

**Institute of Distance and Open Learning
Gauhati University**

**MA in English
Semester 2**

**Paper VI
Literature and Social History**

**Block 1
Romanticism**



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Block Introduction:

In this first block of Paper VI we try to familiarize the students with the concepts and the intellectual environment surrounding the idea of Romanticism. You know that the literary and socio-cultural condition termed 'Romanticism' came to be experienced in England towards the end of the eighteenth century and continued till the middle of the following century before getting transformed into, mutated and replaced by 'Victorianism'. As this paper is on English Literary and Social History, an attempt is made to present to you a picture of the socio-political and cultural scenario of England as well as other relevant places in Europe during the time.

As students of literature, you are aware of the fact that all movements in literature and arts are rooted in and conditioned in movements and events in the social, political and economic fields of their times. Romanticism is deeply rooted in the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789 which stirred the social, political, economic and cultural equations of entire Europe. We can also find traces of the unrest and questioning in related upheavals like the American War of Independence and the Seven Year's War. The ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, fraternity), considered as the chief motto of France, considered to have originated in the French Revolution, transgressed their political domain and penetrated into the lives and culture of the people so overwhelmingly that the literature, theatre, painting, music, sculpture of entire Europe articulated them to various extents. In the first unit of this block, you will get an overview of the historic French Revolution. You can treat this reading as an entry point into the world of the historical event with all its varied, contradicting tendencies and world-views. However it is expected from you that you explore this area of study with more readings, which will eventually help your understanding of the Romantic age in English literature.

The second unit in this block will discuss Romanticism as a major movement in literature and art in Europe. Most of the major themes of English Romantic literature find their roots in the philosophy of the Enlightenment as well as in German Transcendental Idealism. Romanticism, which advocates freedom and expansion in both the physical and intellectual spheres, celebrates imagination and glorifies the self. It can be farther read as the beginning of individualism and democracy. The Romantic poets and thinkers theorized the world of nature from certain new angles that diverged vividly from the

neoclassical thinkers. Besides, language was a major concern for Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge. The major tendencies within Romanticism differ among different poets and thinkers to varied extents. Some major statements from a number of poets and critics have been put forward in this block for you to have an overview of the different and often contradictory ideas within Romanticism.

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Unit 1

The French Revolution

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1.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to familiarize you with one of the most calamitous events of European history, the French Revolution of 1789. In order to study the literature of the English Romantic writers, your knowledge of this radical turn in both French and European history is absolutely essential. By the end of working through this unit, you should be able to

- *describe* the course of events leading up to the Revolution
- *outline* this chapter of French history, and
- *trace* the extent of the impact that the Revolution had on English thinkers

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The French Revolution has been an area of study because it has brought up innumerable questions regarding not only its causes but its consequences and its aftermath. Below you will be taken through many of the details that make it such an absorbing area of study. It should not be comfortably received by you that conditions in France were so devastating as to make a revolution inevitable. In the 1780s, along with England, France was a leading industrial producer. In terms of cultural institutions it had high levels of achievement. As a colonial power, France strode ahead, along with Britain. But France was also an absolutist state, strengthened by the enterprise of Louis XIV, the 'Sun King'.

It had a political organisation that did not allow the voices of the excluded sections to be heard. When the events of 1789 gathered into a storm they did not take the population very much by surprise. The old order had amply displayed its weaknesses and where the cracks were opened up, the angry fervour of those who demanded change stoked the flames. The course of the French Revolution ran through the decade of the 1790s. The events that ran into each other were diverse and complex, sometimes leading in one direction and sometimes the other. We have tried to capture some of these difficulties below.

Inevitably, there were bound to be repercussions on English political life: both in the shape of radical thinking and of its counter-currents. In terms of literature, we can see some of these complexities in the writings of the English Romantic poets. This group of poets remains representative of the English Jacobins, or of the strain of thought among English writers and thinkers who were sensitive to the issues germane to social progress and brought to the fore by the events in France. Indeed, we cannot survey Romanticism without a necessary reference to the French Revolution.

1.3 THE FRENCH HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It would be of help to obtain some familiarity with the period that preceded the French Revolution in 1789. We could begin by considering the reign of Louis XIV, the “Sun King”, whose reign from 1643 to 1715 is probably one of the longest in the histories of European monarchs. Louis XIV did not uphold the feudal structure and instead sought to instal a centralized form of government that ruled from the capital. He worked towards establishing monarchical authority over the main areas of sovereignty, the army, the laws, rules of taxation and the bureaucracy. Louis XIV was also known as the ‘Sun King’ who built the Palace at Versailles which ultimately became the symbol of absolute monarchy; this “château” was designed to enable Louis to exert control over his nobles, courtiers and other functionaries of the king’s court. From 1682 Versailles was the seat of political power in France as it housed the absolutist ‘Ancien Regime’ which later became the target of the revolutionaries in 1789.

Stop to Consider

Ancien Regime

The term denotes the “old order” or the older state structure which had prevailed prior to the French Revolution. This is like pointing out the obvious fact that such a term could have come into political currency among the French revolutionaries only after the old structure had been dismantled by the great turmoil of the Revolution.

What did this ‘ancien regime’ look like? All over Europe, in medieval times, society had been divided into ‘estates’ or orders with their specific places and functions in the hierarchy. The clergy was nominally at the apex giving spiritual guidance and consolation to a population with little hope of worldly happiness. This was followed by the nobility who owned the land and provided military protection. Trade and manufacturing was carried on by town-dwellers whose rights and privileges were usually laid down in charters. The mass of the population, the peasantry, lived under the supervision of the lord and were bound to the land. This model had broken down over the centuries but it was control of the land which continued to be the indicator of social status since land continued to be the source of wealth. The three ‘estates’ of the realm was composed of the Catholic clergy (the ‘first estate’), the nobility (the ‘second estate’), and the remainder of the populace (the ‘third estate’).

The example of Louis XIV in France (ruler from 1660 – 1715) who set about strengthening the authority of the monarch is typical of European rulers during these centuries. Partly due to the instability caused by wars of religion in the sixteenth century, a theory had emerged that absolute monarchy alone could give society the scope to be stable and united. European monarchs were frequently preoccupied at this time with setting limits to the powers of the nobility. As Woloch tells us: “France under Louis XIV (ruled 1660-1715) had set the pace in establishing monarchy’s authority. Continuing the work of [Cardinal] Richelieu, the young sovereign extended the crown’s control the basic areas of sovereignty: armed force, lawmaking, taxation, and bureaucracy. In the process he subdued . . . the “intermediary corps” that had always opposed the extension of absolutism. Certain great nobles who claimed rights in the formulation of state policy were now excluded from the royal councils. Other “overmighty subjects” who had maintained private armies in the countryside were tracked down, brought to heel, and a few even executed.”

The Age of Louis XIV had been one of almost continuous warfare finally ending in the War of the Spanish Succession of 1701 -1715. Louis possibly wished to be an arbiter of the fate of Europe or he may have also wished to divert the energies of his nobility whose powers he had curtailed by extending

the monarch's central control over the provinces, and even the self-governing towns like Bordeaux and Marseilles whose presiding oligarchies stood between monarch and urban subjects. Absolutism in Europe had hardened, by the eighteenth century, beyond the theory of the "divine right" of kings into a justification for a stable society whose need was underlined by the many rebellions and civil wars of the seventeenth century.

The chief law courts of the realm, known as the "parlements", had exercised effective veto power against any policy or legislation they found objectionable. Under Louis XIV, this was brought down under threat of exile even as, elsewhere, a new bureaucracy took over the administrative powers of the parlements, the provincial estates and of royal officials who had invested in their positions.

Stop to Consider

The Parlements

In France the *Parlements* were thirteen law courts which were headed by magistrates who were socially eminent persons. These courts were a uniquely French institution combining both judicial and political functions. Any royal decree had to be registered in a *Parlement* since they were also courts of record. The power that accrued from this function was connected to those situations when a *Parlement* could refuse to register an edict and thus impede its implementation.

The intendants were the principal agents of royal absolutism who were stationed in the provinces, one in each of the thirty-six generalities into which the kingdom had been divided for administrative purposes and taxation. Intendants were chosen specifically by royal dictates and removable by the same method and were also selected from outside the areas which they were made to serve.

It could, of course, happen that the royal crown could use its own methods of intimidating these courts but since 1715 the *Parlements* had regained some of their power to put a check on royal absolutism.

In many ways these *Parlements* came to be seen as self-assigned 'guardians of liberty'. In other senses, the *Parlements* stood as examples of Europe's constituted bodies which upheld interests (such as regional ones) other than what the monarchy conceived as the national interest. An example of just how the *Parlements* could block royal decrees was the case of the tax proposed after the Seven Years' War. This tax would have been more equitable than the older ones as it applied to both nobles and commoners. But the *Parlements* blocked the tax on the grounds that the crown improve the administration of its finances and reduce its expenses.

However, with the ascent of Louis XVI to the throne, the *Parlement* of Paris became an obstacle to his reforms.

What Louis XIV finally left imprinted on the French government was the “stamp of centralized authority” (I.Woloch) that could not be removed even by the French revolutionaries. The absolutist monarchs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries faced a dilemma in their perceptions of the nobility who could either obstruct or support the growth of absolutism. Traditions of the nobles as well as their ambitions had to be contended with and Louis XIV put through his solutions in the form of leaving intact the basic privileges of the nobility, heightening its social prestige through various appointments, commissions, sinecures while simultaneously clipping the powers of the parlements and the provincial estates.

When Louis XV assumed full power after the completion of his minority, in 1723, absolutism returned with full sway despite its continued resistance by the aristocratic bodies (the parlements and the provincial estates) throughout the eighteenth century. His reign came to be marked by debauchery despite a popular early image of a beloved monarch till the period of his great political successes of the 1740s.

SAQ

Attempt to show that ‘absolutism’ is not a term that is interchangeable with ‘dictatorship’. How would you understand the difference? (80 + 30 words)

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Economic and financial crises should be seen as comprising some of the causes of the Revolution of 1789. Bread had become dearer which in turn caused famine and malnutrition. Starvation and disease stalked the poor and the destitute. Fluctuations in the cycle of growth had not been unknown to the European economy. With bread as the staple food item, a survey of the supply and cost of flour and grain was enough to learn of the well-being or even the survival of populations in Europe around the early modern period. France in the seventeenth century had already suffered the effects of calamities like undernourishment, unemployment, rising death rates and disease. In

the years 1709 -1710, France saw one such calamity in the form of famine. This happened to coincide with the war expenses of King Louis XV who had already inherited financial difficulties from Louis XIV. Ultimately, his ineffective rule bequeathed a legacy of troubles to his successor Louis XVI which finally erupted in the form of the 1789 revolution.

Stop to Consider

Seven Years' War

France was involved in this war which, being based on the enmity between Prussia and Austria in Europe, and the colonial rivalry between France and Britain, lasted from 1754 to 1763. The Anglo-French conflict had broken out in North America and in India long before it began on the European continent. France's initial successes suffered a reversal in 1759 and she continued to suffer losses through 1762. The war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 the signatories to which were Britain, France and Spain with Portugal in agreement. The effect of this French military defeat was considerable on French political life as it conceded all French colonial claims to Canada, Nova Scotia, and the Ohio valley to Britain and Louisiana (including New Orleans) to Spain.

American War of Independence

French involvement in the American Revolutionary War (the American War of Independence) came on the heels of the conclusion of the Seven Years' War which had given Britain a sweeping victory. In some senses the American War of Independence resulted from this very victory by creating problems of substantial war debts, and the management of Britain's colonial dominions.

Louis XVI secretly began to aid the American rebels around 1776 going on to formally enter the conflict in 1778, which ultimately became a decisive factor in the course of the war. France's allies, Spain and Dutch Republic, also helped to reinforce troops fighting against the British. The war ended in 1783 with the Treaty of Paris.

All over Europe in general in the eighteenth century, there was a period of relative stability until the 1770s. Power was shared by the upper classes (the nobilities, urban elites, the landed gentry) with the kings and princes as aristocrats and oligarchs who exercised their influence through constituted bodies such as assemblies, councils and estates. The voices of other citizens simply could not be allowed to be heard. Elsewhere, outside France, there were peasant revolts, as in Bohemia and Russia. Constitutional reforms

were also demanded in the Netherlands and Belgium. The old order in Europe was also shaken by events across the Atlantic as Britain's thirteen American colonies revolted against control by the mother country. In France the social structure, at the top of which stood the traditional nobles with their luxurious life-style, was beginning to crack with the crises that beset the reign of Louis XVI who began his rule before he turned twenty, in 1774. Very shy and indecisive, Louis XVI summoned the Estates-General, an act which became one of the causes of the Revolution. This body had been last convened in 1614 and had been constrained under Louis XV to shed its importance in the judicial system. In France, during the eighteenth century, the parlements (law courts) registered the laws issued by the king and could place objections to such laws when needed. These parlements had begun to assume much importance in the absence of the Estates General. Louis XV had become unpopular by remodelling the judicial system through his chancellor, Maupeou. Louis XV made efforts to carry out some laudable reforms but his curbs on the powers of the parlements did not win him his subjects' approval. When Louis XVI tried to reinstate the old judicial system by summoning the Estates-General he was to some extent justified.

Stop to Consider

The Estates-General of 1789

The Estates-General was a representative body in French politics, representing the three estates of the realm: the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners. Before Louis XIV began his absolutist state-building, the Estates-General had met in 1614. When Louis XVI's finance minister, Calonne, proposed his new tax which was rejected by the Assembly of Notables in 1787, his place was taken by Archbishop Lomenie de Brienne. Brienne's plan for emergency loans was again blocked by the Paris *Parlement* which demanded the convention of the Estates-General. Accordingly, Louis did as he was demanded and the Estates-General convened in May 1789. There was already some sort of consensus among both the nobility and the commoners regarding limits on absolute monarchy, individual liberties, a rational government and equality of taxation. However, the extent of reform was difficult to agree upon.

The meeting of the Estates-General in May 1789 only served to heighten the perception of the Third Estate that the legislature had to be reorganized. Rather than discuss taxes, the assembly ended with the constitution of a National Assembly.

However, France was steeped in heavy debts and losses due to her involvement in the Seven Years' War of 1754 to 1763. This war was based largely on the rivalry with Britain both in Europe and in the colonies and ended in the defeat of the French on both fronts. France was faced with a huge national debt. Royal authority was weak and regional diversities could be seen in important matters like administration and taxation. Many distant provinces had their own traditions and conventions and locally constituted bodies called provincial estates. Despite the consolidation of absolutism that Louis XIV had once undertaken, the centre of authority in France was neither firm nor integrated. Policies were not clearly adhered to while resolute decisions were unlikely. Taxation was formulated in such a manner as to exempt the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Although the government under Louis XVI attempted reforms the situation was not conducive to such half-hearted attempts : "As the French monarchy entered the 1780's – its reputation tarnished by previous political conflicts and false starts toward reform – it was too strong to surrender authority willingly, but too hemmed in by the constituted bodies and special interests to exercise sovereignty effectively. There seemed to be no way to forge a consensus, no mechanisms or institutions to harmonize diverse viewpoints." (I.Woloch)

In no mean measure, the crisis of the old regime was also mounted on the tensions between the rich and the poor. France had both the aristocratic classes as well as the middle classes. The French elite could be found both within the nobility as well as the third estate by virtue of the fact that during the reign of Louis XIV the members of the realm's thirteen *Parlements* attained hereditary noble status. This class was not only immensely wealthy (and highly intellectual), its members displayed a greater sense of responsibility unlike the older nobility. New nobles, often consisting of those who had purchased expensive sinecures, were recognized by the crown. Thus there was resentment among the various sections of the elites. Between the country where the typical manorial lord resided and the vastly opulent families which attended the king's residence and the seat of the royal government at Versailles, lay a wide chasm in terms of wealth.

SAQ

Explore the symbolism that Versailles has acquired in the modern history of France. (75 words)

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In eighteenth-century France peasant life was one of poverty and insecurity. A French historian (Pierre Goubert) described the times of Louis XIV in these words: “Death was at the centre of life, just as the graveyard was at the centre of the village.” This description held true even for the later eighteenth century. European society in the period was divided by a vast gulf between the elites and the poor. There was no system of charity or assistance for the poor which drove such indigent people to eke out an existence by desperate means. Vagrancy began to be perceived to be the primary stage of crime. The attitude of the government towards this problem was to punish vagrancy. The French judicial system had acquired notoriety for its use of the *lettre de cachet* or the general warrant which was issued in the name of the crown to imprison an individual without trial. This punitive weapon of the government was one of the special targets of the French Revolution as it symbolised the height of French absolutism. The victim of such a warrant could be silently incarcerated in a dungeon such as the Bastille.

The state of royal finances should be regarded as the breaking point for the old regime in France. Heavy debts meant more taxes and with an inequitable system of taxation, it was inevitable that the administrative districts or generalities in France would try to circumvent the impositions of tax. By this inefficient fiscal system, the government was locked into a vicious circle of borrowings and taxation. By the 1780s the government had consolidated a tarnished image of inefficiency and profligacy, of weak attempts at reforms and of reluctance to relinquish absolutism. Under a new finance minister, Charles de Calonne, who proposed a new framework of provincial assemblies for the sanctioning of a new, more equitable tax on landed property, Louis XVI called an Assembly of Notables in 1787 which, however, denounced Calonne’s proposals.

Calonne’s successor proposed new emergency loans which were blocked by a set of almost revolutionary measures forwarded by the Paris *Parlement*. It asked for the restitution and convention of the Estates-General, - as you have read above — a representative institution that had been shorn of its role since its last meeting in 1614, preceding the era of absolutism. A British traveller, Arthur Young’s comment described the situation in these words, “France is on the verge of revolution, but one likely to add to the scale of the nobility and clergy.”

SAQ

‘Representation’ is an important idea in the discussion of modern political systems. What does the history of the causes and effects of the French Revolution tell us of the march to ‘democracy’? Would you call the *États-General* a symbol of the French conception of democracy?
(60 + 60 words)

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Through 1788, the parleys had continued: the Paris *Parlement* launched an assault on the monarchy albeit on the side of the aristocrats. The monarchy responded by dissolving the *Parlement* and creating new courts, also exiling its leaders. This led to a huge outcry. The middle-classes had allied with the nobility in resisting the monarchy but soon this alliance ended. When the situation became impossible, Brienne conceded to the demand that the Estates-General be convened in Versailles the following May, in 1789. The insurmountable question now came down to how the Estates-General should be organized. The barrier between the noble and the non-noble elites now showed itself to be ineradicable as the *Parlement* proposed that the organization should be on the same lines as in 1614. The aristocrats came under the assault of the bourgeoisie especially as reflected in pamphlets of

Abbé Sieyès titled, *What is the Third Estate?* Sieyès attacked the aristocracy asking: “What is the Third Estate? Everything! What has it been in the political order up to the present? Nothing!” Sieyès’s pamphlet was to provide a powerful influence on the revolutionary thinking that led up to the revolution.

Early in 1789 citizens came together to choose electors and to draw up petitions (*cahiers*) invited by the king. The electors selected thus later went up to regional assemblies to choose their deputies who would go up to the Estates-General. Consolidated *cahiers* were also drawn up. Generally, the nobility accepted in principle the demand for equality of taxation and demands for individual rights, legal reform and meetings of the Estates-General. The third estate however went further to ask for a reorganization of the Estates-General, and for the drafting of a constitution overriding traditional liberties and privileges. The entire electoral process helped to put into shape sharper political opinions and a new middle-class leadership. Leadership of the third estate however came to be taken over by a solidly middle-class set among which was not to be found any artisan or peasant from anywhere in France. Meanwhile the aristocracy had drawn closer to the sovereign as they found themselves confronting an increasingly vociferous and aggressive bourgeoisie. Besides the politically charged atmosphere which filled the air around the whole electoral proceedings, severe economic difficulties added to hardships in 1788-89 due to crop failures and the shortage of grain. The price of bread doubled even as the consequences of earlier depression, unemployment and lowered trade, continued. The roads were filled with beggars and vagrants, while convoys of grain were laid upon by furious consumers. In all, subsistence itself would become the agent of mobilization of the populace against the first two estates.

The spread of radical ideas, an effect of Enlightenment ideals, may have also had some connection with the availability of *libelle* in France in the eighteenth century. We can consider two kinds of developments in the history of ideas that prevailed prior to the French Revolution: the ideas emanating from the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment and those arising from the practice of *libelle*. Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* (1762) became widely popular as the Revolution began although it had not been so popular when first published. The reason for its revolutionary appeal may lie in the way it articulated a trend of thought that had not been voiced earlier: that

communities could be brought into existence where the well-being of each individual would be ensured collectively, or a “civic spirit” could be promoted. The books written by the philosophes appearing around the late 1750s besides the *Encyclopedia* had invoked the authorities’ wrath. In 1759, the French attorney general denounced the *Encyclopedia* before the Paris *Parlement* asking for a ban: “According to its true purpose it should have been the book of all knowledge, but has become instead the book of all error.” By the 1770s opposition to the *Encyclopedia* had abated and as the political climate had also changed, the popularity of the project was so vastly spread that it finally yielded a profit of over one million livres.

SAQ

Would you consider here an overrating of the importance of the *Encyclopedia* in this case of historiography? Attempt to chart out the importance of the intellectual project at a time of crop failures and heavy taxation. (80 words)

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Printing and publishing was controlled in all its aspects in France. Censorship caused the philosophes of the Enlightenment great anxiety although it did not succeed in silencing them. Freedom of expression was a foundational principle of the Enlightenment. Quite often it was possible to circumvent censorship laws with official connivance thus leading to the publication of some important works by the philosophes. Moreover, much of the banned literature was published across the borders of France and then smuggled in. Within this section were works that were actually libellious and targetted eminent individuals or officials. Serious political tracts which were denunciatory included *Memoirs of the Bastille* by Simon Linguet and Count Honoré de Mirabeau’s *Lettres de Cachet*. It cannot be said that all of the banned literature was serious but even through its decadence it definitely fed a sense of alienation among all those who would later stand up for the Revolution.

1.4 NAMES & EVENTS

The French Revolution is now symbolized by the storming of the Bastille. Events that led up to it are partly traceable to the meeting of the Third Estate as the 'Communes' and then instituting itself as the National Assembly by 17 June 1789. The king, Louis XVI, in his attempt to retard the intentions of this body and to assert his control over the ensuing processes, ordered the closure of the venue of the Assembly's meeting, the Salle des États, on grounds of repair. The gathering thereupon removed itself to an indoor tennis court nearby and proclaimed the Tennis Court Oath on 20 June 1789, promising to deliver a Constitution. Soon many representatives of the clergy and the nobility joined the members of the Assembly which was already receiving declarations of support from cities in other parts of France. By the end of June it was apparent that the royal government had succumbed to events although military troops meanwhile were being brought to Paris and Versailles. The National Assembly now named itself the National Constituent Assembly on 9th July. When on 11 July Louis XVI's finance minister, Jacques Necker (whose sympathies lay with the Third Estate), was fired and the whole finance ministry reconstituted, it was taken to be a sign of a royal blow to the Assembly which now pitted itself against the king and his government by adamantly continuing with its proceedings. Paris was by now struck with rioting and plunder, with the French troops in the army – which was otherwise made up of foreign soldiers – coming out in support of the rioting crowds.

On 14th July, 1789, the Bastille (a fortress built up from medieval times) which housed common criminals as well as a few noble offenders, fell to the revolutionaries after several hours of fighting. The riotous mob intended to capture the ammunition and armoury known to be stored in the fortress and after the structure fell its governor was arrested and beheaded. The Bastille had been regarded as a symbol of monarchist tyranny primarily due to its sinister reputation and its downfall was to signal the march of the revolutionaries against ancient régime.

SAQ

Attempt to connect the history of the downfall of the Bastille and the events described in Dickens’s novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. (75 words)

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The National Guard now came under the leadership of Marquis de La Fayette which became a power in its own right, while a new form of government, the “commune”, was instituted. On 4th August 1789 came a major event when the National Constituent Assembly formally abolished feudalism and feudal seigniorial privileges of the Second Estate, and abolished the taxes or tithes levied by the First Estate. On 26th August, 1789, the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen’ was adopted, based upon the model provided by the American ‘United States Declaration of Independence’. The Declaration was drafted by La Fayette and is regarded as the first step in the making of the French constitution. Another major event occurred on 5th October 1789, when about seven thousand poor women of Paris marched on Versailles in protest against the high price of bread but specifically targeting Louis’ queen, Marie-Antoinette.

Among the leaders who influenced the Revolution are the names of Comte de Mirabeau, Talleyrand, duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Maximilien Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat, and Georges Danton. The Jacobin club was the most prominent club among the revolutionaries.

“Liberté, égalité, fraternité”

This is the national motto of France. It is said to have originated in the French Revolution although this is not precisely clear. Each of the terms carried a set of meanings which could be read differently by different factions in the course of the Revolution. In effect what seems to be clear is that it was only one of the mottos that emerged from the turmoil. If we consider the tussles that occurred between the various Estates, we can understand that be it ‘freedom’, or ‘equality’ or ‘brotherhood’, each of these could imply an important part of the notions of democracy that prevailed then.

The creation of the National Assembly began the process of wide-ranging socio-economic reforms. The authority of the Church to impose the 'tithe' was abolished. Under the monarchy the Church had been the single largest landowner and this wealth was targeted as, by November 1789, the property of the Church was put at the disposal of the nation. The charitable services of the church were also taken over by the Assembly. By the beginning of 1790 the Church could no longer impose monastic vows nor was it allowed to maintain the religious orders. By the July of the following year, the clergy was rendered as employees of the state. Under the 'Civil Constitution of the Clergy', the priests were required to take an oath unto the state. Since most of the clergy did not follow this legislation, and the Pope refused recognition of the new Civil Constitution, a process of de-Christianization began which led to the massacre, deportation, and exile of the clergy.

Between 1789 and 1793 when the 'Reign of Terror' began, efforts continued on the drafting of a constitution. In June 1791 the King, with the rest of his family, tried to flee but was apprehended at Varennes and brought back to Paris. The monarchy was abolished in September 1792 and Louis XVI came under the guillotine in January 1793. France also faced external threats at this time as European aristocracies were shocked by the turn of events. The 'Reign of Terror' which ensued thereafter took the lives of nearly 40,000 people. The Jacobins and the Committee of Public Safety became the controlling sections of the new government. The Jacobins were subsequently overtaken by the Girondists. In September 1795 the new constitution took effect while Napoleon Bonaparte took power in 1799 through a coup and installed a Consulate.

1.5 ENGLISH JACOBINISM AND THE REVOLUTION

It was indeed inevitable that 'Jacobinism' would exert great influence on English intellectuals. We can count among those who supported the revolution, poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Their support, however, ended with the beginning of the Reign of Terror. Hazlitt too must be counted among those who were on the side of the revolutionaries. However, it is the name of Thomas Paine that crops up most when we consider how the French Revolution occupied English minds.

With the outbreak of the Revolution in France, English political debates already in process in the eighteenth century regarding absolutism or royal prerogatives and the powers resident in Parliament took on a fresh urgency. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 had made clear the limits of monarchical powers, limits which were further reaffirmed in 1714 during the Hanoverian succession. The leadership of Robert Walpole (1676 – 1745), who held office as leader of the government (a virtual “prime minister” in effect, though the term was not in use then) from 1721 to 1742, and of William Pitt (1708 – 1778) and William Pitt the Younger (1759 – 1806) during the 1750s, the 1780s and ’90s helped to ensure the workings of an unreformed, oligarchic Parliament which could not sustain political stability. Overall, the political organization of the country was a loose network of patronage, interests and ‘connections’. In 1760 George III became king who did not endear himself to the Whigs with his dismissal of Pitt and the installation of his own favourites. As Woloch remarks: “George III was destined to reign over a political establishment far less tranquil than under his two Hanoverian predecessors. The growth of “outside” political agitation in such places as London and Westminster, as well as the eruption of colonial rebellion, would place substantial strain on Britain’s traditional political system.”

The American Revolutionary Wars had had a deep impact on the English mind. The events of the American struggle against British colonial rule, leading up to the Declaration of Independence of 1776 had demonstrated that for all its ‘Enlightenment’, England was a colonial tyrant: “ ‘enlightened’ England became cast in the new and unaccustomed role of old regime oppressor, while enlightened aspirations were realized in the New Republic”. William Blake wrote in 1793, in *America: A Prophecy*, “The King of England looking westward trembles at the vision”. Indeed, historians have opined that it was the American catastrophe which helped to open a new chapter in the English political discourse.

SAQ

To say “it was the American catastrophe which helped to open a new chapter in the English political discourse” suggests a new trend in English political thought. Can you make a conjecture as to what the ‘new chapter’ may have been? Do you think it has any relation to a new wave of British imperialism? (70 + 50 words)

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English “Jacobinism” had had a history derived from the earlier century, especially from the ideas advanced by the Dissenters during the Civil War of the seventeenth century. Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (1791), written in reply to Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) which argued in favour of the nobility set off a pamphlet war from 1789 to around the time of the ‘Reign of Terror’, a vigorous debate in which Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin took their respective places. English Jacobinism was a discourse whose beginnings could be traced back to the conflicts between monarch and Parliament.

Another aspect of the political debates in England involved the question of religious liberty. We can turn to the example of Joseph Priestley who advocated rational inquiry as a principle of the Christian moral life in its everlasting progress. The French experience had been despised by Voltaire who, in his *Philosophical Letters on the English* (published 1734) had expressed perhaps an exaggerated admiration for English tolerance of religious diversity. Despite the fact that Catholics, Jews and Dissenters were not allowed certain liberties, it was not far from the truth that English society permitted the scope for the peaceful practice of one’s religion.

Stop to Consider

How much the Glorious Revolution had meant to England as a political experiment can be seen in the celebratory tones of a century later, in 1788: “The Revolution is undoubtedly the most illustrious and happy aera in the British annals . . . Hence Britain has been . . . the grand bulwark of the liberties of Europe and of the Protestant religion...” The aged Dissenter, Richard Price, commemorated the Glorious Revolution in November 1789 by linking it with the French Revolution: “What an eventful period is this! I am thankful that I have lived to it; . . .I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it.” He challenged his countrymen to support the French Revolution, if they were true

believers in liberty and supported the principles of 1688. Paradoxically, the man who had supported the American rebels in the 1770s (besides many other liberal causes), now took up the gauntlet laid down by Price. His answer to Price came in the form of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790.

The “Wilkes and Liberty” agitation on the issue of parliamentary reform

In 1769, when John Wilkes (a journalist and member of Parliament) was banned from taking his rightful seat in Parliament, despite having won it twice over, it was seen by many people to be a proof of the oligarchic nature of Parliament which set its own rules in contradiction of the popular will. Wilkes had been a supporter of the highly popular statesman, William Pitt the elder, and had published a paper (in 1763) that denounced the the king George III and his ministers’ policy of conciliation towards France. Wilkes had fled to France after obtaining his release from a general warrant of arrest (similar to the French *lettre de cachet*). What was upsetting to Parliament was the fact that Wilkes enjoyed the support of both “the mob” or the common people as well as the “middling element” or the small merchants and members of the various guilds. Wilkes was returned to Parliament as sheriff of London in 1771 and as lord mayor in 1774. The John Wilkes’ attempt to blow up Parliament in the 1760s, sedition trials in 1794 – the cry “Jacobins and Levellers” was raised in the 1790s gestured towards a sense of alarm over the events in France (I.Woloch)

Gordon Riots of 1780

The riots that swept through London in 1780 demonstrated the potential for trouble among the volatile Londoners. It obtained its name from the anti-Catholic agitator, Lord George Gordon, who led the angry reactions to the passage of a bill in the House of Commons granting limited toleration to Catholics. Gordon began by organising a demonstration before Parliament with an anti-Catholic petition with forty-four thousand signatures. The demonstration was joined by sections of the working classes and the poor (“the inferior set”) and soon flared up into large-scale rioting extending beyond parliamentary politics into issues of class and religion. The week-long rioting led to largescale violence resulting in the demolition of at least fifty buildings and almost three hundred people killed. The poorer inmates of prisons were released, houses of important officials were brought down, wealthy Catholics were targetted and even the Bank of England was threatened. Troops were brought in to quell the rioters and finally twenty-five rioters were hanged.

Edmund Burke was to emerge as one of Europe’s “leading ideological opponents of the French Revolution”. In the November of 1789, Richard Price, a fellow-Dissenter of Joseph Priestley, celebrated the storming of the

Bastille and called upon his English compatriots to see the French Revolution as a continuation of what the English had achieved in the Glorious Revolution. Burke's reply came in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as a condemnation of the revolutionaries. Yet Burke's voice was overpowered by others' clamouring for constitutional reform. Mary Wollstonecraft returned Burke's fire with her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), reproving Burke's "moral antipathy to reason". But it was Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791-2) which was heard above all as he spoke directly to plebeian radicalism: the cobblers, weavers, printers and carpenters. Paine had to flee the country as a proclamation was issued in May 1792 against seditious writings. *Rights of Man* had set alight a new wave of thinking and his *The Age of Reason* in the following year furthered the attack on the Church. England already had her share of agrarian unrest as prices soared and with such Jacobin thinking in the air many feared – even as some hoped – that the Revolution may cross the Channel. There was discontent everywhere as industrialization had unsettled people. But in 17... as France declared war on England, the opposition to the government was trapped in a dilemma.

Stop to Consider

Thomas Paine

Tom Paine can be considered to be the "chief oracle of enlightened philosophy" (R.Porter) He emigrated to the British colonies in America in 1774 joining in with American struggle. In his book *Common Sense* (1776) he advocated the cause of the American revolt against Britain. With the outbreak of the French Revolution, he gave support to insurrectionary sentiments in Britain bringing out his *Rights of Man* in 1791. This lent justification to the French Revolution and it first sold 50,000 copies but by 1793, about 200,000 copies were known to be in circulation. He declared, "When, in countries that are called civilized, we see age going to the workhouse and youth to the gallows, something must be wrong in the system of government." This work was followed by *The Age of Reason* (1794 - 96) which was, equally, a text of the Enlightenment reaching out to common people in its critique of theologians and prelates.

In 1792, Paine was elected to the French National Convention and was arrested in Paris in 1793. In 1794 he was released after which he stayed on in France during the early Napoleonic era. He condemned Napoleon's dictatorship. On the invitation of President Thomas Jefferson, he returned to America in 1802 and died in 1809.

William Godwin

In February 1793, Godwin brought out his great work *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Political Justice* which immediately brought him preeminence as a writer and a thinker. Godwin conceived government as an 'evil'.

Among the English writers and poets who looked with hope to the French revolutionaries, the names of Wordsworth and Coleridge stand out clearly. In 1793, Wordsworth pronounced:

"I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged order of every species . . . must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement. Hence it follows that I am not among the admirers of the British Constitution." In the early years of the French Revolution when enthusiasm for it ran high among English Jacobins, Wordsworth rejoiced (as he later recalled).

"I see! I see! glad Liberty succeed

With every patriot virtue in her train! [*The Prelude*, bk VI]

A year after the storming of the Bastille, in 1790, the young poet crossed the Channel to join the celebrations of 14 July. Wordsworth's optimism is caught in lines such as these in which he recounts a walk (with Beaupuy) when a poor peasant-girl is seen:

"and at the sight my friend
In agitation said, ' 'Tis against *that*
That we are fighting,' I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
All institutes for ever blotted out
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
Whether by edict of the one or few;
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind."

SAQ

How much of the above lines applied to Wordsworth’s own understanding of English rule and his observation of the French political system? Paraphrase the general thought behind the lines. (50 + 70 words)

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One of the ideologues of the Jacobin movement in England was John Thelwall who was also a mediocre poet. Thelwall argued Jacobinism to its socialist conclusion by also questioning of the distribution of resources and thus, of property. His *Rights of Nature* was admired by Coleridge. Thelwall visited Coleridge in July 1797 and tramped through the countryside with him and Wordsworth. This was the year when the more famous poets’ *Lyrical Ballads* was conceived. Towards the late 1790s the government successfully repressed the English Jacobin movement, rounding up and arresting its leaders, imprisoning them or sending them into exile. Thus William Blake gave voice to the repression faced by the Jacobin leaders:

“What is the price of Experience? do men buy it for a song?
Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children. [*Vala, or the Four Zoas*, 1796-7]

By 1799, the Jacobin leaders in England had been forced to disavow their revolutionary ardour. Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth in 1799 asking him to write a poem “addressed to those who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes for the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes* . . .”.

We cannot leave out the names of William Hazlitt and Romantic poets like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron who carried on the legacies of the English Jacobins. His *Political Essays* of 1819 show the thoughts of an intellectual “who received the full shock of the experience of the French

Revolution, and, while rejecting the naïveties of the Enlightenment, reaffirmed the traditions of *liberté* and *égalité*.” [E.P.Thompson]

1.6 SUMMING UP

Having read through the brief account of the French revolution above, you have obtained a fair idea of the many complex questions that went into the making of the great uprising. You would have understood by now that it was not a simple cry for greater democracy or the licence to be heard by absolutist monarchs but a working out in perhaps very violent terms the need for a more just society in which liberty, a feeling of brotherhood, and equality would find expression. While you have learnt of the diverse causes leading up to the revolution, you would have also learnt what kind of political and intellectual shockwaves it sent through the generation of thinkers who participated in the release of these revolutionary ideas. You must give importance to the fact that English Jacobinism took its inspiration from this event. As you study Romanticism as a literary movement, you should be able to make the necessary connections between the purely literary and the bedrock of ideas circulating in the larger domain that brought to the poets their imaginative fervour.

1.7 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READING

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Unit 2 Romantic Themes

Content

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Foundations of Romanticism
- 2.4 Major Concerns
- 2.5 Major Statements
- 2.6 Summing up
- 2.7 References/Suggested Reading

2.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to provide you with a grounding in the major Romantic themes. Romanticism as a movement in literature and arts is a complex juxtaposition of several varied and contradictory ideas that develop and accumulate from different ages and traditions of European thought. Reading this unit will enable you to

- *understand* the different tendencies and themes of Romanticism
- *trace* the roots of the major Romantic themes in the philosophy and practice of other ages and traditions
- *locate* the Romantic ideas in the history of western thought and art
- *compare* and *contrast* the ideas and worldviews of different romantic thinkers and poets in English literature

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Romanticism as a movement in literature and art can be realized through various tendencies and themes that differ vastly and often contradict one another. The Romantic poets and thinkers in English literature occupy varied positions and points of view with reference to key ideas like nature, the supernatural, self, identity, imagination, beauty, truth, language etc. The foundations of the Romantic themes can be traced back to different traditions of thought like Enlightenment philosophy and German Transcendental

Idealism. Besides, the influence of the French Revolution is overwhelming in Romantic philosophy. The following sections will try to acquaint you with the foundations of Romanticism as well as the basic tendencies and themes that finally constitute the idea of Romanticism. Besides, a few major statements from English Romantic poets and thinkers have been put forward for your understanding of Romanticism in its plurality of ideas.

2.3 FOUNDATIONS OF ROMANTICISM

From the moment “Romanticism” emerged as a critical concept – in the second half of the nineteenth century – it described a period that not only succeeded a previous age of Enlightenment but also opposed it. In his *History of English Literature*, published in 1864, Hippolyte Taine argued that poets like Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth had “violently broken” with eighteenth-century canons of taste and knowledge and had looked past the Enlightenment to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance for their models. Indeed, even before there was such a thing as “Romanticism,” critics like Francis Jeffrey characterized the three poets as dissenters from established systems of poetry and criticism, and as perpetually brooding over the disorders which attended the progress of civilization.

To be sure, Romantic writers themselves had a hand in constructing the myth of a wholly abstract and detached Enlightenment. When friends advised Wordsworth to prefix his poems with a systematic defence of his poetic theory, he rejected the suggestion because, as he explained in his ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), he did not want to be suspected “of reasoning (the reader) into approbation” of his poetry. Poetry is not systematic or reasonable; it is, as Wordsworth famously claimed, the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”(Preface, 1991,p. 242). Twentieth-century critics and editors of anthologies in large part have continued to stress a decisive break between an Enlightenment characterized by reason and abstraction and a Romanticism that privileged imagination and feeling. M. H. Abrams’ influential book of 1953, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, for instance, uses the metaphor of a mirror to describe the literature of the eighteenth century, which aimed to reflect the world and the underlying laws of nature. Romantic writers, however, strove not so much to reflect

the world as to project themselves onto it and create it in their own image. For Abrams, Wordsworth's 'Preface' is a paradigmatic example of the "displacement" of a mimetic theory of art by one that was "expressive" (p. 22).

SAQ:

Attempt to highlight the difference between the two metaphors of the mirror as centered on verisimilitude and passive reflection, and the lamp as standing for fresh perspectives on perceived reality. Do you think this helps us to grasp a basic difference between Enlightenment 'reasonableness' and a Romantic brand of 'expressionism'? (50 + 50 words)

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A significant effect of the "historicist" turn in the 1980s was that it challenged the long-held notion of a Romantic/Enlightenment break. These "new" historicist critics complicated many of the ideas and oppositions taken for granted in earlier accounts. One idea that gained a lot of ground in the upsurge argued that the social pressures exerted on and by literary movements persist across periods in ways that suggest coexistence rather than succession. The ensuing paragraphs will try and show how in spite of the occasional detour, the romantic tendencies trace their influences back to the age that preceded it.

It is a truism, on the one hand, that the Romantics rebelled against their predecessors. To any student interested in the age, it is apparent that Romanticism attacked the Enlightenment's classicizing, conformist rationalism in place of recognition of unstated emotions and unconscious instincts. The evidence for the Romantic attack on Enlightenment lies everywhere at hand.

