



COURSE CODE: MAEGD 202
COURSE NAME: PURITAN TO
EIGHTEENTH CENTUARY
LITERATURE

**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND
ONLINE EDUCATION
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY**

MASTER OF ARTS

**ENGLISH
BLOCK III**



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MAEGD-202: PURITAN TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE

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BLOCK III

MODULE III: METAPHYSICAL POETS

UNIT 7: METAPHYSICAL POETRY AND POETS

UNIT 8: ANDREW MARVELL: "TO HIS COY MISTRESS",
"THE GARDEN"

JOHN DONNE: "THE SUNNE RISING", "VALEDICTION
FORBIDDING MOURNING", "BATTER MY HEART"

GEORGE HERBERT: "THE COLLAR", "THE PULLEY"

UNIT 9: STYLE AND STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL
POETRY

MODULE IV: CAVALIER POETS

UNIT 10: CAVALIER POETRY AND POETS

UNIT 11: BEN JONSON: "TO CELIA", "TO PENSHURST"

JOHN SUCKLING: "BALLAD UPON A WEDDING"

UNIT 12: RICHARD LOVELACE: "TO LUCASTA, GOING TO
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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block III of MAEGD-202: Puritan to Eighteenth Century Literature will be presented to you in form of three Modules.

Module III deals with *Metaphysical Poetry* that came into existence in early 17th Century; that is, the Jacobean age, the reign of James I who followed Queen Elizabeth to the crown. Metaphysical poetry is an interesting bunch of poems written by a group of well learned people whose poetic style was completely different from the previous age. They were more logical and reasoning than the Elizabethan lyricists. We have chosen representative poets and their poems in this course. Learners will be able to get an in depth knowledge of these poets. **Unit 7** will elaborately present the background of metaphysical poetry, their trends and style. **Unit 8** will discuss few select but representative poets of this group and their poetry. The theme and the structure will be discussed in this unit. **Unit 9** will critically analyse, with the help of the poems their style, symbols, wit and conceit.

Module IV titled *Cavalier Poets* is about a group poets who came into being during the rule of Charles I, known as the Caroline Age (Latin word *Carolus* for Charles) . These are the soldier poets who fought for the king during Civil War and wrote beautiful lyrics of courtship and gallantry. Headed by Ben Jonson, his followers were termed as the ‘Sons of Ben’. Divide into three units, **Unit 10** will give a background of the Cavalier poets and their poetic trends. In **Unit 11 and 12** the learners will be able to learn about few representative poets and their poetry to acquire a substantive knowledge of this genre of that period. These two units will discuss few select poems of these poets and their unique style and compositions.

In **Module V** we have dealt exclusively with *John Milton*, the greatest of all time, the author of English epic *Paradise Lost*. The creator of epic Grand Style, it is very essential for any student of literature to read Milton. Keeping this in view we have given a comprehensive idea of the age of Milton in **Unit 13**. Some select portions of *Paradise Lost* are discussed in detail in **Unit 14 and 15**. Though we have suggested select portions of Book I and Book IX, it is comprehensive and learner friendly. Best effort has been made to incorporate extracts from the texts to give the learners a good impression of Milton’s similes, metaphor and other epic grandeurs.

MODULE III: METAPHYSICAL POETS

UNIT-7 METAPHYSICAL POETRY AND POETS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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7.0 INTRODUCTION

The fruitful juxtaposition of the Reformation and the Renaissance in 17th Century gave birth to new possibilities in the human world. Everything started to be reassessed, redefined and restructured in the field of human faith, religion, creativity, science, mathematics and astronomy. Copernicus and Galileo established that Earth is not the centre of the universe. The beginning of the seventeenth century was marked by new discoveries and developments like the use of clocks, telescopes, thermometers,

compasses etc. which, both technically and metaphorically signified a desire to explore the world and world view more vastly and clearly than earlier. The ways of perceiving things, of thinking transformed a lot, and this led to radical shifts in both- the political sphere and in the socio-economic structure.

We can say that the school or movement of poetry known as Metaphysical Poetry was the product of this complex web of new ideas, discoveries and upheavals. Elizabethan poetry had by now become full of hackneyed and predictable sentiments and the Metaphysical poets reacted against it. It can also be seen as a representation of political reaction to the intellectual and spiritual challenges posited by the transition from the Renaissance to the modern period. This group of poets was highly philosophical, seldom focused on nature and adopted diverse verse forms, none of which became a trend or convention.

Metaphysical poets and poetry came to prominence in the 17th century, primarily through the work of John Donne. However, other poets like Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Abraham Cowley, Thomas Traherne and Henry Vaughan also proved important to the metaphysical approach. In this unit we are going to acquaint you as elaborately as possible the background, characteristics and the practitioners of this school.

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit will introduce you to the major school of poetry in the 17th Century called Metaphysical Poetry giving emphasis on

- The changes in religious, social, political and cultural paradigms of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century England that served to shape Metaphysical poetry

- Introducing the major characteristics or salient features of Metaphysical school of poetry.
- Acquainting the learners with the lives and works of the three major practitioners suggested for reading in the succeeding unit.
- Introducing the learners to few more Poets practising the Metaphysical style.

7.2 METAPHYSICAL POETRY: IT'S CHARACTERISTICS

The phrase metaphysical poetry did not appear until the 18th century when Samuel Johnson, applied as a pejorative term, in his *Lives of the poets* (1779), to attack Abraham Cowley and a group of other poets that included John Donne, Andrew Marvell and George Herbert along with Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw. He criticised them for their lack of feeling and use of grotesque imagery – the conceits in a work like poetry. Johnson was drawing on John Dryden's vehement criticism of John Donne in '*A Discourse Concerning the Origin and Progress of Satire*' (1693). Dryden commented: "He (Donne) affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love." Dryden's comment and Johnson's supportive analysis clearly reflect his and his contemporary's reaction against the untraditional use of poetic theme and style in these groups of poets. The 'new philosophy' that upheaval the whole concept of the cosmos, was never questioned by Donne or other metaphysicals, rather they used these exciting speculations to express and define their emotion which was unique in itself. As these poets were acutely aware of the current ideas, their use made this school of poetry strikingly different from the previous.

Nevertheless, from the criticism itself one can draw the nature and characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry, that the poetry of this school is unconventional and different from the previous ages. Let us now discuss some of the salient features of this school. In the succeeding unit we are going to relate these characteristics with particular reference to the poems prescribed. You should particularly remember that the word ‘metaphysical’ refers to ‘*style*’ rather than *subject matter*.

- **Unified Sensibility:** T.S Eliot, for the first time coined this phrase which implies fusion of thoughts and feelings together in the most balanced way. While the Elizabethans paid more attention to feelings and emotions and in the Age of Pope, poets completely negate emotions and produced poetry as a product of their reason and intellect, a finer balance was a lack in almost all the ages. This was what Eliot defines as *Dissociation of Sensibility*. Metaphysical poets didn't dissociated feelings and reasons from one another. They tried their best to fuse them together. This is what Eliot calls *Unification of Sensibility*, the

LET'S JOT DOWN

Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

most imperative feature of Metaphysical Poetry. Their poetry indicates an amazing amalgam of thoughts and emotions, spiritual and physical, ethereal and earthly, abstract and concrete. Please read the following lines to understand

“Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne
Let us propose one world, each hath one, and is one”

(Donne: *The Good Morrow*)

- **Logical Reasoning:** To achieve the perfect unification of thought and feelings, metaphysical poetry lays great emphasis on the logical reasoning. In doing so, emotions are shaped and presented logically to fit the expression. In that sense they differ from the Romantics’ view of poetic feelings as a ‘spontaneous overflow. By choosing their words they achieve the balanced combination of the sound and the picture. The lawyer like approach in presenting their logic makes the metaphysicals visibly different from other poetic styles.

See the following example where the speaker persuades his reluctant beloved for physical love while alive

"The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace"

(Marvell: *To His Coy Mistress*)

- **Colloquial Language:** Colloquialism is another vital feature of Metaphysical Poetry. Metaphysical poets reacted against the traditional diction of the poets. They employed their own diction in their poetry. They mostly used informal language instead of formal, dignified and sublime language like Milton in their poetry. They tried to use colloquial language.

See how John Donne in his poem ‘The Sun Rising’ addresses the Sun with a rogue language

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?

(Donne: *The Sun Rising*)

- **Metaphysical Conceits:** A significant feature of Metaphysical Poetry is the use of metaphysical conceits. Conceit is a figure of speech which establishes a striking parallel between of two very dissimilar things or situations, which have very little in common. Metaphysical poets explored all fields of knowledge, early science, such as the theory of alchemy, geography, astrology to create their conceits and that is why their use is always novel and witty.

Read carefully the following example from John Donne where speaker persuades the woman for love making by comparing the flea as their marriage bed

It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;

.....

This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;

(Donne: *The Flea*)

- **Far-fetched and hyperbolic images:** The similes and metaphors used by the metaphysicals are often far-fetched and drawn from unfamiliar sources. George Herbert's use of the image of pulley in "Pulley" and Marvell comparing the growth of his love with vegetable in the poem "To His Coy Mistress" are the best examples of such images.

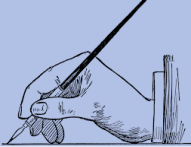
See this example of hyperbolic language

Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes
(So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize)

Countries, towns, courts: beg from above
A pattern of your love!"

(Donne: *The Canonization*)

Hope now you can see how the metaphysical poets appreciated the precise phrase, making select lines worthy of the dramatic epigram; employed paradox in a similar way, framing seemingly contradictory statements to establish truth. Many critics have noted, how the poems of metaphysical poets resemble dramatic monologues. Their poetry dealt with simple but common emotions, such as love, anger, jealousy, and sorrow.

