not about her and is even less about Woolf. In contrast to the angry professor whom the narrator sketches, the narrator is detached and able to think clearly and without personal prejudices.

Unit 16 (b): A Brief Synopsis of Chapter – 5

In this chapter, Woolf tries to locate the point of distinctiveness about and their writing in the modern era, a period in which there were almost as many books written by women as there are by men, and in which many of the debilitating restrictions on women had been lifted. It was a time in which women were able to make contributions. The narrator aims to look at two particular contributions of women:

- The ability to portray women in an expanded manner, which goes beyond the way in which they are portrayed by men; and
- The ability to present features of men that men are unable to see about themselves.

The vehicle for the narrator's exploration in this chapter is the fictional "Life's Adventures" by Mary Carmichael. This work is considered as "...the last volume in a fairly long series...from Lady Winchilsea's poems and Aphra Behn's plays and novels of the four great novelists " (87). It is a part of a developing tradition of women and fiction.

However, the contemporary woman artist can break new ground, especially in her depiction of women, and in her depiction of the relationships between women. The sentence "Chloe liked Olivia " (Woolf 89), the narrator says, which she finds in "Life's Adventures" is a radical departure because it depicts something about women that male writers don't notice: that women often actually like one another. This is significant because it allows one to see women in a different light than how they are portrayed by men.

The narrator wonders at the fact that how literature would suffer if men were only portrayed in a manner comparable to that in which women have been traditionally portrayed by men, as lovers of women only, that is, and never as friends of other men, or as soldiers, or thinkers, or dreamers. If such is the case, in Shakespeare, we would retain most of *Othello*, and a good deal of *Anthony*, but no *Caesar*, no *Hamlet*, no *Lear* (Woolf 90).

Moreover, literature has, in fact, been impoverished by the restricted portrayal of women that it has largely obtained, and the contemporary female artists must explore this ground – to portray “those unsaid or half-said words” which form themselves when women are alone; “those gestures which appear unlit by the capricious light of the other sex” – and thereby to see women as they are and not as they appear to men.

Furthermore, because of the natural relations that exist between men and women, women writers have a distinctive role to play in the portrayal of men. Women are able to see some aspects of men that they can’t see themselves, and they need, the narrator says, to be able to learn to laugh in fiction at the “vanities”, or rather the “peculiarities” of the other sex. Presumably, men might profit from the seeing of women in the absence of such acerbity. But however, it’s done. The narrator says that if Mary Charmichael is “very brave and very honest, she would go behind the other sex and tell what she found there. For a true picture of man as a whole can never be painted until a woman has described that spot the size of a shilling ”(99).

There are many ways, the narrator concludes, that men and women can be useful to one another because they are different; for indeed, she says, men have always gotten from women something that their own sex was unable to supply.

Mary Carmichael is the literary heir not only to the great women writers discussed in the previous chapter but also "the descendent of all those other women whose circumstances I have been glancing at" (89). Yet she takes on something very different than they would have attempted. Woolf gives us a little lesson in reading experimental writing (like Woolf's own), reminding us that "she has every right" to attempt new forms and styles, as long as she is creating something new rather than merely destroying what has gone before. Carmichael represents Woolf's take on the state of women's fiction in her own historical moment. She sees the female literary tradition as being poised on the verge of something unprecedented and exciting, and she takes the opportunity to point out its current shortcomings and to articulate a direction for the future.

"The natural simplicity, the epic age of women's writing may have gone(87)," remarks the narrator, in reviewing the range of subjects upon which women in her own time have made themselves authors. This is the next logical step from Woolf's historical identification of "a woman's sentence." Although she draws attention to the idea that there is a natural way for women to write, a distinctive "woman's sentence," for example, she is also open to the idea that

even that naturalness may be historically contingent. As women change, and as their social roles and circumstantial realities evolve, what is "natural" to them will presumably change as well. Such a change will indeed be for the better: "She may begin to use writing as an art, not as a method of self-expression." When this happens, will there still be such a thing as a "woman's sentence"? Woolf imagines so, for she wants to preserve the richness of difference between men and women. But it must be as flexible and evolving as women themselves.

Women have a creative power that differs substantially from that of men, one that has found expression, even in bygone ages, in non-literary ways. Education, she argues, should bring out those differences rather than enforcing similarity, and so acknowledge and enhance the richness and variety of human culture. "For we have too much likeness as it is."