Blake assaulted all the canons of eighteenth-century art along with all the preconceptions of the empiricism of given support by John Locke, as Wordsworth vilified the diction of eighteenth-century poetry. Again, supernatural sensationalism, such as Fielding reduces to ridicule in *Tom*

Jones, became the norm in the Romantic novel in England, France, Germany, and America, and so as one would expect Enlightenment cosmopolitanism gave way to nationalism and the revival of indigenous mythologies. If we were to look for an explanation here one can understand that classicism is engendered by an urbane culture in which one is 'reasonable' and decorous so that cultural exchange is possible. On literary writing, the effect was to sponsor a greater turn towards the mythological and the interior perhaps. So the Eighteenth-century wrote satire in heroic couplets, moral odes, local poetry, and extended didactic poems in Miltonic blank verse; the Romantics wrote sonnets, blank verse meditative lyrics, ballads, mythological or metaphysical odes, and first-person epics. Eighteenth-century novels were picaresque or epistolary; Romantic novelists satirized the picaresque or else wrote social, historical, or Gothic fictions. Eighteenth-century philosophy was empiricist and materialist; Romantic philosophy, after passing through the inhuman rigors of neo-Spinozism, became transcendental and idealist.

SAQ:

We have traced above the more subtle connections between Eighteenth-century philosophy and Romantic philosophy. Do you think Romanticism can be read as the continuation of the Enlightenment ideas of nature, language and history or would you agree with the view that every age is a conscious overturning of older ideas? To what extent, do you think, does this complicate our study of the history of ideas? (40+50 + words)

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Much in this conventional account is true. But inevitably a closer look complicates the picture. Some writers have shown the degree to which Enlightenment values persist despite the changed atmosphere of the nineteenth century. Voltaire's ideal of tolerance continues in the writings of Schlegel, of Shelley, and of the French Revolutionary thinkers - contemporaries often more different from one another than they were from their common ancestor.

Popean satire is not only reborn in Byron, but also strongly colours Blake's prophecies and leaves traces in some of Shelley's works and even a few of Keats's. Neoclassicism, which was a formative element in the Enlightenment, remained a powerful if variable current in Goethe (who translated two of Voltaire's tragedies), Schiller, the later Schlegels, the artists of the French Revolution, Shelley, Keats, and the later Wordsworth (of "Laodamia"). The mythological works of Keats, Shelley, and Hölderlin in many respects remain faithful to the syncretic (comparatist) and euhemerist (historically rooted) traditions of the Enlightenment, partly because they draw on many now-forgotten seventeenth- and eighteenth- century mythographic compendia.

In this section you will be introduced to another important influence on the Romantic writers. The debts that the period had to pay to classical literature will be studied under three subdivisions. First, the new historical criticism, which had profound impact on the way classical authors were accepted. 'Romantic Hellenism', a renewed interest in the study of ancient Greece that arose during the first decades of the nineteenth century, will follow suit and I will finish by considering how the Romantic century writers transformed the pastoral.

The rise of a new and more precise historical methodology for the understanding of the ancient texts was one of the prominent features of scholarly studies in the eighteenth century. Texts were no longer treated as inspired, but as the specific expression of a group of people writing in a specific socio-historical time period. This methodology was applied to texts like the epics of Homer which revealed that the genius of Homer was not divinely inspired. It was derived from his acute observation of the contemporary society during his forays as a roving minstrel! The Scottish scholar Thomas Blackwell in his *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) further revealed that Homer composed orally and did so in detachable units rather like ballads, tailored to meet the demands of the evening's performance. The power of Homeric verse was then preserved in the songs of the professional singers which, according to Blackwell, gave the poems their unique appeal.

SAQ

‘Hellenism’ is a feature of Romanticism. Can you name some poets of the Romantic age who displayed this concern in various ways in their writings? (30 words)

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These statements laid the foundation for a critical re-evaluation of the British poetic tradition. There came a period of renewed interest in the native ancient folk culture. It is in this context that we need to understand the ballad revival of the late eighteenth century and in 1798, Wordsworth and Coleridge began to assemble a group of original ballads that was published as the *Lyrical Ballads*, an event that marked the beginning of the Romantic movement in England. Along with the rise of historical criticism, the Romantic era was marked by a regeneration of classical art and literature, a movement that was called Hellenism. The re-awakening produced translation of ancient works and was marked by a use of classical myths and symbols in the forms of the period. The attitudes towards the most conventional of all literary genres, pastoral poetry, also clearly bolster the above stated case of reawakening. The Romantics took it up as a challenge to restore to the pastoral the vigour of the original Virgilian or Theocritean classic. For the writers, the classical inheritance was a well that constantly drew sustenance from and more importantly graduated to provide the model for a programme of cultural reform.

SAQ

We can find instances of this reconsideration of classical literature in several poems by the Romantic writers. Can you give some examples? (30 words)

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Writers are no more insulated from political events and controversies than are any other class of people. Indeed, they are less so, in that writers work in language, the same medium in which political concepts and demands are formulated, contested, and negotiated. If this is generally true it is of particular relevance in periods of significant historical change, when political issues impress themselves with increased urgency on all sections of society and give rise to vigorous debates concerning fundamental political principles. The period between 1780 and 1830, during which the great Romantic poets came to maturity and produced their most important works, was such a period. The period from the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 to the passing of the Great Reform Bill in 1832 is inextricably linked to the body of writing that proliferated in that age. Although opinion stands divided, it is hardly ever contested that the French Revolution was the single most significant event of the age. Symbolised by the storming of the Bastille prison on 14 July 1789, the revolution gave rise to intense political debate in Great Britain between the camps of conservative and radical forms of government. Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* defended the concept of the natural rights of man and asserted the prerogative of the living to change their forms of government as opposed to Edmund Burke's defense of the organic model of the nation, one that preserved the traditional modes of hierarchy. The ideas thus unleashed into the already charged political atmosphere made way for a rupture in the social order, one that the literary writing of the 1790s mirrored both in content and modes. Writers took historical and political events for their subjects, producing works on the storming of the Bastille, the war with France that began in 1793 and culminated at Waterloo in 1815, the campaign to abolish the slave trade, and the Peterloo massacre of 1819. Moreover, the writers of the age did not seem to conceive themselves as passive onlookers of the historical upheavals. Rather, writing in a highly politicized climate they understood the importance of their roles as crucial to the ways in which history was understood, and as to how it would be enacted in the future.

This concern with history leads our reading to the other influence on Romantic philosophy – German Transcendental Idealism. It was Kant who provided the Romantic Idealists with the license they needed for new metaphysical explorations; in the realms of ethics, aesthetics, and grand theories of history. It is this decisive shift in emphasis that is emblemized in the first epigraph from *Faust* which celebrated '*Becoming*' over '*Being*'.

Stop to Consider

Dedication

“YE wavering shapes, again ye do enfold me,
As erst upon my troubled sight ye stole;
Shall I this time attempt to clasp, to hold ye?
Still for the fond illusion yearns my soul?
Ye press around! Come then, your captive hold me,
As upward from the vapoury mist ye roll;
Within my breast youth’s throbbing pulse is bounding,
Fann’d by the magic breath your march surrounding.

Shades fondly loved appear, your train attending,
And visions fair of many a blissful day;
First-love and friendship their fond accents blending,
Like to some ancient, half-expiring lay;
Sorrow revives, her wail of anguish sending
Back o’er life’s devious labyrinthine way,
And names the dear ones, they whom Fate bereaving
Of life’s fair hours, left me behind them grieving.

They hear me not my later cadence singing,
The souls to whom my earlier lays I sang;
Dispersed the throng, their severed flight now winging;
Mute are the voices that responsive rang.
For stranger crowds the Orphean lyre now stringing,
E’en their applause is to my heart a pang;
Of old who listened to my song, glad hearted,
If yet they live, now wander widely parted.

A yearning long unfelt, each impulse swaying,
To yon calm spirit-realm uplifts my soul;
In faltering cadence, as when Zephyr playing,
Fans the Aeolian harp, my numbers roll;
Tear follows tear, my steadfast heart obeying
The tender impulse, loses its control;
What I possess as from afar I see;
Those I have lost become realities to me.”

We have provided this excerpt (downloaded from a translation available at Project Gutenberg so that you can see the idea/theme of ‘becoming’ (transformed by historical processes) given place rather than the idea of having reached a point of achievement, a state of ‘being’ . Such a shift makes place for critical evaluation, or some willingness to explore to reevaluate what has already been arrived at.

For these Romantic philosophers the great ideals exist not in any abstract realm of transcendent being, but are immanent in the progress of the individual mind, and in the *history* of mankind. It is from Hegel, however, that we have the Grand Synthesis, the Ring Cycle of Romantic philosophy. Hegel's vision is primarily historical: for Hegel it is the philosopher of history who is the saviour of humanity. He, however, adds a very important reservation: the philosopher-historian does not *affect* history, he interprets it, after the fact. The World Spirit realizes itself in and determines all of history; it uses (Hegelian) heroes, 'worldhistorical' individuals (*Weltgeschichtliche Menschen*), but these heroes know not what they do. The World Spirit becomes conscious of itself in philosophy, but only in retrospect: "The Owl of Minerva," as Hegel puts it in the preface to *The Philosophy of Right*, "flies only at twilight."

SAQ

Attempt to underline the diverse ways in which Romantic thinkers began to display a growing concern with a new understanding of history. Do you think a play between regional and national histories was crucial to their understanding of history? (40+50 words)

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2.4 MAJOR CONCERNS

Romanticism, in terms of one of its major concerns, can be seen as 'the return to nature' or more precisely, in English literary history, 'the revolt against Alexander Pope'. Here Pope must be understood as the representative of the abstractions and artificiality typically characterized as 'Augustan' or in other words that theoretical position that earned him the comment from Hazlitt, "He was, in a word, the poet, not of nature, but of art." Against this theoretical discourse, the Romantics made a harsh protest as we find Robert Southey considering the 'Augustan' as 'the dark age of English poetry'. What we find in the Romantics is a renewed interest in

nature or what is ‘natural’. The Romantics shared a common objection against the mechanistic universe of the 18th century. They conceived nature as an organic whole which is not divorced from its authentic values; it is an analogue of man rather than a complex structure of atoms.

SAQ:

Attempt to organize the ideas in “organic whole” and “analogue of man”. Do you discern a difference in the status accorded to the anthropomorphic (human) figure in relation to the ‘natural’ world? (40 + 40 words)

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Coleridge’s theory of art is based on the idea of a kind of union between both man and nature: “Art itself might be defined as of a middle quality between a thought and a thing, or, as I have said before, the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human” (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter II). John Keats, in one of his letters to Taylor, wrote “if poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves of a tree, it had better not come at all”. (27 Feb, 1818). William Wordsworth, regarded as the most important spokesperson in this field, declared in his 1802 edition of the ‘Preface’ to the *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry is essentially “the image of man and nature”. For him, it is the world of nature wherein lies the cardinal standard of poetic value. This pervasive interest in nature led Wordsworth to take interest in what is unsophisticated or uncultivated. Wordsworth announces his liking for the world of children, unlettered peasants and the mentally disabled on the grounds that their worlds are built up with elements that are ‘simple, belonging rather to nature than to manners.’ This interest in children and childish experience and the belief that adults are not divorced from their childish-selves but rather the products of their early experiences has remained one of the most pervasive influences of all Romantic tenets throughout the last two centuries.

The Romantics accounted of higher importance the heart rather than the brain. They tried to posit emotions or feelings within a cardinal position in the process of poetic or artistic creation. Coleridge complained that the works of Pope were confined to the clinical observation of man and manners which, unlike the poetry composed on natural impulses, were not authored with a deeper stirring of the human heart. Keats sought to draw inspiration for his poetic endeavour from the ‘true voice of feeling’ rather than the ‘false beauty preceding from art’. He pined for a life that is filled with ‘sensation’ and not with ‘reasoning’, where sensation, aided with imagination, can be a means to arrive at truth. Wordsworth announced in his ‘Preface’ to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* that “poetry is passion: it is the history or science of feeling.” His oft-quoted phrase “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” is regarded as a defining statement of the Romantic notion of poetry.

SAQ:

Do you find any trace of Enlightenment thinking in Wordsworth’s conception of human nature, as stated here immediately above? Do you think that Wordsworth has disregarded the importance of the role of education and socialization here? (60 + 60 words)

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Among the different kinds of emotions, most of the Romantics tried to emphasise a certain kind of infantilism; a desire to feel and realize the world the way a child experienced it. This tendency tried to recall the experience of ‘childlike wonder’ and establish it as a major and desirable factor in the process of recreating the world through poetic enterprise. The rejection of artifice and the pursuit of what is ‘natural’ also led the Romantics to the renewed interest in the childish experience or the ‘childlike - innocence’. While trying to establish ‘childlike wonder’ as a major element in the creative process of great works of art, Coleridge mentioned in his *Biographia*

Literaria (Chapter IV) that the creator of art or poetry should have the faculty to “carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child’s sense of wonder and novelty with the appearance, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar”. Wordsworth too advocated the same attitude but put it in a different way as we find him in the ‘Preface’: that the principal object of the poems is “to choose incidents and situations from common life” and then “to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.” This same idea of creating wonder and mystery out of the ordinary is reflected in Shelley’s mystical voice “Poetry lifts the veils from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar”. (“Defense of Poetry”, 1821). However it must be acknowledged that it is the faculty called ‘imagination’ which remained the backbone of all these artistic recreations of the mundane rendered into the extraordinary, wonderful and mysterious.

One of the major concerns of Romantic thinking lay in the choice of language for poetry. The long debate between Wordsworth and Coleridge over the idea of language for poetry can be seen as part of the first Romantic revolt against the established idea of ‘poetic diction’ in English literature. This debate raised two major questions about the nature of poetic language – among what kind of people originates poetic language and how ‘poetic diction’ can be distinguished from the valid language of poetry. The Romantic revolt against ‘poetic diction’ was hostile to pedantry and affectation, but appealing to the primitive, the naïve, the passionate and the natural spoken word.

Poetic diction

The term ‘poetic diction’ refers to the set of words, phrases, figures and the systems of sentence construction used in the process of writing poetry. Throughout the ages, poets have used various poetic diction with distinctive language, words, phrases that did not necessarily belong to the ordinary language of their times. The diction used by poets like Edmund Spenser and G M Hopkins deviated deliberately from the common language of the contemporary poets of their respective times. However with the neo-classic poets and critics, the concern over ‘poetic diction’ became a serious issue in the field of literary practice in English. Based on the principle of ‘decorum’, the neo-classic idea of

‘poetic diction’ necessitated the use of languages that can express the modes and status of the genre they were used in. For reflecting everyday matters, the poet must adopt the language used by the urban, cultivated and the sophisticated people of the age. Besides, for higher genres like epic, tragedy and ode, a refined, elevated language was needed so that the poetic diction could justify the level of the genre. You will notice that the Romantics tended to oppose this neo-classic idea of poetic diction.

Wordsworth’s theorization of the language of poetry was part of his adherence to ‘primitivism’ and revolt against what the aristocratic stance of the neo-classic writers viewed as the right language of poetry. Dryden and Pope shared the doctrine that the language used for poetry should be the language of the king and the court. The pursuit of the ‘natural’ led the Romantic poet to look forward to the world of the unlettered peasant, the child, the uncultivated or the disabled and farther to the language used by these characters. In his ‘Preface’ to the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth states, “I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject, consequently, I hope that there is in these Poems little falsehood or description”. This desire to avoid falsifying called for a poetic language that can faithfully mediate what the poet observes and wants to express. Wordsworth makes a choice of language for this poetic exercise as we read in his ‘Preface’, “I have proposed to myself to imitate, and as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men.” He adopted the language of ‘man speaking to men’ instead of the so-called ‘poetic diction’ just in order ‘to bring my language near to the language of men’. Wordsworth’s idea of ‘the language of man’ as the ideal language for poetry has remained one of the most revered and debated ideas of poetic language among not only the Romantics but also many post-Romantics like Hardy, Hopkins, Eliot, Pound and many more. However this idea is further supplanted by Wordsworth’s emphasis on the all-important kinship between the language of poetry and living speech, as he states, “there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.” However Wordsworth and Coleridge had a basic difference in their attitude towards the language of poetry. Whereas Wordsworth was much concerned about the tension between artifice and nature, Coleridge was concerned about propriety and impropriety, congruity and incongruity.

The idea of Romantic imagination can be understood as juxtaposition of two major and opposite views regarding the engagement of the ‘self’ in the creative process. Whereas one tendency pleads for the ‘self-effacement’ of the poet, the opposing tendency aims at the poet’s intimate subjectivity and the inwardness of experience.

In his ‘Preface’ to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth comments, “it will be the wish of the poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his feelings with theirs.” This doctrine of the poet’s evading his personality and selfhood has found profound expression in Keats’s formulation of the idea of poetic personality – “it is not itself – it has no self – it is every thing and nothing – it has no character. . . . A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no identity.” (27 Oct, 1818) His concept of ‘negative capability’ calls for the poet’s ability to negate his own personality and enter into an aesthetic self constructed by his imagination and art. Coleridge too regarded creativity as the product of a kind of imagination conditioned by the selflessness of the artist (as we find him praising in his *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XV, the invisibility of Shakespeare’s own personality among the chaotic voices of his characters). This tendency of the Romantic’s ‘self-effacement’ has remarkable influences on the post-Romantics. We find T. S. Eliot echoing the same sentiment in his formulation of the poet’s ‘impersonality’.

SAQ:

Try to compare and contrast the ideas in Eliot’s concept of ‘impersonality’ with the Romantic ideas of the poet’s engagement in the creative process. (50 words)

[It will be a fascinating experience for you to discover that some of the ‘modern’ or ‘postmodern’ concepts of literature (eg. formalism) have got Romantic origins. Try to explore this field.]

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It is interesting to note that Wordsworth, despite being a major spokesperson of the idea of 'self-effacement', is seen to possess the other and contrasting Romantic sentiment of the artist's intense subjectivity and the inwardness of experience. Hazlitt comments that (*Examiner*, 21 Aug, 1814) the choice of subject-matter in Wordsworth's poetry bears evidence of his blind trust in his own and private experiences and perceptions without the least regard to their external sources. Coleridge's idea of 'imagination' provides important grounds for this exploration of the artist's subjectivity. Coleridge argues that the world of nature and ordinary things remain as stark 'chaos' for human perception; it is the poet's imagination that brings this variant chaos into a homogeneous life. Describing the idea of Secondary Imagination, which is an essential and the most desirable faculty of the artist, Coleridge observes, "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create,... yet still, at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify". Keats also considers that imagination is essentially creative and intuitive and its appropriation can lead the artist to 'Truth'. Here, the role of the artist becomes almost like that of God. The product of poetic artistry is, like that of God, a new and autonomous world that exists in the field of art. P.B.Shelley observes the same view of the creativity of poetry, "Poetry makes us inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos". This idea of the poetic self with regard to imagination has found much currency among the post-Romantics. Eliot follows the same tradition when he observes the working of the poetic mind as 'constantly amalgamating disparate experiences'. To quote from "The Metaphysical Poets", "the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular and fragmentary... in the mind of the poet, these experiences are always forming new wholes".

Stop to Consider

Here it will be important for you to note that, over the years, the term Romanticism has come to be applied in many newer fields and meanings. Critics like Frank Kermode, Cornwall Bayley have found the Romantic lineage in modernist literary ideas. This is acceptable because, in the last few decades, the idea of what is Romantic has undergone certain mutations within itself. Take one example from Harold Bloom – when he talks about Wordsworth's 'revolution in poetry', he does not mean the return to nature but the evanescence of any subject but subjectivity'. The Romanticism exemplified by this "evanescence of subject"

produces, in Bloom's language, 'an antinature poetry'. ("The Internalisation of Quest Romance", (1971)). This critical position projects Blake, not Wordsworth, as an exemplary Romantic, who argued that nature should be rejected by the artist.

2.5 MAJOR STATEMENTS

Unlike the philosophical rationalism of the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement in the arts can be best understood in the context of the emergence of an alternative aesthetic of freedom with renewed focus on the individual sensibility and originality, the synthesizing power of imagination, uninhibited self-expression etc. The Romantic themes are best expressed in the writings of the period and this section aims to help you trace the connection between the various themes of Romanticism in terms of the major statements.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

A collection of poems and etchings by William Blake. The 27 plates of *Songs of Innocence* were published in 1789. In 1794 Blake issued *Songs of Innocence and of Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Mind*, and since then the two cycles have always appeared together. Dealing with the contrary states of 'innocence' and 'experience', Blake traces the connection between the two states and shows how the experience of the adult life corrupts the innocent joys and convivial rapture of childhood. The transition from 'innocence' to 'experience' is fraught with prohibitions and moral and psychological dilemmas as the paradisaic anarchy of 'The Echoing Green' contrasts with the religious prohibitions of 'The Garden of Love'. This collection also outlines Blake's concern over the institutionalized coercion, enslavement and the consequent atmosphere of dehumanisation.

Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems

First published in 1798, *Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems* is a collection of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This seminal work is often considered to mark the beginning of English Romantic movement and appears as the manifesto of Romantic concerns.

The second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* including a preface by Wordsworth which replaces his original short 'Advertisement' is viewed as the most influential document of the Romantic era. The significance of this collection lies in generating critical notions about poetic language, subject matter, and role of the poet. The third edition was published in 1802. The genesis of *Lyrical Ballads* is traced to the time when Wordsworth and Coleridge were living as close neighbours in Somerset. The book is nurtured by their shared sense of the emotional artificiality of the eighteenth century poetry and petrification of its conventions. Of the original 23 anonymous poems, only four are by Coleridge. With the preference for subjects drawn from 'low and rustic life', *Lyrical Ballads* paved the way for Wordsworth's later frame as a poet. The volume opens with Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and closes with Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey".

The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind

Written in blank verse, 'The Prelude' is an autobiographical poem by William Wordsworth. This poem is basically a poetic reflection on poetry itself and was originally intended to be a 'sort of portico' or prologue to 'The Recluse', a philosophical poem on 'Nature, Man and Society' which Wordsworth began but never completed. 'The Prelude' known to his circles as 'the Poem to Coleridge' remained unpublished during Wordsworth's life. It was published after his death in 1850 and the present title was suggested by Mary, his widow. 'The Prelude' is often read as the spiritual autobiography of the poet where he outlines his vocation as a poet and chooses mind and imagination as a subject worthy of epic. In the course of the poem, Wordsworth situates imagination as above all other modes of understanding and acting upon man and the world. His desire to distance imagination from other modes of understanding is apparent as imagination is 'but another name for absolute strength / And clearest insight, amplitude of mind, / And Reason in her most exalted mood.' Commonly categorized as his greatest work, 'The Prelude' is replete with the references of a critique of the negativity and dehumanization of the modern civilization in terms of the mechanical and deadening equation of knowledge with book-learning and writing as well as the debased conception of human community. Wordsworth craft extends to the analysis of the streets and buildings of the London

metropolis (Book VIII); the abstraction of rationalistic philosophy of Godwin and the catastrophic degeneration of the French Revolution into ‘domestic carnage’ and wars of foreign conquest (IX, X, XI)- factors responsible for the growing sense of estrangement of man from his true purpose and being. In the course of the poem, the poetic imagination emerges as the repository of eternal truths and therefore, is capable of providing aesthetic pleasure as well as moral truth. Imagination, here appears to be the sole factor to humanize the dehumanized world.

Stop To Consider

‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)

“The principal object, then, which I propose to myself in these Poems was to incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature.....”

“He is man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind”

“I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes origin from emotions recollected in tranquility”

“A selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation.”

Wordsworth’s creative partnership with Coleridge resulted in the anonymous publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. The Preface can, to some extent be read as a political text as well as a literary position paper. Wordsworth’s desire to select “incidents and situations from common life” exemplifies his democratic impulse. Best understood in the context of the French Revolution, Wordsworth here advocates “the real language of men” as the authentic mode of communication and negates the neoclassical view that the language of poetry must be more elevated than everyday speech. In the Preface, Wordsworth addresses the opposition between high and mass or popular cultures explored later by critics like Raymond Williams. In establishing the writer as an adversary to popular culture and trends in social and cultural life, Wordsworth anticipates themes articulated by writers ranging from Shelley to D.H. Lawrence.

Biographia Literaria

Published in 1817, *Biographia Literaria* is a philosophical and autobiographical work by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Although the work lacks the aesthetic and recapitulatory ‘finish’ of conventional autobiography, the underlying philosophical concern of Coleridge, here, is the process of human creativity. Beginning *in medias res*, *Biographia Literaria* is replete with the references to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. The influence of Coleridge’s youthful admiration for the sonnets of William Bowles, his early friendship with and domestic proximity to Wordsworth, the ‘associationist’ tradition in philosophy from Aristotle to Hartley etc. can be seen in this work. Here, we find the famous definition of the creative intelligence, or the ‘Imagination’ in terms of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ imagination, the distinction between ‘imagination’ and ‘fancy’ and the origin of the famous critical concept of willing suspension of disbelief, the exploration of the relations between subjectivity and objectivity, self and world etc.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Published in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is the longest major poem written by Coleridge. Coleridge composed this enigmatic poem describing the experience of a Mariner during his voyage in 1797-1798. The poem has been read as a Christian allegory emphasizing the significance of salvation as well as an exploration of Coleridge’s interest in higher criticism. The mysterious figure of the Mariner narrating his experience to the wedding guest and igniting his response on various issues is often interpreted to offer an autobiographical portrait of the poet himself thereby equating the Mariner’s seclusion with Coleridge’s expression of isolation .

Kubla Khan

Composed in 1797 and subtitled as ‘fragment’, the poem is a consequence of an opium induced dream. Coleridge specifies in the Preface to “Kubla Khan” that the poem remains a ‘fragment’ as the writing was interrupted by a person from Porlock. Written in a stylised language, the poem is unique in

its exploration of the creative process of poetic composition, the power of imagination and the harmonious coexistence of nature and creative power.

“Child Harold’s Pilgrimage”

Published between 1812 and 1818, “Child Harold’s Pilgrimage” is a narrative poem written by Byron in Spenserian stanzas. Byron describes the widespread disillusionment and melancholy characterizing the Post-Napoleonic eras through the aimless wanderings of a young man disillusioned with his pleasure-seeking existence. The poem describes the ‘Byronic hero’ looking for distraction in foreign senses and travelling through Spain, Portugal, Albania and Greece. “Child Harold’s Pilgrimage” has introduced the disillusioned and melancholy ‘Byronic hero’ as one of the most typical Romantic figures.

Don Juan

Don Juan is Lord Byron’s unfinished ‘epic satire’ in ottava rima. It was published in 16 cantos between 1819 and 1824. The first two cantos appeared in 1819, cantos 3-5 were published in 1821, 6-14 in 1823 and cantos 15 and 16 in 1824. The central character is depicted as a passive, innocent whose learning comes through the variety of his complex international experience and the poem describes Juan’s experience of man and nature through Byron’s ironic comment on human passions, whims and shortcomings. The loose structure of the poem allows Byron to integrate ironic comments on contemporary English society, politics and literature in Juan’s tale of adventure.

Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Beginning with the often quoted line ‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever’, *Endymion* is a poem in four books by John Keats. Published in the spring of 1818, this poem dedicated to Thomas Chatterton is based on the Greek legend of Endymion. Keats describes how Endymion, a prince of Elis or the young shepherd falls asleep on the Slopes of Mount Latmos and the moon goddess Selene (Cynthia) takes him away to eternal life. The poem was subject to scathing criticism from various quarters and John Wilson Croker made a notorious attack in *The Quarterly Review*.

“Hyperion”

“Hyperion” and “The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream” are the two unfinished epic poems written by Keats in 1818-19. The first version called ‘A Fragment’ published in 1820 takes recourse to Greek mythology and concentrates on the story of Hyperion, the sun-god. “Hyperion” traces the trajectory of the fall of the Titans to the Olympians and how the grieving Titans plan to regain their lost power and glory with the help of Hyperion, the sun-god. The second version called ‘The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream’ was published in 1856. Here, Keats recounts a dream. Here, the poet aware of the widespread misery of the world is granted an entry to the shrine where the Titans’ priestess Moneta offers description of the fall of Hyperion and the advent and consequent emergence of Apollo, the god of knowledge, poetry and music.

“The Eve of St Agnes”

“The Eve of St. Agnes” is a narrative poem written by Keats in 1819. Published in 1820, this poem is written in Spenserian stanzas and is replete with the references of popular legend, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, gothic romance. Keats uses motifs from Boccaccio and Chaucer in this richly sensuous poem describing a night of revelry and merriment in a medieval mansion. The title of the poem comes from the day or evening before the feast of Saint Agnes, the patron saint of virgins. Here, Keats tells the story of Madeline who believes that on this night, a virgin is granted a vision of her lover and how Madeline finds her lover Porphyro in the castle and both escape from the castle in the night.

SAQ:

Comment on the exploration of the interlinked themes of language, nature and imagination in romantic poetry with reference to the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. How would you read the *Preface* as a political document? (40+40 words)

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2.6 SUMMING UP

From your reading of the Romantic themes and their foundations, it has been cleared to you that Romanticism marks a deliberate attempt to break from the neoclassical school of thought. Despite its varied and often contradictory tendencies, Romanticism has been a vibrant period in the history of English literature and art that produced enormous body of works in the Europe of its time. It is hoped that after reading this unit, you will have a proper grasp of this era in English literature. It will farther equip you with proper standpoints and insight while you approach the works of literature and other arts like music, drama, painting, sculpture produced in this age. Your understanding of Romanticism will be much richer as you capitalize the information of this booklet and expand your reading on the area with more books. You can follow the texts suggested to you as a kind of guide into the world of Romanticism.

2.7 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READING

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning
Gauhati University**

MA in English

Semester 2

Paper VI

Literature and Social History

Block 2

Victorian



Contents:

Block Introduction:

Unit 1 : Darwinism

Unit 2 : The Working Classes

Unit 3 : Feminist Movement

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Block Introduction:

This block brings to you the Victorian period, thus its name, "Victorian". This, as you would know, is the nineteenth century mostly till the beginning of the twentieth and perhaps even beyond, to its middle. The block covers three of its most important features: the formation of the working classes, Charles Darwin's influential theory of evolution and natural selection, and the movement for the rights of women which eventually came to be called 'feminism'. Since the student of literature has to draw out the essential connections between social history and literary works, you have to work out for yourself to some extent just how these important movements or ideas came to be encapsulated in the form of literary strategies.

Darwin's theory is important in that it led to the circulation of a set of ideas that came to be called "Darwinism". How does Darwinism manifest itself in the literary work? Possibly, in the way the characters are projected, or how the plot works out to the advantage of any particular character that would refer to the idea of the "survival of the fittest". Victorians like Tennyson were disturbed by such ideas, just as an eminent Victorian like Matthew Arnold must have thought deeply over such new formulations regarding society. We can extrapolate a deep anxiety in Victorian writing. This is the kind of correlation that you must trace out between social and political history and literature. Here we place before you just the bare outlines of social movements and thought that finally went into the making of literary works.

The working class saw itself as such only in this period. You should remember that terms have their own significance; so "working class" refers to something uniquely industrial, or an industrialised form of economic activity. Unless you understand this the earlier serf can be mistaken for the toiling class like the new, industrial working class. That would be a profound mistake. So the history of the working class is important for your conception. This block attempts to help you out by thus bringing to you the unique history of the Victorian period.

The feminist movement too must be seen in the same light: as a growth of a certain kind of consciousness in society. The history, therefore, cannot be separated from what the term is taken to mean now. Our caption, 'Feminist movements' indicates that we cannot study this history as of one, singular

movement. No social movement is either unidirectional, or singular. Thus you should learn also to make the right connections.

As with all the other units and blocks, you must *work through*, with diligence the various units in the block .Your understanding will grow by doing so. Do not stop reading after you have finished with this booklet. There is always more to be learnt. More reading will only help you to learn more.

Contents of Block 2:

Unit 1 : Darwinism

Unit 2 : The Working Classes

Unit 3 : Feminist Movements

Unit 1

Darwinism

Contents:

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Darwin Himself
- 1.4 Darwin's Theory & Its Extent
- 1.5 Further Effects
- 1.6 Applying Social Darwinism
- 1.7 Darwinism versus Religion
- 1.8 Literature & Darwin
- 1.9 Advances to the 20th Century
- 1.10 References/Suggested Readings

1.1 OBJECTIVES

In this section, Unit 4, we take the learner to a most familiar name in intellectual history, Darwin. Darwin and his theory is familiar to most of us as related to the life-sciences, and biology in particular. But Darwin's theory also brought in many other issues related to society as much as to philosophy. In this unit, therefore, in keeping with the method used in all other units, we hope to help you to

- *understand* the nature of Darwin's theory
- *appreciate* its implications
- *interconnect* Darwin's ideas with his contemporary situation
- *gain* a perspective on Darwin's times through this centralizing concept

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The object of this unit is to explore the effects of Darwin's theory. A theory should be clear in its details but it should also be seen as part of larger social processes. To understand what Darwin meant to his contemporaries we

must see how his work came to take its full shape and also how this theory, which could have been confined to scientific work nonetheless was so radical in its focus that it was necessarily going to be taken beyond its first concerns. This section is meant to make these interconnections clear.

1.3 DARWIN HIMSELF

The term, 'Darwinism', takes us to Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882), the naturalist, whose findings regarding the evolution of species caused many in the nineteenth century to change their ideas about human history, the world of nature, and society. While the name of 'Darwin' came to be attached to a set of ideas regarding human society and the laws which appear to govern its history, the theory of evolution points to issues involving evolution itself, the history of evolution, and the processes by which evolutionary change occurs. So we can see here that we have to look at two aspects of the term, 'Darwinism'. In the paragraphs that follow we shall look at these two aspects by turns.

Turning to Darwin himself, we see in the account of his personal life that he had a secure and happy early life except for the death of his mother at the age of eight. When he was sent up to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, to study medicine, he gained from his friendships with the zoologist, Robert Grant, and the geologist, Robert Jameson. The first introduced him to the study of marine animals, while the other stimulated his growing interest in the history of the Earth. Later, he was sent to the University of Cambridge to study divinity at Christ's College. Rather than any academic excellence, we note Darwin's friendship with the circle of Cambridge scientists including the cleric-botanist John Stevens Henslow. With Henslow's encouragement Darwin learnt about science and gained confidence in his own abilities. In 1831, with his studies completed, and thanks to the recommendations of Henslow, Darwin was suggested for the voyage of the HMS Beagle, as observer and companion for its captain, Robert Fitzroy. Towards preparation for the scientific trip he read Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent*. Thus Darwin set sail as an unpaid naturalist on board the HMS Beagle on a voyage to make survey of the east and west coasts of South America. The voyage lasted five years during which Darwin made meticulous notes and collected

specimens for his studies in geology and biology.

The voyage of the Beagle was a singularly important event in Darwin's life because it transformed him into a scientist who was prepared to think independently albeit within the environment of science of his time. The work which Darwin accomplished on the voyage brought him celebrity before he even returned from it. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* had been an influence on his scientific ideas but on the voyage Darwin found evidence to challenge Lyell's views regarding the formation of coral reefs. Lyell later accepted Darwin's new interpretation which explained the formation as a slow and more gradual process, an interpretation which has been confirmed in the twentieth century. His constant findings of fossils of extinct species and their similarities with living ones raised the question of the processes by which this happened.

Stop to Consider

The concept of specis

Darwin's attempt can be summed up as proposed explanation for the diversity of forms of life. He connected this to the idea of nature as process. Change takes place, from Darwin's perspective, over time and prompted by a process of natural selection. Since environments change through time and from place to place, different characteristics are selected naturally through different situations. These differences accumulate over time and result in new species. From everyday experience we know how to distinguish between species; external similarity between the members of a species is an obvious basis for identifying different species. An even more basic feature by which we identify species is interbreeding. By this we can understand how genetic changes are extended to all members of the same species and not to other species. Species are independent evolutionary units sharing a common gene pool.

A certain ambiguity exists in ignorance about whether interbreeding can take place between individuals living in different sites. The other area of ignorance is linked to the question of whether geographically separate populations whose members belonged to the same species at one time diverged at what point of time into two different species. It is in this sense that the question of the connection of 'Homo erectus' (human beings of about 20,000 generations ago) to 'Homo sapiens' (present-day human beings) is to be taken, i.e., the classification of remote human ancestors is more appropriately differentiated from modern human beings even though changes occur from one generation to the next.

In 1836, upon returning to England Darwin was soon made a member of the Athenaeum club and later the Royal Society, in recognition of his work by the scientific fraternity. Thereupon he met many whose names we remember as famous Victorians: Thomas Carlyle, Harriet Martineau and Charles Babbage among them. Henceforth, he began to prepare the record of his voyages as a journal but privately also began to write his notebooks which are regarded as being remarkable as they contain his observations on "the species problem" including data and facts collected through reading, letters and discussions with gardeners, zookeepers, naturalists, breeders and gardeners.

Theories of species and difference

Theories of evolution have existed for a long time as humans have sought to explain the existence of life, the world, and nature or God. Such explanations have been part of various cultures. These explanations have also tried to deal with the concept of mutation or metamorphosis. In traditional Judaism and Christianity the explanations have seen the origins of life as signs of an all-powerful divinity.

Greek philosophers of ancient times also had their creation myths. So we find that Anaximander saw mutation as underlying animal life, while Empedocles saw animal life as issuing and taking form from preexisting parts. In Christianity, the Church Fathers like Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine saw some species, and not all, as having developed in historical time from God's creations. The reason here was thought to be religious rather than biological. Thus some species must have come into existence only after the Great Deluge or the Noachian Flood.

Medieval Christian theologians did not investigate questions of biological processes but the possibility was only incidentally considered by many, including Albertus Magnus and his student, St. Thomas Aquinas. The eighteenth-century did not develop any theory of evolution except in the idea of the possible descent of several species from a common ancestor, put forth by Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon.

Charles Darwin's grandfather, the physician Erasmus Darwin, made some speculations regarding evolution in *Zoonomia* or the *Laws of Organic Life*. The system of animal and plant classification put forth by Carolus Linnaeus was based on the fixity of species but his classification made it eventually possible to accept the concept of common descent.

The great French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck proposed a generalized theory of evolution in the early years of the 19th century in which living organisms are

seen as progressions with human beings at the apex. In this theory modifications occur as organisms become adapted to their environment. An organ is reinforced or obliterated as it is used or left to disuse. Inheritance of characteristics would be based on such use or disuse. In the twentieth century, however, the theory was thoroughly disproved. Nevertheless, Lamarck's contributions to the final acceptance of biological evolution are recognized.

SAQ

1. How does the biographical information about Darwin give us an idea of the world of Victorian science ? (50 words)

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2. How is the word 'species' normally used ? (25 words)

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3. What were the earlier ideas regarding creation ? (50 words)

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1.4 DARWIN'S THEORY & ITS EXTENT

It was only by 1842 that Darwin was confident enough in his theory to draft a short sketch. In 1844 he composed a longer version, which he showed to his friend, the botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker.

Darwin was wary of presenting his theory to the public and thus spent the next decade concentrating on a treatise on barnacles in which he faintly suggested his theory. The intellectual atmosphere in England in the meantime having altered, discussions about evolution became commonplace. However,

Darwin still held back from publishing his thesis until June 18, 1858, when a paper he received from Alfred Russel Wallace, a naturalist working in the Malay Archipelago, made him realize that his life's work may have been preempted by another. On July 1, 1858, a joint presentation by Darwin and Wallace was arranged before the Linnean Society of London by his friends and confidants, Lyell, Hooker, and T.H. Huxley. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* was the 'abstract' of the larger manuscript Darwin had prepared. This was published on Nov. 24, 1859. The 'abstract' sold very well.

In this 'Abstract', which forms the introduction to *The Origin of Species*, Darwin wrote : "In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryological relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and other such facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species. Nevertheless, such a conclusion, even if well founded, would be unsatisfactory, until it could be shown how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified, so as to acquire that perfection of structure and coadaptation which most justly excites our admiration. Naturalists continually refer to external conditions, such as climate, food, etc., as the only possible cause of variation. In one very limited sense, as we shall hereafter see, this may be true; but it is preposterous to attribute to mere external conditions the structure, for instance, of the woodpecker, with its feet, tail, beak, and tongue, so admirably adapted to catch insects under the bark of trees. In the case of the misseltoe, which draws its nourishment from certain trees, which has seeds that must be transported by certain birds, and which has flowers with separate sexes absolutely requiring the agency of certain insects to bring pollen from one flower to the other, it is equally preposterous to account for the structure of this parasite, with its relations to several distinct organic beings, by the effects of external conditions, or of habit, or of the volition of the plant itself."

Beginning in 1837, Darwin's work dealt with the now well-understood concept that evolution is essentially brought about by the combined actions of three principles: (1) variation, a liberalizing factor allowing changes, present in all forms of life ; (2) heredity, the force that transmits similar organic form

from one generation to another, therefore setting the limits on the extent of changes; and (3) the struggle for existence, which determines the variations that will allow the positive adaptations to a given environment. By the interplay of these forces, species achieved alterations through a selective reproductive rate.

Evolutionary theory centres on the three related issues of the fact of evolution itself which means that organisms are related by common descent, the evolutionary history which shows details of when lineages split from one another and the changes occurring in each lineage, and the processes or mechanisms by which evolutionary change occurs. Darwin himself collected great evidence to support the first issue.

Stop to Consider

Lamarck's theory was based on the idea of series of staircases containing a vast sequence of life forms beginning with the simplest and extending to the most complex. He set out his ideas regarding the organization of life *Recherches sur l'organisation des corps vivants* (1802; "Research on the Organization of Living Bodies") and the *Philosophie zoologique* (1809; *Zoological Philosophy*). The two "laws" which he thought to govern the series was that firstly, organs are improved through repeated use and decline through disuse. Secondly, organs acquired or lost through environmental effects "are preserved by reproduction to the new individuals which arise." When Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published 50 years later, Lamarck's views generated great interest and controversy. After the 1930s, most geneticists discredited Lamarckism. One of the weaknesses of Lamarckism was that it was not based on direct evidence but was part of a larger surmise about evolution. However, Lamarck was the first to use the word "biology" in 1802 and although he is seen as a forerunner and not as a founder in the field of biological evolution, he is considered to have made fundamental contributions to systematic biology of the invertebrates.