	<p>1. Mention the two terminologies used by T.S. Eliot in relation to the style of metaphysical poetry.</p>
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<p>2. What is a metaphysical conceit?</p>	
<hr/> <hr/>	

7.3 METAPHYSICAL POETS

Metaphysical poetry marked its appearance as a distinguished group of poetry under the leadership John Donne. While Donne, Marvell and Herbert have been dealt with in details, as their poems have been prescribed for reading, the other Metaphysical poets like Abraham Cowley, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crawshaw, and Thomas Traherne have also made significant contribution to this area. This group of poets

have helped to establish the style of Metaphysical poetry as we know of it today.

Let us discuss in detail the lives and works these poets.

7.3.1 JOHN DONNE

Life sketch:

John Donne (1572-1631) was born of a devout catholic family where his father was a wealthy ironmonger, and his mother the daughter of the dramatist John Heywood. Though went for education at Hart Hall, Oxford, he could not complete his studies there because he refused to take the Oath of Supremacy. Donne matriculated from Oxford in 1584: he did not receive a degree from the University, but was later awarded an honorary M.A.

Donne was brought up as a Roman Catholic, but entered into a secular society in his youth. He denied any specific religious faith and began a serious consideration of faith at that time. Though he seemed to recognize the ‘authority of conscience’ only, he demonstrated a continued belief in the importance of religion. For him “true Religion” lied in the responsibility of any individual as a moral being.

He entered Lincoln’s Inn in 1592, engaged in some seafaring expeditions. As for Donne, he fought with Robert Devereux, earl of Essex, at Cadíz in 1596 and accompanied Sir Walter Raleigh in the Azores on a treasure hunting expedition in 1597; both events become subjects for his poetry. Upon return to England, he enjoyed the patronage of Sir Thomas Egerton, lord keeper of the seal, serving him as chief secretary until Donne’s secret marriage to Ann More, the 17-year-old niece of Lady Egerton, whom he had known for three years. Sir Thomas


Egerton immediately dismissed him from the service, following imprisonment and many other legal problems associated with the betrothal. Due to the dismissal by Egerton, Donne was not only cut off from “polite society,” but was also forced to live with the fear of poverty for years. During this period he tried the patronage of both the countess of Bedford and the countess of Huntingdon which remained unsuccessful. Donne’s struggle with faith continued, revealing his deep consideration of faith and his gradual separation from the beliefs of Catholicism. This was evident in his prose *Biathanatos*, written in 1607. It focused on Christianity and suicide. Donne started writing against Roman Catholicism during this time and was finally ordained into the Church of England at St. Paul’s Cathedral in January 1615 and later was appointed a Royal Chaplain. Ann Donne died in 1617 and after some years Donne was elected the Dean of St. Paul’s. He enjoyed appointment as vicar of St. Dunstan’s-in-the-West in 1624. On the day of James I’s death, March 27, 1625, Donne preached before King Charles I. Ann’s death completely worn him out and in retirement at Chelsea, he continued delivering notable sermons but fell ill again in 1630. He preached at Whitehall before the king last time in Lent, 1631. He died soon after, on March, 1631.

Izaak Walton, John Donne’s friend and biographer wrote:

“His (Donne’s) melting eye showed that he had a soft heart, full of noble compassion; of too brave a soul to offer injuries, and too much a Christian not to pardon them in others. He was by nature highly passionate, but more apt to reluctance at the excesses of it. A great lover of the offices of humanity, and of so merciful a spirit, that he never beheld the miseries of mankind without pity and relief.”

(*The life of Dr. John Donne*, 1639)

LET US STOP AND THINK

	<p>Oath of Supremacy, a declaration of “allegiance, fidelity and obedience to His Majesty the King alone . . . and not to any foreign power.” Not taking the Oath of Supremacy meant disallowing loyalty to the pope, required of all affirmed Catholics.</p>
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Works:

While Donne’s personal life was full of ups and downs and varied experiences, his creative life as a poet also shows complex aesthetic concerns. While exact dating of his early poetry is not assured, he produced his famous romantic poetry as well as his satires, using formal verse in five poems to produce some of the first verse satires in English during the period of his entry in Lincoln’s Inn in 1592. Apart from writing love lyrics, he wrote elegies, epigrams, epistles, satires, and religious poems.

Although it is difficult to interpret the categories of Donne’s poetry as representing different phases of his own life, some critics tend to relate Donne’s life to the study of his poetry. George Saintsbury, for example, in the *Introduction to Poems of John Donne*, edited by E.K. Chambers (1986) comments that the secular works of Donne belong to the first period of his life and the sacred works and prose belong to a second period accompanied by a spiritual awakening. In short, Saintsbury

discerned a transition from worldliness to spirituality, not only in his personal life but also in Donne's literary works.

Forty years of writing produced a remarkable outpouring, in not only poetry and sermons, but also songs, including *"Go and Catch a Falling Star"*; hymns, including *"Hymn to Christ," "Hymn to God My God,"* and *"A Hymn to God the Father"*; and elegies, including *"On His Mistress"* and *"To His Mistress Going to Bed,"* the elegies offering a new approach to English literature.

In addition, he wrote the satires; occasional poems, including *"Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward"*; verse letters; divine meditations, and devotions. often anthologized poems include *"The Flea," "The Good-Morrow," "The Undertaking," "The Sun Rising," "The Indifferent," "The Canonization," "Air and Angels," "Break of Day," "A Valediction: of Weeping," "The Apparition," "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," "Death be not Proud," "Batter my Heart,"* and *"An Anatomy of the World."* a large number of readers' favorites appeared in *Songs and Sonnets*, including, "I am a little World Made Cunningly," and hail from Donne's wild days prior to marriage. Many of Donne's phrases became part of the vernacular, including "Death Be not Proud," "For Whom the Bell Tolls," and "No Man Is an Island." His poetry, never published during his lifetime, first appeared in published version in 1633.

Edmund Gosse examines how the changes in Donne's personal life, beliefs and ideologies greatly influenced as well as transformed his poetry(Gosse, 1899). A parallel study of Donne's life and works led Gosse to conclude that Donne's early works reflected frivolity and a carefree attitude of a youth. The amatory poems belong to this phase, according to Gosse,

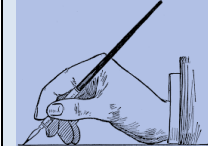
which include poems like *'The Sunne Rising'* and *'The Flea'*. But after a period of ephemeral pleasure hunting, Donne started examining philosophical issues of life from a serious intellectual perspective. Gosse puts 'elegies' into this phase of Donne's life, whereas the religious poetry of Donne is interpreted as reflecting Donne's entry into the world of metaphysics and spirituality. Gosse, while establishing a superstructure of Donne's biography in the process of examining his works, comments: "To pretend that Donne was a saint in his youth is to nullify the very process of divine grace in the evolution of a complex soul, in the reduction of a magnificent rebel to a still more brilliant and powerful servant"

Critical Reception:

Walton defines Donne as a human being who was compassionate and sensitive. His comment also best explains Donne as a poet: his poetry juxtaposes emotion and intellect, reconciles the material and the spiritual. In both secular and spiritually inclined poetry, Donne combines conventional religious imagery with allusions and metaphors rooted in the perception of the secular world. His poems often take the form of a logical proposition and ratiocination. There is usually a movement from the contemplation of a fact or idea, to the deduction of a statement and, finally, to a conclusion. This pattern of logical proposition and argument is represented through the imagery – the conceits. The conceits in Donne's poetry serve as the signifier of free play of intelligence, an intellectual pleasure in words, which provokes the unravelling of mysteries and truths. The ingenious use of conceits combined with a colloquial language offered Donne's poetry a new temperament. Joan Bennett comments: "He (Donne) rescued English love poetry from the monotony which was threatening

to engulf it at the end of the sixteenth century.” Bennett finds in Donne’s poetry a ‘robust delight in dialectic’, a ‘successful fusion of wit and passion’ and the ability of handling sensual love in all its aspects, from ‘the bitterness of desire thwarted, to the fleeting paradise of desire fulfilled’ (Bennett,1964).

The aspects of Donne’s style and treatment of poetry annoyed 18th and 19th-century readers. They also found little to admire in his arrogant and irreverent nature, or his lack of focus and interest in the natural world, or the missing tenderness in his love poetry. But modern audience showed a changing view and appreciated his poems because of their passion and intellect, uneven rhythms, Paradox, and riddle. Interest in him revived, in large part, as a result of efforts in the early 20th century of the poets William Butler Yeats and T. S. Eliot who tried to see his poem through a different lens.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
1. Name the prose work of John Donne.	

2. Mention different types of poetry written by Donne.	

3. What is the title of Donne’s poem collection?	

7.3.2 ANDREW MARVELL

Andrew Marvell was born in 1621 to a Clergyman, in Yorkshire, near Hull. It is assumed that Marvell attended Hull Grammar School from 1629 to 1633 and received an allowance from the Trinity College, Cambridge, foundation beginning in 1633. In 1637 he published his first verse, an occasional poem in a congratulatory volume celebrating the birth of Charles I and Queen Henrietta Mariachild. He was elected to a scholarship at Trinity College in 1638. During the years 1642 to 1647 he travelled to the Continent, visiting Holland, France, Italy, and Spain and met few poets. In 1657 Marvell was appointed secretary to the council of the state under Oliver Cromwell's son and successor Richard Cromwell. He became the MP for Hull in 1659 and continued as an MP until his death in 1678.

He experimented in writing poetry in Latin and Greek during his Cambridge days. Marvell published *An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers* in 1648 and in 1649 published "*To his Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace, upon his Poem's published.*" He seems to have returned to London by that time and published also in 1649 "*Upon the Death of Lord Hastings.*" In the years 1650–55 he wrote and circulated several poems, including '*An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*' and "*Upon Appleton House, to my Lord Fairfax.*" Marvell's Ode for Cromwell also expressed compassion toward the executed monarch, King Charles I. In 1653, when Milton recommended Marvell for a Latin secretaryship, he published *The Character of Holland*. From 1651 to 1653 Marvell served as a tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter at Nun Appleton House in

Yorkshire. The poem titled "*Upon Appleton House*" along with some other poems was written this period.