Unit 16 (c): A Brief Synopsis of Chapter – 6

The last and the final chapter of the text is replete with images. At the very outset, the narrator looks out of the window and comes across an ordinary spectacle: a man and a woman come down the street, meet at the corner and get into a taxi together. Though an apparently common image, the narrator feels that it suggests an image of cooperation which interferes with the unity of minds. The image of two people of opposite sex getting into the taxi generates an idea in her mind: "...there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and they [may need to] be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness." "In each of us," the narrator proposes,

> "two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating " (106).

This might be what Coleridge meant when he said that a great mind is "androgynous" (106) Androgyny, therefore, is the third and final cultural perspective, presented by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. Derived from the ancient Greek 'andro' (or male) and 'gyn' (or female),

androgyny views the sexes and the impulses expressed by men and women as open to change, and it suggests a blending of two viewpoints that are apparently separated.

From the point of view of androgyny, the aim of the artist is not to function as a male or a female. Rather, the goal is to function fully as a complete human being, as a fusion of the male and female facets of one nature, even if one's own gender predominates. Therefore, the narrator contends, some collaboration should take place in the mind between the man and the woman before any form of creation can be accomplished.

After responding to a couple of objections, Woolf concludes the book with a return to her most famous image, with a suggestion that Shakespeare's sister lives in the person of every modern woman, and she can flourish if they can face the reality and work to make an environment conducive to such a genius. As she states:

> ...that Shakespeare had a sister...She died young – alas she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop, opposite the Elephant and Castle... [but] my belief is that this poet...still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here...for they are washing up the dishes and putting children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh.
>
> If we face the fact that there is no arm to cling to...that we go alone...Shakespeare's sister can be born, drawing her life from the lives of those who were her forerunners...the world must be prepared for...[but] she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in property and obscurity, is worthwhile (122).

To conclude the essay, Woolf sheds her Mary Beton persona and directly addresses her audience—presumably women writers. She encourages them to work incrementally for the future of women in general, and specifically for women writers. This recalls the imagery of Chapter 1, as she imagines the building of the great chapel and other university buildings and the great wealth of generations that went into the building. It is true—and her essay provides ample evidence—women are at a disadvantage because of generations of poverty and limited existence. Yet progress has been made, and it takes time to build something great and lavish. Woolf exhorts the women writers of her time to obtain money and a room of their own—

and to write. They might not be the Judith Shakespeare who can write unhindered, but they can prepare the way for her. "Without that effort on our part," she tells them, "without that determination that ... she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry" (122), such a Judith Shakespeare will never come to be.

Unit 16 (d): A Feminist Reading of *A Room of One's Own*

The study of *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* concentrate on leading essays in which she developed an innovative and politically challenging analysis of the causes and effects of women's exclusion from the British cultural, political and economic life. Mrs. Woolf searched for a history that belonged to women, and in doing so, discovered that history was inseparable from the history of women's relation to language. Starting from a consideration of the troubled relations between women and fiction in *A Room of One's Own* 1929, she moves on to a much broader analysis of the political and cultural implications of women's oppression in *Three Guineas* 1938. In both, women are the centre and the target of the author's interest, particularly how society responds to and considers her position and rights.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf develops the theory of the relation between gender and writing. She examines the exclusion of women from educational institutions and the relations between this exclusion and the unequal distribution of wealth. Her fictional narrator Mary Beton experienced this exclusion when she was in Oxbridge where she was prevented from entering the library of all men's college. In this work, Mrs. Woolf faced and experienced male dominance and she was forced by this dominance to raise the feminist goal of changing society or the world to a place where the male and the female voices may have been equally valued. Despite her adamant persistence in this field, this dream of equality remained essentially inaccessible. It is for this reason, that the tone of *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* was full of resentment and discontentment.

The result of ten years of research was Woolf's *Three Guineas* which built on the argument; she developed in *A Room of One's Own*. In this essay, she advocated a form of radical political action in which women would form themselves into a society of outsiders in order to challenge

the rise of Fascism and the drift towards war. She also analysed women's position in culture hastening towards war.

Woolf's *A Room of One's own* is a landmark in feminist literature. It is considered as the first major work in feminist criticism since it has been viewed as the "first modern text of feminist criticism, the model in both theory and practically socialist feminist of a specifically socialist feminist criticism "(Kaur 285).