The theory of evolution has, since Darwin, extended its influence to other biological disciplines, from physiology to ecology and from biochemistry to systematics. All biological knowledge is based on the concept of evolution. The concept of changes through time and the term 'evolution' have both become foundations of scientific knowledge and language. Even in common language we make use of both the concept, and the term, 'evolution'.

While Darwin's notion of natural selection has also been extended to other areas of human discourse, as in sociopolitical theory and economics, the extension can only be metaphorical. In Darwin's intended usage, natural selection applied only to hereditary variations in entities endowed with biological reproduction. In other words, natural selection is a natural process in the living world. But for some the extension has been used as a justification for ruthless competition and for "survival of the fittest". This extended usage was applied to the struggle for economic advantage or for political hegemony. Thus social Darwinism became an influential social philosophy in some circles through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Check Your Progress

1. Explain briefly the focus of Darwin's theory.

(Hint: Since we are students of literature, we are allowed to present laymen's points of view!)

2. Show how 'variety' and 'adaptation' are central to Darwin's theory.

(Hint: Use the two terms in your explanation of Darwin's theory.)

1.5 FURTHER EFFECTS

The theory of evolution has been seen by some people as being incompatible with religious beliefs, particularly those of Christianity. Particularly, the opening chapter of the Bible's Book of Genesis, which describes God's creation of the world, has been seen to be challenged by the theory of evolution. Evolutionary theory has also been seen to contradict the Christian belief in the immortality of the soul and of the idea that man was "created in the image of God."

Attacks on the theory on religious grounds started during Darwin's lifetime. An example occurred in 1874 when Charles Hodge, an American Protestant theologian, published *What Is Darwinism?*. This was one of the most articulate assaults on evolutionism. Hodge argued to show that the design of the human eye demonstrated the presence of the divine Creator, as the design of a watch evinces a watchmaker. Evolutionary theory thus showed that God is denied by "the denial of design in nature". Darwin's theory was both supported as well as criticised by theologians as well. The acceptance by Christian writers came only gradually, about as late as the 20th century.

The set of beliefs to which the name of 'Darwinism' or even 'Social Darwinism' has been given is the theory that persons, groups, and races are subject to the same laws of natural selection as perceptible in plants and animals in nature. According to the theory, which was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the weak are diminished and their cultures delimited, while the strong grow in power and exert cultural influence over the weak. The "survival of the fittest," was the phrase proposed by the British philosopher and scientist Herbert Spencer which the social Darwinists held to mean that the life of humans in society was a struggle for existence in accordance with this principle.

Walter Bagehot in England and William Graham Sumner in the United States, as social Darwinists, believed that the process of natural selection, acting on changes in the population would result in the survival and continuing improvement in the population. The social Darwinists, therefore, viewed societies, as they viewed individuals, like organisms that evolve in this manner.

SAQ

1. Why did Darwin's findings seem to challenge religious beliefs ? (80 words)

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2. What do the effects of Darwin's publications tell us of Victorian society ? (80 words)

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Turning to a most famous poem by Robert Browning, "Caliban Upon Setebos", published in the volume of 1864, called *Dramatis Personae*, we can see an extension of the Darwinian debate. This poem by Browning is widely admired because of its artistic virtuosity and conceptual strength. The poem seems to have been occasioned by the "intellectual convulsion"

following upon the 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species*, especially the focus on the "missing link" from ape to man. Although "Caliban" does not directly relate to Darwin's theory, the poem provides us with a window on the intellectual debates of the time. When we consider that William Paley's idea of "Natural Theology" published in his book in 1802 evoked debate, it is not remarkable that Darwinian theory seemed to have directly weighed down on Christian theological notions of God. In his poem, Browning constructs 'Caliban' differently from Shakespeare's character in *The Tempest* to explore the tendency for human beings to create God in their own images.

1.6 APPLYING SOCIAL DARWINISM

The advocates of laissez-faire capitalism and political conservatism found the theory to their advantage. Class stratification was justified on the basis of "natural" inequalities among individuals. Again, this was bolstered by the thought that the control of property was said to be a correlate of superior and inherent moral attributes such as industriousness, temperance, and frugality. In the light of such arguments it would be erroneous for attempts to reform society through state intervention or other means since these would interfere with natural processes. Thus the theory of natural selection became a handy weapon for the argument that unrestricted competition and defense of the status quo were in accord with biological selection. The theory allowed the conclusion that the poor were the "unfit" and should not be aided. Success could now be seen as the consequence of wealth. In its wider applications, social Darwinism was used to provide the philosophical foundations for imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies. Ideas of Anglo-Saxon or Aryan cultural and biological superiority received sustenance from ideas of natural selection.

Such applications of Darwinian theory declined during the 20th century as an expanded knowledge of biological, social, and cultural phenomena undermined, rather than supported, its basic tenets.

On the basis of newer knowledge, neo-Darwinism has superseded the earlier concept and purged it of Darwin's lingering attachment to the Lamarckian theory of inheritance of acquired characters. Present knowledge of the mechanisms of inheritance are such that modern scientists can distinguish more satisfactorily than Darwin between non-inheritable bodily variation and variation of a genuinely inheritable kind.

SAQ

1. What is meant by laissez-faire capitalism ? (30 words)

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2. How were Darwinian ideas used to justify the inequalities of contemporary society ? (50 words)

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1.7 DARWINISM VERSUS RELIGION

In the intensely evangelical climate of opinion of Victorian England, Darwin's ideas could have brought him within the scope of legal action for blasphemy and sedition. Even for the culture of science Darwin's findings in evolutionary theory were most radical. The natural world was seen by Victorians as one in which the spirit of God manifested itself in the creation of new species of plants and animals coming into existence in place of those that became extinct. The evidence that presented itself to Darwin was therefore certain to contradict this view of life.

In the course of his work Darwin's ideas regarding the fixity of species crystallized into a belief in transmutation. Further work was added to his notebooks. In October 1838, Darwin read Thomas Malthus' *An Essay on the Principle of Population* where the argument was maintained that population growth is geometric while the food supply increases only arithmetically. Thus population increase is always checked by a limited food supply. Darwin was compelled to attend to the issues of competition between species and then within species. Natural selection was the mechanism by which advantageous variations was passed on to succeeding generations. By this the traits of individuals that were less competitive would gradually disappear from populations. Later generations of biologists have come to understand variations within a species as variations in the genes of its individual members. They have explained evolution as the action of natural selection upon genes responsible for advantageous traits.

Darwin's theory has at its core the observation that hereditary variation is a fact of existence. It had been found through experience with animal and plant breeding that variations can be developed that are "useful to man." Darwin reasoned from this fact that variations must occur in nature that are useful or favourable to the organism itself as it struggles to exist. The chances for survival and procreation increase with favourable variations. The less advantageous variations are discarded and the advantageous ones are retained and multiplied in later generations. Natural selection is the name given to such a process. An organism that is well adapted to its environment is the result of such a process. As a consequence of this process evolution occurs.

From Darwin himself: "Let it be borne in mind in what an endless number of strange peculiarities our domestic productions, and in a lesser degree, those under nature vary; and how strong the hereditary tendency is. Under domestication it may be truly said that the whole organisation becomes in some degree plastic. Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical relations of life. Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should sometimes occur in the course of thousands of generations? If such do occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection. "

Most scientists readily accepted the theory. The clergy found it inconsistent with a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis. Darwin's theory did not allow scope for divine intervention. Mankind was removed from a position of superiority vis-à-vis the rest of the animal world. Man was placed as part of a continuum with the rest of nature and not separated by divine injunction.

After the publication of the *Origin*, Darwin continued to write, while friends continued to defend the theory before the public. Huxley and Hooker were among those friends who continued to spread what was tantamount to a gospel of evolution. Darwin elucidated his theory through his three other books: *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868), *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871)

(which took up the issue of human evolution) and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). This last book laid the groundwork for the study of ethology, neurobiology, and communication theory in psychology.

The *Origin of Species* caused considerable public excitement as it was read by notable figures of all kinds. During the 1860s and thereafter, evolution by natural selection was a favourite topic of discussion and debate. The most unpleasant distortion of Darwin's work came in the notion of "social Darwinism" which extended the crude idea of 'struggle for existence' to interpretations of human economic and social life.

The nineteenth century saw its own share of scientific advances but among all of these the theory of evolution by natural selection was the most crucial. However, it is necessary to note that the *concept* of evolution was not new, having been familiar for some decades. The new feature in Darwin's theory was the explanation it provided for the origin of species. In the field of biology, the advances were not as dramatic as in chemistry which flourished in this period. In the previous half-century great advances had been made in the physical sciences. Thus it was the theory of evolution which was the single most significant advance in the period as it touched upon fields far removed from pure biology. This theory brought 'history' into all the sciences; it swept aside the line between natural and the human and social sciences.

The idea of organic evolution was not new. It had been suggested a generation earlier by Erasmus Darwin and in France by Buffon, Montesquieu, Maupertuis, Diderot, and most recently, Jean-Baptiste de Monet, Chevalier (Knight) de Lamarck. Lamarck, as a forerunner in the field, had drawn the first evolutionary diagram--a ladder leading from unicellular organisms to man.

The theory of evolution by natural selection was significant for the way in which it combined a historical view of the universe with uniform, unchanging and continuous laws. We can expand this further by comparing what the geologists had done: the enormous variety of whatever could be observed on the inanimate earth was the result through enough time of the operations of the same forces as visible at present. Natural selection helped to explain the greater variety of living species. Through such conceptions the special status of man was abolished.

Stop to Consider

The obvious sometimes needs to be stated: the living world is truly staggering in its diversity. How is this diversity of plants and animals to be explained?

The evolutionary process lies behind this infinite variety of living species. All living creatures are descended from common ancestors. In one respect this relates living creatures to one another. Modifications occur in the process of biological evolution. The lineages of organisms change as generations follow on one another. Lineages descending from common ancestors diverge from one another giving rise to diversity.

Darwin's explanation of how organisms come about by evolution was incomplete even though it was scientific and essentially correct. For instance, his explanation of how evolution occurs served well to show why it is that organisms have features, such as wings, eyes, and kidneys, clearly formed to serve specific functions. His explanation rested on the fundamental concept of natural selection. In the twentieth century, the modern theory of evolution has arisen with the science of genetics which explains in detail how natural selection works. Molecular biology, a related scientific discipline, has made it possible to find out about problems which had earlier seemed impossible to understand.

SAQ

1. In what sense was Darwin's theory a radically new conception ? (50 words)

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2. What was the Victorian view of God's world ? (20 words)

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3. What was the main idea of 'Natural Selection' ? (50 words)

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1.8 LITERATURE AND DARWIN

The interest in evolutionary theory was widespread in English intellectual life in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Major writers of the period show this interest in various aspects of their works. A fictionalized portrait of Darwin appears in 1866 in *Wives and Daughters* by Elizabeth Gaskell. The debate in scientific circles regarding evolution is to be seen in Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) as well as the greatly popular *Vestiges of Creation* (1844) by Robert Chambers. Scientific ideas were topics of enthusiastic interest even outside the scientific community, among poets, novelists, and readers with intellectual interests. In the period before the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859), England saw heavy industrialization as it changed over from a largely agricultural sociological condition. Such rapid change in the conditions of living brought tremendous anxiety and disorientation. There was a prevailing sense of doubt and anxiety as established ways of thinking were challenged. The typically Victorian sense of uncertainty over either hope or doubt stems in part from this feeling of being cut loose from the old familiar ways of life.

We can refer to Tennyson's great poem *In Memoriam A.H.H.* as a famous example of the effects of Darwin on literary imagination. Sections 55 and 56 of the poem especially express Tennyson's thoughts on the topic. But, as noted by scholars, Tennyson's conception of evolution is different from Darwin's: Darwin's theory did not see evolution as targeting a goal but rather as the ability of a species to adapt to a given environment. The Victorian novel serves best of all in showing the influence of Darwin's discourse. We can see this in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, for instance, where the novelist is able to suggest that the world of nature is to be seen through time and not as timelessly static. Some of the subtler points of Darwinism appear better in literary writings !

Stop to consider

Perhaps the best literary expression of Darwin's theory is to be seen in the movement called 'Naturalism'. Writers of this movement were influenced by Darwinian theory and attempted to portray character as determined by surroundings and heredity. As with realism, naturalistic writers were involved in a reaction to earlier Romantic ideas and thus sought to incorporate the 'scientific' element into their writing by tracing the deeper forces of heredity or environment. In this attempt both realist and naturalist tended to focus on the darker side of society, often stressing the uncouth or the sordid. Emile Zola, the French writer, is considered to represent the school of literary naturalism.

1.9 ADVANCES TO THE 20TH CENTURY

The development of the microscope in the seventeenth-century had far-reaching effects on. It was a device through which a whole new world hitherto invisible was discovered. However, the 17th and the 18th centuries were more concerned with the organization of this new knowledge. But it was in this period that it began to be realized how important it would be to study living organisms as well as man with a comparative approach. The long-prevalent idea of spontaneous generation, or the idea of the generation of living organisms from nonliving matter had begun to recede by the 18th century but it was finally disproved by the work of Louis Pasteur. The 19th century development of evolutionary theory was aided by biological expeditions which added to existing knowledge. In the 19th century we see great progress in biology, as in the formulation of the theory of evolution, establishment of cell theory, laying of the foundations of modern embryology and discovery of the laws of heredity.

Simultaneously, we must note that 'biology' at first, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, meant the study of human life. In the history of ideas, it should be noted that terms periodically undergo transformations of meaning and intent. In the discussion of Darwinism, let us not forget that 1900 was the year of the rediscovery of Mendel's work. Gregor Mendel had published his work in 1866, but it was not until 1900, 16 years after Mendel's death, that his work was rediscovered independently by Hugo de Vries in Holland, Carl Erich Correns in Germany, and Erich Tschermak von Seysenegg in Austria. In Mendel's work was found the technical confirmation of Darwin's work. Finally, the controversy regarding the purpose of evolutionary processes was brought to rest.

Check Your Progress

1. Briefly outline the reception accorded to Darwin's new theory.
(Hint: The scientists did not reject it.)
2. What was the central point of 'Natural Selection' ?
(Hint : 'Natural' improvement was transmitted through variations..)
3. How did Darwinism infuse 'history' into the natural world ?
(Hint: Time became an important feature of variation.)
4. What was the effect of Darwinian theory on the world of literature ?
(Hint: Besides Tennyson, Hardy, Zola-- and others. Try to find out !)

1. 10 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

Encyclopedia Britannica

Beach, Joseph Warren : *The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry*, (London : Macmillan)

Levine, George : *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*, (Cambridge & London : Harvard University Press)

Robert Young: *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Links:

[//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism)

* * *

Unit 2

The Working Classes

Contents :

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Defining the term
- 2.4 Industrial Revolution & its Aftermath
- 2.5 The Organization of Work
- 2.6 Industrial Economy and the Worker
- 2.7 Emergence as a 'Class'
- 2.8 The 'Rights of Man' and Romanticism
- 2.9 Summing up
- 2.10 References/Suggested Readings

2.1 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to familiarize the learner with the contexts of the modern period. The modern period is almost unthinkable without the two great manifestations of capitalist progress: the widening divisions between richer nations and poorer nations through colonialism, and the formation of the working class of industrialized society. We saw the first of these in our earlier unit (3). Here we come to some of the consequences of industrialization. While some of the matter presented here tends to be sociological--and not 'literary', the learner must keep in mind that the connections between 'text' and 'context' cannot be made without first getting at the very basis of literary work which is society itself. Almost every detail of industrialization that we bring here can be seen as having shaped literature in a fundamental way. By the end of the unit you should be

- *familiar* with the historical origins
- *able to understand* the concept of class
- *able to trace* the nature of nineteenth-century society
- *able to place* the working class in a historical perspective

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces the learner to a very important part of English social history--the history of the proletariat. We should only think how capitalism developed in the West and how that was also the process by which the lower sections of society became the 'working class'. We begin with the Industrial Revolution because that was one historical transition which accelerated the rate of capitalist development. By itself this means that in this unit we cover the period from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. In literary history this means that we start from the early Romantic period and stop with the modern. The greater part of this unit moves to show the process by which the class is created and what are the attributes of industrialization. Again, you should try to use the material primarily as a pointer to wider reading on the subject.

2.3 DEFINING THE TERM

As we try to highlight the labouring classes of English society, we must also keep in mind that firstly, the processes of class-formation are dynamic and never static. Secondly, here we are dealing with the idea of 'labour', and that brings us very close to the related terms of 'artisan', 'craftsman', 'peasant', 'shoemaker', 'weaver'--in short, all those social categories which were involved in providing goods and services to society.

The words "manufacturer", "journeyman", and "tradesman", for instance, all meant differently in older times.

If all of this means to stop us from arriving at a reliable definition, we surely need to look at more history to help us move onwards ! Perhaps, then, we can start with 'Chartism' to help us.

Chartism was a British working-class movement which began somewhere in 1838. The movement aimed at parliamentary reform. 'Chartism' is named after the 'People's Charter', which had been drafted by William Lovett and it contained six demands: universal manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, vote by ballot, annually elected Parliaments, payment of members of Parliament, and abolition of the property qualifications for membership. This was an unusual movement in that it was both working-class in character and national in scope. Also, it grew out of protest against the social injustices

of the new industrial order in Britain. Chartism, as a movement, lasted at least a decade till 1848, while its ideas continued to find support even later. All six original demands were subsequently realized.

SAQ

1. How do we differentiate between the names of people who worked to produce things and the 'workers' clearly ? (20 words)

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2. What is the difference between 'worker' and 'craftsman' or 'artisan'? (30 words)

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The brief description above brings us to some notable qualities of contemporary English society; the Chartist movement aimed at parliamentary reform and it militated against the injustices of an industrialized society. Let us look at the description more closely: who were the members of this movement ? We return here to our initial problem of defining the term.

The historian, Eric Hobsbawm, provides us with at least one certain fact which is that the working class was indeed a historically new class. This means that it can be traced as a social group which emerged during a specific period of time. To some extent it is agreed that the working class in British society emerged in the early nineteenth century and underwent some changes in its formation due to the changing conditions from the period 1790-1830 and then after the 'railway boom' of 1843. But it also needs to be remembered that this class actually becomes a recognizable 'class' later in the century.

Stop to Consider

How do we understand 'class'? The concept is of crucial importance in Marxist theory. Marx used the concept as the basis of his theory. Together with Engels, Marx saw 'class' as a distinctive feature of capitalist societies. Capitalist society consists of two principal classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Describing the emergence of the working class, Marx wrote: "Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of the people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class."

Marx also made a distinction between the objective situation of a class and subjective awareness of this situation. This translates to mean the difference between membership of a class and consciousness of the membership.

It is in this connection that Chartism is an important landmark by which to understand this class. By the time this event took place, words like 'artisan', 'journeyman', 'craftsman' which, in the ancient world had meant small producers who worked independently and who had their own small organizations, had begun to mean people who sold their skills for wages. The term, "manufacturer", used to vaguely mean the labour force in the ancient world. Now, in the early nineteenth century, it meant strictly the industrial employer. The older type of the artisan who both made and sold had disappeared.

Perhaps it will be helpful to cast a backward glance at this point in our narrative to the time of great transition which began in England.

2.4 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION & ITS AFTERMATH

The name "Industrial Revolution" is given to the process of change, which began in England in the 18th century, from an agrarian economy with handicraft as its mainstay, to an economy dominated by industry and machine manufacture. From England it spread to other parts of the world.

This great transition is to be seen primarily in the technological changes which brought in the use of new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel. New energy sources, including both fuels and motive power, such as coal, the steam engine, electricity, petroleum, and the internal-combustion engine were used to run machines newly invented. The transformation in the methods of production meant the use of less human labour to produce more as was to

be seen in such inventions as the spinning jenny and the power loom. Naturally, this implied a new organization of work known as the factory system. The re-organization entailed increased division of labour and specialization of function. Part of the larger 'revolution' included important developments in transportation and communication. Industrial revolution meant a significant change from the older times because it consisted in the increasing application of science to industry. A dramatic change derived from these technological applications was the possibility of a tremendously increased use of natural resources and the mass production of manufactured goods.

SAQ

1. If the changes in methods and objects of production constituted the 'industrial revolution', how is the factory-system connected with it ?
(50 words)

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2. What was the situation earlier ? (40 words)

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There were bound to have been repercussions of these material changes in other spheres of life. At the level of material necessities, agricultural improvements made possible the provision of food for a larger non-agricultural population. The sum total of economic changes necessarily resulted in a wider distribution of wealth. Rising industrial production led to the decline of land as a source of wealth. It also meant greater international trade. Socially, new economic gainers effected political changes as policies of state had to correspond to the needs of an industrialized society. One of the most visible and profound changes was the growth of cities. Our list of changes must include the development of working-class movements as new relations tied the worker to his task.. New skills were now required and the

character of the worker had to undergo change with the emergence of new patterns of authority.

To look at these deeper changes closely we must focus on what happens to the worker, the person who is affected most profoundly by the process of 'industrialization'. The worker is reduced to being a 'mere' source of motive power when hand-operated tools are made into instruments of a machine. As production expands, human strength is unable to meet demands of energy. Thus mechanical motive power is substituted for human muscles.

Stop to Consider

What are the features of an 'industrialized' society ? Considering that economic institutions are generally so important, industrial society shows a new principle by which it structures itself. Social position and class membership are decided on the basis of economic position and relationships. Social position, even earlier, had been decided by the possession or the lack of wealth. However, this had not been the only criterion. Social hierarchy in non-industrial societies had been determined by the attributes of tribal membership, age, gender, religion and race.

Check Your Progress

1. What is the period being surveyed here ?

(Hint: There is more than one set of dates to look at !)

2. What were the differences between the new working-class and the old producers of goods ?

(Hint: Earlier, 'artisans' were not the same as the new 'worker'.)

3. What were the distinctive features of the 'Industrial Revolution' ?

(Hint: Be comprehensive in your description.)

4. Describe 'industrial society' differentiating it from earlier agricultural society.

(Hint: A significant change--land was no longer the standard of wealth.)

The 'classic' account of the history of English labour, E.P.Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, describes some experiences of workers during the Industrial Revolution. An equation was perceived by

most contemporary observers between the cotton-mill and the new industrial society. Between 1790 and 1850, new modes of production also implied new social relationships. The mills brought into existence both the 'new' mill-owner and the 'new' working population.

As Thompson reminds us, the image of the "dark, Satanic mill" conjures up feelings regarding the Industrial Revolution. Let us take his description: "it is a dramatic visual image - the barrack-like buildings, the great mill chimneys, the factory children, the clogs and shawls, the dwellings clustering around the mills as if spawned by them." The description, definitely, tells us of what the workers' existence must have been like. The cotton-mill and the new mill-town not only grew swiftly but it also employed ingenious techniques of manufacture and imposed a harsh, new discipline on its labour.

Accounts of contemporary conditions often referred to the cotton industry. Dickens's novel, *Hard Times*, is one example.

SAQ

1. Attempt a description of the landscape of medieval times. (50 words)

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2. What was the "harsh discipline" imposed by the factory - system on workers? (40 words)

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3. Who did the work of production in ancient times ? (50 words)

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Whether the term, "Industrial Revolution", which was popularized by the historian Arnold Toynbee, can really be applied to the economic transformation of late 18th- and early 19th-century Britain has been a point of controversy among scholars. They have pointed out that in terms of employment the industrial sector may not have overtaken the agricultural sector until the 1850s. They have also shown that the average unit of production employed only 10 people and the large, anonymous factories did not become common until the late 19th century.

Despite the debate we see above, the clearest evidence to be taken is of Britain's ability to sustain an unprecedented, dramatic growth in its population from 1780 onward without suffering from major famines or acute unemployment. The population rose from 10.5 millions in 1801 to 18.1 millions in 1841, which is a remarkable fact of the period.

Stop to Consider

Industrialization is bound to affect everything in society. Agriculture is also transformed by 'modern industry'. The change is due to machines and industrially produced chemicals being introduced, and other 'modern' techniques. Peasants are removed from the land as greater amounts of finance are infused into agriculture due to competition. Many agricultural labourers are displaced by the new machinery and impoverished.

In turn, this leads to the accelerated transfer of population to the cities. Town and country thus become further separated. The rural way of life is completely superseded by the modern industrialization. Productivity is increased such that a large portion of the rural labour force is rendered as a surplus. With industrialization, even where agriculture remains as an important part of the industrial economy, there is a simultaneous drop in the proportion of the labour force engaged in agriculture. This is one of the most obvious and clearest effects of industrialization, known as "sectoral transformation". A greater proportion of the work force turns to the production of manufactured goods and services, rather than agriculture.

Industrialization allows the surplus production of food which can feed a primarily urban population.

We must also note another major change in the English countryside which led to the uprooting of many villagers. This was the process known as "enclosure" by which arable lands belonging to the village community in common were parcelled into farm plots for individual owners. In the earlier system of rural

community life, most farmlands were in the form of strips under the control of individual cultivators during the growing season until harvesting, for a year. After the harvesting, and until the next growing season, the land was open to use by the community for grazing their livestock and any other usage. By putting a hedge or fence around it, the land was enclosed thus preventing common grazing and other rights to it. Enclosure began in the 12th century and the process continued till its completion in the 19th century.

By Thompson's account, it is in the period of the 'Industrial Revolution' - about 1790 to 1830 - that the 'working class' began to take shape. His account lists harsh changes: more intensive forms of economic exploitation, the loss of common rights over village land due to enclosures, and the small masters in domestic industries giving way to bigger employers. In agriculture, the exploitation was intensive; in the factories, it was more transparent. His description is unmatched:

"In the mills and in many mining areas these are the years of the employment of children (and of women underground); and the large-scale enterprise, the factory-system with its new discipline, the mill communities - where the manufacturer not only made riches out of the labour of the 'hands' but could be seen to make riches in one generation - all contributed to the transparency of the process of exploitation and to the social and cultural cohesion of the exploited." [*The Making of the English Working Class*, p.216]

These changes in the character of capitalist exploitation were "the rise of a master-class without traditional authority or obligations; the growing distance between master and man; . . . the loss of status and above all of independence for the worker, . . . the disruption of the traditional family economy; the discipline, monotony, hours and conditions of work; loss of leisure and amenities; the reduction of the man to the status of an 'instrument.'" [p.221-222]

It is also necessary, therefore, to keep in view the turbulence that marked the blaze of English history in the early decades of the century: popular agitations in the period 1811-50 consisted of the Luddite crisis from 1811-13, the Pentridge Rising in 1817, Peterloo ('Peterloo Massacre') in 1819, propaganda by the influential radical reformer, Robert Owen, the increasing trade union activity in the next decade, the Ten Hours Movement, the crisis of 1831-32, and then Chartism which became the net result of all such unrest.

All of the above points to the continuing social processes which make social categories. Friedrich Engels wrote in his *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, "the first proletarians were connected with manufacture, were engendered by itthe factory hands, eldest children of the industrial revolution, have from the beginning to the present day formed the nucleus of the Labour Movement". Robert Owen, in 1815, remarked that "the general diffusion of manufactures throughout a country generates a new character in its inhabitants . . . an essential change in the general character of the mass of the people". As we trace the history of the English working class, we also look at the new ways in which work gets organized.

SAQ

1. What are the sociological factors that lead to the emergence of the working class ? (80 words)

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2. What were the clearest signs of an 'industrial revolution' ? (30 words)

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3. In what sense was this set of shanges 'revolutionary' ? (50 words)

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2.5 THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

In the 1830s and 1840s the 'factory system' was still regarded as a novelty. The factory system should be seen as having helped to form the manufacturing population. In 1833, Peter Gaskell, author of *The Manufacturing Population of England* (1833), pointed out how the factory system had "drawn together the population into dense masses". More specifically, the heart of the system was in the power of steam which brought together the

workers: it was "only since the introduction of steam as a power that they have acquired their paramount importance". Yet another contemporary observer, W.Cooke Taylor, noted his observations in *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire* (1842), "The population, like the system to which it belongs, is NEW; but it is hourly increasing in breadth and strength. It is an aggregate of masses, our conceptions of which clothe themselves in terms that express something portentous and fearful . . . There are mighty energies slumbering in these masses. . . . The manufacturing population is not new in its formation alone: it is new in its habits of thought and action, which have been formed by the circumstances of its condition, with little instruction, and less guidance, from external sources . . .". Historical observers point out that the new working class was linked to steam power and the cotton-mill. The material instruments of production were changing the very existence of the workers who used them and creating new social relationships, cultural norms and institutions.

However, while we note all of the above, we should not be led into thinking that the cotton-mill symbolizes all that happened at this time. The Industrial Revolution had been partly led by the changes in the cotton-mills. The factory-system is definitely based on the cotton-mill as a model. But statistically, in the 1830s, the cotton handloom weavers were still many more in number than the mill-workers. We must also consider that the Luddite movement was the work of "skilled men in small workshops". Despite the importance that Engels gives to the "factory hands", English observers note that factory workers were mostly those who were attached to the cotton districts before the late 1840s.

Stop to consider

The 'Luddites' were members of the 19th-century movement led by bands of English craftsmen who protested against the mechanization of factories which threatened to displace them. The Luddite movement caused much destruction of machinery by rioting. The protests began in 1811 near Nottingham and spread to Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Leicestershire by the following year.

The movement was vigorously suppressed as witness the mass trial at York in 1813 which resulted in hangings and transportations of protesters. It is said that 12,000 troops were deployed against the Luddites.

Machine-breaking has been part of the history of labour in England. It was observed to have taken place in a serious way in the seventeenth century and to

continue right up to 1830. The wrecking of machines was a technique of protest used by trade unions in the period before the industrial revolution and during its early phases. The wrecking of machines was used as an important weapon in the famous riots of 1778 when a movement was organized to protest wage-reductions.

The later part of the nineteenth century in England is to be seen in terms of the new forms of life: the spread of industry and urbanization. In a sense, the city symbolized the industrial world. After 1850, there was rapid urbanization, at first in Britain and later also in other European countries. (By one estimate, there were ten cities of over 100,000 inhabitants in 1851 while in 1911, the number had risen to thirty-six. This meant that the city-inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century were only 25% of the population while the 1911 figure meant 44% of the population.) This, by itself, meant new forms of community life. Small towns developed into larger towns and separate villages would sometimes grow together into the typically new industrial region. These industrial settlements would be often (as in the case of Sheffield) surrounded by the beautiful farms and hills so it allowed workers in the newly industrial areas to be half-agricultural.

At this point of time (about the 1870s or so), the great city was likely to contain many factories and could therefore be called industrial but it was much more a centre of commerce, administration, transport and various services. So most of its inhabitants were workers of one kind or the other. Industrial enterprise was not yet significant and was still ruled by the 'master', a man, rather than the impersonal authority of the company board of directors. The economy of the late-Victorian period contained a very different working class than what was to be seen before the railways came to 'globalize' the economy. The history of Europe and Britain in the nineteenth century cannot be written without acknowledging that the last quarter of the century is bound up with the construction of the great trunk lines.

SAQ

1. What are the various ways in which industrial enterprise is organized ? (30 words)

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2. What are the variations we see on the earlier forms of industry in England and Europe ? (50 words)

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3. Do we see the master 'craftsman' of Elizabethan times in the nineteenth century, for instance ? (30 words)

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4. Is there a comparable character among any of Chaucer's pilgrims ? Does Dickens give us any such character ? (30 words)

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The railways carried forward industrialization which must be described in terms of those who were employed to build them: "armies of peasants", and the "armies of coolies" and those mechanics and engine-drivers who had to construct lines far away from their homes in England and Ireland. We can briefly refer to the example of a Thomas Brassey who employed, at times, eighty thousand men on five continents, to transform the human landscape by constructing railway lines. The railways, however, were only second to international shipping in the global perspective. The steamship was an important development in the world economy especially in the case of British trade. Industrialization received a further fillip with the development of the telegraph. It made a breakthrough in the 1830s after which rapid improvements were made.

Stop to Consider

In the nineteenth century we can no longer talk of a singularly 'English' or a 'European' economy. Recall the history of colonial expansion. We need to view industrial and technological developments of the time as aspects of a 'globalized' economy. However, the much-banded about word of the twenty-first century, 'globalization' has connotations different in many ways from what happened in the nineteenth century. The technological inventions of the century were geared to the ideas applicable to such an environment. A need was felt by the capitalist

countries to exert greater control over the remoter parts of their empires while at the same time the workers employed in industrial enterprise were only beginning to make the transition to a new situation.

It is in this sense that we have to look at what the railways did to the working class during the industrial revolution. Many of the policies of the giant railway companies of the time, the Great Western and the Great Eastern, for instance, were based on the realization that many of their workmen were previously artisans.

Technological advances help to explain the force of industrialization. Industrialization led to large and substantial movements of population across the Atlantic (from Europe to the United States), within countries or between states, from town to town, and the rural exodus to the cities. There was a large exodus from agriculture. Here we can use Hobsbawm's description: "Since most Europeans were rural, so were most migrants. The nineteenth century was a gigantic machine for uprooting countrymen." The United States, Australia, Argentina, industrial Germany, and Britain saw a significant correlation between migration and urbanization. The overwhelming reason for migration was poverty. An example can be seen in the years from 1845-54 when there was a great wave of emigration especially from Ireland and Germany when people fled from hunger and from the pressure of population on land.

Check Your Progress

1. What was 'new' about this new working class ?

(Hint: A new set of circumstances was likely to raise a new form of community-life.)

2. What were the visible signs of the new form of society ?

(Hint: A break with traditional modes of behaviour, for instance.)

3. Elaborate the connection between industrialization and urbanization.

(Hint: Industrialization meant that settlements were growing in size.)

4. Comment on the significance of the railways in this period.

(Hint: It enabled the large-scale migrations of uprooted workers. It also spread industrialization.)

5. In what way was work newly organized ?

(Hint: Describe the 'factory-system'.)

2.6 INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY & THE WORKER

Let us repeat a point already mentioned: the working class before the building of the railway network was very different from the one that came after it. Industrial development entered a new fertile phase in the later nineteenth century. This was partly due to the fresh scope that occurred for investments: railways, and metallurgical activities, for example.

SAQ

1. What are the different categories of industries we find around us ?
(40 words)

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2. What is the exact connection between the size of industry and the nature of the working class ? (30 words)

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3. How does a larger industry create a more 'impersonal' environment for the worker ? (50 words)

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This new phase of industrial development led to the formation of a great increase in the size and concentration of the working class. Large industrial concentrations now arose. Take an example: in the 1860s Tyneside (in northeastern England) had about twelve shipyards each employing about 1,500 men. In the period before the 1850s, there was nothing comparable there.

There was a simultaneous change in the occupational composition of the working classes. In 1851, there were less railwaymen than tailors, more shoemakers than coalminers, more silkworkers than commercial clerks in

Victorian England. From 1871 to 1911, the number of railwaymen increased fourfold, and miners more than doubled. In 1875, the biggest national trade unions were the Amalgamated Engineers and the Operative Stonemasons. Then came the unions of the Boilermakers, Carpenters and Joiners, the Tailors and the Cotton Spinners.

With the nineteenth century drawing to a close, in any industrializing, industrialized or urbanizing country of the world economy, was to be found these new historically unprecedented masses of labouring people, anonymous and rootless, who were apparently growing in majority. Where the cities of pre-industrial times had been mostly inhabited by people in the tertiary sector (shops, services, offices), cities had now become centres of manufacture. The big cities with over 100,000 inhabitants had about two-thirds of their occupied population in industrial occupations by the end of the nineteenth century. Each town or region was likely to be in some phase of industrial specialization. For example, textiles came to be associated with Dundee, coal, iron and steel, either alone or in combination, for Middlesbrough, armaments and shipbuilding for Jarrow and Barrow, and chemicals for Widnes. Moreover, there was now the tendency for many more of these armies of industry to work as parts of large and complex firms. In the new centres of heavy industry, especially, the plants would employ workers numbering from hundreds to thousands. The firms of Vickers in Barrow, or Armstrong in Newcastle measured their labour forces in tens of thousands. However, we have to note once more, that in terms of proportion of the entire labouring population, those in the giant factories were only a minority. The growth in the number of the proletarians at this time was impressive. This was apparently due to the enormous scope provided by economic expansion. Industry was even now a combination of manual labour and steam technology and this made it easier for new recruits to find industrial occupation.

2.7 EMERGENCE AS A 'CLASS'

The 1880s are an important decade in English labour history because this was the period of the rise of socialism. By the end of the century politicians were aware of this 'class consciousness'.

Workers, in this period, were scarcely more than paupers. The single fact of being wage-earners who, in common, faced manual labour and exploitation, fed a unifying sense among groups of people who were otherwise of diverse origins, diverse formations, with different languages and customs, and of varied economic situations. A common consciousness inevitably had to develop among these groups who were pushed together by a common style of life and a shared sense of thought. The working class, moreover, was distinct from the middle-classes.

Between 1870 and 1914 (World War I), politics began to touch upon economics. Governments had begun to take interest in the growth of industries. The widening of the franchise, as through the Reform Acts in England, meant that the majority of the electorate would be poor and insecure. The "tidal wave of western capitalism" which flooded the "developed" countries ensured that the numbers of those who lived by earning wages for manual labour was greatly increasing. Even in predominantly agrarian countries, manufactured products were finding markets. The spectacular increase in the numbers of wage-workers led to the formation of recognizable labour classes chiefly in the countries of old established industries as well as in the countries which were newly industrializing in Europe, North America, Japan and some other areas of white mass settlement overseas.

A Reform Act was passed by the English Parliament in 1832. It helped to bring in a change in the franchise by widening the electorate. However, its scope was not essentially democratic as the artisans, the working classes, and sections of the lower middle classes remained outside its ambit. The long Napoleonic wars had not brought peace and prosperity. The times were of open social conflicts centred on "corn and currency", or agriculture and credit. A 'Corn Law' was passed in 1815 to shore up prices of grain. Agricultural distress marked the 1820s. In Parliament, there was apparent conflict of interests between the industrialists and the landowning classes.

The term 'middle classes' began to be used in social political debate. The new environment of work of the steam-driven factory system led to a break with old and familiar ways of life. The new sense of a working class was born in this time.

The proletariat, though deeply differentiated within its ranks, nonetheless became a significant section of society. Hobsbawm points out this inevitable

fact: "the mass of workers was large, was indisputably growing, and threw a dark shadow over the established ordering of society and politics." From the time of the last two decades of the 19th century, till the first decade of the 20th, mass political parties based on the working class forced a new direction in politics.

The 'signs' of this new section of society can be traced to to the 1880s in England. There had sprung up the fish-and-chip shops and football was already a proletarian spectator sport of the time. Housing occupied by the various sections of workers began to develop along specific patterns. Working class resorts came up as in the case of Blackpool. After 1870 there was a slight improvement in the material conditions of the workers. Undoubtedly, there were still very deep differences among the workers and they were not a unified homogeneous mass. Before the rise of the new parties, people talked of the 'working classes' rather than the 'working class'. The famous 'type' of the proletariat of modern industry was yet a minority although rapidly growing in numbers. There were yet more manual workers in small workshops in cities and countryside, spread over diverging and different locations. Boilermakers were exclusively male, cotton weavers were mostly female, craftsmen differed from labourers, between labour aristocracy and lumpenproletariat there existed much difference. There were differences of race, language and origin. But the single unifying fact was that those who lived by wages were increasingly separated from those paid no wages.

SAQ

1. How is any distinction between classes to be made ? (25 words)

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2. How is the proletariat defined ? What gives historical evidence of a new 'working class'? (70 words)

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As a leader of industrialization, Britain was an exception in already having in existence non-political labour organization, trade unionism in the form of craft unions. Trade unions acquired legal status and privileges so substantial between 1867 and 1875 that employers were compelled to contend with their organization in the workplace.

The working-class holiday became an institution from the 1880s. Football culture became a national institution whose final recognition came with the attendance of the Cup Final by the king from 1913. Despite the differences already noted, "Labour" saw itself as a distinct class increasingly recognized by politicians. As with the remark made by Beatrice Webb in 1915: "The power of the Movement lies in the massive obstinacy of the rank-and-file, every day more representative of the working class. Whenever this massive feeling can be directed for or against some particular measure, it becomes almost irresistible. Our English governing class would not dare overtly to defy it."

2.8 THE 'RIGHTS OF MAN' AND ROMANTICISM

In the sections above, the period of history covered stretches from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. We have looked at the formation of the working class but without reference to its accompanying history of how the middle-class came to distinguish itself from this labouring section. We need to keep in mind that the working class developed its own distinct identity in contrast to the middle class which reaped the fruits of its labour.

The other part of history which must be kept in view alongside that of labour, is the tradition of social reform and radicalism in English political thought. Let us recall our first unit above, "Ideas of the Enlightenment" and how these ideas contributed to the French Revolution in 1789. The name of Thomas Paine is important because he participated in the cause of American Independence in 1776 and later returned to England and published his radical pamphlet *Rights of Man* in 1791 and 1792, in reply to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* which condemned the French people's actions. Paine's book in 1791 gave a radical critique of contemporary society and asked for a republican government. The book was banned and Paine went into exile. In 1793 and 1796, he published

The Age of Reason. Paine's writings expressed what was deeply felt by the masses of oppressed sections of society. Nineteenth-century free thought in England was influenced by *Age of Reason* and other thinkers like Rousseau, Holbach, and Voltaire.

The name 'Jacobin', after the famous 'Jacobin Club' which played an important part in the French Revolution, was also applied to radicals in England and other countries in the period Revolution. The revolution in France had a profound effect on English radical thinking. The English Romantic poets wrote their works under the impression of this profound upheaval and in sympathy with English Jacobinism. William Blake expressed this influence in his incomplete work, *Vala*, or *The Four Zoas*:

"What is the price of Experience ? do men buy it for a song ?
Or wisdom for a dance in the street ? No, it is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children.
Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy,
And in the wither'd field, where the farmer plows for bread in vain."

This was in 1796-97. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were well acquainted with Jacobinism. In this sense the Romantics may be recognized as occupying a special place in the history of English poetry.

Check Your Progress

1. Comment on the rise of the working class.

(Hint: Show how it grew in size and significance.)

2. Relate the rise of 'socialism' to the growing political significance of the working class.

(Hint: Observe how political discourse began to make use of the terms.)