The Restoration of Charles II was supported by Marvell later as he always entertained moderate views and started writing pamphlets in support of King Charles II, though he earned the reputation of an opportunist for that. Most agree that his lyrics do reflect the political fractures and confusion of the era. Marvell wrote satires which were primarily engaged with his political ideology. His criticism of Charles II's government for various religious and political reasons was represented in the satires like *The Last Instructions to a Painter*, '*Clarendon's House Warming*', '*The Loyal Scot*' etc. Though many of the pamphlets in the *Instructions series* were wrongly attributed to Marvell, those verified as absolutely Marvell's were "*The Last Instructions to a Painter*"; four editions of "*The Advice to a Painter*" poems and associated poems.

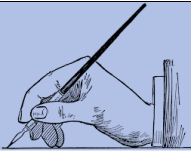
A publication of *Miscellaneous Poems* published in 1681, contained Marvell's best known lyrics, including "*The Bermudas*," "*The Definition of Love*," *The Garden*," "*A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body*," "*The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn*," "*To His Coy Mistress*," and the four poems often considered together as *The MOWER POEMS*, "*The Mower against Gardens*," "*Damon the Mower*," "*The Mower to the Glowworms*," and "*The Mower's Song*."

In the 19th century Marvell's genius as a pastoral poet was discovered. Some of his famous pastoral works are '*The Garden*', '*The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers*' and '*The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn*'. The

most famous poem written by Marvell is 'To His Coy Mistress' thematically designed on the Carpe Diem mode.

Marvell's poetry, however, did reflect philosophical thought regarding the nature of poetry and of those who wrote it, as well as the differences between the public and the private person. He enjoyed exploring the relationship of various forms of art to one another, as well as the meaning of authority, of both a civil and a religious nature. Like his contemporary and fellow poet Donne, Marvell also framed his poetry in the form of logical argument. Marvell's poetry reflects an intellectual intensity, depth of feeling rooted in an ideology of worldliness.

Most critics agree that Marvell's best poetry did not appear until after his death, and he did not receive the fame he deserved for his lyrics until the 20th century. The 18th century critics and readers mostly regarded him as a satirist and pamphleteer, one who encouraged religious tolerance, which could hardly be read after two centuries. Augustan sensibilities could never appreciate his poetry because of the metaphysical sensibility. In T. S. Eliot's *Metaphysical Poets and Poetry* (1921), the influential and inspiring essay on Marvell compared the poet's ability to speak of his age to that of Milton, praising his metaphysical wit. With this an outpouring of critical study of Marvell's works followed and continued.

	<p>CHECK YOUR PROGRESS</p> <p>1. Which are the <i>Mower Poems</i> of Marvell?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
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2. Mention at least two lyrical and pastoral poems of Andrew Marvell.

7.3.3 GEORGE HERBERT (1593–1633)

George Herbert was born in 1593 to a noble family parented by Richard and Magdalene Herbert. His childhood was spent in moving to various places after his father's death, first to Eyton, Shropshire to live with his maternal grandmother, then to Oxford, finally to Charing Cross, London in 1601. Herbert began his education at Westminster School, where he received the honor of an elected scholar. Later he became the public orator to the university. Herbert became Bachelor of Arts in 1613 and looked forward to a privileged life, suitable to his high social rank. He also nurtured himself under the patronage of the duke of Richmond and the marquis of Hamilton to gain political advancement. By 1614 he was a minor fellow at Trinity and one year later promoted to a major fellow as well. He took Master of Arts in 1616. By 1617 Herbert was a lecturer at Trinity. He married Jane Danvers in 1629, the cousin of Earl of Danby, and the two resided in Wiltshire. In 1630 Herbert shifted to a religious career, becoming an ordained priest. Herbert died of consumption in 1633.

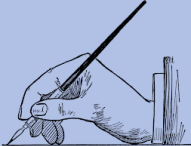
In 1612 Herbert published Latin poetry in a Cambridge volume on the death of Prince Henry. The fact that at only age

19 he was asked to contribute to such an important collection indicates his serious consideration as a Latin scholar. Writing with a nationalistic tone, these first printed poems reflected the poetic talent of Herbert. In addition to Latin, he learned Greek and became fluent in Italian, Spanish, and French. A far reaching writing career began, when Herbert began the use of religious love as a topic for his sonnets. Today readers of Herbert know him as a celebrant of sacred love in his poetry and eventually as the best known religious poet in the English language.

Herbert's friend Nicholas Ferrar published *The Temple* (1633), a collection of poems posthumously in two volumes which included remarkably exquisite piece of religious poems. *The Temple* is divided into three sections. The first section, titled "The Church-porch," The second portion of the collection titled "The Church" contains all those popular lyrics most often associated with Herbert. Select poems in widely anthologized selections include "The Altar," "Redemption," "Easter," "Easter Wings," "Affliction," "Prayer," "Jordan," "Church Monuments," "The Windows," "Virtue," "Man," "Time," "The Bunch of Grapes," "The Pilgrimage," "The Holdfast," "The Collar," "The Pulley," "The Flower," "Discipline," "Death," and "Love." Some of these poems such as *The Alter* or *Easter Wings* present the best example of *Pattern or Shape poems*, where the poet presents the structure of the poem to correlate with the subject matter. The third and final portion, titled "The Church militant," refers to a community of believers who must constantly battle evil.

In spite of engaging only with religious themes, unlike Donne and Marvell whose aesthetic preoccupations are marked by diverse interests, Herbert's poetry clearly reflects the

influence of the metaphysical school. It was not only his poetry but also his life which was exclusively dedicated to religious devotion. This preoccupation was foregrounded even in the poems written by Herbert in early youth: in two sonnets sent to his mother Herbert declares that the thematic concern of poetry should be God's love, rather than the love of woman. Izaak Walton in his *The life of Mr. George Herbert* (1670) writes :
“.....his most holy life was such, that it begot such reverence to God, and to him, that they thought themselves the happier, when they carried Mr Herbert's blessing back with them to their labour. Thus powerful was his reason and example to persuade others to a practical piety and devotion.” Walton's reference to Herbert's piety and devotion is suggestive of his poetic characteristic as well. Herbert's poetry was more epigrammatic, his language more lucid compared to his contemporaries.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
1. Name the poem collection of George Herbert.	

2. Give two examples of <i>Pattern poems</i> of Herbert.	

7.4 OTHER METAPHYSICAL POETS

Let us discuss the minor Metaphysical Poets who have also made significant contribution to Metaphysical Poetry.

7.4.1 RICHARD CRAWSHAW

Apart from the influence of John Donne's style of poetry, Richard Crawshaw's poetry also shows signs of being influenced by the new developments in science as well as the saints of the Catholic Church. A larger part of Crawshaw's work has neglected in the academia while Donne has definitely absorbed the enthusiasm of his readers. However, as the initial amazement at Donne's sudden genius fades away, the study of Crawshaw's poetry reveals in finer details, the subtlety of emotions and expressions in Metaphysical Poetry and reveals his individual passions as a poet.

Though Crawshaw started by writing poems on love he soon moved towards pure religious poetry. The title of Crawshaw's collected poems *Steps to the Temple* is a variation of Herbert's *The Temple*. His poems reveal pastoral qualities which are hard to miss. For example, his poem "A Hymn of the Nativity, sung by the Shepherds" celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ in this world. His "On the wounds of our crucified Lord" paints a picture in words of the wounds inflicted on Jesus Christ. In spite of being a metaphysical poet, Crawshaw's poetry does not reveal complexity of mind, conflict or tension. His images are more pictorial than intellectual. His irregular Odes are full of extravagance and sensuous decorations which make him different from the thoughtful intellectuality of a typical metaphysical poet. He resembled the Cavalier poets in his secular work "*Delight of the Muses*" and poems like "*Wishes to his Supposed Mistress*".

7.4.2 HENRY VAUGHAN

Henry Vaughan was a disciple of Herbert. He was not a priest poet like Herbert or Crawshaw. Vaughan's first published work was the *Poems* (1650). His secular poems were composed basically during his earlier years as a poet. *Olor Iscanus* (1651), a collection of poems, is a secular composition where he emphasised his worldly life and also his experience of the Civil War. *Silex Scintillans* was published in 1650 and its second volume was published in 1655. *The Mount of Olives or Solitary Devotions*, a book of prose work on devotion was published in 1652. Another anthology *Thalia Rediviva* (1678), is a collection of poetry written together with his brother Thomas Vaughan.

It may be noted that Vaughan was very much pained at the effects caused by the war and this was reflected in his poetry. Though he produced both secular and religious poetry, he was more at home in sacred poems. His struggle with sickness forced him to take a different view of life and this was where his poetry started taking the religious turn. Vaughan's religious poetry is of astonishing strength and it is basically for his religious poetry that he is remembered.

Much of his later works is credited to his spiritual master George Herbert. Henry Vaughan would have perhaps remained a writer of secular poems if not came to the influence of George Herbert. Many a times he followed Herbert's style, but Vaughan showed much individualism when he ceases to be influenced by Herbert. He is at his best when he describes the spiritual connection of nature and childhood. His poem *The Retreat* deals with the communion between nature and childhood. Later, in the Romantic Age, we find William Wordsworth expanding on such

similar ideas in his Odes, such as *Ode on the Intimation of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

7.4.3 THOMAS TRAHERNE

Thomas Traherne was a mystical poet who was a contemporary of Henry Vaughan but was relatively unknown. It is the mystic nature of his poetry which places him by the side of the other Metaphysical poets. Much of his poetry remains unpublished and unrecorded. When his manuscripts were located, it was believed to have been the work of Vaughan though it was later ascertained to have belonged to him. It was only after two centuries that Traherne received his much deserved fame.