Woolf employs a number of methodologies, historical and sociologist analysis, fictional hypothesis, and philosophy, notably to answer her initial question of why there have been so few female writers. As described, "Woolf's *A Room* has become a project that houses us. In her power, failure and perplexities, she is a major architect and designer of feminist criticism" (Vowlvy 62). Many writers use this piece of work as a tool to represent their suffering. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf suggests that a female writer is always inherited as well as an originator. Her own legacy has crossed colour and class lines in the feminist community. Michele Barrett, writing from a Marxist Feminist perspective, praises Woolf's fruitful and still largely unexplored insight in A Room of One's Own that, "The condition under which men and women produce literature are materially different" (Barrett 1003). At that time, women were under the control of their male counterparts. They did not have their own work or even own money. As a result, they did not have mental freedom. And if they tried to write, they lacked the courage to sign their works. Tillie Olsen used *A Room* to meditate on the silence of women that were more marginalized than Shakespeare's sister, exploring not only gender as one of the "traditional silencers of humanity", but also "class economic circumstances and colors." Woolf's point of view in *A Room* is that of a collective voice, of the literary influence on women writers and it has been explored in the works of some later feminist critics. For example, Jane Marcus in her essay "Thinking Back through our Mother's" emphasizes Woolf's reliance on the work of other women. Woolf knew by experience, how women influence each other. "Far from Harold Bloom's concept of the anxiety of influence, it is rather the opposite, affording the woman writer relief from anxiety, acting as a hideout in history where slide can lick her wounds between attacks on the patriarchy" (Jensen 92).

A Room derives its importance from the several themes it covers. They are the basic principles the women have to gain to be able to write like men. According to the present reading, old topics are the outcomes of one major theme which is financial independence as seen in Michelle

Barrett's statement, "If we may prophesy, women in time to come will write fewer novels only but poetry and criticism and history. But to be sure, one is looking ahead to that golden, that perhaps fabulous age when women will have what has so long been denied them leisure, and money, and a room to themselves" (Barrett 52), to be able to write, there, women ought to cross many obstacles such as gaining the proper education, proper space, and most importantly, money. The material autonomy is of prime importance in determining the position of the female writers. Indeed, *A Room* as manifested in the very title does stress privacy; this freedom is to be independent.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is a key text of feminist literary criticism. Written after her deliberation of two lectures on the topic of fiction at Cambridge University in 1928, Woolf's essay examines the educational, social, and financial disadvantages women have faced throughout history. It contains Woolf's famous argument that women must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. Although Woolf describes this as an opinion upon one minor point, and the essay explores the "unsolved problems" of women and fiction.

Through the fictionalized character of "Mary"- who visits the British Museum to find out about everything that has ever been written about women. Woolf built the argument that literature and history have been constructed by men to traditionally marginalize women. Women are inferior writers or inferior subjects, instead of locating their silence in their material and social circumstances. Women have been barred from attending schools and Universities for intended or excluded law for an inheritance or expected to Mary during which their time is spent housekeeping and childrearing. Woolf imagines what kind of life Judith Shakespeare - the talented sister of Shakespeare – might have lived, concluding that she, would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty.

It is also an issue of gendered values, Woolf insists that writing in the 1920s, it is, the masculine values that prevail. this is an important book, the critic assumes because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room. Woolf ends with an appeal to the audience to write all kinds of books, hesitating at no subject however trivial or however vast; Judith Shakespeare would come again if he worked for her and so to work even in poverty and obscurity is worthwhile. Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* is a landmark of twentieth-century feminist thought. It explores the history of women in

literature through an unconventional and highly provocative investigation of the social and material conditions required for the writing of literature. These conditions leisure time, privacy, and financial independence-underwrite all literary production, but they are particularly relevant to understand the situation of women in the literary tradition because women historically have been uniformly deprived of those basic prerequisites.

In her exploration of this idea, Woolf launches a number of provocative sociological and aesthetic critiques. She reviews not only the state of women in literature but also the state of scholarship, both theoretical and historical, concerning women. She also elaborates an aesthetics based on the principle of incandescence, the ideal state in which everything that is merely personal is consumed in the intensity and truth of one's art. Just as Woolf speaks out against traditional hierarchies in the content of her essay, so too does she rejects standard logical argumentation in her essay's form. Woolf innovatively draws on the resources of fiction to compensate for gaps in the factual record about women. She writes a history of women's thinking about the history of thinking women; her essay is a reconstruction and a re-enactment as well as an argument.

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Assignments

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of Woolf's argument in *A Room of One's Own*.

2. How does Woolf's essay play a pivotal role in incorporating the major premises of the 'Second Wave' of feminism?

3. Comment critically on the technique of narration in *A Room of One's Own*.

4. How would you perceive Woolf's stake on the concept of 'androgyny'?