3. Write briefly on the forms of working class culture.

(Hint: For example, football as a sport.)

4. Elaborate on the Romantic response to the Industrial Revolution.

(Hint: For example, Wordsworth's sympathy for the rustic, the Romantic worship of 'Nature'.)

5. Briefly trace the urge for social reform in English literary texts of the nineteenth-century.

(Hint: The Romantics, the 'condition of England' novel, Dickens, among others.)

2.9 SUMMING UP

Through the above discussion an attempt is made to familiarize you with the idea of 'the working class', its emergence in the 18th century Europe and its influence on the society of its time. The most important factor behind the emergence of this class was the industrial revolution. Colonialism ensured huge markets for the products as well as sources of raw materials. The result was the growth of capitalism and the formation of the working class. The emergence of this class has been influential in the transformations in the socio-cultural lives of England as well as Europe. As such, the study of any work of art or literature of that age needs an understanding of the working class which had been the most dominant factor in socio-cultural environment of the 18th and 19th century England.

2.10 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

Hobsbawm, Eric : *The Age of Capital* 1848 - 1875

Hobsbawm, Eric : *The Age of Empire* 1875 - 1914

Hobsbawm, Eric: *Revolutionaries*

Hobsbawm, Eric : *Worlds of Labour, Industry and Empire*

Thompson, E.P. : *The Making of the English Working Class*

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Unit 3

Feminist Movements

Contents:

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Women's Movement
- 3.4 First Statements
- 3.5 Moving Forward
- 3.6 The Second Wave
- 3.7 Contemporary Trends
- 3.8 Suggested Readings

3.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we bring to you a very wide and complex subject, 'feminism'. You will find here a general but brief survey of the evolution of feminism through the various stages. By the end of the unit you will be able to

- *define* feminism
- *see* the distinctions between various stages of feminism as a developing concept
- *identify* the dominant concerns of feminists
- *trace* the history of women's movements

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Feminism can be seen as an ideology and a movement that concerns itself with women's subordinate position in the social polity dominated by men. It calls for an end to the discrimination against women through an overhauling of the male-dominated political, economic and social order.

3.3 WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The presence of divergent and sometimes opposed strands of thought and action make an acceptable definition of 'feminism' virtually impossible. It is

in this regard that we can have a better understanding of 'feminism' if it is defined in terms of its historical origins and development. That is, if feminism is addressed in terms of 'movements', a historical process encompassing multifaceted ideas and actions, then the important and common issues before all the feminists get highlighted. It is interesting to note that feminist activity and thought started long before the term was adopted to describe those who campaigned for women's rights.

To some extent, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) was a pioneering text for the women's movement. In her book Wollstonecraft argued for higher standards in education for women and for developing women's rational faculties and economic independence. She said "I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures". Wollstonecraft fearlessly attacked some pillars of patriarchy like John Milton and some supposed prophets of liberty like Rousseau who were not in favour of extending liberty to women. Mary Wollstonecraft's text, being a very courageous expression of women's concern about their social, economic and political condition, gave a direction to the development of women's rights movements in the mid- nineteenth century. It is to be noted that there were a few male figures who had seriously considered the subject of women's inequality.

Early Stirrings

What prompted women to fight against their subordination ? What made women conscious of their secondary role in society ?

If we consider the history of women's 'voices', we go back a long way into ancient times. Through the ages there have been expressions of women's dissatisfaction with a secondary social status, or their questioning of women's role in the order of things. We have to refer to the work of the ancient Greek poetess, Sappho, to the play *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes, to Chaucer's Wife of Bath, to Christine de Pisan in the Middle Ages, and many other examples which may yet be brought to light. In our own society, there can be found many names which voiced important concerns related to social structuring.

Aphra Behn and Anne Bradstreet are important names in the literary history of the 17th century. The 18th century saw larger numbers of female names in the literary circuit.

In 1779, William Alexander published *History of Women*, noting therein, "We allow a woman to sway our sceptre, but by law and custom we debar her from

every other government but that of her own family, as if there were not a public employment between that of superintending the kingdom, and the affairs of her own kitchen, which could be managed by the genius and capacity of women." Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), whose husband was Ambassador in Turkey (1716 - 18), considered Turkish women to be 'freer' in comparison with English ladies. Her sentiments were shared by Judith Drake, who wrote *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (in 1696, which had come out in five editions by 1750), who voiced the opinion that men and women were alike in their 'Souls'. The history of the 18th century shows the greater participation, in intellectual life and in the print culture, of women. Women figured as historians, as intellectuals, as writers, as biographers, literary critics, and novelists. But Samuel Johnson refused women an entry in his *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), a refusal we can contrast with the account given by Mary Robinson in 1799, in her *Thoughts on the Condition of Women*.

Mary Astell, politically a conservative who rejected a contractual concept of government, she championed the development of women in relation to which she espoused the idea of a "female educational enclave".

Mary Wollstonecraft came from Newington Green, a London suburb, from a close association with Dissenters. Wollstonecraft took up the cause of women's education, inveighing against the role laid out for women in the matter of education. She called for a "Revolution in female manners". Some rallied round to such calls; Anna Laetitia Barbauld, a Dissenter, in 1795, proclaimed in *The Rights of Woman*:

"Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
"Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
Woman! too long degraded, scorned, oppressed;
O born to rule in partial Law's despite,
Resume thy native empire o'er the breast. . "

We should see here that the collective voicing of protest against the subjugation of women may be traced to the late 17th and then the eighteenth centuries. The last was the period when considerable change was to be seen in English society and prompted a public discussion of the women's question.

3.4 FIRST STATEMENTS

John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Woman* (1869) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) by Frederick Engels had diagnosed the problem of woman's suppressed position in society. Back in 1791, Olympe de Gouges, a French revolutionary, published her 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Citizen' in response to the

French Revolution's "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen". De Gouges argued that women were equal to men and they must have all the rights enjoyed by men. Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges were the architects of the political tradition or movement called 'feminism' that did not acquire self-conscious existence until the international suffrage battles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

SAQ

Which women united to speak in a united 'voice' ? (30 words)

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The history of feminist movements highlights the historical appearance of women's rights movements at different periods as a series of "waves". Thus, first-wave feminism is used to refer to the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century feminist movements that were concerned basically with gaining equal rights for women, particularly the right of suffrage.

If we attempt to insert women's movements within a larger social framework, we can see how it was in part the march of industrialization which set aside women, particularly married women, from the 'economy' which was seen in terms of those who are 'occupied', i.e. received an individual cash income. By this categorization, unpaid domestic work was 'unoccupied'. This resulted in a masculinized concept of 'labour' where the prejudice against women working, as among the bourgeoisie, was far greater and more readily applicable. As with the economy, politics too worked in the same pattern. As democratization advanced, the right to vote was extended after 1870, the exclusion of women became more marked. Politics thus became a masculine affair.

The Second wave feminism, called the radical feminist movement, referred to the emergence of feminist activity in the late 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to the failure of the New Left to fulfill their goals.

Stop to Consider

Women's movements & 'Feminism'

"While FEMINISM has usually developed out of activist women's movements aimed at changing women's situation, not all such movements have styled themselves 'feminist'. The term has sometimes been refused on the grounds that it is too closely linked with the sectional interests of women who are privileged in terms of CLASS, 'RACE' or IMPERIALISM. But the debt owed by feminism to women's movements, feminist or no, across the globe and over time, is immeasurable. . .

The issues around which independent women's movements have emerged include civil rights, especially suffrage; equal political, economic and sexual rights; social purity and temperance; anti-slavery; lesbianism; disability; environmentalism; PEACE; and in 'Third World' contexts, popular women's consumer movements concerning prices and inflation. They range from left radicalism to the conservatism which has often been attached to campaigns premised upon the superior moral qualities of women.

The emergence of autonomous women's movements has been closely associated with social revolutionary movements, movements for national liberation and ANTI-IMPERIALIST . . ."

[- *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*]

SAQ

What were the early objectives of the feminist movements ? (40 words)

.....
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.....

Women's exclusion from the exercise of political power was the chief reason behind the rise of the first wave of feminist movement in Europe. Politics continued to be an exclusively male-dominated activity since women were denied the right to vote in western democracies and they remained politically unrepresented in formal political institutions. The European and American feminists have found that women's political exclusion was rooted in Western political theories and institutions. Political theorists and philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau argued for a natural difference between men and women. Their philosophical arguments classified women as too irrational to exercise political power and take part in public life.

Traditional Stereotypes

Women realized that a central issue which led to their oppression and exploitation was the question of how they had been represented in traditional discourses. Male ideology had condemned them to nearly total silence and abject obedience. Their literary endeavours had always invited male scorn and their depiction as either goddesses or as mother figures meant the perpetuation of the ideology of gender.

"In describing the period 1875 - 1914, in his chapter, "The New Woman", Hobsbawm offers some insights on the movements for women's emancipation

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"It may seem absurd, . . . to consider the history of half the human race in our period in the context of that of the western middle classes, a relatively small group even within the countries of 'developed' and developing capitalism. Yet it is legitimate, insofar as historians concentrate their attention on changes and transformations in the condition of women, for the most striking of these, 'women's emancipation', was at this period pioneered and still almost entirely confined to the middle and . . . upper strata of society. It was modest enough at this time, even though the period produced a small but unprecedented number of women who were active, and indeed extraordinarily distinguished, in fields previously confined entirely to men: figures like Rosa Luxemburg, Madame Curie, Beatrice Webb. Still, it was large enough to produce not simply a handful of pioneers, but - within the bourgeois milieu - a novel species, the 'new woman' about whom male observers speculated and argued from the 1880s onwards, and who was the protagonist of 'progressive' writers: Henrik Ibsen's Nora and Rebecca West, Bernard Shaw's heroines, or rather anti-heroines."

[E.J.Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*]

3.5 MOVING FORWARD

The first wave feminist criticized the division of human activities as public and private on the basis of some arbitrary and false theories. On the other hand, they argued for the interdependence of the two spheres of life. The feminist action against women's exclusion from political sphere led to the suffrage movement which became prominent in Europe and the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, the single issue of suffrage brought to light many important differences between different feminist viewpoints. Many feminists did not consider the issue of suffrage as the central question or key area of inequality between men and women because large sections of the male population

were also denied the right to vote. Many feminists, however, believed that suffrage was central to the feminist cause, but they had diverse ways and reasons to justify their claims. They also had to face a paradoxical situation in their attempts to justify the political rights for women. On the one hand, they had to claim that women were not different men and they were as rational as men to take part in public sphere. At the same time, in claiming rights for women they were affirming their sexual difference from men.

Stop to Consider

Women and Politics

"How far, then, had the condition of women been transformed in the half-century before 1914? . . . By the simple and elementary standards of Mary Wollstonecraft, who asked for the same rights for both sexes, there had been a major breakthrough in women's access to occupations and professions hitherto maintained as male monopolies, and often bitterly defended in the teeth of common sense and even bourgeois convention, as when male gynaecologists argued the special unsuitability of women to treat specifically female diseases. By 1914 few women had advanced through the gap, but in principle the way was now open. In spite of appearances to the contrary, women were on the verge of a massive victory in the long struggle for equal citizen rights, symbolized by the vote. However bitterly contested before 1914, less than ten years later women could vote in national elections for the first time in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA. It was evident that this remarkable change was the culmination of pre-1914 struggles. . . . In the matter of equality of earnings, there had been no significant advance. With negligible exceptions women could still expect to earn much less than men for the same work, or to occupy jobs which, being seen as 'women's jobs', were for that reason low-paid. "

[E.J.Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*]

"EQUALITY The equality/difference couplet came to dominate much contemporary feminist discussion during the 1980s, the difference in question being sexual difference. . . .

This shift between Feminisms of equality and difference, and various new syntheses, is sometimes related as an unfolding over time, from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. 'First-wave' feminism, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and the US, founded on the liberal philosophies of Locke and Rousseau and later, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor . . . is said to be a feminism of equality focused on winning legal, civil and political rights for women; SECOND-WAVE feminism is then presented as a feminism of difference . . . "

[*A Glossary of Feminist Theory*]

Stop to Consider

The feminist movements of the nineteenth century and twentieth century are renewals of the eighteenth century tradition of thought that focused on the question of women's inequality in the patriarchal system.

The claim for women's inclusion in the political sphere gave rise to the first wave of feminism. The first wave feminism was marked by diverse and even contradictory opinions on the importance of the issue of suffrage for women's liberation. There is not one but many feminisms; rigid classification among them is, however, not possible.

3.6 The Second Wave

Between the suffrage movement and the reinvigoration of feminist activity in the late 1960s and 1970s, called the second wave of feminism, the question of women's emancipation did not lie dormant. The struggle for women's citizenship which started with the call for suffrage ended the total exclusion of women from the political sphere. But the feminists soon realized that the move out of the private into the public sphere did not mean a total emancipation for women. In the late 1960s and 1970s women voiced their concerns about women's inequality in the areas of family, sexuality and work. The issues of paid employment, equal salaries and the provision of condition such as childcare have been long-term feminist concerns.

SAQ

1. How would you see the differences between the two waves of feminism? (40 words)

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2. Do you find any continuing concerns in feminist movements ? (40 words)

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The radical feminists of the second wave stress women's political power at an informal, grass-root level. "The personal is political" was the famous slogan of the second wave of the feminist movement. It suggests that relations between the male and the female are marked by what Wilhelm Reich called 'Sexual Politics'. Using the phrase in the title of her work *Sexual Politics* (1970), Kate Millet argues that politics refers not merely to the "relatively narrow and exclusive world of meetings, Chairman and parties. The term 'Politics' shall refer to power- structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another".

The recognition that personal relationships are also based on the exercise of power is a significant step in the feminist questioning of the male-female relationships in the family, working place and decision -making bodies. The rise of the second wave of feminism can be ascribed to the socialist, including the Marxist, categorization of the question of women's inequality as a marginal problem. The socialists believed that the redressal of the grievances of the oppressed class would automatically solve the problem of inequality faced by women. But the leftist movements failed to fulfill the demands of the women and the resurgence of feminist activity took place in the 1960s to focus on the question of women's liberation as a separate problem.

Stop to Consider

Power relations between men and women related particularly to the struggle for women's bodies have engaged the attention of many feminists. You can see this in phrases like "sisterhood is powerful" or 'Sexual Politics" (Kate Millet). Feminists have taken up the question of power differently from Michel Foucault whose study of the subject has been highly influential. Some feminists have found his work useful for the construction of power in our society while those who disagreed, did so on the argument that Foucault's does not take into account "the systematic power of men as a group over women as a group". The traditional definition of "politics" has linked it to the state, political parties and public life. But feminists recognise that the connotations of the political have to be seen through the variations of culture and history. Hence it is seen by feminists as being social in nature and in terms of its relations to the conflict over the distribution of scarce resources.

Even after achieving suffrage in the first two decades of the twentieth century in all Western democracies, women came to realize that the right to vote

could not mean full political citizenship. As a result, the focus of feminist thought shifted from the formal political institutions to the private sphere. The second wave feminist pointed out that complete emancipation of women could not be achieved if the private sphere of women's lives continued to be regulated by the male power-politics. Feminists have focused on questions regarding gender differentiation in the labour market since women had to do unpaid housework and earned less than men. Some Marxists- feminists have attempted to explain women's lower status in the labour-market through an examination of the capitalist system of production. In the capitalist system, the employers keep the women in low-paid jobs so that in case of demands for higher wages the employer can turn to this reserve force.

Some Marxist feminists describe how the two systems of capitalism and patriarchy force men and women to perform different economic roles. In the patriarchal system, men exclude women from better-paid work to ensure women's financial dependence on men. Some other feminists examine issues such as sexuality and reproductive capacities of women as the primary cause of the division of labour on gendered lines.

Another major concern of the second wave of feminist movement has been the question of women's lack of control over their own sexuality and fertility. For some feminists, sexuality is not a central issue in the question of women's subordination, for others it is the very key to men's domination of women. Again, for some feminists, reproduction and motherhood are a burden and a cause of women's oppression. They want liberation from this burden through new scientific technologies. Some feminists, however, consider motherhood as a very pleasurable and empowering experience and view technology as a means used by men to interfere in women's experience.

Stop to Consider

We can see how profoundly feminism has served to question deep-seated assumptions about society and social roles. Feminists have highlighted the way in which subjective positions are reflections of the influence of specific circumstances. This has helped to show up the uncertainties and subjectivity hidden in ideas like objectivity and neutrality. Feminists have demonstrated that mental processes like thought are not disembodied and abstract but are tied to the nature and situation of the body located in time and place. Thus the "body" symbolizes 'location' in terms of concrete situatedness, rejecting thus the Cartesian tradition of thought occurring at a disembodied, universal level.

In view of the divergent thought and functions followed within the second wave of feminism itself, the term "Radical Feminism" has been coined to make reference to the feminist politics which was responsible for uncovering the extent of violence against women. It was born in North America out of dissatisfaction with radical left politics. It argued that sex roles are socially constructed, not biologically designed. The insistence that 'the personal is political' and that sexuality is to be totally freed from male domination is associated with radical feminism. While radical feminism put the stress on man-woman difference, liberal feminism campaigned for equal rights and changes in the legal system to provide equally to women. Feminists of the second wave were also deeply influenced by the revival of Marxism in 1960s. Attempting to achieve some kind of synthesis between Marxist theory and feminist accounts of gender systems, Marxist feminism exposed some of the weaknesses of the theory of production which had not included the labour of 'reproduction', performed at home unpaid, by women. They wanted a revision of these theories so that Marxism could be applied as a critique of the gender discrimination in modern capitalist society.

An overview of the two waves of feminism establishes the point that it has been a political movement in its origin and subsequent evolution. All the feminists agree that politically, socially and economically women were relegated to a secondary status on the basis of the natural difference between men and women. For centuries, women's biological capacity for reproduction and their lesser physical strength have been seen as determining their subordinate roles at home and making them unfit for participating in the public sphere. They are judged to be closer to nature, less reasonable than men and ruled by emotion. The feminist, on the other hand, argue that muscularity and femininity are mere social constructions, formulated by the conventions of the patriarchal society for the benefit of men. Simon de Beauvoir, in her work *The Second Sex* (1949) asserts that 'woman' is a biological category, and all the behaviour associated with femininity is a social construction. "One is not born a woman: one becomes one"----this famous statement of de Beauvoir suggests that the psychological and behavioural aspects of 'sex' are the products of patriarchal cultures and not the natural results of biological difference. She points out that societies are organized on the assumption that man is 'self' and woman is 'other'. In this patriarchal binarism, the 'self' treats the 'other' as a supplement or threat

but never as an equal. Feminists of both the waves have tried to dismantle the hierarchies of self-other, active-passive, rational-irrational, formulated by the male-dominated society.

Construction of the feminine

De Beauvoir highlights the deep asymmetry of terms like "masculine" and the "feminine". Masculinity stands as the human norm, or the "absolute human type" so that a man does not preface his statements with, "I am a man". A woman, on the other hand, is seen to hold views grounded in her femininity, and not objectively. Such traditions of thought are summarised by de Beauvoir in these words: "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being . . . she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other."

3.7 CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

The classification of the feminist movement into two waves should be read as a useful summary of a historical process which started in the late eighteenth century and is still going on. Moreover, the classification of the movement into two waves should not overlook the diversity of feminist thought and action that exist within the two waves. Again, feminist thinking in recent times has taken a textual turn with the proliferation of newer and newer forms of discourses. The academic appropriation of the concepts of psychoanalysis, structuralism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and post-modernism in the field of feminist thinking of 1980s and 1990s has led to its being labelled as the "third wave". The focus of French Feminism on language as an instrument of male domination says that language represents the male point of view and advocates a special, feminine language---"écriture feminine". North American feminism, on the other hand, adopts the strategy of close textual reading of the canonical work. Undertaking a revisionist reading of the western literary tradition they attempt to expose patriarchal ideology as reflected in the so-called literary classics.

Again, a revision of the main tradition of feminism as followed in Europe and North America has given rise to Black feminism and feminism of the third-world countries. The Black feminists claim that black women are

oppressed both sexually and racially and they challenge the white women's ability to speak for black women. The white feminists are also accused of Eurocentrism in their overlooking the impact of colonialism on the women of the colonized third world countries. Thus, third world feminism has developed in response to the particular problems faced by woman in the third-world countries. The diversity of feminist thinking is, however, accompanied by debates over the role of theory and the relevance of academic feminism to the lives of ordinary woman.

Check Your Progress

1. Substantiate the view that feminism is not a unitary concept, but a grouping of divergent ideas and actions.
2. How does radical feminism differ from liberal feminism? Do you think that a neat classification of feminism into different theoretical versions is possible?
3. Feminism belongs to a self-conscious political tradition --- Justify in the light of the major concerns of the first and second waves of feminism.
4. Discuss feminism as both an application and a critique of the Marxian ideology of power relations.
5. Assess the role of patriarchy in the rise of feminist movements.

3.8 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

Jane Freedman: *Feminism* (2002) --- the book focuses on such feminist concerns as politics, women's citizenship, employment, sexuality, race and ethnicity. It provides an account of the evolution of feminist struggles for liberation. The book also argues that rigid classification of feminism into various waves is not justifiable.

Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell and Carol Wolkowitz: *A Glossary of Feminist Theory* (2000) --- The Glossary identifies and defines all the major concepts that have structured feminists theory, particularly in 1960s and 1970s. It is a comprehensive guide to an understanding of all key words in feminists thought--- from 'abuse' to 'women's language', from " androgyny' to 'womanism'.

K K Ruthven: *Feminist Literary Studies, An Introduction* (1984) --- A broad survey, by a male writer, of the impact of structuralism, poststructuralism and Marxism on feminist thought and practice. It focuses on some major issues of feminism such as --- the claims for distinctive styles in women's writing, male bias in the construction of language and gynocentrism. The work argues that literary works undoubtedly contain features which can be labeled misogynistic, and justifies the need for constructing feminist theories of criticism.

Maggie Humm ed.: *Feminism- A Reader* (1992) --- a comprehensive book on different versions of feminism from Virginia Woolf to the present day.

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning
Gauhati University**

MA in English

Semester 2

Paper VI

Literature and Social History

Block 3

Modern



Contents:

Block Introduction:

Unit 1 : The Modernist Movement in the Arts

Unit 2 : The Crisis of Empire

Unit 3 : The Rise of 'English'

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Block Introduction:

As we have explained elsewhere above, our course on historical issues is organized around movements, concepts, stages and the history of ideas. In this block you will be introduced to a set of ideas which originate with the events occurring in the modern age.

The study of history is so clearly intertwined with what is called ‘literary study’ that students need to be informed about this aspect of their course-work. Had it been a simple process of remembering dates and names, there may have been no need to take up an entire course on ‘Literature & Social History’. But concepts do not appear out of thin air as you will find below. The same can be said of the great nationalist movements in the colonized world of Asia and Africa. Nationalist movements organized themselves on the basis of specific issues, one of which was the right to self-determination. In other words, if we consider social history in terms of social movements propelling new structures and new social organizations, then literary study can only be enriched in including the necessary reference to such widespread change in social attitudes or social behaviour. This helps to explain why your literary study must include a course on social history.

As with the other previous blocks in this course, we cover a certain period of history here. This is roughly the late 19th century onwards to about the middle of the 20th century. You must, even while you make appropriate use of this book, try to explore other writings on the same historical period. We have added the names of books which can help you but our list can never be exhaustive.

On account of the restricted space here, we have not been able to give you every related topic at great length, limiting the information to just an adequate working knowledge. This means that you should attempt to find out some more about the subject by following what we have indicated here.

Unit 1: The Modernist Movement in the Arts

Unit 2: The Crisis of Empire

Unit 3: The Rise of ‘English’

Unit 1

The Modernist Movement in the Arts

Contents:

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Defining Modernism
- 1.3 Modernism in Art
- 1.4 Impressionism
- 1.5 Cubism
- 1.6 Futurism
- 1.7 Expressionism
- 1.8 Dadaism
- 1.9 Surrealism
- 1.10 The 'Modern' in Poetry
- 1.11 Modern Drama
- 1.12 Modern Novel
- 1.13 Summing up
- 1.14 Glossary
- 1.15 References/ Suggested Readings

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The attempt in this unit will be to

- *help* you define the various ideas of modernism,
- *acquaint* you briefly with the ideas and movements of the modern age,
- *make* you relate your knowledge of the period with the individual authors, artists and poets as well as their works.

1.2 DEFINING MODERNISM

The parameters of Modernism have been much debated, and as such the term eludes a clear definition. Roughly, it can be said to have taken its roots during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France and during the

1890s in Britain and Germany, and extended till the start of the Second World War.

The term is frequently used to signify a deliberate and radical break in Western art, literature, and culture in general, with what came to be seen as more traditional, conventional, and **decadent** practices of the earlier era. With its social and historical background, it includes the resurgence of the Women's Movements, particularly the emergence of the concepts of the **New Woman** and **Women's Suffrage**, the peak and subsequent crisis of the British Empire, the beginning of the decolonizing process in Africa and Asia in particular, the events around and within the First World War, far-ranging technological changes, and so on.

Moving from one century to the next: women suffragettes, empire, etc

You must see here that several connections are being made : modernity is being connected to a particular historical moment which displayed its own peculiar characteristics and state of mind. Below we give you two descriptions of the same historical moment, one is chiefly economic while the other is cultural and artistic.

Between 1870 and the outbreak of the First World War, the Western world could be summed up in the words of Eric J. Hobsbawm :

“By the 1870s the progress of the bourgeois world had led to a point where more sceptical, even more pessimistic, voices began to be heard. And they were reinforced by the situation in which the world found itself in the 1870s, and which few had foreseen. The economic foundations of advancing civilization were shaken by tremors. After a generation of unparalleled expansion, the world economy was in crisis.”

While this constitutes the chronology of events, we can find its cultural manifestation in other terms.

As explained by M. Calinescu, we can see the intimate connection between modernity and crisis - “modernity itself can be seen as a “culture of crisis” “. Calinescu further explains this notion by showing that “As a culture of crisis, the avant-garde is consciously involved in furthering the “natural” decay of traditional forms in our world of change, and does its best to intensify and dramatize all existing symptoms of decadence and exhaustion.”

Take note also of another description given by Raymond Williams : “[The] late nineteenth century was the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production. Photography, cinema, radio, television, reproduction and recording all make their decisive advances during the period identified as

Modernist, . . . The 1890s were the earliest moment of the movements, the moment at which the manifesto (in the new magazine) became the badge of self-conscious and self-advertising schools. Futurists, Imagists, Surrealists, Cubists, Vorticists, Formalists and Constructivists all variously announced their arrival “.

Modernism as an umbrella term brings within its scope all the movements taking place in the arts, necessarily experimental and complex in nature, registering the change and the crisis undergone by the entire Western, but chiefly, the European, world. There is a sense of a catastrophic divide from the past and a revolutionary turn towards the new and the unexplored, so much so that it prompted Virginia Woolf’s half-serious, half-jesting remark, “In or around 1910, human nature changed.”

Modern/Modernism/Modernist

“During the last one hundred and fifty years or so, such terms as “modern,” “modernity,” and more recently “modernism,” as well as a number of related notions, have been used in artistic or literary contexts to convey an increasingly sharp sense of historical relativism.”

This sentence is meant to awake you to the care and caution you need in using the term, the modern. From this statement, you also get a feel of the amount of work that this little word is made to do - to oppose periods of time.

No definition of ‘modern’ can be complete. Look at the poet Baudelaire’s description: “Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art, of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable”. You may not understand this at first glance but it is interesting to take up what Baudelaire suggests : modernity as a source of beauty is fleeting but it takes over finally, what is traditional. Modernity therefore opposes tradition and goes over to exploring that which is yet to be. It is rebellious in this sense and thus avant-garde.

The linking of modernity with Baudelaire is necessary because he was an important theorist of aesthetic modernity. In the English language, ‘modernity’ appears as early as 1627 to mean “present times”. Baudelaire’s conception of modernity is striking because it takes in the idea of the banality and triteness of ‘modern life’ as opposed to the “eternal sublimity of nature and the grandeur of a legendary medieval past.”

In some of its connotations, ‘modern’ recalls the opposition of the modern writer or artist to the ugliness of modern industrial civilization and its rise, along with bourgeois *philistinism*, in the nineteenth century.

In the 1830s ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ arose as rebellion against bourgeois values, the shape aesthetic modernity took against the modernity of the philistine.

1.3 MODERNISM IN ARTS

The modernist tendency expressed itself initially more powerfully through various avant-garde movements in art, such as Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Expressionism and so on, and manifested powerful parallel tendencies in literature as well, as can be seen in Symbolist and Imagist poetry. These movements were, by and large, also reactions or responses to the dominant movements in mid and late nineteenth century Europe, particularly, Naturalism and Impressionism. Our aim here would, therefore, be to first analyse these modernist movements in the arts and then go on to their influences in the various genres or forms of modernist literature.

SAQ

1. Whom would you include in the Symbolist movement in literature?
(50 words)

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2. Which tradition or traditions does Symbolism choose to oppose?
(40 words)

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Avant-garde

The metaphor used here is that of the “advance guard” or “vanguard” which signifies both a profound criticism of what has gone before as well as a definite will to change and commitment to what is valuable for the future. The term itself has a military implication which helps to point up some of its attitudes and trends : militancy, nonconformism, exploration and finally, the overcoming or conquest of time.

One kind of modernity is closely allied with ideas of progress. If you look again at the beginnings of the ‘modern’ in the Renaissance (called the ‘early modern period’) and then in the Enlightenment in the late 17th and 18th centuries, modernity points to a stage in the history of Western civilization. So the modern becomes associated with scientific and technological progress, industrial

revolution, economic and social changes brought about by capitalism. But aesthetic modernity is opposed to all these values because these are bourgeois ideas of modernity which continued some outstanding traditions of earlier periods of history - the confidence in the benefits of science and progress, the cult of reason, the cult of action and success and pragmatism.

Modernity as an aesthetic concept is radically antibourgeois being based on disgust with middle-class values and thus using diverse means (rebellion, anarchy, self-exile) to register this protest. This is the kind of radical militancy which gives us the avant-garde. In France, in the 1870s, came partly to mean the small group of writers and artists who transferred their radicalism to the domain of art. They believed that by revolutionizing art they would be revolutionizing life.

Peter Childs, in *Modernism*, identifies three major reasons for the drastic and dynamic changes in European art from the middle of the nineteenth century. The first reason is the invention of photography and the Kodak camera which appropriated the representational role that was one of the responsibilities of the painter. Consequently artists were now compelled to explore perspectives in and other than the strictly **naturalistic** and **representational**.

Secondly, painting paraphernalia had become much cheaper thanks to major breakthroughs in chemistry during the late nineteenth century, so that art & the artists could subsist without much income or patronage in the cities. Last, the cities, especially after the French Revolution, had become cultural **hubs** that were accessible not only to the rich upper classes but to the common people as well, since now, the museums and art galleries which were situated in the cities were opened to the public. Art, at this point of time had ceased to be a mere pastime or individual profession but had become transformed into a formidable industry.

SAQ

Attempt a brief definition of ‘modernism’ - in terms of historical moment, its cultural manifestations, and its attitudes in the realm of art. (50 words)

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The French Revolution and the History of Art

If we choose to look at the effects of the French Revolution on literature and the arts, the following description tells us:

“To list some examples: the year 1790 saw the appearance of Goethe’s *Faust, a Fragment*, of Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, of Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. In these works are found the Romanticist view of human destiny, of the state, of moral energy, and of aesthetics. The remainder of the decade goes on to show that it belongs to a new age; it gave the world Goya’s “Caprichos” and the portrait of the Duchess de Alba, Beethoven’s *Piano Sonata in C Minor (Pathétique)*, Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, the beginning of August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck’s translation of Shakespeare into German, Schelling’s *Nature Philosophy*, Herder’s *Letters on the Progress of Mankind*, Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*, Schiller’s *Wallenstein*, and Schleiermacher’s *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. These are so many evidences of a new direction in thought and culture.

To say, then, that the cultural history of the later modern age—1789 to the present—begins with the French Revolution is to discuss that revolution’s ideas rather than the details of its onward march during its first 10 years. These ideas are the recognition of individual rights, the sovereignty of the people, and the universal applicability of this pair of propositions.

France by 1789 had been for more than a century the cultural dictator of Europe, and it is clear that in England and Germany the search for native sources of art was stimulated by the desire to break the tyranny of the French language and literature. The rediscovery of Shakespeare, for example, was in part a move in the liberation from French classical tragedy and its rigid limitations of subject matter and form. “

The passages above are taken from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and are meant to show you some details of the period in terms of artistic and literary trends. It is from here that European culture moved forward towards modernism later on.

The various movements within art (as well as literature), referred to through such umbrella terms as ‘Art Nouveau’ and ‘Post-Impressionism’ were, to a great extent, reactions against the tyranny of precision in Naturalism, though the periods of their peak vary from nation to nation. These were also largely anti-Romantic, anti-realist, **anti-positivist** in nature, and were thus, a collective “shift away from the romantic nuances of Symbolism towards a harder, mechanized, more impersonal or classical form of the image; from an assertive aestheticism towards a more crisis-ridden view of the modern

artistic situation; from an ambition of artistic wholeness to a fascination with decreation” (Bradbury and McFarlane; p.201).

In surveying these movements in modern art, we will first consider Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

Symbolism and Anti-positivism in Art and Literature

Certain features about the period under discussion are striking : the decades leading up to the First World War made up a time when an entire way of understanding and interpreting the universe was transformed. Some intellectual fields were revolutionized - physics, for instance. Some old sciences were revolutionized and brought in innovations, as in genetics; some scientific theories led to new fields, as with psychoanalysis. Along with names like Picasso and Schönberg, there were the names of Max Planck, Einstein and Freud in the intellectual realm. In a very short period of time the universe had come to be radically transformed. It was no longer possible to comprehend the universe through ‘facts’ laboriously compiled or through the ‘commonsense’ of intuition or ‘sense experience’. As Hobsbawm remarks, “In a sense ‘nature’ became less ‘natural’ and more incomprehensible.”

One development which was notable was in the field of mathematics whose links with the real world had collapsed through the new requirement of only scrupulously excluding any contradiction among its postulates and disallowing any appeal to intuition. Another crisis in the intellectual realm was - “A much larger body of scientists as well as eventually most educated human beings found themselves involved in the crisis of the Galilean or Newtonian universe of physics, whose beginning can be fairly precisely dated in 1895, and which was to be replaced by the Einsteinian universe of relativity.”

The arts were thus imbued with a deep sense of uncertainty regarding reality. Nature was still the reference-point for the creative arts but a new idiom had to be created which would allow the expression of a radically new understanding of life and the universe. Reality and subjectivity had to come together in such an idiom because the new knowledge revealed that reality itself is often the result of a priori assumptions. This was the crisis of ‘positivism’ which the avant-garde had to confront and resolve.

It is from this point that we can go on to grasp one statement about symbols (and therefore relate to symbolism) by Charles Baudelaire : “From the world of the senses the poet takes the material in which to forge a symbolic vision of himself or of his dream; what he asks of the world of the senses is that it give him the means of expressing his soul.”

We can see here a poetic statement about the relation of reality and subjectivity.

1.4 IMPRESSIONISM

While Impressionism was to a great extent representational, it was also, however, a move away from stark realism and blended better with Symbolism in that it tried to capture the immediateness of a particular object at a particular moment of time, to capture the individual and fragmented effects of light and colour at a single instant, and then to build up a unified impression through that fragments.

The Impressionists, chief among them **Renoir, Monet, Degas, Manet, Alfred Sisley** and others were less concerned with social realism than with presenting visual impressions by means of light and colour. They usually painted landscapes but were also interested in more contemporary subjects like tennis-parties, horse-racing, seaside resorts, picnics and so on. What shocked their contemporary audiences was the lack of interest in academic standards of composition and drawing; their habitual blurring and fragmentation of outlines, and colour.

Impressionism peaked during the year 1870-80, covering the careers of Sisley and Pissarro who painted fresh and beautifully evocative landscapes; Renoir and Monet who painted the river Seine at Argenteuil. Monet, in particular, is particularly significant for his series of pictures in which the object is depicted at different times of day under different weather conditions. Monet and Degas on the other hand, had a wider range of subject (Ballet dancers, laundresses, cafés, brothers) and their paintings were characterized by such devices as unexpected viewpoints/vantage points, close-ups and figures abruptly cut off by the frame to capture the dynamism of modern urban life.

By the 1880s however, younger artists and even many of the senior Impressionists felt the limitations of the movement in that it was based purely on perception, and they, in particular Gauguin, Redon, Van Gogh, Cezanne and Seurat tried to incorporate individual perspectives on their art. For example, Gauguin was more inclined towards Symbolism in art and brought back into art the faculty of imagination and the element of dream, using his art to express not only visual perception but states of mind. **Toulouse-Lautrec** painted with an extravagance of colour and expression the melancholy inherent in the heady world of the brothel, cabaret and music-hall. Seurat on the other hand, developed a technique called 'Pointillism' or

'Divisionism' which was based on the assumption that painting like language, could be reduced to its smallest element the dot. His views were based on scientific studies of colour and visual perception, and he was thus more concerned with the working of vision rather than with the broad impressions effected by light on objects. His paintings were composed of various minute dots or 'points' of colour which were combined by the eye to form a range of colours and shades when viewed from an appropriate distance.

SAQ

1. How far do you consider the art of painting to have been influenced by scientific developments? (50 words)

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2. What significance do you attach to the term 'Impressionism'? (30 words)

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1.5 CUBISM

One of the most powerful movements to emerge out of Post-Impressionism was Cubism. The term was first used derivatively by Henry Matisse in 1908 in his criticism of a picture by Georges Braque who, together with Pablo Picasso, is regarded as the founder of the technique developed a year earlier. Cubists incorporated the element of abstractness in art, and preferred painting humans or constructed objects rather than nature per se. They thus did not try to reproduce a photographic or even an Impressionistic picture of an object; in fact many of their paintings, at first sight, do not bear any resemblance to recognizable objects but merely give an impression of an object's solidity and abstract qualities. Since Cubism was non-representational in nature, it was also free to experiment with perspective in painting, the assumption being, that it was impossible to depict reality faithfully

since a two-dimensional medium could not represent three-dimensional space without any kind of distortion. Moreover, in reality, the individual can view an object from different directions and positions, and not necessarily in a one-to-one manner, so that the point of focus and the centre of vision could move flexibly between foreground and background depending on the individual's perspective.

While Post-Impressionists as Seurat and Cézanne had relied on dots/points, colours and lines in order to approach the problematic of visual representation, the founding Cubists, Picasso and Braque, attempted to depict the three-dimensionality of the object through the two-dimensional medium of painting. This necessitated a total liberation from a fixed perspective and faithfulness to actual size and shape of objects. This technique was much influenced by African art, as well as by Cézanne's advice to "deal with nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone". Picasso also introduced the technique of collage in his paintings a technique which was to become an integral element of art and literature in time to come.

The first phase of Cubism, referred to as Facet Cubism (1907-9), reduced natural forms to basic geometrical shapes and were to a great extent a combination of old representational and new abstract styles, while in the second phase, Analytical Cubism (1910-12), there was further fragmentation of objects which were depicted from all angles and were open from inside. There was a minimal emphasis of colour while interest shifted to form. Colour, however became important from 1912 onwards, in the hands of the Spanish painter Juan Gris who used colour and shape to a greater and decorative effect in his painting. There was, at this point, also the interest in collages, and there was a total rejection of imitation with the re-creation of new objects. This phase is usually referred to as synthetic Cubism. This attempt at re-creation from reality reduced to its fragments is a preoccupation that is again frequently encountered in Modernist fiction, as in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* or even to some extent in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

SAQ

1. What is the distinction between 'representational' art and 'non-representational' art ? (50 words)

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2. Do you find any connection between what was happening politically at the time and the experiments in the arts ? (50 words)

The Cities of Modernism

A striking feature of modernism is its metropolitan character. Malcolm Bradbury and James MacFarlane, in their book, describe this feature at some length. You see how Paris, Vienna, and other great European cities provided the fertile ground for modernist experiments. As you read about all of this, you must keep in mind the important point that it was the “new and specific location of the artists and intellectuals of this movement within the changing cultural metropolis” which helped to create the culture of modernism. That is to say, modernism absorbs the cultural progressions occurring in the metropolis.

Raymond Williams, from whom the above point has been taken, explains that

- i) the metropolis of the late 19th and earliest 20th centuries, had become the site of new social, economic and cultural relations;
- ii) this development was related to the benefits of imperialism which brought back wealth and power in these imperial capitals thus leading to a widening gap, both social and cultural, between the provinces and the capitals; and that
- iii) a complexity and a sophistication had come to define social relations which made possible great liberty of expression.

Further, this meant a kind of openness in sharp contrast to traditional cultural, social and intellectual forms which prevailed in the provinces or the less developed countries.

1.6 FUTURISM

Another experimental movement during this period is also radically different from the Post-Impressionist techniques and has more to do with the technical advances that were brought about during the early years of the twentieth century. This was Futurism, which began early as an Italian movement. It was founded by the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), who published the Futurist **Manifesto** in the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1909

in Paris. This Manifesto was to serve as a preface to the volume of poems he had composed.

Earlier, as editor of the journal *Poesia* in Milan since 1905, he had been greatly responsible for publicizing the French Symbolists in Italy. This Manifesto, however, was depicted as a statement of declaration from Italy to the entire European world and presented itself as a challenge to the various other contemporary movements in its radical distance from their points of departure. For this movement extolled the beauty of speed, and flight, in the form of the motor car, the airplane and the ocean liner. Moreover, they differed particularly from the Cubists in that the former fragmented their forms with penetrating shafts of light which, together with their use of colour, imparted a feeling of dynamic motion into their work. In the Futurist Manifesto Marinetti declared:-

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned by great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath - a roaring car that seems to run on shrapnel - is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace [a famous Hellenistic sculpture in the Louvre]. We will glorify war - the world's only hygiene.... We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by pain; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capital. We will sing of the clangor and the heat of nights in the shipyards and docks blazing with electric moons; of gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking snakes; of factories hanging from the clouds by the twisted threads of their smoke trails....