In much of his poetry, Traherne has celebrated the mystical relationship of God with human. His attitude towards nature-human relationship can be said to be similar to that expressed by Romantic poets like Wordsworth. His poetry shares many similarities with the poetry of G.M. Hopkins. Traherne's poetry delights in a childlike wonder at the love of God. He sincerely believed in the saving grace of religion and its power to uplift Man from the worst of situations. Traherne has been included in the Calendar of Saints by the Anglican Church.

Traherne is best known for *Centuries of Meditations* which is a collection of short paragraphs. His prose can hardly be considered apart from his verse, because in its expression of spiritual perception it reaches the level of poetry both in quality and content. His only publication during his lifetime is *Roman Forgeries* in 1673.

7.4.4 ABRAHAM COWLEY

Abraham Cowley is the last of the Metaphysical Poets and represents its decadent stage. He may also be referred to as a transitional poet as his poetry is a crossover from the mysticism of the Metaphysicals and the rationality of the School of Reason upheld by Pope and Dryden.

Modern critics are not very sympathetic to Cowley but he enjoyed great popularity in his lifetime. Milton had placed him along with Shakespeare and Spenser. Cowley was devoted to the Metaphysical style from the childhood of his poetic career. He was devoted to wit and his poem lacked the mystic nature of the metaphysical poets.

Cowley's poetry suffered from his effort at trying to be too clever or witty. His style is similar in nature to that of Dryden though his love poems *The Mistress*, published in 1647, closely resemble the love poems of the other metaphysical poets. His another collection, *Poems*, was published in 1656.

7.5 HISTORY OF RECEPTION

Metaphysical poets received admiration in their own time, but by seventeenth till nineteenth century lots of negative criticism have to be faced by this group of poets. Almost all the academic critics and men of letters during Romantic period were very critical about the treatment of poetic subject and temperament in metaphysical poets. The lowest criticism drained in late eighteenth century when critic like Hazlitt acknowledged his little knowledge about Donne.

The critical responses to the Metaphysical poets changed from the negative to the positive in the mid-nineteenth and the twentieth century when readers and critics tried to see the

metaphysicals with a detached view. By 1890's critics like Saintsbury, Gosse, Raleigh and Dowden began to write in praise of Donne and opened a revolutionary door for the 20th Century critics. In 20th century much credit goes to Herbert Grierson for creating a new taste in the revival of the metaphysical poets. In 1912 Grierson had produced an edition of *Donne's Poetry* which offered a generation of young and searching new readers the depth they missed so long.

T.S Eliot on Metaphysical poetry: Among recent critics the appreciation of T.S. Eliot is most remarkable. Eliot, in the beginning of his essay "*The Metaphysical Poets*" (1921) says that the phrase 'metaphysical' has long been used as a term of abuse, as the label of a quaint taste. He tries to assess how far this school of poets, or rather a poetic movement, digressed from the main current. Eliot discerned a vitality of language and dramatic element in metaphysical poetry, particularly in Donne's use of imagery or language as a whole. Eliot, for the presence of these qualities in Donne, compares him to Shakespeare, Chapman, Middleton, Webster and Tourneur. He comments that when a poet's mind is completely focused on creativity, it attains the power of amalgamating diverse experiences. Whereas the ordinary man's experiences fail to be juxtaposed into an organic whole, the true poet creates unified wholes out of diverse experiences. Eliot contrasted the ability of the Metaphysical poets to unify sensibilities with the quality he termed as 'dissociation of sensibility' found in the eighteenth century poets. Eliot's own fascination was always with the French Symbolist poets like Charles Baudelaire and Jules Laforgue and he comments that they are closer to the Metaphysical poets for possessing the quality of transmuting ideas into sensations, of transforming an observation into a state

of mind: “A thought to Donne was an experience, it modified his sensibility”. The presence of those qualities in Metaphysical Poetry which led to so much denigration by Johnson were the reasons for which Eliot and many other twentieth century critics praised it. Eliot even commented that a shrewd and sensitive poet like Johnson failed to define metaphysical poetry by its faults. Harold Bloom, in his introduction to *John Donne and the Metaphysical Poets* (Bloom’s classic Critical Views) says that in the twenty-first century a balance has been restored in the field of the study of metaphysical poetry which is free from the exaggerated glorification of the school at the cost of the denigration of others.

7.6 SUMMING UP

All the poets studied above, both the major poets whom we shall deal in detail as well as the minor poets have elevated the Metaphysical Style of Poetry and have given a new dimension to the display of learning and their vast knowledge which they have projected in their poetry. Though Metaphysical Poetry did receive its share of criticism but one cannot deny that whether it be the poems of John Donne or Andrew Marvell- they do make an interesting reading. Donne may be criticised for his comparisons but he did introduced novelty with his style of poetry. In the next unit we shall try to present a detail summery of the texts prescribed along with an analysis of the treatment of theme and style unique to the metaphysicals.



7.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Relate briefly the intellectual and aesthetic framing of the seventeenth century to the emergence of the Metaphysical Poetry.

Q2. Trace the origin of the term 'Metaphysical' and discuss the critical response to Metaphysical Poetry from Dr. Johnson to the modern times.

Q3. Discuss briefly the contribution of Abraham Cowley and Richard Crashaw to Metaphysical Poetry.



7.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

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Bennett, Joan. *Five Metaphysical Poets*. Cambridge University Press; 1964.

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Thomas N. Corns, *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry: Donne to Marvell*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

**UNIT 8: ANDREW MARVELL: “TO HIS COY MISTRESS”,
“THE GARDEN”.**

**JOHN DONNE: “THE SUNNE RISING”, “VALEDICTION:
FORBIDDING MOURNING”, “BATTER MY HEART”**

GEORGE HERBERT: “THE COLLAR”, “THE PULLEY”

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Poetry of Andrew Marvell

8.2.1 Reading the poem “*To His Coy Mistress*”

8.2.2 Reading the poem “*The Garden*”

8.3 Poetry of John Donne

8.3.1 Reading the poem “*Sunne Rising*”

8.3.2 Reading the poem “*Valediction: Forbidding
Mourning*”

8.3.3 Reading the poem “*Batter My Heart*”

8.4 Poetry of George Herbert

8.4.1 Reading the poem “*The Collar*”

8.4.2 Reading the poem “*The Pulley*”

8.5 Summing Up

8.6 Assessment Questions

8.7 References and Recommend Reading

8.0 INTRODUCTION

The two poems “*To His Coy Mistress*” by Andrew Marvell and “*Sunne Rising*” by John Donne may be considered to be written keeping similar thoughts in mind. In his poem Marvell

tries to reason with mistress about the lack of time at their disposal and hence the lovers ought to make maximum use of the time available to him. The poem by Donne also concentrates in the poet's argument with the sun where he tries to reason with the sun regarding the incomparable beauty of his wife/lover and the autonomy of love in its own world. While Marvell is quite soft in his reasoning, Donne is quite argumentative and forceful.

Donne's poet "Valediction Forbidding Mourning", brings out some of the famous and unusual conceits ever used in English poetry. His famous conceit of the compass surpasses the limits of poetry and takes Metaphysical Poetry to a completely new level. Content-wise the poem may not be accepted as being exceptional but its stylistic qualities do lend the poem a magical touch.

The moral world of Herbert's poetry is never devoid of the awareness of the basic truths of humanity, because he represents it from the perspective not only of a devout follower of God, but of a sensitive poet. Whereas his contemporary metaphysical poets presented man both as lover of woman and worshipper of God, Herbert was clinging only to the latter representation. Yet his poetry unravels a complex psychological world, traversed by varied emotions, from rebellion to resignation.

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Unit seven is a part of Module III which deals with Metaphysical Poetry. In this unit the poetry of Andrew Marvell, John Donne and George Herbert shall be dealt in details.

- This unit shall study Marvell's famous poem "To His Coy Mistress" which has been written in the *carpe diem* tradition and the poem "The Garden"

- Three poems of John Donne, namely – “The Sunne Rising”, “Valediction Forbidding Mourning” and “Batter My Heart” shall be studied.
- George Herbert’s poems “The Collar” and “The Pulley” have also been included in this unit.
- In this unit the stylistic features and the thematic concerns of the poems would be studied

8.2 POETRY OF ANDREW MARVELL

Andrew Marvell was a Puritan but he was not strict or gloomy. He was a man of the world and a humanist. He had more in common with the Renaissance poets who celebrated worldly joys. He did write religious poetry but his secular poetry is more interesting. Some of his poems like “The Garden” adore the beauties of nature and this infuses his poetry with sensualism which we find in the poetry of John Keats. We also find him sometimes to have a lot more in common with William Wordsworth in his nature poems like “Upon the Hill and the Grove at Billborough” Perhaps he could have been a better poet if he would have devoted himself whole heartedly to poetry but he was too much involved with the fleeting fashions of the day. In his lifetime he was given a very high status as a man of words and sound judgement. He was a friend and colleague of John Milton and it was his intervention which saved Milton from execution after the Restoration.

8.2.1 READING THE POEM “TO HIS COY MISTRESS”

Andrew Marvell’s ‘*To His Coy Mistress*’ is centred on the urgency of consummating love in the context of the inevitability

of death. The poem is thematically based on the poetic convention *Carpe Diem*, the Latin phrase for 'seize the day'. The male speaker in the poem tries to convince his beloved that her clinging to virginity would not have been a problem if they had all the time and space in the world. The lovers must realize, the speaker maintains, that it will be too late to love when death will destroy their youth and beauty. So when one is young, one should seize the moment and every racing moment of time should be savoured.

In this poem the philosophical treatment of the ravages of time goes parallel with the theme of urgency of physical desire in love. The speaker appeals to the woman not to delay in consummating their love, because beauty fades and time is a destroyer. He says that had they enough time and space in the world, the woman's staunch clinging to her virginity would be justified. The 'carpe diem' convention (Latin for 'seize the day') is drawn upon by Marvell here to deal with the favourite metaphysical theme of preoccupation with the passage of time and the consequent fact of mutability. Marvell's speaker mockingly refers to the solitude of the grave: "The grave's a fine place, / But none I think do there embrace". The image of the grave usually brings about a morbid tone and is often traditionally used to warn one of sin and consequent doom. In '*To His Coy Mistress*' this image serves a different purpose: to seduce the lover. The woman is warned that her treasured virginity will end up in being adored by the worms in the grave. The poem is divided into three sections; in the first part the speaker contemplates on time and philosophizes about its devouring of everything that is youthful and beautiful. In the second part the speaker straightforwardly states that he and his mistress cannot afford the luxury of entertaining the coyness which stands in the way of the consummation of their love, in

the second part. The final part offers a solution to the problem of mutability and death: seize the day when there is beauty, youth and time. The physical union of the lovers will bring all perfection – this is emphasized through the image of the ball: “Let us roll all our strength, and all / our sweetness, up into one ball.”

Like many other metaphysical poems “*To His Coy Mistress*” also makes oblique references to the idea of imperial expansion and European preoccupation with the exploration of the far east. The Orientalist perception of the east is foregrounded in the representation of the Ganges as something very remote and exotic: “Thou by the Indian Ganges’ side / Should’st rubies find.”

8.2.2 READING THE POEM “THE GARDEN”

Through the poem “The Garden” the poet shows his dislike towards a life of action. Marvell advocates the contemplative life and in the poem he compares the glory of a contemplative life over the vagaries of an active life which is spent in the pursuance of earthly honour. The poet considers it to be a utter waste of time for men to strive towards military and civic achievements. The poet expresses his dissatisfaction ,

“How vainly men themselves amaze

To win the palm, the oak or bays,”

According to the poet, the men try to win only an insignificant part of the tree like the leaves while the rest of the tree mocks them at their stupidity. The men perform unceasing hard work to obtain a herb while greater achievements stare at them- these greater achievements, the poet compares with the shades of trees which unitedly weave garlands to bring

tranquillity to the life of men. These garlands of peace and serenity are superior to the leaves that the men bent on chasing.

“Does prudently their toils upbraid

While all flow’rs and all trees do close

To weave the garlands of repose.”

The poet says that it is such shade that he has located Quiet and also found her- Innocence. He personifies the abstract concepts of quietness and innocence as two sisters whom the poet was searching for. He says he was looking at the wrong places , he was looking for them busy men.

“Fair Quiet, have i found thee here,

And Innocence, thy sister dear!”

He believes these two sisters can be found only in the shades of plants and not amidst people. Here, one may consider the poet’s lack of faith in human company which he regards as more of a disturbance which acts as a barrier and keeps men away from achieving the tranquil state in life. He considers the company of men as savage as compared to the beautiful solitude of the garden.

In the next stage of the poem too, the poet continues to compare human qualities with the qualities of the garden and asserts that human society lacks the beauty of a garden. He says that the fair complexion of the lovely ladies and their red lips are nothing compared to the colours of the garden. He even chastises the lovers for writing their names on the trunks of the trees to celebrate their love. The poet assures the garden trees that he would never carve the name of any woman on a tree but he would write the names of the trees themselves. The poet says

even the God of loves takes rest in the garden when he is exhausted. The lovers too, when they are tired of their love affairs, seek the company of trees. The Gods after chasing after earthly beauties finally settle with trees. The poet lists the different benefits he enjoys from the trees- the apples, the grapes, the melons and the peaches which give him heavenly enjoyment. But the poet is not simply satisfied with the pleasure of the tongue, he seeks something more than that. He seeks a different sort of pleasure- the pleasure of the mind. The mind transcends the lands of the lands and oceans of the world and creates a new world of its own. The mind reduces everything to nothingness and gives rise to fresh thoughts in the shade of a tree.

Critical Appreciation

The poem “The Garden” is a unique metaphysical poem with a romantic tone. The poem may be compared to the nature poems of the Romantic age where nature was a major theme of inspiration of the poets. The poem is quite musical in its flow and is an expression of the poet’s personal connection with nature. Like other metaphysical poems, it draws allusions from various sources like the Bible and other mythological sources and other far-fetched images. The main theme of the poem is that the peaceful life of man amidst nature is far superior to the busy life of man in society.

‘The Garden’ presents the profusion of vegetation in a garden of a country house and establishes that it is a remedy for all the stresses of the material world. The function of a garden is to provide a shady repose. The solitude of the garden is more desirable than the company of a fair woman. The garden, in fact seems to be equivalent of the Garden of Eden, but before the

creation of Eve. Although the garden stands for the rejection of woman's beauty and all other material pleasures, the presence of a sundial designed from flowers and the industriousness of the bees indicate an active life rather than a life of complete passivity and escape.

The poem establishes the point that it is possible to withdraw from the world in its ordinary disposition to find spiritual solace through a solitary contemplation with ordered nature, which may lead one to a "Green thought in a green shade". Instead of supporting inactivity, passivity and escapism, 'The Garden' suggests a creative withdrawal in the world of nature. A parallel is drawn between the beauty of woman and the beauty of the garden, where the emphasis is put on the purity of the latter. The proposition of the poem is that the Garden of Eden before the creation of Eve is a double paradise unified. The garden offers a retreat from the strife of life. Marvell alludes to Latin poet Ovid's *Metamorphosis* to state the bodily transformation of those who are frequently harassed: "Apollo hunted Daphne so/Only that she might laurel grow. /And Pan did after Syrinx speed,/Not as a nymph, but for a reed."

The Palm, the Oak, the Bayes all symbolically stand for pursuit of personal glory, which fade into insignificance in front of the shady repose of the garden. The garden offers a solitary refuge, reminiscent of the Eveless garden of Eden ; but it nevertheless suggests an active life, with reference to a dial made of herbs where the industrious bee counts the time : "How well the skilful gard'ner drew / of flow'rs and herbs this dial new ; / Th' industrious bee / Computes its time as well as we." 'The Garden rejects the useless quest for material felicity and dismisses the 'red' and 'white' of woman's beauty, and

prefers the solitary bliss offered by the ‘green’ of the garden. The sensuous description of a country house garden, with its ripe fruits creates the feeling that in such a blissful state the erasure of all stresses of the material world is possible. The garden takes a human mind to the level of transcending all trifles of the external realities, by creating ‘Far other worlds, and other seas’. The poem highlights a green, natural world replete with peace and innocence in contrast to a material world inherited by fallen man. As Eliot has rightly referred to seventeenth century metaphysical wit as a ‘tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace’ (T. S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets”, 1921), there is apparent simplicity in the content of Marvell’s poetry, which in fact carries a layer of significations.

LET US STOP AND THINK



In the ‘The Garden’ Marvell presents the society as rude in the Romantic vein. The emphasis on the bliss offered by the solitariness of the natural world also alludes to a philosophical movement called Transcendentalism that originated in Europe and flourished in America in the nineteenth century. The American Transcendentalism includes the writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who believed that moral truths can be discovered in the world of nature. The spirit and the ideas of this movement can be found in Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854), which records how Thoreau was withdrawing from the strife and complexities of the society to a life of solitariness and self-reliance in the natural world of the Walden Pond.

The recent ecocritical theory foregrounds nature literature, highlighting the relationship between literature and natural environment. The term ‘ecocriticism’ was first used by William Rueckert in 1978 to suggest that ecological concepts can be applied to the study of literature. Marvell’s ‘The Garden’, ‘On a Drop of Dew’ and ‘Bermudas’ are examples of his contribution to English nature poetry and it is possible to interpret these poems from an ecocritical perspective. In the nineteenth century reception of Marvell’s poetry the primary focus was on Marvell as ‘the green poet’.

8.3 POETRY OF JOHN DONNE

John Donne may be taken as the leader of the Metaphysical Poets. We have already dealt in details about his poetry. His style and thematic concerns would be dealt in detail in the next unit.

8.3.1 READING THE POEM “THE SUNNE RISING”

The poem “The Sunne Rising” is a typical metaphysical poem observing most of the basic norms of metaphysical poetry. Its argumentative statements and forceful assertions are common qualities of a metaphysical poem. It is one of the best love poems of John Donne and one of the most anthologized of his poems.

The poem begins with a sudden address to the sun by the angry and irritated lover poet who has been interrupted in his love-making by the “Busy ,old fool”, the sun, which has entered his bedroom without permission. The personification of the sun as a “Saucy pedantic wretch” has reduced the status of the sun from being the source of all power on earth to an unwanted nuisance. The poet challenges the sun that the time schedule of

lovers are not to be adjusted to the motions of the sun and he, in fact, orders the sun to get involved with other meaningful activities, to interfere in places where his interference is needed and is welcomed. He asks him to pick on the school children and apprentices who need to wake up early and also asks the sun to warn the court's huntsman about the arrival of the king. He declares to the sun and the readers that love does not follow the divisions of time or climate.

The poet refuses to enter into a competition with the sun for he is not interested in wasting his time with worthless associations, he would rather spend his time with his lover. He would not wink his eyes to prove his power to the sun for he does not wish to lose sight of his lady. He says the beauty of his lover is so bright that it can blind the blazing sun and in case the sun can still see properly, the poet asks the sun to go and check on the spices of India and tell him later if the spices of India are still to be found there. By stating that all the kings and spices are in his bed, the poet in a hyperbolic way, establishes the superiority of the poet's lover to everything else exotic or glamorous in this world.

The poet give enormous importance to his love and finds her to be equal to all states and he himself the prince of all states. Everything else in this world is insignificant to the microcosm they had built for themselves where all honour that would be bestowed on either of them would only be fake and all precious things would be without value. The poet places his microcosm, his own world, in front of the audience asks the sun to fulfil his duties of warming the earth by warming the pet himself. He asks the sun to take their bed as his centre.