How does the language look like to you? Isn't it very visual in nature? In fact, some key terms of Futurism - dynamism and simultaneity - expressing the beauty of speed (in fact, 'Dynamism' had been considered as names for the movement but eventually gave way to 'Futurism'), were major experiments in film and painting during the time, while the literature of the movements was also pervaded by that visual element. Paintings such as Russolo's *Sleeping City* and *The Revolt* and Boccioni's *Fight in the Galleria* and films such as Balla's *Girl Running on a Balcony* and *Lead in Motion*, the *Papier collé* of Carrà as well as Marinetti's **Free Word broadsheet** *Mountains + Valleys + Roads X Joffre* were typical specimens of this movement.

SAQ

What were the forms in which Futurism manifested itself ? (40 words)

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As Judy Rawson, in her essay on “Italian Futurism,” [in *Modernism*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane] says, “The call [was] for a new poetry of intuition to hate libraries and museums, to repudiate reason to reassert that divine intuition which is the gift of the Latin races. Their poetry [was] to depend on analogy instead of logic; the old Latin grammar [was] to go, and nouns [were] to be placed as they [came]; verbs [were] to be used only in the infinitive adjectives, adverbs and punctuation to be abolished (though mathematical and musical signs [were] allowed; and human psychology [was] to be replaced by a lyrical obsession with matter”.

The movement had an overt anti-clerical and anti-socialist ideological basis and many of its ideals later came to be associated (whether rightly or wrongly) with Fascism, as a result of which this movement encountered widespread outrage and extremist reaction. While the Futurist context was chiefly Italian, there was a parallel and somewhat similar strand of Futurism in Russia, chiefly in the works of the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, who declared the non-relevance of all previous art in the present world and therefore all examples should be destroyed, since the present reality could be explored only through newer forms of art. This was again a reaction against the nuanced allusive work of the preceding symbolists, while Futurism itself attempted to deliberately embrace in **a Nietzschean fashion** the new technological world and derecognise what seemed to it the decadent past. The idea of revolution was thus a motivational force in Futurism in general and in the Russian in particular. Thus, in order to demonstrate and reinforce the defunctness of earlier forms of arts in the face of new techniques, the Futurist Francis Picabia exhibited a stuffed monkey labelled *Portrait of Cezanne*, *Portrait of Rembrandt*, *Portrait of Renoir*.

Stop to Consider

When we survey modernism and the avant-garde we have to note the attraction towards forms of anarchism and nihilism, even to forms of revolutionary socialism. This was undoubtedly contradictory but there was an underlying linkage between the violent opposition to prevailing conventions and the avant-garde declarations of anarchism, nihilism and revolutionary socialism. While the predisposition to be anarchist stemmed from the emphasis on the liberation of the creative individual, after 1917 the concept of heroic revolution helped to cast as a model such liberation for all individuals. It was this tendency which was fed by hostility to the war and militarism as we see from the Dadaists, the Surrealists, the Russian Symbolists and the Russian Futurists.

On the flip side, Futurism as an artistic and literary style, however, had less influence in Britain, except through Wyndham Lewis's own version - after distancing himself from Futurism - of the flux, speed, energy of the contemporary technological, mechanised world, which was named Vorticism. At the same time there was also acknowledgement of some of the key points of futurism in such writers as Evelyn Waugh, D.H. Lawrence (though they saw it more as a liability than a positive element), and the movement itself seems to have served as a precursor to such films as Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, and to the relatively new game of cyber fiction.

Check Your Progress

1. Show how 'modernism' reflected the dominant concerns of the period.
2. To what extent is the modernist movement, in its various forms, a creation of a new form of metropolitan culture ?
3. Explain the methods adopted by modernist writers and artists to articulate their departure from older traditions.

1.7 EXPRESSIONISM

Expressionism is another movement during the modern period whose roots go back to the Post-Impressionists, especially to the work of Vincent Van Gogh. It is, however, a movement which tends to encompass a variety of forms - poetry, drama, painting, cinema and architecture, and is therefore hard to define. It was originally used in French in 1901 to categorise eight paintings by the painter Julien Auguste Hervé in the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, but in the German context it was taken to characterise a group of French painters who included the Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges

Braque. By 1911, it had come to include the earlier Cezanne and Van Gogh as well and in general, seemed to imply any form of reaction against Impressionism on the grounds that it sought to eradicate the sordidness and decadence of the society behind a facade of beauty and colour. Simultaneously there was also the rejection of the prosaic and banal aspect of society which was increasingly succumbing to industrialism and technological advancement. Expressionism, thus, applied itself to the inner world of feeling rather than the outer world of fact, and this necessarily resulted in a distortion of the natural appearance of objects in order to survey what the artist felt about actual subject. Alternatively it could also consist purely of colour and forms entirely unrelated to nature or reality, but still express the mood of the artist. It was thus an attempt to move away from representation, while the self tried to break the constraints of conventionality and search for new ways of expression.

The Expressionist painter, such as the Norwegian Edvard Munch (pron. moonk) and the Russian Vasily Kandinsky, sought to depict the conflicts within the individual from a totally subjective viewpoint and thus to achieve a kind of liberation of the spirit, to the “inner resonance” (in the words of Kandinsky) which was being kept repressed due to the objectification and mechanization of the human spirit in the age of machines and technology. The emphasis was on shades rather than the dynamism of light, and how shade and darkness could work insidiously on the mind, while nightmare and alienation were major preoccupations of the Expressionists. Expressionism was also particularly influential in Germany, where it was seen as a revolutionary attempt to create a visionary, idealistic world, to free art and culture as a whole from constraints of class, especially middle-class society, to express the numerous dimensions of the self, and to go to the deepest recesses of the human psyche, and to adopt and transform the language, rhythm and images drawn from the modern industries’, into relevant, regenerative symbols. While Franz Kafka was a major Expressionist novelist in Germany, in Britain people like Wyndham Lewis and Christopher Isherwood exploited its technologies to the full in their works though even some passages of the works of Joyce and Woolf are expressionistic in nature.

SAQ

How does Expressionism represent objects of external reality ?

(50 words)

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1.8 DADAISM

The First World War exercised a traumatizing effect on the modern consciousness, so much so that art began to question whether any meaning or relevance was left of it at all. Such an extremity of nihilism is seen in the two movements, Dadaism and Surrealism, both of which emerged after, and were to a great extent a consequence of, the War. While these movements exploited many of the techniques of the pre-War movements at the same time they emphatically rejected the possibility of arriving at a cohesive experience of the modern and all it signified. Besides the war, they were further radically influenced by the remarkable breakthroughs in such fields as psychology. Both these movements, like the other movements, were not however restricted to the arts but extended to literature as well.

Dadaism (“dada” in French means “hobby-horse”) developed between 1915 and 1922, and was the result of a growing disillusionment during the First World War. It appeared almost simultaneously in New York, with Marcel Duchamp’s exhibition of ‘ready-made’ sculptures; and in Zurich in 1916 with the founding of the (Café) Cabaret Voltaire by the Romanian poet Sami Rosenstock who wrote under the name Tristan Tzara. [By another widely accepted account, “the name was adopted at Hugo Ball’s **Cabaret (Café) Voltaire**, in Zürich, during one of the meetings held in 1916 by a group of young artists and war resisters that included Jean Arp, Richard Hülsenbeck, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco, and Emmy Hennings; when a paper knife inserted into a French-German dictionary pointed to the word *dada*, this word was seized upon by the group as appropriate for their anti-aesthetic creations and protest activities, which were engendered by disgust for bourgeois values and despair over World War I.”]

It was in the Cabaret Voltaire where works by the representative Dadaists Hans Arp (with his challenges of random assortments of scraps of paper), Max Ernst (with his photo montages) were exhibited. Tzara's own poetry had the semblance of arbitrariness which was typical of the Dadaists' attempt to capture the spontaneity of human experience and creativity.

The Dadaists were brought together by a mutual revulsion at World War I and by a rejection of conventions in art and thought and a self-conscious attempt at experimenting with unorthodox techniques in order to jolt society into self-awareness. The movement spread into both Europe and North America from the start of the World War till the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

SAQ

World War I had a profoundly disturbing effect on Western society. Can you name some writers who expressed this despair in their works? (40 words)

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The first group to be formed within this movement was in Zurich from 1914-18, around the poets Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Tristan Tzara, and Richard Huelsenbeck, and the painters Hans Arp, Marcel Janco and Hans Richter. In their work they were influenced by the pre-war avant-garde movements of Cubism and Expressionism. Subsequently, the term was adopted in New York by the group comprising Marchel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Marius de Zayas and Man Ray during the period from 1915 to 1921. In Berlin, (1917-22) one of the largest Dada groups was formed by Richard Huelsenbeck with John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch and George Grosz while Paris also witnessed for a period an interest in Dada promoted by Tzara, Picabia and André Breton (1919-24) as the final phase of Dada which was well on the way to disintegration with many of its members opting for Surrealism.

The Cabaret Voltaire became a central agency in establishing performance as a central medium of Dada, while the cross-culture allegiances of its members and invitees (including the Austrian Max Oppenheimer, the Romanian Arthur Segal and the Ukrainian Marcel Slodki, as well as French and Russian participants) and the attraction for African performances (inspired by the Futurists) contributed to its international character. The emphasis was once again on pastiche, and on artistic spontaneity centred round the governing principle of chance as well as a high degree of reverence for forces outside rationalism, paving the way for the later emergence of Surrealism. Some of the significant works in the Zurich Dada were the sound poems (*Phantastische Gebete*, 1916), which were illustrated with abstract woodcuts by Hans Arp; Hugo Ball's recital and performance of *Gadji beri bimba*, while dressed in cardboard cylinders designed by Marcel Janco; painted wood reliefs by Arp such as *Entombment of the Birds and Butterflies (Head of Tzara)*. (1916-17); plaster reliefs such as *The Loch* by Janco; and collaboration on geometric tapestries by Sophia Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp, such as *Pathetic Symmetry* (1916-17), which were unusual because of the media used as well as diversity and collaborative techniques.

Stop to Consider

"In the early years of the century, partially in Apollinaire and more directly in the poems which became known as bruitiste, verse composed as pure sound was being written in several European languages. The eventual outcome, along this very specialized line of development, was the phonetic poem, evident among some of the Futurists but more especially in Dadaism. In 1917, . . . Hugo Ball wrote that 'the decision to let go of language in poetry, just like letting go of the object in painting, is imminent', and he had indeed just written his *Gadji Beri Bimba*. His own account of its public reading is instructive:

I began in a slow and solemn way

gadji beri bimba glandridi launa lonni cadori

It was then that I realized that my voice, lacking other possibilities, was adopting the ancestral cadence of priestly laments, that style of chanting the mass in the catholic churches of East and West:

zimzim urallala zimzim urallala zimzim zanzibar

zimzall zam.

Moreover it was done to drums and bells."

[Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, p.68, Verso, 1989]

Many of the exhibitions of Dada creations were accompanied with music by Hans Heusser, Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. Another innovative art work was the result of collaboration of Walter Serner and Christian Schad (who later moved away from the group upon his removal to Geneva) and was also preoccupied with the working of chance - these were called 'schadographs' (since they were developed by Schad in particular), and were deliberately arbitrary compositions created by laying objects on photographic paper and exposing the plates to light.

While the Zurich Dada was heavily informed by World War I, New York Dada, including creations by Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp, was more distanced from the war, and directed more aggressively against the art establishment. Alfred Stieglitz's periodical *Camera Work* became one of the centres around which the New York Dadaists conveyed and many members including Picabia, Edward J. Steichen, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove and Charles Sheeler exhibited their works at Stieglitz's Photo-Secession gallery. Another periodical *291* was launched in March 1915 which brought in another member Marius de Zayas, which Duchamp was introduced in June 1915 to a literary and artistic group centred round the Modern Gallery opened by de Zayas, including writers and poets William Carlos Williams, Margaret Anderson, Wallace Stevens, Alfred Kreyborg and Elsa Freytag-Loringhoven, and the painters Joseph Stella, Morton Livingston Schamberg and Man Ray.

Some of the significant creations of the New York Dadaists were Picabia's mechanomorphic works, such as *Very Rare Picture on the Earth* (1915); Duchamp's studies on glass which were in many cases adaptations of technical diagrams, and installation of ready-mades as art, such as *Bicycle Wheel* (a replica, 1963); Man Ray's painting such as *Rope Dancer Accompanies Her Shadows* (1916) and his photograph of a mechanical egg-beater titled *Man* (1918). Such a concern with the ready-made was a challenge thrown by the Dadaists at conventional notions of originality and was a deliberately anti-art gesture also implicating the process of industrial mass-production. Of course this preoccupation with industrial ready-mades also made for the major controversy relating to the New York Dada.

Kitsch

Between the two world wars and after the second World War there was a visible growth of “pseudo-art”. In cultural terms, kitsch can be seen as one of the most typical products of modernity, both technologically and aesthetically. It is defined by its dependence on fads and the tendency to be rapidly obsolete so that it can be called only an “expendable” art which is commodified for consumption. Kitsch is valued directly in terms of a demand for spurious replicas or the reproduction of objects whose original aesthetic value lay in their being unique and inimitable.

Lastly, Berlin Dada was, more than any other Dada group, considerably influenced by political events. Richard Huelsenbeck, who had been one of the founders of the Zürich group and had transmitted it to Berlin, was joined by Franz Jung, Gerhard Preiss, John Heartfield (formerly Helmut Herzfelde) and his Brother Wieland Hertzfelde, George Grosz, Walter Mehring, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, Otto Schmaulhausen and Johannes Baader. The Club Dada was formed in April 1918 at the Galerie I. B. Neumann, and most of the members, chiefly Huelsenbeck, rejected the trend of abstractionism in art such as Expressionist art, and again the alternative experimentations concerned themselves with phonetic poems (by Hausmann), photomontage (used for extensive satires against the *status quo*, and developed by Heartfield and Grosz), collages and assemblages of discrete objects, and posters. ‘Photomontge’ consisted of pasting fragmented photographs with printed messages as in the (later) anti-Nazi works like “Kaiser Adolph” by Heartfield. Similar with the groups of New York and Zurich, Berlin Dada shocked and enraged audiences at public meetings. Dada publications were brought out by them—”Everyman His Own Football” (*Jedermann sein eigener Fussball*), *Club Dada*, *Der Dada*, and *Dada Almanach*.

Berlin Dada was, in particular, a user of the technique of Photomontage, that is, collages made by assembling photographs from the mass media not aimed at conventional realism but by using unexpected combinations with other images or with words, in order to analyse contemporary reality and the post-World War I state of affairs. Much of the work done by the Berlin Dada was confiscated by the authorities since they were seen, because of their highly critical and satirical overtones, as volatile threats to the establishment.

By the early 1920s, Dada was disintegrating with its members increasingly drawn to Surrealism or disavowing its ideals altogether. In fact Dada was continually undergoing conflicts within its various groups and many artists went against what was increasingly seen as a measure of orthodoxy in the older order itself. Such conflicts made the ultimate destruction of Dada inevitable. Such conflicts made the ultimate disintegration of Dada inevitable.

SAQ

1. What constituted the targets of Dadaist radicalism? Was there a consistent pattern? (50 words)

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2. Was Dadaism a nihilistic movement? (40 words)

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1.9 SURREALISM

Surrealism developed as an extended response to the First World War and its consequences and took its roots as an offshoot of Dada. The movement developed primarily in France, and the Surrealists were led by the former Dadaist André Breton who had broken from the preceding movement during the early 1960s.

The initial members, as identified in Breton’s *Manifeste du surréalisme*, known also as the First Manifesto of Surrealism, (1924), the essay “Une Vague de rêves” (October 1924) by Louis Aragon, and the periodical *La Revolution surréaliste*, (December 1924), were poets including Philippe Soupault, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Jacques Baron, Max Morise, Marcel Noll, Pierre Naville, Roger Vitrac, Simone Breton and Gala Eluard ; artists like Max Ernst, Man Ray, Hans

Arp, Georges Malkine, and later, Yves Tanguy, André Masson and Joan Miró ; and writers including Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Antonin Artaud, Raymond Queneau, Marcel Duhamel and Jacques Prévert.

Although they shared sympathies with Dada regarding an opposition to bourgeois values and authoritarianism, the Surrealists developed a more positive outlook, that was derived from the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and the political ideology of Marxism, to go beyond the Dadaist movement of “anti-art”. The Surrealists resorted to a considerable revision of values in every field in an attempt to respond to the deep crisis they sensed in Western culture, which was undertaken with the help of unconventional techniques in each of the forms it espoused, and most particularly present in the technique of **Automatism** that had much to do with **Freud’s theory of the unconscious**. Surrealism as a movement remained active even after the end of World War II, under the guidance of Breton, who died in 1966. Most of the members of Surrealism had previously had been members of the Paris Dada, subsequently breaking associations with it. Surrealism differed from Dada significantly in that while the latter concentrated on attacking prevalent and conventional values, the former tried to improvise alternative to the status quo.

SAQ

Both Dadaism and Surrealism being subsumed under the label “Modernism” suggests their shared, overlapping concerns. Make a list of these. (40 words)

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The term “Surrealism” was coined in 1917 by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire initially to describe one of his own plays (*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*) and the ballet *Parade* (by Erik Satie, Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso), and the term was appropriated by Breton to identify the counter-trend in the Arts developing in reaction to the principles of Dada. The aim behind the adoption of such a term was to describe a process and a form of

expression which would transcend or go beyond traditional realism (sur-réel), and at the same time also involve an element of surprise. Thus, it was increasingly believed that since reality was subjective and not imposed externally, it could also be artistically created by attempting to delve deep into one's unconscious. Breton, who had worked with **shell-shock** victims at a psychiatric centre and therefore had access to the visions or images projected by the patients into their external surroundings as to produce individual versions of reality, considered the possibility of deliberately effecting this performance in art, through unexpected juxtapositions, the most effective of which would be the result not of conscious attempts but rather the results of subconscious thoughts and notions manifesting themselves through the medium adopted. This was the essence of Automatism and Breton's version of 'automatic writing' which eschewed any preconceived subject or style or syntax, so that the flow of images from the subconscious could come uninterrupted.

Stop to Consider

Modernism and Language

A significant feature of the diverse movements was the tendency to dispense with language altogether based on the idea that it was too compromised and corrupted by existing conditions. Antonin Artaud spoke of "substituting for the spoken language a different language of nature, whose expressive possibilities will be equated to verbal language." G. Apollinaire conceived of "man in search of a new language to which the grammarian of any tongue will have nothing to say".

The modernist aspiration was to develop language into the condition of music, or to the conditions of visual imagery, or performance. In this aspect the Symbolists delivered a different idea of a spiritual universe obtained through a synaesthetic world of the senses. For the Symbolists, therefore, the poem enables such a revelation through a mode of realized 'correspondence' (as with Baudelaire), in which the poetic word is equal to a verbal symbol. Thus the 'poetic word' is at once a material embodiment yet metaphysical in revealing a spiritual yet sensual beauty.

Surrealism thus had an affinity with the modernist technique of the stream-of-consciousness as practised, for example, by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* or by James Joyce in *Ulysses* or *A Portrait of the Artist as a*

Young Man. One of the first Surrealist experiments that took place was collaborative effort by Breton and Philippe Soupault titled ‘Les Champs magnétiques’.

In 1919 with Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault, he cofounded the review *Littérature*; in its pages, **Breton** and Soupault published “Les Champs magnétiques” (1920; “Magnetic Fields”), the first example of the Surrealist technique of automatic writing. In 1924 **Breton’s** *Manifeste du surréalisme* defined Surrealism as “pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express . . . the real process of thought. It is the dictation of thought, free from any control by the reason and of any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.” Surrealism aimed to eliminate the distinction between dream and reality, reason and madness, objectivity and subjectivity.

Another kind of automatic writing carried on was through spiritualist mediums who would go to a self-induced ‘hypnotic’ trance in which they could speak, draw and answer questions, revealing knowledge that lay outside the purview of human reason and logic. Thus language in this case lost its pragmatic function, giving way to possibilities of deeper layers meaning within it. For the surrealists ‘automatic writing’ was possible not because of external mystic presences but from one’s inner psychic being. Thus, Breton defined Surrealism as “psychic automatism in its pure state, which it is intended to express, either verbally, or in writing, or in any other way, the true functioning of thought. Thought expressed in the absence of any control exerted by reason, and outside all moral and aesthetic considerations” (Turner: p.375).

As mentioned earlier, Surrealism relied heavily on Freud’s theories of the unconscious and the tremendous power it exerted on conscious human actions and behaviour, though for that matter Freud himself considered the work of the Surrealists to be of little value since they did not have any therapeutic purpose in view. The common tropes in surrealism were dreams, childhood and madness.

The Forms of Surrealism

Poetry and Painting

In the surrealist writing of poetry, as with Breton, Paul Éluard, Pierre Reverdy, and others, we note a startling juxtaposition of words. This effect is created by following not logical connections but by the guidance of psychological

reasoning. This helped to bring forth unconscious processes at work in the mind.

In painting, where we find the major achievements, Surrealism is to be seen in highly unfamiliar images, grotesque and fantastic. Here is to be seen the combined influences not only of Dadaism but also of such earlier painters as Hieronymus Bosch and Francisco Goya. Contemporary influences of such artists as Odilon Redon, Giorgio de Chirico, and Marc Chagall also helped in surrealist conceptions. If we search for a 'method' in Surrealist art, we see an emphasis on "methodological research and experimentation" which was based on the conception that the work of art was a means to explore the personal psyche.

Like the other art movements, Surrealism also expressed itself through a variety of forms. Some of the significant Surrealistic creations were books such as Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926), Breton's *Nadja* (1928), the Surrealist periodical *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-9) ; the visual Surrealist works of Max Ernst, Man Ray, Masson, Hans Arp, Miró and Tanguy (such as Ernst's *Pieta or Revolution by Night* (1923) ; Man Ray's *Furious Sons* (1925), and so on) which drew on a number of techniques some of which had also been part of Dada, such as collages, photomontages, combinations of popular art and film stills, **the automated technique of frottage** (developed by Ernst) and **solarization** (developed by Man Ray and Lee Miller).

Surrealism had, apart from France, a strong presence in Belgium as well, where an autonomous group comprising the editors of Dada periodicals *œsophage* (1925) and *Marie* (1926), the musician, poet and artist E. L. T. Mesen, and the painter René Magritte respectively; and the contributors of another periodical *Correspondance*, Paul Nougé, Marcel Lecomte, Camille Goemans, the musician André Souris and the writer Louis Scutenaire, formed in Brussels in 1925, becoming official in 1926. Many other groups were also formed at various intervals especially by those artists and writers breaking away from core groups due to differences in ideologies and converging towards particular periodicals featuring rival Surrealist ideas. For example, there was the periodical *Le Grand Jeu* which drew Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, Maurice Henry, and the Czech painter Josef Šíma and which represented rebellion within the Surrealist Community and was ostracized in 1925. Similarly, another group, adversely criticized by Breton in his "*Second manifeste du surréalisme*", and including the photographer

Jacques-Andre Boiffard, and writers and artists such as Leiris, Limbour, and Baron, converged around the periodical *Documents*, edited by Georges Bataille. Their creations in various media were directed towards the negative aspects of human existence on a purely instinctual level.

SAQ

Modernism does not completely overthrow ‘tradition’ but seeks its own definition in opposition to whatever was traditional. Would you agree with such a view ? (50 words)

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One of the most significant Surrealist painters, Salvador Dali, belonged to another group contributing to the periodical *Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which also included the former Dadaist Tristan Tzara, Alberto Giacometti, and Valentine Hugo. These Surrealist groups were also concerned with taking anti-**Fascist** political positions, and at the same time falling back on **psychotic and neurotic states** of the human mind. During this period this movement also underwent internal conflicts due to the increasing attraction of many of its members towards Communism which they found difficult to reconcile with their core allegiances to Freudianism.

Salvador Dali became one of the most prominent of the Surrealists, developing the “paranoiac-critical” method (Turner: p.379), capitalizing on the concept of paranoia, in which an individual interprets the world around him/her according to the single idea his/her mind is obsessed with, thereby opening up the critical possibility of reading a single image or creation through several individual perspectives, as, for instance, seen in his *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937). Dali also drew on the Freudian notion that the dream contents latently concealed the dreamer’s deep-seated, often sexual, desires, and therefore tried to express these layered contents through a minutely detailed, visual medium in such paintings as *Illuminated Pleasures* (1929). At the same time, Dali’s Surrealistic practice also tended to blur the initial Surrealist emphasis on the interrelation and interpenetration of conscious

and unconscious realities, and this, accompanied by his political unreliability, led to the group splitting in the 1930s.

The emphasis on the disturbing potential of objects viewed through a film of **paranoia** was also explored in the works of other Surrealists such as Giacometti (in such sculptures as *Suspended Ball*, (1930-31), or Meret Oppenheim's *Object* (1936), comprising a fur-covered cup and saucer. Many women Surrealists including Gala Eluard, Valentine Hugo and Jacqueline Breton, also exploited this dynamic potential of object-making in their work, which acquired influence and attention only after the 1930s.

Surrealism suffered a period of stasis in Europe during the Second World War with the German members being interned in 1940 and many others emigrating to the USA. Much of the centrality of the movement shifted from Europe to the American (both North and South) nations and colonies though a few groups continued to operate in London and Paris. At the end of the War, Breton revived Surrealism but faced mounting criticism as being excessively idealistic by the more revolutionary Tzara and the Existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre; at the same time there was a new interest in magic as a reinforcing agent for the already existing interest in automatism, dreams and the unconscious. After the death of Breton in 1966, Surrealism as a movement practically disintegrated, though its preoccupations continue to subsist within subsequent wider cultural practices.

Surrealism, more than any other art movement in Modernism, was an open-ended and wide-ranging movement which did not deny any linkage with earlier innovations in the arts brought about by such movements as the Picasso-led Cubism.

Check Your Progress

1. Justify the view that modernism was an acknowledgement of the connection between culture, literature and politics.
2. Would you agree with the idea that modernism was trapped in the paradox of both resisting the dehumanizing processes of the modern age and stressing this very fact in art? Give a reasoned answer.
3. To what extent can modernism be said to have discarded "the rhetoric of humanism" of the preceding age?

1.10 THE 'MODERN' IN POETRY

The two most significant and powerful influences on Modernist poetry was Symbolism (developed initially in France) and Imagism (developed in America), accompanied by the flexible vers libre (free verse) and a self-consciously experimental, intellectual and allusive poetic stance, such as in the poetry of T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) and Ezra Pound (1885-1972). Thus when we refer to Modernism in English poetry, the emphasis naturally is on these external influences, since poetry in English, especially before World War I (with, perhaps, the exception of W.B. Yeats's poetry), had largely been insular, non-experimental and conventional, and conservative in nature.

Symbolism and Imagism

The symbolist movement showed an endeavour to bring poetry close to music; words begin to resemble musical notes, emptied of their sensible content. We see this acknowledgement in the French poets Mallarmé, Verlaine and Valéry. Paul Valéry described Symbolism as an "intention of several groups of poets (not always friendly to one another) to recover from music the heritage due to them." Stéphane Mallarmé, who presided over the symbolist movement in the 1870's and the 1880's, turned the art of poetry into a craft and a philosophy. He described the symbolist method in these terms:

"To name an object is to do away with three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem which is derived from the satisfaction of guessing little by little; to suggest it, that is the illusion. It is the perfect handling of the mystery that constitutes the symbol: to evoke an object little by little in order to show a state of mind or inversely to choose an object and to disengage from it a state of mind, by a series of unriddlings."

One description of the symbolist movement says: "Each poet developed and represented a single aspect of an aesthetic doctrine that was perhaps too vast for one historical group to incorporate. . . . But more than on any other article of belief, the symbolists united with Mallarmé in his statements about poetic language. The theory of the suggestiveness of words comes from a belief that a primitive language, half-forgotten, half-living, exists in each man. It is language possessing extraordinary affinities with music and dreams."

English poets like T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot shared a similar set of concerns under the influence of the French symbolists. Arthur Symons dedicated his *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) to Yeats. In 1900, Yeats wrote in his essay on "The Symbolism of Poetry" that literature had tended to lose itself, through the influence of the scientific movement, in "opinion, in declamation, in picturesque writing, in word-painting".

Hulme, in his essay “Romanticism and Classicism”, described poetry as “a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters . . . Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language.”

The major poets to write during this period were Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), William Watson, W.E. Henley, Laurence Binyon, and Alfred Austin (who was Poet Laureate from 1896 to 1913). Apart from these poets, there were also those avant-garde poets, who came to be known as the Georgian poets, partly due to their inclusion in five anthologies of Edward Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry* (from 1912 - 1922): Rupert Brooke, Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Wilfred Gibson, Walter de la Mare, W. H. Davies, John Masefield, among others.

However, it was during and after World War I that English poetry underwent significant changes in diction, style and subject matter, initially explored by the war poets such as Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Rupert Brooke (all of whom were actively involved in and most even killed during the War). In these poets, conventional poetic structures were taken up only in order to mock at the paradoxes of contemporary life, especially in the background of the War, thus contributing to the deflation of any semblance of idealism in the poetic tradition, and deliberately taking up an anti-heroic stance towards this end. These poets demonstrated a willingness to take up the grim and contending realities as well as the inherent corruption of their society and culture, which could also be seen in their linguistic appropriation of colloquial language and slang in much of their poetry, seen for example, in the second part of Brooke’s double sonnet “Menelaus and Helen”, describing the sequel to the recovery of Helen by her husband Menelaus after the Trojan war:

So far the poet. How should he behold
That journey home, the long connubial years?
He does not tell you how white Helen bears
Child on legitimate child, becomes a scold,

Haggard with virtue. Menelaus bold
Waxed garrulous, and socked a hundred Troys
'Twixt noon and supper. And her golden voice
Got shrill as he grew deafer. And both were old.
Often he wonders why on earth he went
Troyward, or why poor Paris ever came.
Oft she weeps, gummy-eyed and important;
Her dry shanks twitch at Paris' mumbled name.
So Menelaus nagged; and Helen cried;
And Paris slept on by Scamander side.

The War Poets

The literature of World War I and the interwar period

The impact of the first World War on the Anglo-American modernists was understandably considerable. The poets who wrote about it and its social meanings had been traditionalists and all saw action. The poetry itself came to be known only later, in the 1930's. Rupert Brooke, who died in active service in 1915, wrote about the early idealism of the war at its beginnings. Sassoon's poetry was written against the war and expressed bitter anger about it. Isaac Rosenberg's verse was consistently critical of the war.

The person who was largely instrumental in familiarizing the British writers and intellectuals with Symbolism was the Decadent poet Arthur Symons (1865- 1945) Through his study of *The Symbolism Movement in Literature* (1899) which was an extensive survey of the French Symbolist movement and its members covering two generations, including Charles Baudelaire (who wrote the immensely influential poem "Correspondences", and his more daring and experimental successors Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91) , Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98), Paul Valéry (1871-1945) and Jules Laforgue (1860-87). Of course, the movement itself (called in France *Symbolisme*, and its practitioners *les symbolistes*) did not limit itself to poetry but extended to drama and the novel, bringing in its purview, the dramatists Villiers de l' Isle Adam, who wrote the seminal Symbolist play *Axel* (1890), and Maurice Maeterlinck, whose play *Pélieas et Mélisande* (1892) was to inspire modern opera such as Debussy's opera of the same name; and the novelists Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), with his novels

such as *A rebours* (1884), and Edouard Dujardin, whose *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888) influenced Joyce. The Symbolist movement also made strong inroads into painting as well, apart from influencing a generation of writers and artists connected with the Modern Movement.

The symbolists favoured indirect expression, reverie, inspiration, suggestion and evocation over direct expression and developed as a reaction against the earlier tendency for the descriptive precision for realism and naturalism. The effect of the Symbolists can be seen in the representative poets of Anglo-American modernism - Eliot, Yeats, Pound (and to some extent, on such poet-novelists as D.H. Lawrence). The Symbolist trend had affinities with the earlier Aestheticism and its view of art as an escape from reality, and emphasis was laid on the autonomy of the poem as well as the capacity of language to evoke mysticism and spirituality as well as sensuality through symbols and images. The function of the symbol was to “distil a private mood or to evoke the subtle affinities which were held to exist between the material and spiritual worlds. Symbolist writers were particularly concerned to explore the musical properties of language, through the interplay of commutative sound relationships ...” (Drabble, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 6th edition; page 989).

W.B. Yeats

A key poet in the context of Symbolism in English poetry is William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), who had also proclaimed himself to be the “last of the Romantics”. His poetry was a combination of Irish and a wider Celtic mythology as well as a deep mysticism, and initially, was more preoccupied with effecting an escape from the perceived modern melodies of urbanization and materialism; through the route of folktales and connection carried over from pre-industrial rural Ireland, a tendency, as will be seen later, similar to Synge, Lady Gregory and the Irish Literary Theatre in general.

The later influences, including the political energy and sheer strength of personality of Maud Gonne, whom Yeats considered to be his muse, his marriage in 1917, the patronage of Lady Augusta Gregory, whose residence at Coole Park was to exercise such a creative influence on him, as well as the various political and militant activities in Ireland’s struggle for independence, especially, the rebellions or revolutions in 1913 and 1916, become strongly present in Yeats later poetry which veers away from a mere clutching at idealism and instead confronts actual circumstances and, by confronting them, tries to arrive

mystically, and through an extensive use of symbolism, at some kind of a resolution. The multiplicity of Yeats's preoccupations has been loosely summarized as "those of permanence and impermanence ("Sailing to Byzantium", "Among School Children", "Byzantium"), of the cyclical patterns of world history ("The Second Coming", "Leda and the Swan", "Two Songs from a Play"), of contemplation and action ("An Irish Airman Foresees His Death", "A Dialogue of Self and Soul", "Long-Legged Fly"), of body and soul ("Michael Robartes and the Dancer", "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop"), art and the artist ("Ego Dominus Tuus", "The Circus Animals' Desertion") ..." (Baldick : 84).

From his initial Romantic moorings, Yeats poetry gradually became more confrontational towards modernity, adopting a new, barer, more casual style which would give scope to the dialectics and division of meaning within the poem and within language itself, and the device of using masks or personae, a la T. S. Eliot, suggesting a disillusionment with the modern condition, and acknowledging the fragmented world-view of the individual, and the spiritual, moral and cultural bankruptcy accompanying this condition, such as his poems "Among School Children" and "The Second Coming" suggest.

Parallel to Symbolism in modern poetry was another development - Imagism - which popularized free verse and tried to establish a newer poetics derived from classicism, but at the same time shared sympathies with Symbolism in its relative antipathy towards Romanticism and attraction towards the aesthetic philosophy of T.E. Hulme, one of its founders. It began as a group led by T. E. Hulme in 1909, and lasted till 1917, when its last anthology was published. Its initial members included Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), F. S. Flint, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, F. M. Hueffer (Ford), Allen Upward, and John Cournos. On the other hand, while they were not conscious members and contributors, many of T. S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence's poems also reflected Imagist techniques and preoccupations.

Imagism and the later development of Vorticism (associated with the writing and paintings of Wyndham Lewis) was based on the idea of the compact image found in Japanese haiku and tanka, as well as in much of French symbolist poetry. The major Imagist anthologies during this period were Pound's *Des Imagistes* (1914) and Amy Lowell's three volumes of *Some Imagist Poets* (1915, 1916, 1917), while Flint's "Imagisme" (1913) and Pound's "A Few Don'ts for Imagistes" (1913) were considered its

manifestoes. The emphasis of Imagist poetry was on the avoidance of abstraction, use of a musical rather than a metrical rhythm, economy and precision in language as well as a direct, hard, clear and precise treatment of an image. Such a technique can be perceived in such poems of Pound as cited below:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

(“In a Station of the Métro”; the spaces between the phrases functioned to separate the groups of words as if to suggest separate images)

As cool as the pale wet leaves
of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn.

(“Alba”)

The rustling of the sill is discontinued,
Dust drifts over the court-yard,
There is no sound of footfall, and the leaves
Scurry into heaps and lie still,
And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them.
A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.

(“Liu Ch’e”)

The petals fall in the fountain,
the orange-coloured rose leaves,
Their ochre clings to the stone.

(“Ts’ai Chi’h”)

Stop to Consider

Symbol and Image

In Modernism, the emphasis on metaphor can be demonstrated from its use of symbols for allegorical or representational effect. This tendency developed from the symbolists’ belief that the purpose is to connote not simply denote, to convey the transcendent reality behind appearances in terms of the symbols employed. Symbolism in literature originated in the work of Baudelaire and evolved partly as a reaction against Zola’s naturalism. Drama and art also witnessed the flourishing of symbolism but poetry remains the major area of symbolism. Noted symbolists Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé abandoned the

constraints of rhyme, form and metre and favoured a free verse stressing rhythm and musicality in poems replete with the themes namely, death, the erotic and intense mystical and religious feelings.

Conventionally speaking a symbol takes recourse to a concrete, real signifier (e.g. the snow at the end of Joyce's "The Dead" in *Dubliners*) on the one hand and also relies on an elusive, suggestive, complex of signifieds. Symbolism can also be used as a method of uniting the internal and the external or projecting the internal onto the external (e.g. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Kafka's 'Metamorphosis').

SAQ

1. How does the insistence on 'symbol' and 'image' recapture some of the basic features of modernism ? (50 words)

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2. Do you find any influences of the visual arts on the modernist experimentation with language ? (40 words)

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T. S. Eliot is another major representative of the experimentation of modernist poetry, and his *The Waste Land* (1922) becomes a significant member of the modern condition. Eliot's poetry was a synthesis of various traditions, not only the contemporary but embracing the earlier traditions as well, seen in the blending of sources as varied as the Symbolist Baudelaire, Shakespeare, mythology, Oriental religion and philosophy, Imagism, non-Christian cultures and traditions (as seen in the presence of the Sanskrit Upanishads at the end of the poem), popular entertainment, as well as a number of other writers both classical and modern. Again, since modern poetry is predominantly poetry of the city, his poetry quintessentially reflects urban disillusion as well as resonances from such cataclysmic events as the World War I and the Russian Revolution, and puts it in stark contrast to the complacency of the earlier ages.

For instance, his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917) recreates this modern scene in an adequately modern technique. Eliot, like his other contemporaries belonging to this first movement of modern poetry, also imbibes an internationalism fully demonstrated in his poetry. Again, the polyphony and fragmentation inherent in his most ambitious and famous work, *The Waste Land*, is also symptomatic of the intellectual’s troubled response to his modernist moorings. Tracing itself to Eliot’s own nervous breakdown during 1921, the poem, however, transcends individual subjective preoccupation with its vision of a country devastated by a curse and consequently barren and bereft of any kind of spiritual revival or even consolation. It is a surrealistic landscape where temporal and spatial *locus standi* are obliterated and a tapestry of characters from Tiresias, the blind prophet of ancient Thebes, to the modern (but probably false) fortune teller Madame Sosostriis, through random voices from Dante, Spenser, Kyd, Shakespeare, Marvell, Baudelaire and Verlaine converge in a blend of post-World War I London and Dante’s Limbo (in *The Divine Comedy*).

Similarly, Prufrock in “The Love Song” also typifies an internal journey of the self taken in Modernist terms in which there is a high degree of self-questioning in an attempt to come to terms with insecurity and doubt regarding one’s existence in the given circumstances. This is accompanied by the persona of Prufrock itself trying to take up, in the course of the poem, masks of heroes such as John the Baptist and Hamlet but finding himself totally unable to identify with them, and thereby laying bare his crisis of a loss of identity and sense of alienation from his cultural and class allegiances to his society, negotiated though a network of unconscious drives, hidden desires and a self-conscious, but at the same time detached, surrealist and symbolist language.

SAQ

What ideas of the ‘self’ , ‘irony’ and ‘image’ do you get from a reading of “The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock” ? (30 + 30 + 30 words)

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A similar poetic exercise was at the same period, taken out by Edith Sitwell who, along with her brother Osbert and her friend Nancy Cunard, brought out the periodical *Wheel* (1916-1921). Her poetry, preoccupied with an irate attack on Georgian poetry as well as on the Romantic tradition, relied on extensive experimentation in free verse and a free association of images through similar sound.

However, by the late twenties, the energy and sense of rebellion inherent in Modernist poetry was subsiding and a newer trend was increasingly being taken up during the 1930s, chiefly by a new generation of poets including W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNiece, and Cecil Day Lewis. Their poetry, sometimes referred to as “committed poetry”, drew upon the communist philosophy of Marx and psychoanalytic theories of Freud to address the tremendously pressing nature of their times. Their poetry withdrew from the myths and legends that Eliot, Pound and Yeats subscribed to transferring the emphasis instead to immediate social realities, particularly British socio-economic and political realities. Thus, they sought to move away from the mysteriousness and remoteness of earlier modernist verse, and while at times preserving the idea and forms behind it, incorporated more popular and literary verse forms (such as ballads and songs associated with the former, and the sonnet and villanelle with the latter). While objectively considering the contemporary urban and industrial life and bringing out the sordidness and by extension moral and psychic corruption within it, they also felt able to celebrate or at least regard with favour modern technological innovation such as the aeroplane (as in Stephen Spender’s “The Landscape Near an Aerodrome” (1933)) and the railways (as in Auden’s “Night Mail” (1938), and Spender’s “The Express”, (1932)). Most of their poems were published particularly in the representative anthologies *New Signatures* (1932) and *New Country* (1933), and the journal *New Verse* (1933-9).

The writing of poetry, however, was to receive a serious setback with the coming of the Second World War, after which English poetry underwent further changes that made space for a mounting disillusionment in humanity as well as more topically, with current British society.

The Auden Generation

The poet, W.H. Auden, began his career towards the end of the 1920's rising to prominence with *The Orators* in 1932. This work was seen to articulate the harsh realities of the period and the political crises that English society was passing through. The nineteen-thirties made up the period of Auden's preeminence in English poetry, giving it a distinct shape and direction. He was publicly acknowledged to be 'communist' often putting into verse ideas, concepts and figures which constituted criticism of the establishment and polite society and displayed a leftist bias. Poets like C.Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood and Louis MacNeice were some of his closest friends and together with many other lesser known poets, the whole generation came to be called the "Auden generation".