Critical Appreciation

'*The Sunne Rising*' is a love-lyric which emphasizes on the self-sufficient nature of love. The poem glorifies the lovers, while the sun is marginalized and condemned as a 'busy old fool'. The speaker in this poem treats the sun as an intruder in the cosy world of the lovers. The little world of the lovers serve as the microcosm of the external world, where all the glories of the material world can be found. The East and the West and the monarchs of the world – all come to be found in the lovers' bed. The riches and the glory of the outside world become insignificant, when contrasted with the glory of love. The lovers are self-sufficient and happier than the kings and princes. The sun is urged by the speaker to shine on them alone, as the lovers' world represents completeness and perfection.

The lovers are wakened by the morning sun and the proud lover scorns him as an interrupting subject. The power of the monarch of the cosmic world gets insignificant as is mocked by the lover, as he can wipe him out, can erase the very existence of the sun simply by closing his eyes, except that he does not want to lose sight of his lover even for an instant. The world of the lovers is an independent one, its activities not being determined or guided by the passage of time or by the change of seasons. The whole world lies in the lovers' bed and the outside world is only a mimicry, a shadow of the lovers' world; "Princes do but play us; compared to this / All honour's mimic; all wealth alchemy." Here, the lovers form their own microcosm, their own world and the exotic Indies and the glory of the kings all lie in their bed.

The entire poem embodies an erotic dialogue and is shaped in the form of a rhetorical argument. The sun is

vehemently dismissed as an old voyeur; is reminded of his duty of waking up the school boys, court huntsmen, country ants and apprentices; then is treated as something inferior and peripheral compared to the lovers' world. Donne here somewhat reverses Copernican astronomy and takes resort to the earlier belief of Ptolemaic astronomy of sun as moving around the earth. Donne's poem also deconstructs the traditional and glorified status of the sun as a symbol of divinity, mostly found in Petrarchan and Elizabethan poems. Such representations reflect the spirit of the age: Donne was born in an age of shifting attitudes and perceptions.

In *'The Sunne Rising'*, the triviality of the external world is metaphorically represented through the image of the school boys, apprentices, court huntsmen and country ants. As it is necessary to transcend the temporal to reach the level of eternity, to conquer the countries and the kings of the world, the proud lover declares the woman as the epitome of all states and himself as the emblem of all royal ownership. The poem engages with the typical metaphysical theme of mutability and time as the destroyers of youth and eternity and presents a discourse of defiance against the external forces and challenges. In most of Donne's poetry death and rags of time are shown as being challenged by love's enduring quality and *'The Sunne Rising'* is no exception to this.

LET US STOP AND THINK



'The Sunne Rising' implicitly displays one of the dominant preoccupations of the time – imperialist ideology through its reference to states and kingship. Moreover there is an oblique

representation of the Orientalist perspective in the poem's reference to the exotic Indies: "both the Indias of spice and mine". Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) defined Orientalism as a world view, particularly based on Western perceptions. The Orientalist construction of the east is primarily a product of 'imaginative geography', which leads to the projection of the east as passive, devious, treacherous and inferior.

8.3.2 READING THE POEM "VALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING"

The poem "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" was probably written in the year 1611, when John Donne travelled to Europe. Donne had to leave behind his wife for an uncertain period of time and this probably gave rise to the emotion we find he deals in the poem. It's a love poem which turns a moment of separation into a moment of celebration of their eternal love. It is Donne's idea to see his love to be different from the love experienced by others and hence his farewell to his beloved and therefore cannot bear resemblance to that of other lovers.

In this poem the speaker advises his beloved not to mourn at the moment of their parting from each other. The poem emphasizes on the union of true lovers even when they are physically away. The speaker takes resort to ratiocination to arrive at the conclusion that true lovers realize the spiritual nature of their love, unlike the "dull sublinary lovers" who cannot accept separation. He points out that virtuous people die gladly and do not mourn death. True love does not die as a

consequence of separation, rather becomes stronger like gold which shines and expands when beaten out to a gold leaf; true love shows constancy like the fixed foot of a compass leaning towards the moving foot.

The poem begins with the statement that virtuous people leave the world quietly whereas ordinary people refuse to accept the reality of death for taking the virtuous away from the material world. The lovers should also leave the world in the manner of the virtuous men, without lamenting over the inevitable laws of nature. The lovers have the ability to challenge death with the eternity of their love and they hardly care about the trivialities like physical separation from each other. The farther they move from each other physically closer are they emotionally and spiritually. They are like the pair of compasses where the lady remains at the centre, being fixed and the man comes back to her in an invincible gesture of love.

Critical Appreciation

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The poet begins the poem with a reference to death, but he uses this reference to gently remind his lover of the everlasting memory of the virtuous men after death. Here his emphasis is on their virtues and not on their death and it is this virtue which he compares with the love he shared with his beloved. With the abundant use of figurative language, the poet compares his love with several ideas and tries to establish the superior status of his love.

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no;

The bodies of virtuous men would silently leave their bodies though their friends may not want them to go or may be unaware of their departure. In a similar way, the poet wants his lover to bid him farewell without making a hue and cry so that their moments of love would not turn into a show and become an issue of insult or shame. He asks his lover to “melt and make

no noise” as such a scene would be a profanation of their divine love. The term laity is used here to stand for the members of the Church congregation or in other sense the common people and the poet has no intention to be classed into the same category.

In the third stanza, Donne brings in the reference of the world and its movements to compare his love with the affairs of other ordinary people. The poet tells that when the earth moves it may cause fear in the minds of the people who may be shocked by the movement in the upper layers of the planet, while on the other hand, the actual movement which goes on in the inner concentric spheres, though may be of a much higher magnitude, rarely causes any harm. At the time John Donne, the Ptolemaic theory of the universe was still accepted as a standard and the universe was believed to consist of concentric circles with the earth at its centre.

The next metaphor in the poem, the poet compares the ordinary lovers to the moon who have fallen in the abyss of no hope of attaining platonic bliss. The “dull sublunary lovers” have no hope because these lovers could not move beyond physical attachment. Their love is guided by “sense” and hence their love depends on the presence of both the partners. The poet and his lover, however, is a superior couple and they are not affected by each other’s absence. Their based is based on sensible divine logic which the others are deprived of. The lovers share a very strong bond and hence can stand a long separation. He calls it a love which is beyond definition.

But we by a love, so much refin’d
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less eyes, lips,

and hands to miss.

The metaphor is extended into the next stanza where the two souls which are united stand a breach of physical separation by expanding their souls to reach out to each other. He develops a metaphysical conceit from the physical property of gold which can be beaten to airy thinness and still would not break. Their two souls would just expand like gold.

Donne uses scientific imagery in this poem while engaging with the theme of lovers' parting, reiterated in many of his poems with different perspectives and philosophical concerns. "Sweetest love, I do not Go" is another poem that deals with the theme of lovers' parting from each other, suggesting logically that the two are one, they cannot be separated by temporary parting from each other and sometimes such parting is necessary as rehearsal for their final separation to be brought by death. Whereas "Sweetest love, I do not Go" centres on a comparison between the sun and the lover in the context of their fastness of return to destination, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" employs the conceit of a pair of compasses to ensure the safe return of the lover to the woman. Donne often creates organic, unified entities out of paradoxical ideas or situations. In "Loves progress" and "To his Mistress going to Bed", Donne compares the human body to a map – a geographical space. In 'The Sunne Rising' also similar aesthetic preoccupation with images drawn from the world of geography and astronomy can be found. In "A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning", the comparison between the two lovers and the pair of compasses represent metaphorically the perfection or security of a circle, an image of the possibility of eternity in mortality. The conceit suggests love's sustaining virtue. Like many other love poems by Donne, this poem also

establishes the point that the two lovers attain singleness and a unified essence with their purity of emotion. Donne also draws a parallel between the ‘dull sublunary lovers’ who are dependent on physical proximity and fail to accept absences as necessary phenomenon, and the superior nature of love which is like gold beaten out to a gold leaf, more expanded when apart. The departure of the lover from the woman is like the movement of a pair of compasses: the woman is the fixed foot, the centre, whereas the man is the moving one. As the man moves farther, the centre turns more towards him, metaphorically suggesting the lovers’ united selves and the purity of their love.

In ‘A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning’ the woman is represented as the fixed foot or centre of the pair of compasses, which signifies that the woman has a fixed role to play in the domestic and the social sphere : “Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show / To move, but doth, if the’ other do.” The patriarchal society of Donne’s time, which was firmly set on traditional and hierarchical values of the family is reflected in many of Donne’s poems, although obliquely. Again, the man is the explorer here; “when the other far doth roam....”, whereas the woman is passive and her movement is directed by the man’s movement, without having any individual choice of her own: “It leans, and hearkens after it”. Images of colonialism appear again through the representation of the man in the poem as an explorer making voyages in the distant territories.

8.3.3 READING THE POEM “BATTER MY HEART”

The poem “Batter my Heart” by John Donne became famous for its unusual visualization of God as a ravisher as well as for its unusual figurative language that the poet used to

express his relationship with God. Victorian readers would have definitely found the poet's imagination to have gone too far for their standards.

The poem gives the stimulus of a violent meditation to God and the total surrender of a god Christian to the will of God. Though the language used in the poem is quite strong and highly figurative, yet it does not distract the reader from its main theme which is the poet's personal relationship with God and his experience of religious ecstasy.

In the very first stanza itself when the poet gives his first line "Batter y heart, three person'd God"- the poet draws attention to the violent physical nature of the relationship that God has with the poet. The term "three person'd God" here represents the Holy Trinity- Christ, the son of God, God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The poet demands that all three of them together launch an attack on his heart. His address to God continues as he builds further into the theme.

"Batter my heart, three-person'd God,

As yet but knock, breathe, shine and

Seek to mend;

That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow

me , and bend"

The poet creates an extended conceit where he desires that God enter the door of his soul and violently usurp him, the way an enemy usurps a town. He wants God to burn and blow his old self away so that he could be turned into something new-something that has bent to the will of God. He wants God to ride him so that his self can be overthrown. Yet, no matter how

much the poet may desire God, he has been betrothed to Satan- the enemy of God.

“Yet dearly I love you, and would be
lov’d fain,
But am betroth’d unto your enemy”

He extends this allusion to the relation of a man and his wife where the wife has involved herself with external affairs and has thereby become impure for her husband. To regain this purity again, the speaker has to be divorced and untied from God so that he could be built back again into something new.

The final lines take the poem to an extreme level with allusions too strong for his time. He compares the act of surrender to God with that of a woman being raped by a man, the word “ravish” used here clarifies this stand, though this ravishment only renews her chastity instead of defiling her.

Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Such allusions were too astounding if the poem “Batter my Heart” is taken as a religious poem. This kind of paradoxes and allusions show the hallmark of metaphysical poetry- a kind of poetry which has its chief objective in shocking its readers.

Critical Appreciation

Donne wrote some Petrarchan sonnets addressing religious themes from a perspective, which is entirely his own, which juxtaposed erotic images with spiritual preoccupations.

In most of the Holy Sonnets the speaker is shown to be torn between the desires of the flesh and the consciousness of proceeding towards the path of damnation. However, the speaker in Donne's Holy Sonnets keeps an unwavering faith in the power of God's forgiveness. It can be said that the Holy Sonnets, focused on the divine, shows a departure from the representation of the worldly experience of love and sensuality in the elegies and the songs.

The sonnet XIV, '*Batter My Heart, Three Personed God*' represents the conflict of a speaker who realizes his own sinful nature and is afraid of not being forgiven by God. The entire sonnet is an impassioned prayer to God to take hold of the speaker's soul and to repair or purify it. The speaker compares his soul to a territory conquered by the devil, which lawfully belongs to God. He urges God to make him free from the devil's clutches.

The religious poetry of Donne (Holy Sonnets) represents humanity in its vulnerability and sinfulness. The sinner addresses the saviour God and a contemplation of sin, death and judgement follows. In the secular poems Donne presented eternity of love as a challenger of mutability. In the religious poems death is challenged with the idea of one's being merged with God, of attaining spiritual salvation. The focal point of the religious poems is the complex intertwining of conflicting ideas of conscience and temptation, death and salvation etc. In "*Batter My Heart, Three personed God*" the speaker chronicles his complex psychological state of being inclined towards evil and of being torn with conscience. He wages God to renew him as a purer soul. There is a simile in the poem that compares the speaker to a conquered town or territory: "I like a usurped town." The vices of the instincts, the devil of temptation, are the

invader or conqueror here, whom the speaker fails to fight back as he is too vulnerable now. Yet he has the God's deputy within him, the ability to reason – a quality bestowed on the followers of spirituality: "Reason your viceroy in me." There is a series of images in the poem that signifies the speaker's spiritual bondage: the words 'captive', 'imprison' and the reference to marital bond in the words 'betrothed', 'divorce' are used to signify the bondage. The speaker is betrothed to the devil against his own will and he pleads with God to free him from those clutches. Like his amatory poetry, Donne's religious poetry is also replete with erotic imagery. In the final couplet of the sonnet 'Batter My Heart' the speaker urges God to 'enthrall' and 'ravish' him to liberate him from the devil's trap : "Except you enthrall me, never shall be free / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me." The entire poem is framed as an impassioned dialogue of a devout lover of God who is torn by conscience and reality of being trapped by the vices of the flesh.

LET US STOP AND THINK



The popularity of the emblem books in the seventeenth century England was a significant religious phenomenon. The emblem books represented some ethical or spiritual ideas through a motto, a symbolic picture as the illustration of the motto, and an exposition. It had great impact on the mind of the people who were interested in solving the enigmas associated spirituality. The metaphysical religious poetry can be termed as a parallel discourse in the field of religious aesthetic.

8.4 POETRY OF GEORGE HERBERT

The moral world of Herbert's poetry is never devoid of the awareness of the basic truths of humanity, because he represents it from the perspective not only of a devout follower of God, but of a sensitive poet. Whereas his contemporary metaphysical poets presented man both as lover of woman and worshipper of God, Herbert was clinging only the latter representation. Yet his poetry unravels a complex psychological world, traversed by varied emotions, from rebellion to resignation.

8.4.1 READING THE POEM "THE COLLAR"

Like many other religious poems, *The Collar* is centred on the theme of the rebellious attitude of a God's servant and his final acceptance of God's love. The speaker asserts that he is free from the subjection of God's power. The imprisonment that he suffers now, he feels, is his own creation. So he will free himself from the cage of God's overpowering presence. But when he is angry and is ready to execute his decision, God calls him and he replies, 'My Lord'. The poem does not present unquestioning obedience of God's servants. It rather presents the complex nature of spiritual service.

The collar is emblematic of one's loss of freedom and subjection to power and authority, because a collar is worn by horses and oxen to pull heavy loads. This symbol of servitude is employed by Herbert to present a vacillation in the human soul, between faith and doubt. The poem begins with the representation of an outburst of rebellious feelings borne by a faithful follower of God, which consequently leads to several questionings on the nature of spirituality. There is a movement within the poem, from rebellion against unquestioned

subjugation to the realization of the necessity of attaining God's love. The freedom attained at the cost of the loss of God's love will be a fruitless one. The final words of the poem suggest a resolution of the tension seen in the beginning and a humble resignation: "Me thoughts I heard one calling, child! / And I replied, My Lord." The poem 'Affliction' Also chronicles the same psychological state of the speaker, oscillating between resignation and pain born out of the sense of being a subject to servitude and bondage : "At first thou gav'st me milk and sweetness ; / ... But with my years, sorrow did twist and grow...." Herbert drew his imagery from the daily world: the objects of the material world served the purpose of communicating serious religious thoughts. The image of the collar is suitably applied in this poem to convey a subtle idea, which reflects the typical metaphysical juxtaposition of the trivial and the sublime.

Critical Appreciation

One of Herbert's most loved poems, "*The Collar*" stands for the anguish and acceptance of a devotee of God. The 'collar' here may be assumed to be like the collar of a dog- a sign of being owned, an act of subservience and restriction. From the beginning itself, the poem has a tone of deep agony where the speaker wishes to be free of the 'collar', he wants to be free from the will and authority of God.

"I struck the board, and cry'd,

No more."

No more the speaker desired to be led by God, he wanted his "lines and life" to be free. As a priest himself, Herbert had to face tighter restrictions than others. He had

expressed his desire to lead an uneventful life where not much would be expected of him and he could be away from scrutiny. He plans an escape abroad, probably to some distant land. He knew he was free to travel to any place he wanted- both physically and psychologically. He was not tied by any visible ropes but he felt something always held him back. The poem, sprawling in its philosophical significance, raises the question on liberty. If a person as free as the speaker does not feel free then who else can be free in this world and even if one attains full liberty, the question still remains- is such a liberty worth its price?

He believes he would be

“Loose as the winde , as large as store

Shall I be still in suit?”

The speaker questions if his suit- the garments of the church which defines his religious identity still be applicable and effects his movements and thoughts? He identifies himself with the faith that had affected him so deeply and at the felt tied by its responsibilities.

“Have I no harvest but a thorn”

The poet relates his experiences to the suffering of Christ who had to wear a crown of thorns at the hands of his tormentors. This shows the extent of which his faith has shaped his identity. He accepts that there was corn which was drowned by his tears, he did have wine which too was dried up by his sighs. By drawing references to crops and cultivation which bore no harvest, he desires to know if the time consumed was a loss to him. Sometimes he felt that as a young man he should have won physical victories in the world of men and wear the

flowers and garlands reserved for the victors. He raises this concern to voice the confusion felt by many who entered into a life of complete devotion to God, may often may go through a period of hopelessness and waste. The speaker hears his inner voice which urges him to recover his life from his sighs and reap double the pleasure that he may be enjoying at the moment. The voice asks him to forsake his self created prison and break free from the clutch of his unholy thoughts.

The speaker urges his readers/listeners not to shut their eyes to the glory of God and no matter how troublesome such a devoted life may be and how much they may be affected by their thoughts of escape. The speaker keeps on raving about his lack of freedom till he hears the voice calling “Child” and immediately came his reply “My Lord”. The speaker like a child had been raving about his father while the father all this time watched the son struggle at his chains. The relationship between the devotee and God, as expressed by the speaker in the poem, is like that of the father and son where no matter how much the odds, the father always came for the rescue of the child.

8.4.2 READING THE POEM “THE PULLEY”

‘The Pulley’ establishes the point that God has endowed human beings with all benevolence, but He has not blessed humanity with rest. The divine intention behind the absence of this blessing is that man must be in a constant state of struggle. Otherwise man would turn to self-worship, which is completely a perverse state of being. If man is not encountered with weariness, there will be no space for God’s worship.

This poem focuses on the significance of God’s creation of man as an ever struggling being. God has endured man with

all blessings – strength, beauty and wisdom, but the endowment of rest is missing in God’s benevolence towards man. The implicit reason or the divine purpose behind that is perhaps to make man restless so that he does not turn to worship himself. God’s intention is to make man turn to divinity in a constant state of struggle and weariness. The entire state of making man constantly turn to God in times of distress is compared to a pulley, a mechanism used for lifting heavy objects through a rope. ‘The Pulley’ like many other religious poems by Herbert shows the truth that man’s devotion to spiritual vocation is often subject to a possibility of fluctuation, but often resolves into humble resignation. Herbert attributes this essential situation to God’s pull, a religious motif to be found in many of the metaphysical poems, including Donne’s sonnet ‘Thou Hast Made me’ : “Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art, / And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.”

8.5 SUMMING UP

The seven poems discussed above reveal the different facet of Metaphysical Poetry. While Marvell celebrates the love of the world in his poems, we have John Donne who has argumentative style infuses a fresh energy into our study of poetry. Herbert in his poem “The Pulley” seeks to understand the divine intervention in the human condition. All the three poets show the variety that Metaphysical Poetry can accommodate within itself.