We have to place this poetic history against the traumatic background of the period with the effects of the Depression, the rise to power of Adolf Hitler, the Spanish Civil War and support to it from intellectuals internationally, the spread of fascism, and the very concrete threat of the next great war. In many ways Auden is to be seen as the spokesman of an intensely traumatised generation of writers.

Check Your Progress

1. Briefly compare the main themes of the poems written before the First World War and after it.
2. Sketch the English poetic responses to the First World War.
3. To what extent does Eliot's "The Wasteland" capture the mood of the inter-war years? Justify your answer with textual examples.
4. Would you agree with the view that the metropolis predominates as a theme of modern poetry? Give specific instances to illustrate your answer.

1.11 MODERN DRAMA

Modernism as a concerted movement did not, unlike modern fiction or poetry, arrive in British drama till the end of the Second World War with such neo-realistic works as John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), except for some experiments by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, and a number of non-naturalistic plays by George Bernard Shaw, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge which were influenced by dramatic

innovations taking place in Europe such as Expressionism, Italian Futurism, Dadaist Cabaret and Antonin Artaud’s “Theatre of Cruelty” (that was part of the Surrealist experimentation).

The Swedish dramatist August Strindberg (1849-1912) and the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) were the torch-bearers of new trends in European drama towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Strindberg’s plays, chief among them *The Father* (1887), *Miss Julie* (1888) and *The Creditors* (1889), incorporated naturalistic realism in order to lay bare the fault lines within bourgeois society and the inner conflicts in characters arising out of it as well as an awareness of the inequalities and strictures based on gender. His later plays such as *To Damascus* (1898-1901), *The Dance of Death* (1901), *A Dream Play* (1902), and *The Ghost Sonata* (1907) incorporated an Expressionistic blending of a sense of suffering and desire for salvation and redemption and at the same time emerged as symbolic of the deep psychic states of the individual. The psychological and symbolic features of Strindberg’s plays later influenced the plays of Eugene O’Neill, Arthur Miller, as well as the Theatre of the Absurd.

SAQ

What can be taken as the distinguishing marks of ‘naturalism’, ‘expressionism’, and ‘the symbolic’ in drama ? (20 + 20 + 20 words).

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Similarly, Ibsen had also started with a naturalistic exploration of society and the network of human relations within it through an innovative and powerful prose style that was to be adopted by many later Modernists. Most of his earlier works such as *A Doll’s House* (1879), and *Ghosts* (1881), were informed more by naturalism, but gradually his work leaned towards symbolism, as his later plays such as *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *The Master Builder* (1892) and *John Gabriel Borkman* stand testimony to. Added to an analysis of the problematic of bourgeois

social and gender issues there is also a deepening interest in these plays on the forces and the workings of the unconscious, as well as a flair for powerful dialogue, and a dispensing off of traditional theatrical effects. The plays of both these dramatists, made available to the British readers and audiences through translations (chiefly at the behest of G. B. Shaw) contributed in changing the settled climate of British drama at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The plays of George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and Oscar Wilde () though on extreme polarities, nevertheless were equally iconoclastic in effect. Shaw's plays, such as *Candida* (1894); *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898), *Saint Joan* (1924), *Arms and the Man* (1894-99), *Man and Superman*, and *Pygmalion* (1913), termed as problem plays or plays of ideas, were greatly influenced by Ibsen's plays, and attempted to make the society aware of its decadent values by undermining accepted values of class, morality and gender. Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) was, on the other hand, more a product of his Aestheticism, but was a potent pointer toward subsequent modernist practices due to its inverted morality and plural identities, as well as a caustic satire on prevailing upper and middle class values.

Another important development in modern drama was the revival of poetic drama or modern verse-drama. Nineteenth-century Naturalism in the theatre had been instrumental in establishing prose as the ideal vehicle to express the work-a-day world of the middle classes. This hegemony of prose was effectively challenged by W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot in their dramatic practice. The Irish dramatic movement, in particular, the work of Yeats as well as that of Synge (who, though writing in prose, invested it with a poetic quality not hitherto achieved in modern drama), was instrumental in reviving poetic drama in the English theatre. Yeats's finest verse-dramas, including *The Shadowy Waters* (1895), *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), *On Baile's Strand* (1904), *Purgatory* (1938) and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), evoking an Irish culture based on traditional and mythological themes, also showed an influence by anti-realist Japanese Noh Theatre, with its emphasis on performance relying more on music and dance than through dramatic presentation. His plays, staged in the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, sent out a positive signal for the potential of verse or poetic drama to confront contemporary realities through a ritualization of myth and reality.

Similarly, the plays of J. M. Synge (1871-1909), such as *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), and of Sean O'Casey (1880-1964), such as *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), also dwelt on the generational and racial conflicts inherent in the idea of an ancient, rural Ireland forced to be under the dominion both of the external authority of the English but at the same time, within its own culture, the authority of the now outdated and regressive Irish orthodoxy.

T. S. Eliot admired the masterly handling of verse in Yeats's plays and might have been influenced by him in his own plays. After the success of his verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot searched for a poetic drama based on modern life, with people on a level of easy familiarity with the accoutrements or accessories of modern life, such as apartments, telephones and motor cars. He had this end in view while writing the dramatic fragments of *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932) early in his career. However, he attempted it with more knowledge, experience and even more success in *The Cocktail Party* (1950) and *The Family Reunion* (1939).

Developments in Theatre through a Historical Perspective

The famous critic, Raymond Williams, shows how nineteenth-century Naturalism appeared before full-fledged modernism in theatre. A technical innovation emerging from Naturalism was the 'lifelike' stage set. One part of modernist naturalism comes across in Ibsen, the early Strindberg and then Chekhov, with their dramatic "challenging selection of the crises, the contradictions, the unexplored dark areas of the bourgeois human order of its time." Considering the "furious denunciation" following upon such explorations, as in Ibsen's *Doll's House* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, because they were seen to threaten the "standards of decent society", Williams draws a line from modernist Naturalism to "the work and reception of the avant-garde". Since modernist Naturalism was "physically convincing", it was "intellectually insufficient" to explore crises and experiences beyond the living room (crises of social and economic dimensions, of subjectivity). These limitations were sought to be overcome by experiments by Ibsen, Chekhov, and Strindberg, leading to methods later named 'Expressionism'.

A form of "bourgeois dissidence", however, continues to give later, in works like *Man and the Masses* (Ernst Toller, 1921) and Erwin Piscator's Proletarian Theatre,

“the eventually distinguishable forms of ‘subjective’ and ‘social’ Expressionism.” Williams observes, “New names were eventually found for these avant-garde methods, mainly because of these differences and complications of purpose. What was still there in common was the refusal of reproduction: in staging, in language, in character presentation. But one tendency was moving towards that new form of bourgeois dissidence which, in its very emphasis on subjectivity, rejected the discourse of any public world as irrelevant to its deeper concerns.” This leads to forms like Surrealism and Artaud’s ‘Theatre of Cruelty’, parallel with the break from the bourgeoisie and affiliating with the working class—early Soviet theatre, Piscator, and finally, Brecht. This gives rise to what is called ‘political theatre’.

But what was probably the most radical of developments in modern drama was the Theatre of the Absurd, which gained wide currency during the 1950s and early 1960s. The function of the plays coming within the ambit of Absurd drama was to give a dramatic expression to the philosophical notion of “absurd”, a notion coming increasingly in significance especially after the publication of Albert Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942. It sought to depict the meaninglessness and purposelessness of life culminating in an inevitable death and attended by futile endeavours to grasp at hope, at meaning, as the endless wait for Godot (who never appears) by Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1955) demonstrates. Beckett was part of this new generation of playwrights writing after World War II and therefore showing the burden of the world-wide devastation and senseless destruction consequent to the War. The plays in this genre make extensive use of meaninglessness in dialogues as well as silences and aporias or gaps in meanings. All these Absurd dramatists, including Beckett (also in his later works as *Happy Days* (1961) and *Endgame* (1957), Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Federico Lorca, and Luigi Pirandello seek to represent the collapse of received human cultural and moral tradition and meanings, a spiritual aridity similar to the kind expressed in *The Waste Land*, and a severe exploration of illusion and reality, deception, disguise and play acting, as well as a general disorientation with one’s present fixities of location, due to splits within one’s very self.

The Philosophy of ‘Absurd’ drama

The philosophy of the absurd centers around the idea of the world as fundamentally mysterious and indecipherable in nature and the realization of the fact that this recognition is frequently associated with sense of loss, purposelessness, bewilderment, helplessness, metaphysical rootlessness and nothingness and so on. The idea of the ‘absurd’ was influenced by the famous existentialist philosophers like Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Following the widespread diffusion of the notion of the ‘absurd’ after the publication of Camus’s essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in 1942, it came to influence the ‘The Theater of the Absurd’ that grew immensely popular in the war-ridden Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Significant amongst the absurd dramatists were Arthur Adamov, Edward Albee, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco, Alfred Jarry, Harold Pinter, etc..

Lastly, in what becomes another achievement of modern European drama is the use of Absurd elements and shock tactics in modernist drama in order to bring about a correction or a change in the existing state of social affairs. This purpose was undertaken by the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) in an explicitly Modernist stand. In his theory of “epic theatre” combined with his Marxist sympathies, he rejected traditional Aristotelian notions of dramatic structure arguing in favour of a play as loosely connecting discrete scenes without necessarily having dramatic climaxes, and as using songs, (like chorus) to comment on the action. More importantly, for Brecht, drama did not need to create the illusion of reality but instead should distance the audience or spectators from the sense of recreation of reality through techniques of defamiliarization and denaturalization.

In order to confront social changes and the changing and flexible hegemony of capitalist forces in art, Brecht believed the various games of art themselves had to change dynamically in order to be able to move a critique of society and human relations within it. In his plays such as *Mother Courage* (1941) and the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1949), Brecht set out precisely to attain these ends and at the same time take into account the inevitable and necessary radicalization of modernist aesthetics.

Check Your Progress

1. Attempt a consideration of Bertolt Brecht’s “epic theatre” as drawing on the elements of the modern.
2. Justify the view that modernism is a collective experiment in the art of representation. Support your answer with examples.
3. To what extent, do you think, verse becomes an important vehicle of modernism ? Justify your stand with appropriate examples.

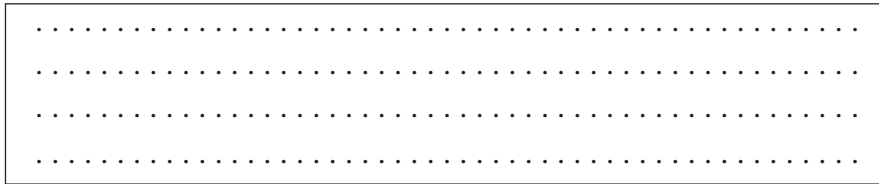
1.12 THE MODERN NOVEL

Like its counterparts in the Modernist movement - poetry and to a great extent even drama - the modern novel also registered a reaction against (what is now perceived as) the “classic realism” of Victorian fiction and its attendant notions of a reliable narrator, extensive use of free indirect discourse, and most of all, the projection of what D. H. Lawrence termed “the old stable ego”. In the larger European context, such a reaction had been evident in the later fiction of Gustave Flaubert, Emile Zola (who, however, was for the most part, an ardent advocate of Naturalism), Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Henry James. Each of these novelists was preoccupied with an exploration of the inner desires of their characters which came in conflict with the demands of society and class on them, forcing to the surface deep faultlines within their psyche and forcing them at times towards a moral, mental, spiritual and emotional collapse. However, these authors differed in their approaches to their subjects.

Flaubert and Zola appropriated the mode of Naturalism while Dostoyevsky, attempted to create a “higher realism” that would embrace not only material but spiritual truth as well. Henry James, in his novels such as *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Europeans* (1879) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), used “point of view” in order to lay bare the psychological landscape of his characters’ minds as well as to provide multiple perspectives to the story.

SAQ

What are the technical and thematic differences to be seen between the modern novelists and earlier ones, like Charles Dickens ? (60 words)



In much the same manner, the “stream of consciousness” technique developed in the fiction of James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner. The phrase, denoting “the continuity of impressions and thoughts in the human mind, or a special literary method for representing this psychological principle in unpunctuated or fragmentary forms of interior monologue” (Drabble, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* : page 975), was initially coined by William James (Henry James’s elder brother) in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890). This concept also had much to do with Henri Bergson’s idea of time not in the sense of linear or chronological time but of time also in the sense of being relative according to the individual who perceives it. The phrase, in its literary sense, was used by May Sinclair in a review to describe some early volumes of Dorothy Richardson’s novel sequence *Pilgrimage* (1915-38).

James Joyce, who started out as a naturalistic writer in *Dubliners* (1914) under the influence of Flaubert, also appropriated the more demanding and potential stream-of-consciousness technique for his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914-15), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans Wake* (where it is more radical than ever). The form, on the other hand, in the work of Virginia Woolf, combined with a more visionary symbolist and surrealist quality in an effort to render with sincerity and candour, the unique experience of a woman, and therefore, particularly feminine conflicts and desires, as seen, for example, in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). The idea behind this form is to enable a faithful record of the fluidity and randomness of human thought as represented through the characters, and, towards this end, exploit in full measure the vast possibilities of language that can be achieved through irregular or even absent punctuation, broken syntax, absence of grammar and so on.

In a different way, Joseph Conrad approaches the question of subjectivity and meaning especially in the context of race and colonialism, in his novels such as *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), and *The Shadow*

Line (1917). Conrad relied extensively on the technique of Impressionism, establishing a network of impression gathered at different points of time at different points of the text and retrospectively linking up to produce a greater realization, the process facilitated by the use of time shifts, flashbacks and juxtaposition of events so that the narrators, the listener(s) as well as the reader(s), are compelled to retrace the entire chain of events and thus the significance of the accumulated impressions is reinforced in the mind. At the same time, the process is problematised by withholding the idea of authority from the narrator himself (the narrator being, in every Conrad novel, male). This method also enables the author as well as the reader to enrich the multiple psychological perspectives associated with the novel and its characters and incidents. Such a conception of the novelist's purpose tallies closely with the significant statement made by Virginia Woolf in her essay "Modern Fiction" (1919):

"Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?"

(*Modernism*, by Peter Childs)

The last modernist novelist we will take up for a brief discussion is D. H. Lawrence who, though he did not make such dynamic experimentations as Joyce and Richardson did, nevertheless becomes important in that he actively challenged the existence of the "old stable ego" and voiced the need to explore living human relationships (particularly between man and woman) with a perfect sincerity and candor. It was important since, for him, it was these relationships which would enable the individual to live 'Life' and fulfill one's "Being" as the innermost core of the self that one wants to "be". The novel, according to him, by exploring the "subtle interrelatedness" inherent in relationships and therefore in "Life", is the perfect medium to this end. While Lawrence is not concerned with the conventional sense or meaning of morality, he is concerned with a morality that would transcend its more material and conventional variety, a morality that would have both man and woman (at least initially in his theory) realize their manhood and womanhood and thereby to realize the value of 'Life'. The medium that Lawrence chose to explore this aspect was the medium of emotional and physical relationships

of the characters in his novels such as *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), *Aaron's Rod* (1922), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

1.13 SUMMING UP

Thus we see that each of the various forms in the Modernist movement involved a deliberate break from current tradition in order to search for a new world of meanings and values which would serve as objective correlatives for the contemporary circumstances and realities of life. Let us briefly go over what we have done in this unit so as to sensitize you to the central concerns of the **Modernist movement in the Arts**.

In Section 1.2 I gave you a brief description of the concept of life can bmodernism and what is seen as constituting the term. From Sections 1.3 to 1.9 I discussed in detail the numerous experimentations carried on in the field of painting and the other fine arts as well as their influence on the literature of the period. The chief movements I took into account were Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism. In the subsequent sections (1.10 to 1.12) I took up the major literary forms - poetry, drama and novel - and attempted to show how each of these forms incorporated the peculiar conditions we associate with the Modern condition.

Therefore, I hope that by the end of this unit, you have mastered the ideas and concepts underlying Modernism, and been able to connect the wide range of experimentations in the movements themselves with the nature of the attitudes and responses inherent in them.

1.14 GLOSSARY

Suffrage - the right to participate in the political sphere through such empowering methods as the right to vote in elections

naturalistic the kind of representation in which the idea is predominant that life is governed by natural laws, thus 'documentation' becomes its distinctive quality

representational the idea that life can be 'reproduced' or 'reflected' in art or writing

hubs - centers; cultural centres

anti-positivist intellectual attitude refuting the positivist - this would imply the refutation of the ideas of Auguste Comte who advocated the positivist philosophy of recognizing the laws of succession and relation governing phenomena as the basic aim of knowledge

Manifesto - a document containing the basic principles of any movement whether artistic, political or literary

a Nietzschean fashion - “almost every article of faith challenged by the Modernists had previously been attacked by Nietzsche, whose pronouncement in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* that ‘God is Dead’ makes him an important figure to follow Marx, Darwin and Freud, but his influence is much wider.” (Peter Childs)

Freud’s theory of the unconscious - Freud conceived of the human ‘unconscious’ as tripartite and consisting of the id, the ego and the superego

shell-shock - afflicted with the effects of bombardment during the war

1.15 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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Unit 2

Crisis of Empire

Contents:

- 2.1 Objectives**
- 2.2 Decline of Empire**
- 2.3 Newer Concepts**
- 2.4 Indian Nationalism**
- 2.5 From Decolonisation to Crisis**
- 2.6 Decolonisation and the Rise of Nationalism**
- 2.7 Summing Up**
- 2.8 References/Suggested Readings**

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The attempt in this unit will be to provide continuity to your earlier reading of the growth of the British Empire as well as to familiarise you with the concepts of decolonisation and nationalism which are important issues in postcolonial studies. You have to read this unit along with Unit IV, “The Postcolonial Perspective”.

By the end of this short unit, you will be able to

- *identify* the different political processes adopted against colonialism
- *name* important dates in recent world history
- *describe* imperialist concerns in the 20th century, and
- *frame* in proper perspective political and cultural concerns against the fact of colonialism.

This unit is exhaustive within the limits set by its title. What it covers is to be considered as providing necessary material for understanding ideas of ‘postcolonial’ criticism and theories as well as to fill in the details of the background of present times.

2.2 DECLINE OF EMPIRE

Nineteenth-century imperialism had been perpetuated initially through informal means of trade and commerce, and then reinforced with formal annexation. However, the growth of formal imperial authority of the British Empire has also been seen in terms of a progressive decline of Britain's economic and political power after 1870 as it had to face increasing competition from rising capitalist economies as the United States of America as well as from other imperialist powers as France and Portugal which were also trying to consolidate their hold on world affairs.

SAQ

1. Is there any special significance in '1870' ? (20 words)

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2. What is the connection between trade, commerce and annexation ? (30 words)

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Thus, it has been argued that the expansion or widening of the formal empire by Britain, especially in Africa and Asia, was only a poor compensation for its shrinking informal economic empire elsewhere (Cain and Hopkins: p. 9). Moreover, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the disastrous consequences of the Boer War (1899 - 1902) to the British economy also exposed the fault-lines in the Empire. Though the Boer War cost Britain more than the combined cost of all her other imperial endeavours, it could not destroy the social and political structure that the Boers had established independent of and despite British rule. It laid bare the inefficiency and the sense of insecurity of the British government regarding its colonies even as it elicited a suspicion among the British intelligentsia regarding government policies towards rival nations as well as its colonies.

The Boer War

The Boers were descendants of Dutch settlers (although there were originally other peoples as well), and the word 'Boer' means 'farmer' in Afrikaans. They were settlers in South Africa, around the Cape, who came there in the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There were two Boer Wars: the first stretched from 1880 - 1881, while the second was from 1899 - 1902. The background to this was related to the gold rush which brought British and other prospectors to the Transvaal.

The idea of imperialism was itself subject to much debate in that while the metropolitan imperial power increasingly subscribed towards a democratic structure, within the colonies, however, autocracy was enforced, which was "based on the combination of physical coercion and passive submission to a superiority so great as to appear unchallengeable and therefore legitimate" (Hobsbawm: p.82). At the same time, by the first decade of the twentieth century, Britain had by and large accepted the independence of the colonies having predominantly white settlements.

Although the British Empire tried to retain a veil of complacency and stability over its formal authority in the colonies, there was an increasing sense of imminent crisis, something that had been set in motion by the Boer War and reinforced by the accelerating freedom movements in such colonies as Egypt and India, and closer home, in Ireland. The African and Asian colonies in particular had exploited their access to new ideas in education and other fields and were thus able to assimilate and use them against the occupying imperial power.

Stop to Consider

The settlement which created the Irish Free State in 1922 brought "a marked change in the formal designation of the Empire as a whole". The exercise was one of nomenclature but it reveals imperialist difficulties. David Thomson writes, "The original 'Articles of Agreement for a Treaty' referred to 'the Community of Nations known as the British Empire'. The Constitution of the Irish Free State, in 1922, described it as 'a co-equal member of the Community of Nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations' . . . The phrase matched well the new conception of a free association of equal partners, and was meant to reassure Irish susceptibilities."

Ireland was followed by India in the rising tide of anti-imperialist nationalism. Although in 1917, Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, spoke of 'responsible government' as British hopes for India as "an integral part of the British Empire", the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms proposed in 1918 were too insubstantial to realize self-government. Gandhi's campaign thus had to forge ahead, through Jallianwala Bagh, until his imprisonment in 1922, when he had to suspend it due to the tendency for it to exceed the limits of civil disobedience.

2.3 NEWER CONCEPTS

In 1922 the Irish Free State was designated by its Constitution as "co-equal member of the Community of Nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations." Such a concept of 'Commonwealth', between 1924 and 1929, began to replace the older one of the 'British Empire'. It was a case of either recognising the full autonomy of white dominions, as in the Irish Free State, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South of Africa; or of moving towards delegating power and devolution of responsibility to governments in other parts of the Empire as India, Ceylon and Malaya.

British foreign policy had already been confronted with the autonomy of the Dominions with regard to their separate representations in 1919 in the peace conference, their separate membership of the League of Nations and certain other matters. Such new practices, supported by the fact that the Dominions exercised autonomy over their internal affairs and growing demands for self-government, or independence, for India meant that it was time to visualise a new 'Constitution' for the Empire.

In 1926 Imperial Conference, the definition of dominion Status was adopted which accepted that they were "autonomous communities within the British empire, equal status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations." Understandably, 'Dominion status' was a goal other parts of the Empire could aspire to. It was time for the Empire to proceed to a new configuration.

An important factor which passed through the breadth of the Empire was trade. A high proportion of British trade was comprised of trade with the countries of the Commonwealth. In this context, India had a remarkably

large role to play as both importing and exporting country. Problems for the British Empire arose from the fact that countries like India and other agricultural states could turn to other sources of supply as they were becoming more industrialised.

SAQ

What could have been the reasons for the backwardness of the colonies? (40 words)

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2.4 INDIAN NATIONALISM

The first partial retreat of the British Empire was made in the granting of partial independence and autonomy to Ireland and Egypt during 1921-22. The freedom movement in India was meanwhile also gaining new momentum with the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885) becoming a powerful and influential agent. There was also a parallel but more aggressive movement gathering force in Bengal at the same time. In South Africa, which was home to a large community of Indian immigrants, became the site of the first and successful implementation of passive resistance advocated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who had started his political career here by founding the Natal Indian Congress in 1894.

By the time Gandhi came to India (after the First World War had started in 1914), the Indian National Congress was already trying to spearhead and channelise the discontent and anger of the educated middle classes against repressive and discriminatory British policies. Significantly, the party included in its ranks a number of Western, chiefly British, sympathisers such as Allan Octavian Hume (who was actually one of its founders) and Annie Besant. There were also non-secular, more traditional and religious movements that tried to counter British cultural invasion by rigorously reinforcing the indigenous religious traditions of India.

However, the greatest impact against British imperial policies at this point was made in 1919 by Gandhi's declaration of 'Satyagraha', the first application of passive resistance in India after its success in South Africa, which took the freedom movement to a wider spectrum of Indians. The subsequent refashioning of the INC into a party catering to the aspirations not merely to the middle class but to the masses at large irrespective of caste, class and language and continual resorting to non-violent resistance made the freedom movement in India wider and greater in impact, ending with the gaining of Independence in 1947.

Such wide-ranging national movements went a long way in shaking the apparently secure base of the imperial powers, in this case, Britain. But it was also acknowledged that the colonial situation itself was a self-defeating one in that it engendered possibilities for its eradication by trying to create an efficient and educated section of lower administrators who thereby had access to Western ideas in culture, politics and other fields which they could effectively incorporate within their own quest for freedom.

Thus, there were several consequences of European appropriation of Asia and Africa in that, in the words of Geoffrey Barraclough, "First, it acted as a solvent of the traditional social order; secondly, it brought about substantial economic changes; finally, it led to the rise of western educated élites which took the lead in transforming the existing resentment against the foreigner and foreign superiority into organised nationalist movements on a massive scale" (Sinfield: p.141). At the same time, however, the crisis of empire was not equally damaging for all the imperial powers. In fact, more than any other power, it was Britain which came out of the decolonising process most unscathed, since it was by and large consensual. Moreover, the increasing tendency towards globalisation and free trade in the West made it imperative that the colonies be disbanded so that their markets could be made free of the restrictive and protective trade practices of the mother country. As a result, the process of decolonisation took on a greater rapidity and urgency especially during the inter-war years and after the Second World War.

SAQ

Name other imperial powers of the period. (30 words)

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2.5 FROM DECOLONISATION TO CRISIS

During the First World War, the British Empire had been able, by and large, to preserve its consolidated state, even though the Boer War had left a deep impact. In fact, as mentioned earlier, this war and its consequences exposed an undercurrent of insecurity and anxiety which would come to haunt the imperial and colonial powers from the end of World War II.

Even during the First World War, the excessive casualties suffered by troops sent by the Dominion countries (that is, colonies which had been granted responsible government by Britain) ignited widespread resentment against the British policy of conscripting private citizens who were medically fit for army services. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 which gave Britain major chunks of Africa and Middle-east Asia only added to the political and economic burden of perpetuating an extensive empire which seemed to be outliving its efficacy and significance.

With the rise of newer democratic sensibilities in Britain, coupled with the acceleration of nationalistic movements in the colonies, Britain granted independence to Egypt in 1922 and to Iraq in 1932 in order to minimise the risk of entire disintegration of the empire. The Statute of Westminster in 1931 also granted constitutional autonomy to the Dominions. The Jalianwallah Bagh Massacre meanwhile also added fuel to the nationalist fire in India, forcing the British government in India to introduce large-scale constitutional reforms. Although not on the same scale as India, the African colonies also expressed resistance from time to time against colonial rule.

Not only the British but the other empires as well - German, French and Portuguese - were undergoing rifts within themselves during the period during and between the two World Wars.

Changes at Home

The post- First World War years in England were a reflection of both the destruction brought on by the war as well as the reaction to war. British economy had received a blow as much as its international status. English culture had received profound damage and public life had come to seem morally degraded. A change in public life, in social conduct was plainly evident. Women had become more openly indulgent. Divorces were more frequent now possibly helped by certain new clauses in the Matrimonial Clauses Act. These were the years of Eliot's *Wasteland* but also promise and the newly beginning processes of 'Americanization'.

2.6 Decolonisation and the Rise of Nationalism

The Second World War (1939-1945) signalled not only the beginning of a new world order but the disintegration and decolonisation of the earlier imperial and colonial powers. Britain, of course, did not have to confront severe military resistance by its colonies, unlike some others such as the French Empire. The French were forced to withdraw after violent warfare and massacres from Vietnam during 1946-54, Madagascar (1947-8), Morocco (1952-6), Algeria (1954-62), and Cameroon during 1955-8 (Howe: p.105).

British decolonisation, on the other hand, involved more nationalist ideologies, strikes, riots, imprisonment, and most particularly, as in India, the method of Peaceful non-cooperation on the part of the people. There were also the imperatives imposed on and promises of liberation and right of self-determination made by Britain during and after World War II that hastened the process of decolonisation.

Nationalism

“During several struggles against colonial rule in the twentieth century, the myth of the nation has proved highly potent and productive. It was popular with a variety of independence movements because it served many of their intellectuals and leaders behind which resistance to colonialism could unite. Speaking in 1970, Amilcar Cabral, a leading figure in the independence movement in Guinea-Bissau, described the contemporary conflict within several African colonies (as, indeed, it was in many other colonies in other parts of the world previously) specifically as one of 'national liberation in opposition to imperialist

domination' . . . The nation became mobilised as a powerful symbol which anti-colonial movements used to organise themselves against colonial rule. If colonialism had condemned millions to a life of subservience and dispossession, then anti-colonial nationalisms promised a new dawn of independence and political self-determination for colonised peoples. Many colonies were represented in this period as nations-in-chains, shackled by the forces of colonialism, whose peoples had been alienated from the land which was their rightful possession and which would be returned to them once independence dawned.

In making these kinds of claims, anti-colonial nationalist movements were often working with the national territorial borders that had not existed prior to colonialism and were often fixed by the colonising nations. For example, at the Berlin Conference of 1885 the Western powers divided up Africa between them by drawing arbitrary borders around various parts of the continent. The colonial borders of these new 'nations' ignored the Africans' own maps of the continent. In some cases they divided into two indigenous tribal lands; . . .

So, in calling for national liberation from colonialism, many anti-colonial nationalisms were working with the map of the world drawn by the colonisers. This was, on the one hand, an expedient and effective manoeuvre in the struggle for independence, but on the other it proved a potential source of problems in the post-independence period . . . To complicate matters further, one of the most important results of Empire was the movement of peoples across the globe — of Africans and Indians to the Caribbean, of Europeans to America and Australasia. For these migrant peoples, their relationship with the land was complicated. . . . Which nation was 'truly' theirs ?

So, the imagining of a sense of simultaneous national identity for often heterogeneous groups of people in the colonies has always had to face several challenges. “

- John Mcleod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*

Consequent to these developments, in Asia, India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, while Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Burma (now Myanmar) gained theirs in 1948. Hong Kong was the lone British colony in Asia since 1950 until it was eventually handed over to the People's Republic of China in 1997. In Africa, the Gold Coast became the independent nation of Ghana in 1957, while Sudan gained independence in 1956, Nigeria in 1960, Sierra Leone in 1961, Tanganyika (later becoming Tanzania) in 1961, Uganda in 1962, Kenya in 1963, Zambia and Malawi both in 1964, Gambia in 1965, Botswana in 1966, and Swaziland in 1968. Rhodesia, on the other

hand, had to suffer years of guerilla warfare before finally becoming independent as the nation of Zimbabwe in 1980. The West Indies also became independent during the 1960's.

Parallel to the idea of decolonisation there developed the concepts of nationalism and nationhood. Nationalism has been defined as an "ideology which affirms the autonomy of the nation-state and is usually represented by political movements that seek national unity or, as in the case of colonialism, independence from external rule" (Thieme: p.181). This is accompanied by a deliberately essentialist distinction of the race or nation from the colonising power which casts a positive image of the very difference previously used by the coloniser as a justification of invasion. For example, the apparent purpose that was projected by the East India Company and later the British Government was of civilising the natives through Western learning, religion, and science so that they could overcome their beliefs in superstitions and a false spirituality. But the nationalist movement in India, on the other hand, adopted that same spirituality in order to project the nation and its culture and civilisation as infinitely superior to and more enlightened because of its deeper roots than the British culture.

The vision of an identity separate from the colonising country was at the root of the nationalist tendencies in such British colonies as Australia and Canada even though, paradoxically, the white settlers themselves were the successors of their British colonial ancestors who had decimated and subjugated the native Aborigines and Indian tribes respectively in the two territories. Nevertheless, as a result of such strong anti-colonial nationalistic sentiments, Britain was forced to grant independence to these two Dominions, along with New Zealand and South Africa in 1931.

Similarly, but on a much larger scale, the nationalist movement in India under the leadership of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi, became an inspiring model for other colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. The eventual independence of India was the peak of the crisis in the British Empire and signalled its ultimate disintegration. It was accompanied by the awareness within India as well as Pakistan of being a free, separate nation, having its own individuality, and having the potential to determine and regulate its own policies and ideologies.

This period of crisis in the British Empire was extensively mapped in English literature of the time, such as E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Paul Scott's tetralogy *The Raj Quartet*.

The nationalist tendency asserted itself yet again in Egypt and brought the culmination of the power of the British Empire with the Egyptian leader Gamel Abdel Nasser seizing control of the Suez Canal in 1956. Earlier, in 1948, Britain had suffered a humiliation with the creation of the Jewish nation of Israel from a portion of Palestine which was then under British rule. Now, during this military engagement with Egypt, while Britain gained the support of France and Israel, the combined efforts of the USA and the then USSR, both of which had begun to yield tremendous economic and political influence regarding world affairs, compelled the British to withdraw not only from the Suez but from the entire Middle East, thereby effectively terminating its influence as a great colonial and imperial power.

Suez Crisis

The Suez Canal, 165 km long, joins the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea. It was designed and built by a Frenchman. The British gained control over its operation from 1875. After the British troops were withdrawn, the Egyptians took control in 1956 provoking an attack by a joint Anglo-French force. However, international opposition to their action forced them to withdraw. British accounts of this episode seek to justify their actions on the grounds of the extension of Russian communist influence over Egypt headed by Nasser. The actual Anglo-French campaign lasted barely a week but it brought to the fore vehement reactions from nations in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Britain would come to play a relatively minor role during the subsequent and still functional neo-imperialism compared to the other rising and powerful economies such as the USA, USSR (now only Russia), Germany, Japan, and so on.

SAQ

Which factors would you regard as being of the highest importance in British loss of control over international affairs ? (50 words)

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Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*

[‘What is swaraj?’] “Editor: . . . To drive the English out of India is a thought heard from many mouths, but it does not seem that many have properly considered why it should be so. . . . Why do you want to drive away the English?

Reader: . . . We must own our navy, our army, and we must have our own splendour . . .

Editor: . . . You want the tiger’s nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. . . .”

[‘The Condition of India’] “Reader: . . . all the disadvantages of railways are more than counterbalanced by the fact that it is due to them that we see in India the new spirit of nationalism.

Editor: . . . The English have taught us that we were not one nation before and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us.

. . . . I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another’s languages and there was no aloofness between them. . . .”

2.7 SUMMING UP

In this unit we tried to analyse the concept of empire and the related ideas of decolonisation and nationalism. From an overview of the decline of the British Empire towards the early twentieth century in the second section, we proceeded to discuss the interrelation of decolonisation and the crisis of empire in the third and finally analysed the connection between decolonisation and the spirit of nationalism. Finally we also commented on the representation of this crisis in the British Empire in literature of the time.

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Unit 3

The Rise of ‘English’

Contents:

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 The Argument for ‘Literary Studies’
- 3.4 The Question of Gender
- 3.5 Imperialism and English Studies
- 3.6 The Leavisite Contribution
- 3.7 English Studies Thereafter
- 3.8 References/Suggested Readings

3.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to look at the historical backdrop of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century England which proved to be the most fertile ground for the ‘rise’ of English as an academic subject. This shows that prior to that period, English was not included in the curriculum of higher education. ‘Literature’ meant all sorts of discourses like history, philosophy, etc, and creative literature could not claim any separate identity of its own. But in the twentieth century, English literature became a major area of study in the entire globe.

This unit will take you to the causes behind this transition, helping you to

- *focus* on this interesting aspect of evolution of ‘English’
- *discover* the processes which gave shape to this discipline
- *identify* the critics whose works are influential
- *describe* the problems related to ‘English’ studies

3.2 INTRODUCTION

No one can deny the role of ‘English’ in the implementation of the western project of colonialism and its highly important role even in the era of post-colonialism and globalization. It is not a co-incidence that the Victorian

period which witnessed the heyday of British imperialism also pioneered the introduction and consolidation of English studies both in England and in its colonies. Historically, the evolution of English studies can be categorized under three periods of English history.

In the Romantic period, creative literature achieved a major success as it had by then become a separate subject that was considered superior to other discourses because of its association with human life, its values and passions. The formation of the hierarchy between the creative and non-creative discourses was accepted and consolidated in the Victorian period. It is significant to note that in the battle between science and humanism, the latter side won and on that account, 'literature' was introduced as the torch-bearer of humanistic ethics. Then, in the twentieth century, 'English' studies became an unquestionable agenda in academic and intellectual life. It was even accepted as the only possible answer to the ravages of war and industrialism. In the next part of our discussion we will focus on the evolution of English studies as a historical phenomenon.

SAQ

Which academic disciplines are generally grouped under 'humanities' ?
(40 words)

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3.3 THE ARGUMENT FOR 'LITERARY STUDIES'

(The Victorian Argument)

A major exponent of the mission of English studies in Victorian England was Matthew Arnold. During this period, English seemed to have been in competition with natural science, for educational reformers argued about the merits and demerits of these different subjects. T. H Huxley advocated the cause of science on the ground that scientific teaching was a great success in Germany. Arnold, on the other hand, argued:

“The middle age could do without human letters, as it could do without the study of nature. (Now) human letters have an undeniable power of engaging the emotions, the importance of human letters in man’s training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of science in extirpating what it calls “medieval thinking” (*Literature and Science*).

Matthew Arnold, the Victorian poet-critic, was a staunch believer in liberal humanism. He held the conviction that the English aristocracy could play a major role in disseminating proper cultural values and morality and in cultivating aesthetic awareness among the common people. He was a classicist in his assertion of the faith that modern poets should learn the art of poetry from the classical writers of the past (“Preface to Poems 1853”). In his essay “*The Function of Criticism in the Present Time*” he states that critical writings are as important as creative writings and that critics have the immense responsibility of circulating the best ideas in the society so that creative writers can use those ideas in their writings. Arnold’s broad critical intelligence is reflected in his essays and lectures on literature, social questions and issues of religious beliefs. In his *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold suggests how a broad, humane intelligence needs to be cultivated to rise above the narrowly partisan and dogmatic beliefs. In his works such as *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* Arnold boldly states his beliefs that the language of scripture is fluid rather than static, literary rather than legalistic and requires an experience of life, a flexibility of spirit and the broad culture of the true critic.

The Cultural Project

Cultural criticism, in which is located the ‘rise’ of English, can be traced back to what Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in 1830, proposed in *On the Constitution of the Church and State*. He put forth the idea of a ‘clerisy’ of writers and artists, a kind of alternative ‘National Church’, “at the fountainhead of the humanities, in cultivating and enlarging the knowledge already possessed, and in watching over the interests of physical and moral science . . . the objects and final intention of the whole order being these - to preserve the stores and to guard the treasures of past civilization, and thus to bind the present with the past.”

You can compare this with what Arnold suggested as an antidote to the philistinism of the middle classes : ‘culture’ as bringing to society “the best that has been thought and said”.

In this direct combat with science, Arnold used literature or ‘human letters’ in its broader connotation to suggest “the best which has been thought and said in the world.” Arnold’s arguments were strong enough to defeat the claims of science. The victory of literature at this stage of history can be regarded as a milestone in the development of ‘English’ studies. The advocates of English studies of the Victorian age viewed the pursuit of English literature as a powerful substitute for religion. As Arnold said:

“More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us, without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.”

The Victorian crisis of faith had already relegated religion to the background. The Victorian ruling class, however, was much concerned about Christianity’s gradual decline in power and influence in society. Traditionally, religion played the role of a great leveller; it spread a pacifying influence that fostered meekness, self-sacrifice and a contemplative inner life. Living under the umbrella of Christianity, the people of England, particularly the middle-class and the common working-class people did not find religious encouragement to cry for political and economic justice. But with the emergence of scientific discovery and social change, the foundations of religion began to crumble, and the ruling class looked for an alternative medium of social control to prevent any threat of social and political disruption. The need for English studies was most urgently felt as the most easily available and best substitute for religion at this juncture.

Stop to Consider

Which works by Victorian writers are regarded as being the documents of this ‘Victorian’ crisis of faith ? You can turn to Tennyson’s famous poem, *In Memoriam*, for the flavour of this intellectual and spiritual crisis. It is widely considered to articulate this moment of doubt through its sustained debate over the issues brought up by Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Another famous document of this deeply critical moment is Arnold’s “Dover Beach”. While these two poems tell us of the Victorian mind beset by uncertainties, you should also remember that it is not easy to define “faith”. When we say that Tennyson expresses “doubt” or “faith” what we are looking at is his formulation of the issues brought up by new scientific theories such as

Darwin's. What is actually striking is that Tennyson saw this set of ideas related to evolution as encapsulating new directions of thought which could seriously undermine the moral fibre of society. You have to relate Tennyson's anxiety to the larger turmoil of Victorian society which was being shaken politically, economically and culturally. The same could be said to apply to Arnold's reflections on the "Sea of Faith" in "Dover Beach".

Thus, though liberal humanists like Arnold advocated the cause of 'literature' for apparently apolitical reasons, the ideology of the ruling class was highly instrumental in the dissemination of English studies among the masses. The study of English literature was expected to cultivate the feelings of universal brotherhood, tolerance, generosity and other human values, since literature deals in universal human situations and enlarges the sympathies of the readers. Such an assessment of the value of reading English literature in Victorian England did justice to the ideology of both the ruling class and the liberal humanists.

3.4 THE QUESTION OF GENDER

The rise of 'English' in England was, to some extent a natural concomitant of the gradual admission of women to the institutions of higher education. The distinction between literature and other academic disciplines like Physics and Chemistry is usually drawn on gendered lines: literature is supposed to have dealt in finer feelings and is more suitable for women rather than for men. But there is a paradox at the heart of this gendered thinking and classification of English as a 'feminine' subject. It is because the ruling power of Victorian England patronized the study of English literature to serve the project of imperialism which had nothing to do with the concept of 'eternal feminine'.

English in the 'feminine' curriculum

'English', as an institutionalized discipline, first found acceptance in the Mechanics' Institutes, colleges for the working classes, and "extension lecturing circuits". As Terry Eagleton describes it, "English was literally the poor man's Classics - a way of providing a cheapish 'liberal' education for those beyond the charmed circles of public school and Oxbridge."

But besides the working class, women were also the targets of ‘English’. In 1877, a Royal Commission witness suggested English as a “suitable subject for ‘women . . . and the second- and third- rate men who . . . become school-masters.” As Eagleton tells us, “The ‘softening’ and ‘humanizing’ effects of English, terms recurrently used by its early proponents, are within the existing ideological stereotypes of gender clearly feminine. The rise of English in England ran parallel to the gradual, grudging admission of women to the institutions of higher education; and since English was an untaxing sort of affair, concerned with the finer feelings rather than with the more virile topics of *bona fide* academic ‘disciplines’, it seemed a convenient sort of non-subject to palm off on the ladies, who were in any case excluded from science and the professions.”

SAQ

What kind of distinctions would you make between ‘literature’ and other disciplines? To what extent does ‘literature’ foster the ‘finer feelings’? (20 + 20 words)

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3.5 IMPERIALISM AND ENGLISH STUDIES

The Victorian age achieved the height of success in the extension and consolidation of imperial power in different parts of the globe, and significantly enough, English as an academic subject was introduced for the first time in the Victorian period itself. The complicity between the two projects can be understood taking into account the purpose designed to be fulfilled by the pursuit of English literature. The Victorian government put stress on the study of English cultural and literary heritage to inspire patriotic feelings among the civil servants and members of the British army who were entrusted with the responsibility of serving and safeguarding the British overseas colonies. Imbibing the knowledge of such great writers as Shakespeare and Milton, the servants of British imperialism could display their sense of cultural superiority to their colonized subjects. Although English was introduced at Oxford in 1894 and in 1911 at Cambridge, philology formed

a major component in English studies. Philology however, was closely bound up with Germanic influence. On the other hand, England defeated Germany in the First World War and this victory intensified the English hatred for everything German. As a result, English was freed from the philological component and the pursuit of English as literature, rather than as a language was made possible. As Terry Eagleton puts it: “English literature rode to power on the back of wartime nationalism.”

Stop to Consider

The Arnoldian enterprise of cultural enlightenment as providing the grounds of the new discipline of English was consolidated by a government report on ‘The Teaching of English in England’ in 1921 which erected English literature as the purveyor of English culture. English literature is seen here as the central humane discipline:

“English is not merely the medium of our thought, it is the very stuff and process of it . . . the element in which we live and work. In its full sense it connotes not merely an acquaintance with a certain number of terms, or the power of spelling these terms without gross mistakes. It connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves in our native environment.”

Academic literary study, from the beginning, was seen as part of “a broad project of moral regeneration, class harmonization and the promotion of a specifically national identity, and this project existed alongside, and sometimes sat uneasily with, the perceived need to establish English as a discipline.”

We can turn to what Patricia Waugh tells us of “Literature and the Academy”:
“advocates of ‘humane’ literary study attacked a philology-ridden study of texts on the grounds that Arnoldian ideals of ‘culture’ and ‘criticism’ could provide the “self-cultivation and intellectual flexibility” now under threat from the advent of science. In the period from the 1880s to the first World War, “the humanist camp in the universities demanded and gradually won some space in the curriculum for the study of literature not as an illustration of grammatical principles but ‘as literature’.”

Philology, when it came to dominate academic study, was a product of the renowned German university system which led the educated world in philosophy, natural science, medicine, social science, and biblical scholarship. It “promised to explain not only the evolution of languages, but the unfolding of cultures and civilizations along with them, by deploying a set of new sciences ranging from phonetics and dialectology to comparative mythology and ethnology. . .” So philology commanded respect but it was too demanding and scientific to carry on the ‘humane’ project which only the “public” literary critic could undertake.

SAQ

1. What is understood by the phrase, ‘Liberal Humanism’? (30 words)

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2. What were the grounds of Arnold’s proposal to exalt literary study? (60 words)

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The situation of the colony

In her famous work, *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan, surveys the colonial rule of the British in India with the aim of showing how ‘English’ came to be an instrument of colonial domination.

She remarks, “The history of education in British India shows that certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature - for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking - were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition. Despite occasional murmurs to the contrary, the notion that these functions are unique to English literature still persists in modern curricular pronouncements, with a consequent blurring of the distinction between ‘English literature’ and ‘English studies’ . . . The distinction . . . is a useful one to bear in mind in connection with British Indian educational history, insofar as it draws attention to literary *education*, as opposed to *literature*, as a major institutional support system of colonial administration. The transformation of literature from its ambivalent “original” state into an instrument of ideology is elsewhere described by another critic, Terry Eagleton, . . .”

Viswanathan points up the relevance of the history of British Indian education saying that “the emergence of the discipline of English in colonial India, its rootedness in strategies of sociopolitical control, opens up fresh inquiry into possible implications of empire for current debates on curriculum in general.

When, in our own times, students and faculty clamor for a broadening of curriculum to include submerged texts of minority and third world cultures, the knowledge that the discipline of English developed in colonial times would appear likely to strengthen their claims and force their opponents to reconsider the premises of the traditional Eurocentric curriculum.”

Check Your Progress

1. How would you describe the ‘methods’ of English literary study in terms of a cultural project? Support your answer with a comparison of critical readings.
2. Write a brief note on Arnold as critic.
3. Give a summary of the Victorian argument for establishing ‘English’ as a branch of academic study.

3.6 THE LEAVISITE CONTRIBUTION

F. R. Leavis was the true inheritor of Arnold in his conviction that the study and appreciation of literature is a moral as well as a humanizing enterprise. Leavis was wholeheartedly committed to the cause of English studies as he believed that the moral significance of literature lies in its capacity to reflect the whole quality of human life in a sensitive way. It was with this purpose to promote English studies that Leavis and Q. D. Roth, later Q. D. Leavis, launched the quarterly critical journal, *Scrutiny*, in 1932, the publication of which continued up to 1953. The ‘Scrutineers’ made a reassessment of the writers of English literature on the criterion of their commitment to the moral and cultural crusade against the commercial values of the mechanized society.

The writers who received the ‘Scrutineers’ unqualified approval were — Chaucer, Shakespeare, Johnson, the Jacobean and Metaphysicals, Bunyan, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, Austen, George, Eliot, Dickens, Hopkins, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Eliot and D. H. Lawrence. On the other hand, poets like Shelley and John Milton were given a secondary place for their verbally disembodied or abstract expression. Leavis’s disapproval of Milton can be seen in this estimate of Milton’s style: “He (Milton) exhibits a feeling for words rather than a capacity for feeling through words . . . habituation could not sensitize a medium so cut off from speech - speech that belongs to the emotional and sensory texture of actual

living and is in resonance with the nervous system.” Leavis’s negative estimate of Milton springs from his conviction that the essence of ‘English’ lies in its ability to convey the robust vitality of life through concrete expressions. The glorification of such writers as Shakespeare, D. H. Lawrence and Hopkins is based on Leavis’s ideological preoccupation with the organic unity of the sensuous quality of language with the vital quality of life. The ‘Scrutineers’ believed in the myth of the organic society of the past that stands against the mechanical life of modern industrial society. They insisted that though a return to the organic society of the past is not possible yet literature itself can present the picture of organic society in front of the sensitive readers if English language strives for a concrete and sensuous ‘enactment’ of lived experiences.

F.R.Leavis, the Critic

From the 1930s to the 1950s, F.R.Leavis, in Cambridge, redefined English literature and the way it came to be studied. Leavis is remembered for his attack on the ‘culture’ of industrial society. Leavis was influenced in his views both by Sir Arthur Quiller Couch and I.A.Richards, believing that mass culture of industrialised society had helped to destroy the authentic, unified culture of the ‘organic community. Leavis consistently pointed to the institutions of modern society as the symbols of the emptiness of commercialism. He saw ‘tradition’ as the repository of collective creativity which helps to sustain the inner resources of the community.

Leavis primary interest lay in stressing the links between culture and society. In 1933, together with Denys Thompson, Leavis published *Culture and Environment* in which industrial mass production was seen as creating the forms of contemporary culture.

SAQ

How would you understand ‘Mechanical’ in opposition to ‘Organic’ ?
(50 words)

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Leavis's re-mapping of English literature is not above criticism, but the stress he put on the sensitive appreciation of literature and the right use of language greatly contributed to the promotion of English studies in the twentieth century. In 1930s the scholars of English studies were viewed as leading the most valuable life because it was supposed to have given them the opportunity to recreate the natural and organic society of the past. Leavis held the conviction that: "thinking about political and social matters ought to be done by minds of some literary education and done in an intellectual climate informed by a vital literary culture." He ascribed tremendous importance to literary appreciation because it enhances the quality of human existence.

The arrival of T.S Eliot in England in 1915 was a significant event in the promotion of English studies. He insisted on the necessity for a positive reassessment of the metaphysical poets who displayed a unity of thought and feeling, experience and expression. He strongly believed in the impersonal order and dynamic power of tradition in the light of which the present and future work are to be judged. Eliot also felt the need for reviving the deep symbols and archetypes of mythology to connect the present with the past. This has resulted in a vigorous research for cultural and literary heritage, with a positive bearing on English studies.

The Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century like John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Abraham Cowley and many others were known for their bold experimentation with technique in the field of poetry. Their innovative practices, were denounced as unnatural by Dr Samuel Johnson in his work 'The Lives of the English Poets'. Johnson's criticism, however, was a reflection of his neo-classical sensibility. The credit of placing the Metaphysicals in a positive perspective goes to T. S Eliot, the pioneer of modern English poetry after the war. In his *epoch-making* essay "The Metaphysical Poets", Eliot asserts that these seventeenth century poets inherited the great tradition of "unifying sensibility" achieved by the great Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists like Shakespeare and Webster. 'Unification of sensibility' means an organic correspondence between emotion and thought, feeling and intelligence, of which metaphysical conceits are notable examples. Eliot made a strong appeal to the modern English poets to follow the art of the metaphysical poets because the complexity of the modern age requires for its articulation an equally complex technique.

Besides being a critic of great repute, Eliot was a poet (*The Waste Land, Four Quartets, Gerontion, The Ash Wednesday*) and a poetic dramatist (*The Family Reunion, Murder in the Cathedral, The Cocktail Party*)

While F. R Leavis held the conviction that study of literature fosters transmission of human values, his contemporaries like I. A Richards and William Empson restricted the role of literary appreciation to ‘close reading’ of the text. Following the norms of close reading, the scholars are expected to understand the text in isolation from the socio- cultural and historical contexts. I. A Richards called it “practical criticism”. The pioneers of practical criticism like Richards, Empson, Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate among others insisted on scrutinizing the quality of language and style rather than focusing on the authorial and historical contexts of the texts, particularly in poems. They held the view that the goal of objective criticism can be attained by an analysis of ‘tensions’, ‘paradoxes’, images and ‘ambiguities’ embedded in the language of the poems. These practitioners of ‘new criticism’ and ‘close reading’ shifted their focus from literature a humanist enterprise to literature as a kind of dry formalism and it is one of its major limitations. Despite its shortcomings, the new critical orientation, however, made significant contribution to the cause of English studies. Of all literary genres, English poetry gained the most from the new critical orientation, because the length of the poem enables the critic to search for the elements of formal coherence in a poem with ease.

The rise of formalism/New Criticism

The example of I.A.Richards in the history of English literary criticism should remind us that literary study assumes its shape under the impress of different forces at work in society. While, with his death in 1979, Richards came to be less remembered, it is interesting to learn that it was his view of literature as the antidote to the serious deficiencies of modern society.

We recall Richards in the context of the establishing of ‘new’ criticism, a way of studying English literature as an autonomous discipline. What we must note is how Richards ‘freed’ English literature from the grip of German philology by setting up criticism on ‘scientific’ principles. His method, or principles, however, were seen by Leavis as contrary to what was desirable.

SAQ

How would you distinguish between a new critical reading of a poem from a traditional one? (40 words)

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3.7 ENGLISH STUDIES THEREAFTER

As the study of English literature responded to the demands of the imperialist ideology during the colonial period, the promotion of English studies has not discontinued even in the decolonized world. It is because English has now been accepted as a global commodity to be used by all and it is the sign of cultural hybridity which marks the postcolonial condition. Moreover, a reinvigoration of critical activities has taken place in the decolonised nations since the postcolonial focus is directed even to the texts produced in imperial Britain - from Shakespeare and Dickens to Kipling and Foster.

Stop To Consider

1. The establishment of “Scrutiny” is a milestone in the rise of English studies.
2. F. R. Leavis, the great exponent of English studies, advocated an intense and sensitive reading of literary works because he believed that literature is conducive to life and vitality and the study of this subject is a moral experience.
3. The upsurge of critical activities in the field of literary studies of the twentieth century can be attributed to the endeavours of the Leavises, T.S Eliot and the New Critics, who focused on the ‘close reading’ of the text.
4. English studies have received a new impetus and a new direction with the development of postcolonial theory and practice.

Check Your Progress

1. Assess the impact that ‘science’ and other social forces had on the ‘rise’ of English.
2. Give a brief account of how ‘English’ became the ideological instrument of colonial domination.
3. Recount the Leavisite argument proposing English literature as the antidote to the moral and cultural deficiencies of modern society.
4. Make a brief consideration of ‘new’ criticism as the new direction of English literary study in modern times showing how it was in fact a response to a set of sociopolitical factors.

3.8 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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**Institute of Distance and Open Learning
Gauhati University**

**MA in English
Semester 2**

**Paper VI
Literature and Social History**

**Block 4
Post-Modern**



Contents:

Block Introduction:

Unit 1 : The Postcolonial Perspective

Unit 2 : Culture Studies

Unit 3 : Globalisation

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Block Introduction:

A course on social history tries to look at the various incidents and movements taking place at different moments in history and to analyse and understand the ideas that influence as well as arise from the historical movements and incidents and their effects on the social, political, economic and cultural environment of that time. As students of literature, our primary concern is to see how the movements, ideas at various political, economic, cultural spheres of the society affect the world of literature and art.

This block introduces you to the movements and the intellectual environment that surround the idea of 'Post-modern'. It is somewhere in the middle of the twentieth century or after the Second World War where we can trace the beginning of the social condition and experience which we term as the Post-modern. It is expected from you to know that the period after the Second World War is marked by certain rapid changes in the field of technology and industrialization fueled by the use and multiplication of computer controlled systems of production and management. The penetration of technology into all spheres of lives and society also accorded much importance to the intellectual workers like scientists, laboratory workers and technicians. Increasing use of computer and internet gradually paved the way towards the digital world where the world has been reduced to what is popularly termed as a 'global village'.

Globalization, despite being a capitalist phenomenon powered by the economic powerhouses of the West, celebrates intercultural and international exchanges without paying much heed to the political, national, social or religious boundaries. It would be interesting for you to note how the elements of Popular Culture are monitored by the intricate layers and relationships within the economic structures of the capitalist world.

You can read the ideas like 'Post-colonialism' described in this block in continuum with the ideas like 'Crisis of Empire' that you have come across in the previous block called Modern. On account of the limited space here, we have not been able to give you every related topic at great length, limiting the information to just an adequate working knowledge. For instance, in the unit on the postcolonial perspective there are many issues related to 'national culture', as in the debates relating to borders/ boundaries, or

diaspora, but too much information may not be of the greatest convenience for you to carry around. This means that you should attempt to find out some more about the subject by following what we have indicated here.

Unit 1: The Postcolonial Perspective

Unit 2: Culture Studies

Unit 3: Globalisation

Unit 1

The Postcolonial Perspective

Contents:

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 The Discourse of Colonialism
- 1.4 Against Colonialism
- 1.5 The Colonial Project
- 1.6 The Subject of ‘Orientalism’
- 1.7 Cultural Patterns & Colonial Encounters
- 1.8 Suggested Readings

1.1 OBJECTIVES

From your reading of the third unit, “Capitalism to Imperialism”, in the second block, you have already gained a fairly detailed historical account of how colonialism emerged and became a global movement. This unit provides the related account of what colonialism brought to the fore in the way of ideas. The reason why you have to know this set of ideas or this kind of perspective is because it is widely acknowledged by scholars and critics now that colonialism should be worked into intellectual history because some important issues are raised by this sweep of history and events.

By the end of this unit you will be able to

- *define* postcolonialism
- *refer* to the various notions surrounding postcolonialism
- *contextualise* postcolonial studies in terms of cultural and historical studies

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism is a scrutiny of the colonial relationship. Since the consolidation of colonialism is largely the work of the construction of the

myths of power and imagery of subordination and race classification, the postcolonialist perspective involves a questioning of this colonialist ideology and its dismissal. It is to be noted that the rise of postcolonialism is not necessarily and exclusively related to the period after decolonisation. The exercise of such a perspective co-incided with the progress of the colonial project in the African, Asian and South American countries. Therefore, the post colonial must be distinguished from the hyphenated term 'post-colonial'.

Stop to Consider

The debates concerning the 'postcolonial' are many and you should be aware that the label can be seen as too easily applied. Does 'postcolonial' mean that colonialism is finally over? Or does it mean to indicate only the writing that comes after the occurrence of colonialism? How far back into history does one go to point at the 'colonial'? Is it an appropriate, or even adequate, descriptive label which brands writers as belonging to a group? These questions remain important even as we continue to use the term.

Nayantara Sahgal, in 1989, gave vent to the the problems raised by the the term:

"First we were colonials, and now we seem to be post-colonials. So is 'post-colonial' the new Anno Domini from which events are to be everlastingly measured? My own awareness as a writer reaches back to x-thousand BC, at the very end of which measureless timeless time the British came, and stayed, and left. And now they're gone, and their residue is simply one more layer added to the layer upon layer of Indian consciousness. Just one more. "

Another definition says : "The term post-colonial' is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates, and, . . .it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact. Post-colonial critics and theorists should consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to 'after-colonialism' or after-Independence. All post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. The development of new élites within independent societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/invaser societies — all these testify to the fact that post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction." ["General Introduction", *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (ed.:Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin)]

SAQ

How important is the difference assigned to writing “postcolonial” as against “post-colonial”? (50 words)

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1.3 THE DISCOURSE OF COLONIALISM

Colonialism thrives upon the construction of the hierarchies like West-East, self-other, white-black, superior-inferior, colonisers-colonised. On the other hand, postcolonialism subjects these cultural and political hierarchies to scrutiny and instead of hierarchies and essentialism, attempts to focus upon the inevitability of cultural hybridity or plurality. It is here that the postcolonial thinking differs from the anti-colonial sensibility, the strength and intensity of which got reflected in the nationalist movements in the third-world countries. Discourses, both literary and non-literary, were the chief platforms for the postcolonial thinkers for the exercise of their postcolonial belief in hybridity. Post colonial critics unravel how in these discourses took place a dismissal of the colonialist perspective and entered instead a celebration of cultural diversities at the same time. Thus, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and V.S. Naipaul’s *A Home for Mr Biswas* or *The Enigma of Arrival* can be subjected to postcolonial reading.

SAQ

What kind of connection can we posit between ‘nationalism’ and ‘postcolonialism’? (50 words)

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Though colonialism has a broad implication suggesting even the conquest of Britain by Rome thousand years back, yet in the context of postcolonialism, the term colonialism is used to refer only to the period of the nineteenth and twentieth century that has witnessed the greatest expansion of colonial

hegemony and also its decline. While the Victorian age experienced the height of success of the colonial ideology with the expansion of territorial boundaries and exploitation of resources of the occupied lands, in the twentieth century, resurgence of nationalist activities in the third-world countries began to pose a serious threat to the strategy of the colonial governments. Anti-colonial struggles gained momentum in countries like India, Kenya, Algeria, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia and Trinidad and Tobago. The postcolonial perspective takes into account as to how the culture and writings of these once colonized countries were mobilized for the purpose of political liberation.

Race & Ethnicity

All discussion of colonialism, and postcolonialism, touches upon the issues of nationalism, race and ethnicity. The history of colonialism inevitably shows how the rhetoric of nationalism was instrumental in gaining freedom from colonial domination. All too often, in formerly colonised countries, nationalism has been manufactured through the use of criteria based upon ideas of race, religion and ethnicity.

The idea of 'race', on inquiry, shows how it appears as an invention designed to construct fundamental differences between groups of human beings. 'Race', in this fashion, becomes the means by which it serves the interests of certain groups of people. To that extent, it is a 'political construction'. 'Racial difference' offers the ideological support for discrimination by one group against another.

An explanation of 'ethnicity' involves showing how diverse social practices, rituals and traditions can be used to identify different groups.

The two terms above can be used synonymously sometimes but while 'race' points to physiological features as a common feature among individuals, the idea of 'ethnicity' can be much more dispersed including language, cultural or symbolic practices or the circumstances of birth.

From "White Forms, Aboriginal Content", - Mudrooroo (Australian writer)

"For better or worse, ninety-nine per cent of Australian culture is of European derivation. Aboriginal culture (or cultures) alone is (are) indigenous and rooted in the soil. They, like every other culture on the globe, are subject to change and are changing constantly. I want to emphasize that such a thing as a stone-age culture (static and unchanging), is a myth created by those who should have

known better and still put forth by those who should know better. All societies and cultures change and adapt, and this is fact not theory. The Indonesians were the first recorded visitors to Australia and aspects of their culture were taken in and adapted by the Aborigines of Arnhem land. Cultural traits from New Guinea were adapted by the Queensland Aborigines and perhaps this process was two-way. Cultural affinities between Papua New Guinea, Torres Strait and Cape York Peninsula do exist. The idea of Australia being isolated from the rest of the world until the arrival of the Europeans is a myth put out by them, and sooner or later it must be put to rest.” [From *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, p.228]

1.4 AGAINST COLONIALISM

It was in the context of the Algerian struggle for liberation from France that Franz Fanon wrote his epoch -making *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon was unsparing in his denunciation of the European mind: “When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man and an avalanche of murders”. He spoke for the cultural regeneration of the native people and put the stress on the need to “insult” and “vomit up” the white man’s values.

He argued that the nationalist movement must aim at not only political freedom but complete cultural and social transformation. The Indian, African and Caribbean nationalists focused on reconstituting a cultural identity which had been so long degraded by the colonizers. Therefore, the postcolonial consciousness, a critique of the legacy of colonialism, can be said to have been rooted in the birth of the anti-colonial nationalist struggles of the twentieth century.

Key Figures

Aime Césaire & Leopold Senghor

Césaire belonged to the French Caribbean colony of Martinique while Senghor came from the French African colony of Senegal. These two figures are important for the idea of ‘negritude’ which they upheld as being extremely valuable. Both these writers attempted, through their writings, to free ‘negritude’ (or ‘blackness’), from its pejorative senses and to invest it as the common, positive bond capable of uniting black peoples throughout the world. Senghor helped to promulgate Negritude almost as a philosophy, making it equivalent to an instrument of

liberation, overturning the accumulated negative associations of the term, re-evaluating and valorising black culture which had been subjected to centuries of brutalization and dehumanization. This attracted criticism with the argument that Negritude simply seeks to reverse the terms of racist denigration, reversing the object of white people's condemnation into one of valorization. At the same time, however, Senghor undermines the idea of absolute difference and upholds cultural assimilation.

Césaire, in his earlier *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, is closer to the ideas of Senghor. He is said to be the originator of the idea of Negritude. His later work, *Discourse on Colonialism*, goes beyond claiming the dignity of the black people and turns to probing and dissecting colonialism itself. Césaire's work is powerful and profoundly oppositional, showing how colonialism brutalizes the colonizer and reverses any argument which seeks to justify colonization.

Frantz Fanon

Fanon is considered to be one of the earliest theorizers of anti-colonialism. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon takes into consideration the question of resistance. This is an early text that he wrote and he opens it with a quote from Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*. Trained as a psychiatrist, Fanon studied medicine in France and after going on to Algeria in French service, he resigned from French employment because of the brutality of the colonial regime, and joined the Algerian resistance. 'Resistance' is a key motif in his work and although to some degree he agreed with Césaire, Fanon saw negritude differently: "It is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro creates negritude."

We have mentioned some important names connected with postcolonial theory and criticism leaving out many others : C.L.R.James, Amilcar Cabral, Gandhi, and Nehru, among others. Different theorists emphasise different aspects of the large, complex field called the "post-colonial". But that means that you have to read and explore more on your own !

SAQ

Many postcolonial theorists and critics consider 'resistance' to be an important part of their work. How would you define 'resistance'? (50 words)

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1.5 THE COLONIAL PROJECT

As the post colonial perspective is an attempt to dismantle the European myth of white man's superiority, a look at the causes and conditions which generated and justified such a mind-set will be relevant in this context. The colonial perspective, in its concern about the superiority of European culture and rightness of empire, is grounded in the eighteenth century project of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment argued that man must develop his rational self through the acquisition of knowledge. The Enlightenment celebration of human rationality was accompanied by a corollary suggestion that some human beings were more human' than others on account of their rational faculties. The Europeans considered the white races to be more rational than the non-whites and regarding themselves as the measure of all things, they formulated derogatory stereotypes and images to define the non-white races of the third- world countries. For example, Thomas Babington Macaulay defended the introduction of English education in India in his minute of 1835, for, inheriting the legacy of Enlightenment, he believed that the civilization of India was much inferior to that of Europe:

“It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England“.

Stop to Consider

The history of Indian education/Enlightenment discourses/the white man's burden

The English Education Act was passed in 1835, ending some irresolution for British educational policy which had been held between its increasing involvement in Indian education and its enforced noninterference in religion. After the passing of the Act, Indians were required to submit to the study of English literature. It was given a different status all along, and even while it was begun with an emphasis on the teaching of the 'language' it was soon realized that the 'liberal' content of English literature could not be disseminated without the British colonial administration running into grave difficulties. The result of such thinking, in short, led these colonial administrators to initiate "several steps to incorporate selected English literary texts into the Indian curriculum on the claim that these works were supported in their morality by a body of evidence that also upheld the Christian faith." [Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India" in *The Masks of Conquest*]

The problem of education and knowledge show us two different sides of the colonial project. What you should be able to grasp from here is the idea that colonialism had profound consequences for human civilization. Just take a close look at the two observations given below -

“It is the outcome of a historical process which has made the larger part of mankind subservient to the other. During this process millions of innocent human beings have had their resources plundered and their institutions and beliefs destroyed, whilst they themselves were ruthlessly killed, thrown into bondage, and contaminated by diseases they were unable to resist. Anthropology is daughter to this era of violence.” [Claude Lévi-Strauss]

“Anthropological ‘others’ are part of the colonial world. In the historical situation of colonialism, both white rulers and indigenous peoples were constantly involved in representing to each other what they were doing. Whites everywhere came into other people’s worlds with models and logics, means of representation, forms of knowledge and action, with which they adapted to the construction of new environments, peopled by new ‘others’. By the same token those ‘others’ had to restructure their worlds to encompass the fact of white domination and their own powerlessness.” [Bernard S. Cohn]

The argument for enlightenment, in this way, generated binary opposites like West-East, White-Black, Self-Other, rational-irrational and civilized-savage for the benefit of the Europeans. Another factor which was very effective in the nineteenth century for strengthening the cause of colonial enterprise in these third-world countries was the evolutionary theories. Colonization was represented as a strategy of ‘survival of the fittest’. The Europeans argued that the West had the mastery of rational powers, energy, cultural superiority and technological skill to dominate the rest of the world, the “other”. They defended the project of imperialism on the ground of their fitness and ability to survive and as the very means of their ‘survival’. Now it becomes obvious that the classification of human beings as degenerate and/or primitive was located in Europe. The European depiction of the colonized as always situated as other and unable to assume the necessary role as ‘self’ has provided the central terms for post-colonial debate. The self/other opposition suggests that a subjective self constructs everything alien to it as ‘other’. This opposition can also be phrased as centre/margin, dominant/muted or colonizer/colonized in post colonial studies.

Check Your Progress

1. Attempt a definition of 'postcolonialism'.
2. Show how the Enlightenment became a source of inspiration for the consolidation of European colonialism.
3. Give a summary of important features of the study of colonialism.

1.6 The Subject of 'Orientalism'

Edward Said, considered to be a pioneer in the realm of post colonial studies, highlights in his book *Orientalism* (1978) the ways in which the colonizing imperialists generated stereotyped images and falsifying myths about the colonized world. Unmasking the ideological disguises of imperialism, the book claims that the Western project of studying, researching and writing about the orient is inextricable from the Western motivation for dominating and restructuring the Orient. Said says: "The relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power and domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony..... The Orient was orientalised not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered common place by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be - that is, submitted to being - made Oriental" (*Orientalism*, 1978). Said's analysis of the situation highlights the fact that cultural texts like art, literature, philology, ethnography play a vital role in the construction of the "Orient" and in the great game of colony and empire.

Stop to Consider

1. Postcolonial perspective signifies an attempt to question and dismantle the cultural hierarchies like West-East, Self-Other, coloniser-colonised etc.
2. A wide range of subjects can be brought under the purview of the postcolonial perspective, i.e. all forms of discourses produced by both the colonisers and the colonised and in both the colonial and post colonial condition, if these discourses exhibit a tendency to scrutinise colonial politics.
3. While colonialist enterprise was fuelled by the Enlightenment project and social Darwinism, the rise of postcolonial perspective can be duly ascribed to the anti-colonial national movements of the twentieth century in the third-world countries.

Representation

In his work, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Said considers 'representation' to be "one of the key problems in all criticism and philosophy". It is thus a central motif in his work. What is representation? In one sense, it is a political issue often related with parliamentary systems of representative democracy, where a politician stands in for a section of the population. In another sense, it applies to questions of philosophy or aesthetics where we are given to consider whether an image truly 'represents' an object. In the context of Said's study of Western representations of the East, Said's contention in *Orientalism* is that the 'Orient' was 'constructed' to suit colonial ambitions of subjugation and exploitation : as an object or a category of knowledge, the 'Orient' was very much a 'construct'. In the discourses surrounding it, the 'Orient' was projected in a way that systems of domination and exploitation could thrive on the work of Orientalists. What we have to understand is that Said was not concerned with how true or false was the representation but that "the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as "the Orient"."

As the postcolonial perspective is political in its concerns and emerged as a critique of colonialism, it recognizes a devastating strategy of colonialism which compelled ideas of racial superiority to be brought to the fore. However, for some critics, it involves a strong awareness of cultural interaction or hybridity. Unlike the colonial and anti-colonial strategies to polarize the relationship among different cultures as East/West, First-World/Third-World, Black/White, postcolonial thinking is based on recognition of cultural plurality as unavoidable. The evolution of such awareness, however, involves different phases. At the initial stage, the colonized people attempt to assert their cultural identity by reclaiming their past. Commending cultural affirmations by the indigenous people in the face of European insult, Frantz Fanon says: "This culture, abandoned, sloughed off, neglected, despised, becomes for the inferiorized an object of passionate attachment— The culture put into capsules, which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorized". (Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*). What he means is that any critique of the colonial perspective involves an attempt to reinvent the forgotten indigenous cultural traditions set in the pre-colonial past.

SAQ

Which sets of binary oppositions do you see as integral to colonial discourse? (40 words)

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1.7 CULTURAL PATTERNS & COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

If we include Irish history in our purview, W.B Yeats’ nostalgic evocation of a traditional Ireland with its rich cultural heritage, his belief in cultural regeneration and his imagination of an idyllic Irish past can be interpreted as postcolonial as these impulses aim at dismissing the myth of superiority of the materialist, imperialist Britain. In India, Gandhi also fostered an image of a pre-industrial, self-sufficient native tradition to defy the cultural colonialism of the West. But what makes their position postcolonial is not just the assertion of native cultural identity but the articulation of their concerns in the colonial tongue, i.e., English. Postcolonial thinking does not overlook the reality that the third-world waves of nationalist struggles for freedom have learnt the theories and examples of decolonization from the West. The lessons of nationalism were literally acquired in the colonial classrooms through the teaching and transmission of European national histories. Thus, the Indian students absorbed the principles of the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution and were encouraged to apply those ideals in the context of Indian war of independence. The postcolonial perspective recognizes the mingling or interaction between the colonizers and the colonised as an unavoidable condition. In the context of culture and literary texts, this is known as “hybridity”.

Nationalism

Fanon on ‘National Culture’

“Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.. In such a situation the claims of the native intellectual are not a luxury but a necessity in any coherent program.. . .

To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible.

..

We must not therefore be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm. . .

A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. . . “

Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*

The arguments for and against nationalism occupied much space in the exchanges between Gandhi and Tagore. Since the concept of 'nation' is based on ideas of inclusion and exclusion determined by criteria of race, community or ethnicity, it was understood by these thinkers to be derived from the consequences of colonialism. To that extent, as both Tagore and Gandhi were keenly aware, nationalism contained the potential seeds of further dissension and harm. In *Hind Swaraj*, which is widely considered to contain some Gandhi's basic ideas, Gandhi draws out the fine distinction between the coloniser and colonialism. He asks the reader (the interlocutor in the 'dialogue' between 'editor' and 'reader' in the book), not to equate 'British' and 'colonialism'. He insists on the reader's knowing the the meaning of the word, "civilization". 'Swaraj', in this connection, is to do with 'self-rule' (or 'home rule') but what is the 'self' we are after, asks Gandhi. The document is fascinating since it brings to us the keen awareness of the complex issues involved in the anti-colonial struggle.

Crossing the borders of languages, forms and styles, postcolonial writers take part in the formation of a hybrid situation. They combine English rhythm and language with Indian themes. For example, the story-telling traditions of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and the technique of oral narrative of the *Puranas* have been utilised in the Indian novel in English which itself was very much influenced by the nineteenth century English novel. A classic example of cultural hybridity is *Kanthapura* by Raja Rao who describes the nationalist movement in English idiom. His prefatory remarks about the challenge of narrating rural India through an English idiom is worth mentioning. He says: "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own". Raja Rao's manipulation of English to suit his purposes is postcolonial in character. Salman Rushdie insists on the same postcolonial condition of hybridity as he says: "We can't simply use the language in the way the British did — it needs remaking for our own purposes"

(“Imaginary Homeland”). Rushdie’s own works are an illustration of crossing, fragmenting and parodying different narrative styles and perspectives.

Stop to Consider

The ‘signs’ of hybridity

The name of the postcolonial critic, Homi K. Bhabha, is closely linked with the concept of ‘hybridity’. He departs from the idea of over-simplifying binaries of East and West by focusing on the problem of how language helps to construct representations in colonial discourse arguing that “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction”. His later work, in attempting to bring theoretical analyses of colonialism into alignment with neo-colonial realities, concentrates on the issues of post-colonial identity, and related problems of ambivalence, mimicry, besides hybridity.

Bhabha works to challenge the practice of constructing racial and cultural differences by interrogating the very construction of difference that enforce them. Colonial discourse, for him, is the “discursive formation that connects across this spectrum of discriminations.” This may sound somewhat difficult, but you should see that Bhabha’s focus is on seeing how differences themselves are ‘made’ or ‘constructed’ in keeping with colonial policies which justified domination and subjugation through theories of racial superiority.

Bhabha is a difficult critic to read but can be rewarding with due effort. In his famous essay, “Signs Taken for Wonders”, he states : “Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities . . .Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.”

Again, in the context of ‘hybridity’, you have to also look closely at the problem of national culture. Fanon observes, in the context of Algerian literature, “It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space.”

In the condition of postcolonial, the need of creative interaction between the East and West is felt by both the coloniser and the colonized, for both suffer from a sense of cultural insecurity. The postcolonial perspective is also a critique of the cultural hegemony of the West from inside, an admission

of the plurality of perspectives. An urge for self-questioning and an impulse to explore the non-West, its religious, mythical and spiritual and philosophical ideologies and practices are displayed by a host of European figures. Pablo Picasso's art, for instance, demonstrates the artist's interest in the African primitive life for the cultural regeneration of the West. T. S. Eliot's study of Eastern philosophy, D.H. Lawrence's preoccupation with the search for alternative values in *The Plumed Serpent* and *Aaron's Rod* are symptomatic of their realization of a lack in the Western modes of thought and life. They were not critical of the imperial policy of the West, but their works unravel a conscious realization that the West need the 'Other', the non-West to save itself from further moral and spiritual degradation.

The primitive in modern art & literature

Primitivism, as the cult of the 'Noble Savage' originates with 18th century thought. One of its main concerns was to critique that society from a perspective outside it. "The ideas embodied in primitivism were in many ways continued in the Romantic movement, with its stress on Nature, freedom (both political and artistic), and the natural man..... In recent years writers like Edward Said took exception to the Eurocentric implications that the concept of primitivism carried, and the subject has been re-defined in the context of postcolonial studies." (*The Oxford Companion to English Literature*)

Alternatives Perspectives:

Nineteenth century Naturalism and even anti-Romanticism was based on positivist science and utilitarianism " The tradition of thought represented by this-positivist, analytical, objective, generalized, logical, absolutist, impersonal, determinist, intellectual, mechanistic- also in large measure fed the aspirations of literary naturalism, which by 1893 was reputedly.... already dead....." From 1882, there was a growing interest in "debatable phenomena" which was the subject of study for the Society for Psychical Research. What this reflected was the growing interest in the nature and development of the individual personality or ego as well as in 'occultism' that is the mystic and the irrational aspects of life and matter. There was, therefore a turning to Oriental sources associated with this kind of thinking. There was also increasing attention to the nature of the unconscious or subconscious mind. The concepts of irrationality began to make inroads into what was earlier dominated by scientific method. It was in this manner that the supremacy of the scientific method began to be questioned and that such questioning came to occupy an important place in modernism

The application of postcolonial perspectives in the whole range of academic disciplines like history, literary studies, sociology and ethnography has resulted in a completely new reading of these discourses. In history it has developed the practice of rewriting histories of the indigenous people by using European forms, i.e., it is a way of revisiting the historical representation of the colonial power and the conquered race. But the aim of such historical revision is not to replace the West with the non-West, rather it is to focus on double identities experienced by both sides, such an approach even probes into the role of the colonised, their complicity with Europe, in the process of colonisation. In its attempt to dissolve the universals (East-West, Self-Other, Coloniser-Colonised, Centre-Periphery etc.) and to focus the indeterminacy of selfhood, the postcolonial perspective can be said to bear similarities with postmodern thinking itself.

Stop to Consider

1. Postcolonial perspective avoids the essentialist approach of both colonialism and anti-colonialism. It is an acknowledgement of interaction and hybridity in culture.
2. The European search for new value systems, embodied in the non-West, is an expression of the postcolonial awareness of cultural pluralities.
3. The postcolonial approach has resulted in the reassessment of all forms of discourses— literary and non-literary.
4. In the celebration of pluralities and disruption of hierarchies, postcolonialism comes closer to postmodernism.

Check Your Progress

1. Write on the concerns central to postcolonial thinking.
2. Discuss, with examples, the important issue of 'national culture' in postcolonial discourses.
3. Discuss the importance of the work of Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha in discussions of colonialism.
4. Explain 'hybridity' as a concept which opposes the legacy of colonial discourse.

1.8 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

Edward Said: *Orientalism* (1978). A pioneering text in the field of postcolonial studies, examines a number of European representations of the Middle East and shows how the West forms the concepts of 'Orientalism' to promote their sense of racial and cultural superiority and to degrade the non-West.

Homi K Bhaba: ed. *Nation and Narration* (1990). A collection of essays that explore the difficulties of defining and writing about the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. The work dismisses the authority of tradition, people, the Reason of State and High culture in the making of the 'nation'. Rather it suggests that 'nation' as narration is a fluid and ambiguous concept.

Elleke Boehmer: *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 1995, Oxford University Press. Some fundamental themes and images of Post-colonialism - journeying, loss, the search for community, and the arrival of the stranger— are discussed with reference to a broad range of texts, from Trollope and Kipling to V.S Naipaul and Ben Okri.

Ania Loomba: *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 1998. Routledge. This work is an introduction to the historical dimensions and theoretical concepts associated with colonial and postcolonial discourses. Loomba also examines how sexual, racial and class differences intersect with colonial ideologies and Post-colonial discourses.

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Unit 2 Culture Studies

Contents:

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction: What is Popular Culture?
- 2.3 Postmodernism and Popular Culture
- 2.4 Popular Culture and Literary Studies: Theories of Popular Culture
- 2.5 Reading Popular Culture
- 2.6 Summing Up
- 2.7 References/Suggested Readings

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to acquaint you with the concept of popular culture and how it is perceived to be different from ‘high culture’. At the same time, it is also important to realise that in the post modern condition, the line drawn between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture is largely blurred and therefore popular culture cuts through both categories and thus emerges as an intriguing phenomenon for critical and literary studies. In the following sections, I will attempt to draw your attention to all these critical issues and at the same time familiarise you with the nature and elements of popular culture. By the end of the unit, you should be able to

- *define* ‘culture’
- *distinguish* between ‘popular’ culture and other cultural dimensions
- *follow* the various discussions of ‘culture’
- *sketch* the connections between social critique and cultural studies
- *relate* culture to critical discussions of art and literature

2.2 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS POPULAR CULTURE?

Before defining popular culture, it is critical to discuss what *culture is*. Culture is the most important concept in anthropology, and refers to “the patterns

of behaviour and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create and share” (*Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia* 2005). Thus it includes beliefs; behavioural codes; language; rituals and customs; fashion; food habits and cuisine; technology; religions; political and economic systems; and intellectual and artistic practices or products that define and socially construct, particular human communities.

This definition, forming part of the triple meaning of culture presented by the cultural studies critic Raymond Williams, combined with two other definitions of culture (also by Williams) as a particular way of life, either a particular society or a nation, or a particular period in history; and as constituting a generalised process of intellectual, artistic or spiritual development gives a layer idea of the concept of culture. Thus the first definition would see culture in terms of literary or artistic forms such as poetry, the novel, drama, ballet, music, painting, theatre and film, while the second would relate to different subcultures (that is, groups sharing a set of common interests, values, tastes, rituals, a specialist knowledge and jargon associated with it, way of dressing, hobbies or pastimes, among other things, within the layer compass of a particular culture) which might support or antagonise the dominant culture they belong to, such as the ‘hippie’ culture in Britain in the 1960’s and 70’s, and to such practices as the celebration of Christmas, or film culture. The third definition would, on the other hand comprise of mostly intellectual figures such as philosophers or great artists, who would indicate the cultural development within these terms of a particular community or age.

Stop to Consider

The study of ‘culture’

Matthew Arnold, the Victorian literary and cultural critic, propounded the idea in his seminal work, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), that culture or high culture was important in helping to create shared values which made for social coherence. From the 1930s to the 1950s, F.R. Leavis in Cambridge, saw industrialisation as culturally destructive and privileged literature as the source of shared values and meanings. Between the two great wars, Marxists shared the view that ‘mass culture’ was abhorrent.

As with Arnold and Leavis, a central issue for cultural studies has been the relation between culture and society. British cultural studies has been developed

through the work of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, who began to lay emphasis on the inclusion of working-class culture, popular culture and the media in the study of canonical literature.

The information given above brings to your notice the interconnection between the various constituents of 'culture': social values, values important for social life and activity, the different sections in any given society who has to transcend material difference and come to share values and ideas, and the circulation of cultural ideas through various social means like literature and media. As you can see from all these, the study of culture is important simply because it brings within its preview so much of social life that we can come to a better understanding of how our lives are arranged through the economic and political forces at work in society. The study of culture reveals just how economic, political and ideological forces influence us in the less visible ways in the guise of aesthetics, religious ideologies, academic orientation, or even as cultural artifacts.

When we come to popular culture, however, it usually denotes or refers to the particular way of life of a particular society or groups within that society as well as the music, literature, arts and media of that society rather than the heavy philosophical, intellectual or artistic baggage possessed by that society. This is not to say that popular culture cannot be intellectual or philosophical in nature but to point out the frequent implication of the term 'popular' as something that is well liked by the masses, something that to win their favour, or something that is itself the production of the masses. Thus popular culture comprises all those prevalent tastes, interests and talents, which reflect the mainstream cultural tendencies associated with any society or of any sub-group within it. Thus it can include film, music, television as well as advertisements, cartoons, newspapers, magazines, books, sports, clothing or fashion and cooking as well as any other product that reflect 'mass' cultural leanings at particular points of time and place.

There can be a multiplicity of agencies responsible for the production of articles belonging to popular culture. For instance, the entertainment industry including popular music, film, television, radio, video game, book (including genres such as comic books, detective thriller, horror fiction, romances) publishing is a powerful sector generating products regarded as part of a society's popular culture. The determining factor here is the commercial viability of the particular commodity.

SAQ

1. In what sense does a particular commodity become ‘popular’ ? (30 words)

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2. What kind of connection can be made between ‘cultural production’ and artistic creativity ? (50 words)

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Folklore, again, is another source of popular culture tracing its roots to the dawn of human civilization. In fact, before the large scale consequences of the Industrial Revolution, the prevalent mass or popular culture had depended heavily on folklore. Even afterwards, it continues to be the fountainhead of a variety of popular products of culture such as jokes or slang, or even many urban legends. Parallel to the folk territory is the modern professional-circuit daily, making available to the public and other specialised knowledge that is disseminated to the public by the news media and through many private knowledge and entertainment companies such as ‘Animal Planet’, the ‘National Geographic’ or ‘Discovery’. This knowledge is accompanied frequently by interpretation which is aimed at garnering more popular attention.

The ‘Internet’ becomes a synthesis or a melting pot of all these factors and agencies as the sole medium capable of bringing to a single meeting point all the divergent activities more than each of these factors can singly or in combination can make possible.

2.3 POSTMODERNISM AND POPULAR CULTURE

Although ‘post modernism’ is a term that had been in circulation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was only during the 1950’s and 1960’s in American criticism in particular that the term gained a familiar

mainstream cultural signification. This had a lot to do with the general reaction against the modernists' ivory tower explorations in cultural fields and the elitism inherent in modernist aesthetics which was implied in the distinction between 'high' cultural artefacts, which are unique and therefore have a special value, and 'low' cultural products, which are mass-produced and therefore, by implication do not have the cultural value attached to objects of 'high' culture, but rather become associated with bad taste.

Stop to Consider

Postmodernism and Cultural Boundaries

By the late twentieth century, around the eighties, 'postmodernism' began to take on a meaning as evident in Fredric Jameson's use of the term : "a new cultural epoch" in which capitalism, in its latest form of consumerism, breaking into the unconscious, the Third World and culture (in its broadest sense). In this sense, postmodernism meant a breakdown in the idea of an objective viewpoint, or an "Archimedean point", which could make a distinction between "critical "(analytical and objective) and "functional" (instrumental or utilitarian) systems of knowledge. This meant that there could not be fundamentally rational forms of inquiry; or, rational forms of inquiry could not give us the foundations of knowledge.

This meant a blow to ideas associated with modernity: art as autonomous, epistemological guarantees of truth in rationalism, or even the objectivity and truth of science.

Those who support postmodernism stress the fact that all art is grounded in the cultural assumptions of its age. Ideas regarding the autonomy of art, drawn from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, emphasised its withdrawal from historical engagement; its aloofness from historical determination is challenged through postmodernism. Critics like the American Leslie Fiedler had spoken, around the 1950s, of an art challenging high modernism, by democratically bridging the gap between high and mass culture.

High culture, thus, has traditionally been regarded as the territory of arts and sciences that developed as a result of the European Renaissance, accompanied by the idea of knowledge as leading the individual to a broader and deeper understanding of life. Some of the important emblems of high culture are classical music and the fine arts, patronage of museums and galleries, *haute cuisine*, international travel like the Grand Tour of Europe,

literature, especially classical literature and poetry, European philosophy, theatre, religion, especially the more traditional forms of Christianity, fashion or *haute couture*, and even the more expensive sports such as equestrianism, fencing, sailing, and golf.

On the other hand ‘low’ culture, in this context would seem to include popular music, escapist fiction and run-of-the-mill films. It is largely seen as inferior to its ‘high’ counterpart.

SAQ

1. Do you think that “difficulty” could be an adequate method of distinguishing between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art ? (40 words)

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2. Do you think that critical knowledge is a prerequisite of ‘high’ art? (30 words)

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During the 1950’s and 1960’s, the work of Susan Sontag and Leslie Fiedler was instrumental in pointing out the emergence of a “new sensibility” that attempted to retrieve culture from modernist bracketing within the museum and the academy. Thus postmodernism can be viewed partly as a reaction to what increasingly came to be seen as the modernist bourgeois cultural elitism, which had lost its bohemian power and along with it, its ability to shake the complacent middle-class ethos. As a result, the artists who were considered revolutionary in modernist terms such as Pablo Picasso, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and Bertolt Brecht, become part of the classical canon rather than avant-garde, while the newer, post-war generations assumed the culture of the avant-garde, struggling against the modern tradition.

Check Your Progress

1. Write a note on the artistic developments in the 16th-century European Renaissance. How relevant would it be to draw cultural boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture in that period?
2. Comment on the challenges laid by postmodernism to ideas of artistic autonomy.
3. Briefly sketch the reasons for the significance given to 'popular' culture in discussing postmodernism.
4. Comment on the distinctions between 'high' art and 'low' art. Comment briefly on the origins of 'high' art.

2.4 POPULAR CULTURE AND LITERARY STUDIES: THEORIES OF POPULAR CULTURE

Popular culture has come to acquire a serious academic and critical space since the 1960's and popular culture studies as an academic discipline has contributed in changing the critical concerns of more established and traditional disciplines, combining itself with one or more critical methodology. Generally, it is considered as combining communication studies and cultural studies aimed at deconstructing received ideologies related to both fields.

As discussed in the earlier section, one of the chief preoccupations in popular culture studies has been the blurring, and at times complete breakdown, of the conceptual barriers set up between "high" and "low culture" in such diverse mediums as comic books, popular music, television and the Internet. The traditional distinction between mass culture as necessarily coarse, tasteless, and generally degraded and elite or "high" minority culture as inevitably uplifting intellectual and enlightened have been progressively problematised consequent to considerable reevaluations during the 1970's and 1980's. Cultural analysts have increasingly tended to view such distinctions as arising out of the intrusion of politics in cultural affairs rather than remaining as aesthetic or intellectual endeavours.

SAQ

1. Would you identify any serious content in 'low' culture ? (30 words)

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2. What could be a major preoccupation in items of 'mass culture' ? (40 words)

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One of the most influential and controversial theories of popular cultural studies has been the theory of culture industry, a predominantly Marxist approach developed by the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School is the name ascribed to a group of German theoreticians associated with the Institute for Social Research which was established in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the Institute shifted its base to the University of Columbia in New York, going back to Germany in 1949, a few years after the end of World War II. In its critical work on popular culture, it relied on a blending of Marxism and psychoanalysis, which was given the name 'critical theory' (Storey: 85). The major names associated with the Frankfurt School are Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Leo Lowenthal, and Herbert Marcuse.

The term 'culture industry' was in fact coined in 1944 by Horkheimer and Adorno to refer to the processes and products of mass culture. The products belonging to and produced by the culture industry, according to them, are characterized by two features: cultural homogeneity (a system produced by the network of films, radio and magazines), and predictability (Storey: 85). This theory is diametrically opposed to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century concept of mass society and culture, visualized by intellectuals such as Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis, as representing a threat to cultural and social authority and thereby facilitating a moral crisis caused by the weakening of traditional centre of authority such as the family and religion. Even such an essay as E. M. Forster's "Does Culture Matter?" tries to imprint on the reader the ominous picture of a society given to mass culture disavowing more traditional forms of culture. In such a society genuine art

and culture can hope to survive only by severing its links with the tastes of the masses and retreating within a minority community avowing values which are threatened by popular culture, which degrades itself by lending itself to excessive commercialization, while pure art remains autonomous and independent of such pressures and thereby retains its disinterestedness and moral value.

The Frankfurt School, on the other hand, viewed popular culture as contributing towards the maintenance of social authority and setting up a system of conformity of the masses, and not, as Arnold and Leavis thought, a system of anarchy. In effect, in the words of Adorno and Horkheimer, “the deceived masses” are trapped in a “circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows even stronger” (quoted in Storey: p.85). The culture industry seeks to prevent the masses, through a process of standardization, stereotyping and conservatism, from thinking of possibilities beyond the market-based commodifying and exploitative framework of capitalism by inducing a false sense of fulfillment through its various agencies as advertisements, films, and so on.

Stop to Consider

The Frankfurt School:

“The core concern of the Institute’s research programme was the problem of the relationship between base and superstructure in late capitalism, articulated in terms of the connections between economic life, the psychological development of individuals, and changes within science, religion and art, law, custom, public opinion and popular culture. . . .

. . . Adorno’s contribution to literary theory would not come until the 1950s. This leaves Leo Lowenthal, who . . . sketched an outline of a materialist literary theory, as the principal theorist and practitioner of a Frankfurt approach to literature.

Lowenthal published ‘On Sociology of Literature’ in the first volume of *Zeitschrift*. Here he responds to what he perceives as the atheoretical (and ahistorical) nature of contemporary literary criticism. . . . Lowenthal suggests that both the form and content of a literary work can be understood . . . through reference to the social and historical conditions within which the work is produced. The task of a materialist literary theory becomes that of accounting for ‘the extent to which particular structures find expression in individual literary works and what function these works perform in society’.

Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 9, pp.109-110.

In opposition to this culture, the Frankfurt School visualizes an ‘authentic culture’ (somewhat akin to the Arnoldian and Leavisian notion of ‘high’ culture which is anti-industrial, anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist) which, unlike the mass cultural artifacts produced by the culture industry, elicits a critique of the capitalist culture and is thus idealistic in nature. Though increasingly threatened by the forces of the culture industry, ‘authentic’ (Horkheimer) or ‘affirmative’ (Marcuse) culture has a liberating purpose without being didactic; it is always in danger of being absorbed by the culture industry but there remains a hopeful belief that it would expose the falseness and betrayal incorporated within the culture industry by **capitalist ideology**. One of the major concerns in this tense relationship between ‘authentic culture’ and the process of **commodification** in which the former is devalued is when its products like classical music are made too accessible by turning them into saleable items, as when classical music is used to sell consumer goods, or when it is used in Disney comics. The insidious influence of culture industry is such that, in the words of Adorno,

“[t]oday anyone who is incapable of talking in the prescribed fashion, that is of effortlessly reproducing the formulas, conventions and judgements of mass culture as if they were his own, is threatened in his very existence, suspected of being an idiot or an intellectual.” (Storey: 88)

SAQ

How appropriate is Frankfurt School analysis to the influence of Hollywood/Bollywood productions on Indian society. (60 words)

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While the Frankfurt School does not deny the possibility of democratisation of culture it however seems to lapse into the conventional distinction between high and popular culture prevalent especially during the Modern period and

to a great extent fails to problematize the binaries that are assumed by it in the consideration of “culture” and “mass culture” as given below:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Culture | Mass Culture |
| Real | False |
| European | American |
| Multi-dimensional | One-dimensional |
| Active consumption | Passive consumption |
| Individual creation | Mass production |
| Imagination | Distraction |
| Negation | Social unification |

(Storey: p.93)

Moreover, many of the members of the Frankfurt School also take the culture industry as a monolithic structure, failing to identify counter-currents within it that threaten its apparently unified existence. At the same time, while for Adorno the culture industry makes for a passive consumption by the masses, locating the meaning of the cultural product within its mode of production, the view is not so negative for the more progressive Walter Benjamin (“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”). For Benjamin, reproduction of ‘authentic’ or ‘affirmative’ cultural artefacts makes them available for mass consumption and thereby paves the way for the emergence of a “democratic” culture and for the abolition of capitalism itself.

Stop to Consider

Walter Benjamin & T.W. Adorno: the status of art in capitalist society

The contrasting views of Benjamin and Adorno, in relation to their ideas of art as means of rupturing the capitalist social order, can be understood as follows. Benjamin considers that the modernisation process allows for the technical reproduction of art. Earlier forms of art had been surrounded by the ‘aura’ of authenticity and uniqueness. With modernisation, art is freed of its limitations. Benjamin is especially interested in the conflict between painting and photography, seeing the ‘elimination of aura’ in a reproducible art form like film. On the other hand, Adorno sees the changed conditions under which art is to be produced in the modern age. Art can no longer retain autonomy. What cheapens artistic value is the separation of art forms into ‘high’ and ‘low’, the commodification of art and the technological invasion of art which reduces individual control and creativity over art.

Later developments in the Marxist appraisal of popular culture are largely critical of the pessimistic arguments put forward by the Frankfurt School. During the 1970s cultural theory registered an enormous response towards Louis Althusser's definition of ideology, "a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts)", as a "practice" which enables people to confront and live through the conditions of their existence, in creating an illusory equation between their real life existence and imagined social formations. Thus ideology as closed system imposed externally, prevents an awareness of the contradictions involved within real existence. Thus the meaning of a cultural text can be produced only by a consideration of both these elements, which only a 'scientific' discourse can facilitate. Subsequent works on cultural production, such as Pierre Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production* or Judith Williamson's *Decoding Advertisements* deploy these Althusserian concepts in order to analyse how popular culture becomes imbued with ideology.

Ideology and Culture – understanding the cultural origins of ideology

You can understand the connection between culture and ideology better by referring to Catherine Belsey: Louis Althusser's reading (or rereading) of Marx—especially in *The German Ideology* - led him to gather that ideology is not simply a set of illusions. It is a range of representations in the form of images, stories, myths, of the real relations by which people live. But these representations do not give the system of real relations which shape individual lives "but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live". Thus, ideology can be said to be both a real as well as an imaginary relation to the world. Real, because people actually live their relationship to the social relations which determine their existence but imaginary in discouraging a full understanding of these conditions of existence including the ways "in which people are socially constituted within them."

So ideology should not be seen as simply a system of ideas carried about in the head, nor even should it be seen as an "expression at a higher level of real material relationships, but as the necessary condition of action within the social formation." That's why Althusser conceives of ideology as a "material practice" which resides in the behaviour of people acting in accordance with their beliefs. Ideology is present in commonplace (besides philosophical and religious systems) notions when we seem to 'recognize' what is 'obvious'. What is 'obvious' cannot, by this ideological truth, be the whole truth. To that extent ideology obscures the real conditions of existence by presenting partial truths,

concealing contradictions, apparently providing answers while really turning away from questions. But ideology should not be equated with conspiracy, or distortions foisted upon us. It is not ‘created’ by anyone.

Here, then, is the connection with ‘culture’. If one aspect of ‘culture’ resides in the images and artefacts it is capable of giving rise to, then ideology is a necessary element in such images and representations.

SAQ

1. What is meant by ‘monolithic structure’? (20 words)

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2. What can you understand by ‘pessimism’ in Adorno’s views of popular culture ? (30 words)

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Another Marxist cultural approach in popular cultural studies is through the Gramscian notion of “hegemony”. “Hegemony”, according to the Italian communist activist Antonio Gramsci, is the perpetuation of its power by a ruling class not through overt economic authority but by mobilising intellectual, moral, and ideological consensus among its members and through them among the outsiders. In the context of popular culture, a similar hegemony might be seen as existing in the active consumption of texts and practices produced by the culture industry, especially by the youth subcultures. Since such hegemony is accompanied by a consensus, popular culture becomes subject to dynamic transformations as the ideologies and culture industries themselves lose the guarantee of permanence.

Stop to Consider

Gramsci & Cultural Studies

“Among the most important influences on cultural studies in the 1970s were the French structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and the Italian Marxist Antonio

Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Published work from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, for example *On Ideology* (1978) and *Culture, Media, Language* (1980), played an important role in making this theory known to a wider readership. Both Althusser and Gramsci ascribed an important role to culture in the reproduction of social relations."

....

"When approached from a cultural studies perspective, literature becomes one element in the study of broader questions of culture, ideology and cultural history. Questions of aesthetic value are no longer free floating and apparently universal. Cultural studies also insists on a wider set of questions than those found in traditional text-based literary studies such as the study of the social and ideological role of popular literary forms and the raising of questions of readership."

Chris Weedon, "Cultural Studies", *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol.9

Allied to this idea of hegemony in popular culture is the possibility of a subversive popular culture which debunks, in an instance of the carnivalesque, the more conservative cultural texts and practices. The carnival, according to the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin, is significant because by drawing interest to bodily processes and functions and by implication to the dynamism inherent in it, it resists the dominant ideology imposed by official authority. This model also draws on certain binaries, some of which are given below:

Carnival/Culture

Laughter

Body

Profane

Unofficial

Open

Contingent

Movement

Abundance

Intensity

Transparency

Official/Culture

Seriousness

Mind

Spiritual

Official

Dogmatic

Immutable

Stasis

Scarcity

Control

Opaqueness

(Storey: 110)

Thus, sports such as wrestling (as aired on television), horror fiction, horror films, crime fiction, are some examples which perpetuate anti-official discourses by challenging mainstream assumptions though their value might be called into question in official discourse.

SAQ

How would you understand the role of culture in the “reproduction of social relations”? (50 words)

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Feminist approaches towards popular culture and its representation of gender and sexuality also present important perspectives on the consideration of popular culture within literary studies. For example, Laura Mulvey’s significant essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” explores the subjection of women in popular cinema under a “male gaze” which reinforces the strictures of a patriarchal society regarding the image of a woman both as an object of male desire and as signifying the threat of castration to man. The audience comes to take a male voyeuristic pleasure in visually taking over the woman as an object on which it can impose its “controlling gaze” which is also erotic in nature and is consequently another form of exploitation and oppression of women. A crucial question against such a formulation is how far the case for a “universal validity” is admissible and whether the audience’s gaze is always necessarily male.

Stop to Consider

The ‘gaze’

“The concept of the gaze describes a form of power associated with the eye and with sense of sight. When we gaze at somebody or something, we are not simply ‘looking’. The gaze probes and masters. It penetrates and objectifies the body. A lot of the time, we simply ‘see’ things: we register certain sensations to do with light, colours and shapes without any ulterior motives. Sometimes we ‘observe’ things: we look at them carefully in order to find out about them in detail. Then there are times when we ‘glance’ at things: our eyes skim over them and caress their surfaces in a casual way. But when we gaze at things, our aim is to control them. “

“According to Michel Foucault . . . the operations of power are inseparable from the dynamics of the gaze.” Visual control in modern societies, over people, proceeds from social and economic transformations subsequent to the Industrial Revolution which enables the maintenance of discipline in our societies through these means.

In Lacan’s idea of the gaze is tied to the Latin meaning of “observare” (observe) which means “to conform one’s action, to comply with” much as we ‘observe’ rules and regulations. So here, to observe, means to see from within a system of conventions and limitations. In other words, we cannot take observation to be neutral since it brings along a cultural baggage.

Some alternative feminist studies, again, deal with the aspect of escapism related to popular culture, especially cinema and the romance, in the sense of a temporary respite from the social problems faced by the audience in their everyday life in the solutions provided by the texts available in these genres. According to these studies, popular culture thrives not by the internalization by women of the exploitative patriarchal system enforced in society, but by identification with the possibilities of power, control and self-confidence and a transgressive, alternative femininity opened up in them as well as in the larger than life projection of Hollywood stars (Storey: 119).

Similarly, women’s magazines, and soap operas catering to women’s tastes may also be seen as sites of negotiations between the internalization of dominant social mores, with their images of women as the consumed, and the possibilities and opportunities presented to the women (in their role as readers or audience) to become a consumer.

Of course, these approaches towards popular cultural studies form just a section of the numerous approaches developing during recent times. Such a wealth of responses towards popular culture reflects its ability to provoke its target audience as well as underlines the strong conflicts within it.

Representation and ‘Reality’: the question of representation in cultural studies

Many significant developments have taken place recently revealing a crisis in representation. It is acknowledged that representations do not necessarily reflect a pre-existing reality. The mind, it is clear, is no longer accepted as being passive and mirror-like (or passively reproductive). It is an active and a creative faculty.

This is the major theme of *The Mirror and the Lamp* by M.H.Abrams (1953). A representation carries with it an indefinite number of potential contents to be represented if we accept the fact that it represents only because we interpret it and thus its capacity to represent is dependent on its capacity to suggest. Thus it recognised now that a representation is not to be taken as being immediately and unequivocally connected to a reality. This requires us to reconsider older views regarding visual art, fictional texts, history, geography and many other forms of representation. What is real is to be experienced only through mediating texts, stories, or images. These, again, cannot represent reality in a neutral manner but in accordance with the codes and conventions of particular societies. Many of these codes and conventions enter the works of representation not consciously or even unconsciously but are so intimately inherent in our cultures that we do not recall that they are constructed or arbitrary. That they are constructs is an aspect which is effaced over time.

2.5 READING POPULAR CULTURE

Popular culture, obviously, then, is not limited to literary texts, though genres such as horror fiction, crime thrillers, bestsellers, romances (such as Harlequin Novels and Mills and Boon romances), science fiction, comic books, recipe books, and the like do fall in this category.

During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries many new genres of popular culture had emerged due to considerable socio-economic changes: genres as diverse as illustrated papers and magazines, printed sheet music, the post card, the greeting card, (innovations in) children's books, photography, and so on. In the performing arts also there emerged new concepts such as the comic opera, vaudeville (associated with Broadway theatricals), and music hall entertainment. During the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, while these genres have prevailed, they have undergone further transformations and modifications consequent on the rapid development of the nineteenth-century industrial mass production, the introduction of cutting-edge techniques of sound and image broadcasting and recording, and the birth of film, radio and television. Thus in the context of contemporary culture, the popular would include also such texts as films, television serials, particularly soap operas, advertisements, radio programmes, video games, and much of the material accessible through the Internet.

A very powerful signifier of popular culture, again, is popular or 'pop' music, which might be taken as referring to all kinds of music other than classical music, or children's songs, hymns or similar kinds of religious chants or music (though there is a genre of popular music incorporating a religious element and there may be cases where strictly religious music might be incorporated in popular songs), military music, work songs, and national anthems or such forms of patriotic music. But the problem in privileging the classical over the popular poses further problems in the face of many popular works showing a high artistic level and musical innovation while many classical compositions are excessively simple and designed more at pleasing crowds. The blurring of boundaries in music, as in literature, between 'art' or 'high' and 'popular' is visible further in such genres as light classical compositions and also when works of classic music, such as some operatic pieces by the tenor Luciano Pavarotti, achieve a sudden, hard-to-explain popularity and thus become, temporarily, popular music.

Popular music can be a potent pointer to not only mainstream cultures but subcultures prevailing in society as well since they have a vast network of listeners by virtue of being disseminated through mass media such as recordings and radio and television. It is also, however, the product of the modern business enterprise which produces and distributes it for commercial profit. This can be seen, for example, in the parallel developments in popular music during the 60s. The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Yardsticks, etc., were part of a larger mainstream wave of popular music and having links with the working and lower middle classes, despising fashion, wearing long hair (mostly), and possessing anti-authoritarian beliefs. At the same time, there was a rival emergence of the Mods (against the Rockers described above) that was interested in the musical forms derived from black culture, such as rhythm and blues, blue beat, and ska (Jamaican form of music fusing elements of traditional Jamaican mento and calypso music with a rhythm and blues sound), and partial to modern jazz. This was a musical subculture evolving partly as a reaction to the mainstream privileging of the Rockers.

Subsequent trends in popular music since the 1970s have included Punk Rock (which was against the mass commercialisation of music) with groups such as The Clash, and The Sex Pistols; Glam Rock (Pink Floyd, Genesis);

the post-punk Goth Rock (Bauhaus); Garage music (popular both in England and the USA and deriving from the practice of numerous aspiring youth groups attempting to create their own music bands and practising in the garage); Hip Hop (popular during the 1970s); Soul; Techno Rock (registering a note of fierce rebelliousness), and so on.

Lastly, there is another development within the realm of art that had a pioneering effect in popular culture studies: the Pop Art movement originating in England in the late 50s and popularized in the USA in the early 60s. This form of art made use of objects, materials and technologies from mass culture in order to represent the products of industrial society thereby utilizing materials from everyday life such as advertisements, photographs, comic strips, beverage cans and so on. Pop Art thus becomes a critique of the depersonalized processes of mass production and ventures into the territories of popular taste and 'kitsch' that had hitherto been considered outside the realm of true art. One of the significant Pop artists has been Andy Warhol who worked specially on film or 'movie' stars such as Marilyn Monroe and the protean aspect of publicity and fame. The role of the media in the perpetuation and variation in popular culture has been succinctly summarized in his statement that: "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes."

Check Your Progress

1. To what extent does 'popular culture' become a critique of industrialised societies? Show the role played by modern technology in the promotion of 'popular' culture.
2. Sketch the feminist view of popular culture and cultural divides in society. To what extent does popular culture help to sustain stereotypes of gender? Give examples in support of your argument.
3. Explore the discussion in cultural theories of the status of literature in society. How is literary activity interconnected with the cultural formations in modern society?
4. Attempt an explanation of the relation between ideology, hegemony and culture.

2.6 Summing Up

Thus we see that popular culture exhibits tremendous complexities which are further accentuated by the variety of its components. In the sections above we tried to consider various aspects within the ambit of popular culture. In the second section we tried to arrive at a fuller definition of popular culture by considering the definition and nature of culture and its multiple manifestations. In the third section we tried to visualise the postmodern condition and see how popular culture in this context blurs the difference between 'high' and 'low' cultures followed in the next section by a study of the theoretical frameworks within which the different approaches to culture work. The thrust however has mostly been on Marxist and feminist approaches to popular cultural studies, with particular references to the key issues dealt with by the critics. Finally, we also considered the kinds of texts admissible under the heading of popular culture especially referring to popular music and the Pop Art movement. Since the area of popular culture, as we have seen, is extraordinarily vast and ever changing, it is necessary to update yourself regarding the new evolutions in this territory.

2.7 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

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Unit 3

Globalization

Contents:

- 3.1 Objectives**
- 3.2 What is Globalisation ?**
- 3.3 Globalisation and the Changing Idea of Culture**
- 3.4 Globalisation and the Book Market**
- 3.5 Summing up**
- 3.6 References/Suggested Readings**

3.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, I will attempt to give you a brief idea of the processes and consequences that accompany the concept of globalisation or globalism in order to enable you to visualise the changing contexts of literature and the arts as a result of changes in the larger economic, political, and technological arena in today's world. By the end of this unit you will be able to

- *define* 'globalisation'
- *enumerate* the different aspects of globalisation
- *connect* the concept of globalisation to ideas of nation and identity
- *outline* the effects of globalisation on literature and culture.

3.2 WHAT IS GLOBALISATION ?

Globalisation, appearing in the 1960's and gaining popular and academic prominence during the 1980's, has been defined as referring to "a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant" (Steger: 2003). Thus, it signals the emergence of a "global society" which has established a growing network of economic, political, technological, and cultural linkages as a consequence of considerable advances in communication, transportation, and information technologies. The world is seen in terms of a "global village" with closer

and more intensified connections between individuals, communities and nations.

Globalisation is a dynamic process that is still evolving as more advances are made in the areas, particularly, of information and communication. Moreover, the precise nature and consequences of globalisation have frequently been contested since it affects people and communities residing in various parts of the world in quite different ways. In particular, the postcolonial appraisal of the process is significant since the “developing countries” in the “second” and the “third worlds” have been the most affected, whether for better or for worse, by globalisation. Another related issue is the growth of multinational corporations (businesses having networks, operations, or investments in many countries) and transnational corporations (businesses functioning in a global marketplace) as a consequence of an increased rate of globalisation. As a result, international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the World Bank, which oversee and regulate world trade and finance, have come to play a significant role in this context.

The advances and improvements in communication, transportation and information technologies have contributed to lessening the cost of processing business orders by over ninety percent (Microsoft Encarta 2005). Outsourcing of services and increased connectivity through the Internet as well as lower cost of computer processing power and communication services have also been instrumental in creating a vibrant world economy. Now business and other interactivities can be carried on twenty four hours a day, seven days a week from anywhere in the world. Thus, an unprecedented increase in trade and the movement of capital (stocks, bonds, currencies, and other investments) has been the most evident outcome of globalisation. For instance, in the year 2001, world trade comprised a quarter of all the goods and services produced in the world, while by the beginning of the twenty-first century, capital worth \$ 1.5 trillion (including yen, euros, dollars, and other currencies) was being poured daily into the fields of trade and investment (Microsoft Encarta 2005).

Stop to Consider

Arjun Appadurai's description of globalisation may be of some use here. He says, of the typical features of globalisation, " Its most striking feature is the runaway quality of global finance, which appears remarkably independent of traditional constraints of information transfer, national regulation, industrial productivity, or "real" wealth in any particular society, country, or region. The worrisome implications of this chaotic, high-velocity, promiscuous movement of financial (especially speculative) capital have been noted by several astute critics. . ."

You can infer from this how some traditional conceptions need to be revised : we are here talking not merely of closer connections between countries, and regions but of how money is flowing, being allowed to flow, across countries, overcoming the limitations of borders and "national regulation". It means that nations now have to lay down new laws and create new categories to understand ownership of wealth, new rules to regulate industrial activity.

Globalisation, in this context, may be said to have been a postmodern phenomenon, shifting from the conditions associated with the age of modernism and modernity, aided by newer and more advanced technologies like computers, cellular phones, pagers, fax machines, digital cameras, television, satellites, jet planes and most importantly, the Internet and the creation of the World Wide Web, thereby facilitating, and in fact demanding, greater economic, political, and cultural interdependence among economies. At the same time, globalisation does not remain bound within the range of technology but is inextricably woven into a historical continuum regarding the evolution of the human civilisation. For example, the invention of computers and jet planes have their precursors in the invention of the steam engine, the telegraph, the telephone or the phonograph as it was called then, the typewriter, the internal combustion engine, and numerous electrical appliances during and soon after the Industrial Revolution. These latter products, in turn, were preceded by inventions such as the telescope, the compass, the windmill, gunpowder, and the printing press and so on. Thus an entire evolutionary chain of technology is responsible for the present level of technological expertise. Opinions have remained divided over whether globalisation is a recent phenomenon, and if not, till how far back it can be traced.

An interesting book by Prof. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, called *Before European Hegemony* (1989), traces a “world system” in the thirteenth century A.D. when “many parts of the Old World began to become integrated into a system of exchange from which all apparently benefited”. East (China, for instance) and the West had established contact with each other. These different parts of the world had become economically integrated and each saw great “cultural efflorescence”. “Technological and social innovations produced surpluses, which were, in turn, traded internationally to further intensify development. Parallel advances in navigation and statecraft facilitated contact among distant societies, which generated even more surpluses. In all areas, prosperity - at least at the top - yielded high culture, and Europe, hitherto the least developed region, perhaps had the most to gain from the new links forged.”

The above is meant to give you an idea of the work done and being done by scholars in the field of history and sociology. You will thus be enabled to develop critical insights into your study of social history. Very often we use descriptive labels without being fully aware of their limitations, of how they restrict our vision of the world.

While globalisation has obvious economic, political and ideological dimensions, in this unit we will concentrate mainly on its cultural and literary aspects which nevertheless are deeply influenced by the other more material aspects.

SAQ

What can be called a defining characteristic of “globalisation” ? (30 words)

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3.3 Globalisation and the Changing Idea of Culture

Culture, comprising language, literature, music and other fine arts as its major components, thrives on interactivity and exchanges between communities and nations. This continuous process of cultural evolution, of course, goes back to the earliest phases of human civilisation, transforming

itself over the ages to its present manifestations. So the globalisation of culture does not refer to an isolated phase in history nor does it imply a sudden outburst of cultural intensification and expansion born solely out of the new wave of technology. What the phrase registers, however, is the heightened rate of cultural transmissions that have accompanied and are integral to the process of globalisation in the contemporary world.

The increased dependence on the Internet and the availability of images and ideas through the World Wide Web or otherwise means that cultural, and by extension, literary, practices are no longer rooted in fixed national or social localities and constantly undergo transformations in meaning, losing old ones and acquiring many new ones in the process through coming in contact with dominant global themes.

Stop to Consider

We can attempt to understand economic globalization through the many-sided processes it involves and which give specific shape to economic, political, cultural and subjective structures. One of the many effects of these processes concerns new concepts of time and space. In these new concepts the national and the global have their parts. The 'global' makes up one part of our lived experiences just as does the 'national'. Our contemporary moment is distinguished by this fact. One consequence of such overlapping ideas has to do with the way this affects our study of history and society. The social sciences, for instance, assumed the 'nation-state' as the basis of its assumptions. Sociological reality was assumed to be contained within the nation-state as the basic formation.

Due to large-scale migration triggered by globalisation (which, in turn, is due to the increase in economic inequalities brought about by globalisation), nations are increasingly becoming multicultural societies, composed of various smaller subcultures. They have also become racial and cross-cultural melting pots as people from different nationalities converge in common locations. Thus, in Britain, since the later decades of the twentieth century, there has been a gradual rise in the number of people emigrating from Asian and African countries in search for better job and educational opportunities or for political asylum. These immigrants bring remnants of their culture along and thus create a synthesis of multiple cultures. The Indian community,

for example, has a strong cultural identity, as well as a considerable economic and political power, and a vibrant and talented literary and artistic presence which frequently deals with the experience of living between and at the same time within two cultures. This tendency is not restricted to literature but extends into such genres as cinema, as is evidenced by films such as *Bride and Prejudice*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, and *East is East*.

SAQ

How would you posit a connection between globalisation and large-scale demographic movements ? (50 words)

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Stop to Consider

This is a description of what the words “multiculturalism” and “postcolonialism” mean. The reason why you should be familiar with such terms is that ‘globalisation’ carries with it the notion of (trans-) nation, an idea that has a long colonial history behind it. It also carries a strong association with the West. From this standpoint, any discussion of ‘globalisation’ involves a discussion of cultural impositions through Westernisation, as also the opposition to such a process.

“While multiculturalism is commonly associated with ongoing debates over race, slavery, and colonialism within single countries, the postcolonial remains more associated with debates over colonialism and diaspora within Europe’s ex-colonized geographies. Yet despite differences in emphasis, both movements share a critique of Eurocentrism, racism, and colonial discourse. Both form part of a loose constellation of interdisciplinary research initiatives and political projects that cover a wide range of theories, discourses and revisionist “bottom-up” history, diasporic indigenous studies, Afro-diasporic studies, critical race theory, transnational feminism, whiteness studies, antiracist pedagogy, media critique, postmodern geography, counter-Enlightenment philosophy, border theory, antiglobalization theory, and many other forms of adversarial knowledge.”

[Robert Stam and Ella Shohat]

Globalisation of culture, however, also has its negative aspects in that it is being gradually realised by anthropologists that numerous dominant social

powers, such as the USA as well as large multi- and transnational corporations, are imposing a cultural hegemony on smaller societies by compelling them to adopt Western commercial cultural in the name of Fashion, free trade, open-market system, charity and even protection of national sovereignty.

Questions are also being raised on whether globalisation is actually not a diversification of culture but rather a homogenisation artificially propagated by a Western 'culture industry' based in New York, Hollywood, London, and Milan (Steger: 70), through, for example, the proliferation of branded or copies of branded shoes of all kinds, baseball caps, tee shirts, and fast food such as burghers, pizzas, and soft drinks like Coke or Pepsi. This is alternatively seen as a form of cultural neo-imperialism, a process of 'Americanisation' of world culture. On the other hand, there are supporters of globalisation who claim positive results of the entry of capitalist consumer values in the form of more freedom, liberalisation, and a truer democracy in the world.

Globalization and Culture

Scholars and theorists agree that there is no such thing as a global culture although there is a globalization of culture. This means that processes of cultural integration simultaneously with the processes of cultural disintegration take place across states, beyond the state-society unit, thus at the trans-national or trans-societal level. The globalization of culture is to be seen as being one with the tremendous expansion and extension of global communications and world markets.

The well-known cultural critic, Stuart Hall, defines a cultural form of globalization : "Global mass culture is dominated by the modern means of cultural production, dominated by the image which crosses and re-crosses linguistic frontiers much more rapidly and more easily, and which speaks across languages in a much more immediate way. It is dominated by all the ways in which the visual and graphic arts have entered directly into the reconstitution of popular life, of entertainment and of leisure. It is dominated by television and by film, and by the image, imagery, and styles of mass advertising."

3.4 GLOBALISATION AND THE BOOK MARKET

One of the major effects of globalisation has been on the global market. In the case of the book market the demands of the readers have registered a huge shift, influencing the entire process of literary production. Connected with the book market is the larger question of language and the changing patterns of language use in the global context. Of all the languages in the world, English has developed as the second most used and the most dynamic, which might be seen as a consequence of its increased use in international communication for all purposes.

While part of the reason behind the wide dissemination of English throughout the world is its colonial ancestry, the transformation of English into *the* global language is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. It has happened largely because of the need for a common medium of communication among different cultures or communities or nations, as well as in such areas as world sports, trade and commerce, higher education, and specialised professions. Another reason advanced for the supremacy of English by postcolonial critics is “the power of the Anglo-American culture industry to make English *the* global lingua franca of the 21st century” (Steger: p.83).

SAQ

1. To what extent, do you think, does ‘English’ project any national identity ? (30 words)

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2. Try to name the different reasons for the emergence of English as a ‘global’ language. Does it reflect a ‘global’ or a ‘local’ identity ? (50 + 20 words)

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As a result of these circumstances the nature of readership has also changed in that more people are able to, and are compelled to, read, write, and converse in English. Conversely, authors desiring greater visibility and wider readership have to resort to English for obvious reasons. The disintegration of the British Empire had brought to the fore new voices from the former colonies who talked about their experiences under colonisation. This gradually gave way to larger issues of identity and self-expression, as people from the ‘developing’ nations immigrated en masse to ‘developed’ countries, particularly Britain and the USA. The result was the formation of a wide Diaspora (of any culture or race or nation) which had to negotiate between multiple and conflicting nationalities, cultural identities, and political and social allegiances. Many of the writers belonging to the diaspora take to writing in English since it becomes the most accessible and commercially viable of languages. For instance, the writers of the Indian diaspora are located outside India, and write in English - Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, to name a few. Again, even many writers and poets who are based in India, prefer English to regional languages in order to meet the demands of a global readership not limited to a single nation, and, of course, also to meet the demands of the large publishing houses who have to reckon with the global economic and financial scenario.

Diaspora and Globalisation

Scholars and thinkers who are engaged with the discussion of globalisation and postcolonialism have different views on the issue of diasporic consciousness. It is recognised by many that diaspora, which indicates a collective movement away from a territorial base, may be a liberating factor where national differences cease to regulate life. However, in multi-ethnic communities such as the USA, it is questionable whether this is a concrete fact. Some are inclined to point out that new nations and new nationalisms are forming so rapidly that globalisation may be said to really lead to greater regionalisation.

Thus, one of the advantages of globalisation regarding literary production and readership is the greater exposure that one’s culture enjoys when a particular writer undertakes to write in English. This applies not only to original literary creations but to translations and translation studies as well. On the other hand, as a result of globalisation in the book market and

contemporary readership, the vernacular or regional languages have to bear the brunt of a lack of interest as a result of which many languages in different parts of the world are on a tremendous decline or virtually on the verge of extinction. Cultural globalisation thus becomes a double-edged sword in today's fast and commercial world.

Lastly, the presence of the Internet is also a major factor in determining the contemporary book market and regulating the tastes and preferences of the readers through its patronage of English.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss globalisation as the name given to the site of contesting identities.
2. Sketch the connections between globalisation and nationalisms.
3. Show 'globalisation' as the term which stresses cultural transactions between corporations and nations.
4. Outline the importance of 'Americanization' as an aspect of globalisation.

3.5 SUMMING UP

In this unit I dwelt on how the concept of globalisation works in the cultural sphere and how it is regulated by and determines the dominance of certain cultures. In the second section we tried to arrive at some kind of working definition of globalisation and analyse its nature. In the second section we went into the specifics regarding the globalisation of culture while in the third section we looked more particularly at how globalisation affects general readership and consequently the book market and the entire chain of literary production.

3.6 REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READINGS

Brooker, Peter (2003) *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*, London: Arnold.

Steger, Manfred B. (2003) *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Thieme, John (2003) *Post Colonial Studies: The Essential Glossary*, London: Arnold.

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