8.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss John Donne as a Metaphysical poetry with illustrations from the poems discussed above.
2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem “Sunne Rising”

3. Discuss the Renaissance elements in the poetry of Andrew Marvell.
4. Discuss “To His Coy Mistress” as ‘carpe diem’ poem.
5. How does Marvell use the metaphor of ‘Garden’ in the poem “The Garden”? Attempt a brief appreciation of the poem from the point of view of eco-criticism.
6. Discuss the metaphysical elements in the poetry of George Herbert.



8.7 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

UNIT 9: STYLE AND STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Learning Objectives
- 9.2 Style and Structure of Metaphysical Poetry
- 9.3 Use of Wit and Conceit in Metaphysical Poetry
- 9.4 Summing Up
- 9.5 Assessment Questions
- 9.6 References and Recommended Reading

9.0 INTRODUCTION

There was a deliberate and conscious departure from the smoothness of the conventional sixteenth century verse in Metaphysical Poetry, particularly visible in their use of conceits. Johnson defined metaphysical wit, the crux of metaphysical conceit, as- ‘discordia concors’, where there was a combination of dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Johnson commented: “The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions....” The metaphysical conceit is essentially associated with ‘wit’ which refers to something more than mere humorous and rather signifies an intellectual complexity. Helen Gardner, a seminal critic and authority on Metaphysical Poetry, commented: “A conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness, or at least, is more immediately

striking. All comparisons discover likeness in things unlike: a comparison becomes a conceit when we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness” (Gardner, 1961). Although most of the critics tend to focus on the quality of far-fetchedness of the comparisons in metaphysical conceit, it is more important to contemplate on the areas of ideas and experiences from which they are drawn. The metaphysical poets used their vast range of knowledge in the areas of contemporary scientific innovations and reasoning. They were engaged with the issues of man’s position in the universe, time and eternity. The conceits served as the vehicles for representing their emotional and intellectual engagements with diverse issues and ideas. In one place they dealt with sensuality and pleasure of the body, on the other they focused on religious themes and spiritual experiences.

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To introduce to the learners the style and structure of Metaphysical Poetry.
- To enable the learners to understand the use of wit in and conceit in Metaphysical Poetry
- Metrical style followed by the major metaphysical poets

9.2 STYLE AND STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Metaphysical poets were men of learning and tended to express their vast learning in their poetry. They often indulged in dissection of emotions rather than the smooth presentation of human feelings in their poetry. Their poetry was intelligent and

comprised of intellectual references. The simple images and expressions used by Elizabethan writers were extended in hyperbolic measures in Metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poets also infused their poetry with great passions. Donne's poem "Sunne Rising" and Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress" are best examples of their passionate poetry.

The Elizabethan poets wrote in a very lyrical style. However, during the last phase of the Elizabethan Age, much of the poetry produced were infused with artificial sensuality and passion. Metaphysical poets, on the other hand, did not pay much attention to melody or rhythm. Their poetry is of coarse and rugged in nature. Donne's "*Sunne Rising*" is a classic example of this kind. Donne discarded melody and his other Metaphysical poets followed him in this unique aspect.

Metaphysical poetry reflects tremendous energy in presenting their logic which makes this genre of poetry unique in itself. The combination of the energy of mind and emotion in all four poets is highly capable of the drama demanded by nature the of the metaphysicals and equally capable to extract the required energetic response in the reader. It is seen in Donne and Herbert in particular, the poetry bursting forth with a vitality which provokes the reader's emotion:

*But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.*

(Marvell: *To His Coy Mistress*)

Metaphysical poetry is usually marked by an ABRUPT OPENING which is very essential to achieve the logical note through a little bit of drama. In the poem "Sunne Rising" the poet begins directly with the exclamation against the sun "Busy

old fool, unruly sun,” and the poem “Batter My Heart” also begins on a similar note.

You may notice the beginning of Herbert’s *The Collar* to understand the impact of such an abrupt note on the readers

*I struck the board, and cried, "No more;
I will abroad!
What? shall I ever sigh and pine?*

Such abrupt, aggressive openings are used by Metaphysical poets to grab the attention of the reader. They serve the purpose taking the readers by surprise and every time denotes a note of freshness to the poems. It is one of the most innovative ways to avoid monotony for the readers of poetry.

In contrast to many of his predecessors, Donne uses a direct and often **Colloquial Diction**, a language of conversation. This simplicity of language is especially marked in the later poets, George Herbert and Henry Vaughan and amply used to achieve the complaining but submissive religious poetry. Diction combines with a strongly controlled rhythm which is closely tied to the meaning: if the result sounds harsh or gentle, it is because the poet deliberately chooses to make his words move in time to their meaning.

See the conversational tone of the following lines from John Donne’s *The Canonization*

*For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your mind with arts
improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honor, or his grace,*

*Or the king's real, or his stampèd face
Contemplate; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.*

This conversational style also leads to denote the quality of a *dramatic monologue* in the poems of the metaphysicals. A dramatic monologue is a poem written in the form of a speech of a character or narrator where the presence of the imagined other person is evident. Often such narration throws light on the psychological insight into his character. In the above extract apart from the speaker, the presence of the listener is clearly evident to whom the speaker chides for being unnecessarily interfering between him and his love. You may have noticed till now that various stylistic techniques in metaphysical poetry are not isolated from one another, rather they support each other to achieve the highest dramatic effect.

Metaphysical poetry is highly **Logical In Nature** and in most cases tries to prove a particular point through arguments and syllogisms. No matter how important or abstract the idea may be, Metaphysical poets are hell bent on proving their point in their poem. The arguments or logic put forward may be weak or strong but the attempt is continuous. See the following example from Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*

*Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. **I would**
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse*

Till the conversion of the Jews.

You may have surely noticed the exaggeration of logic in the last four lines given by the speaker in support of his desire to love at that moment as against the continuous refusal of the lady to do so.

Metaphysical poetry is particularly praised for its **Concise and Epigrammatic** style. Phrases are selectively used and the language is kept in its natural stage. However, it is the thought that constitutes complexity in the treatment. Donne and his fellow poets tried to represent human emotions in a realistic and passionate way by using logical syllogisms or paradoxes and concepts taken from varied fields of contemporary subjects. Donne uses the example of movement of the planets and earthquakes to explain the difference between real love and mere physical attraction, in his poem “*Valediction: Forbidding Mourning.*”

*Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.*

All experiences inform one another, and the bringing together of diverse experiences is the essence of Metaphysical WIT. At the same time, it is founded on logic and analogy, the working out of an exact parallelism or a logical progression (as in the 'if . . .but ...therefore' of the 'Coy Mistress').

Please refer to the text to understand the above example

Had we but world enough and time, (1)

.....

if you please, refuse..... (9)

.....

But at my back I always hear (21)

.....

Now therefore, while the youthful hue (33)

.....

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run. (the couplet)

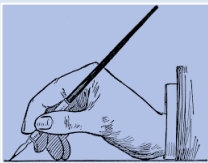
Logic informs, for instance, the analysis of the body/spirit relationship in 'The Flea', an exaggeration or may indeed be fallacious, as in the 'Coy Mistress'

"I would

Love you ten years before the flood,

And you should, if you please, refuse

Till the conversion of the Jews" or the conclusion, more light-heartedly, that 'nothing else is' apart from the lovers, in 'The Sunne Rising', but the dialectic method in which Donne and his contemporaries were educated flowed into the imagination of their writing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Give one example of 'abrupt opening' from one of your prescribed poems.

2. Give an example of 'exact parallelism or a logical progression' in metaphysical poetry as discussed above.

3. Is Donne's *Sunne Rising* a dramatic monologue?

STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

The language, used by Metaphysical poets is highly evocative and infused with multi-dimensional meaning. It demands intellectual ability and sensitivity on the part of the reader also to grasp the meaning and essence of a poem. Because of a unique combination of intellect and emotion, form or structure play a pivotal role in metaphysical poetry.

John Donne invested a great deal of time and effort in constructing the logical sequence of the poem. Each of his poems is a personal drama and each may be analysed in its prose form. He also had unique stanzas and structures for each of his poem. Because they are argumentative, logical in approach, the sentence or stanza formation can be seen bearing that. Ample use of exclamatory sentences, broken line structure, question mark etc. are uniquely and meaningfully used in the poems. Every poem expresses a separate idea and the stanza style was

adapted according to the meaning it wants to express. The structure arose out of the meaning and the logical sequence of the poem and not vice-versa. Unlike Elizabethan poetry where most of the sonnets could be boiled down to the theme of the ravages of time on love and beauty or the power of art over time, metaphysical poets infused each of their poems with unique subject matter. Each one of Donne's poems deals with a particular argument, a point that he wants to prove. Unlike Herbert, who was quite abstract, Donne's poems were often pictorial and rich in visual imagery. His poem "Sunne Rising" and "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", both are heavy in pictorial imagery from different fields of knowledge.

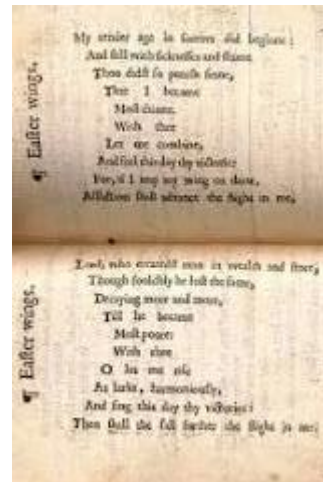
Donne's poem "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" follows a very logical structure where he places a proposition and supports it with different analogies. In the poem, in the first and the second stanza he seeks to place the argument about the separation of lovers and the pain which it causes. To support his argument he places other examples of similar cases of separations and he continues providing further analogies to support his previous proposition. This is Donne's favourite style of writing poetry. The reader often becomes so engrossed with the drama in the poem that the ultimate proposition may escape him. He brings physics, chemistry, geology and geometry all together to prove his point.

The poetry of George Herbert is often termed as PATTERN OR SHAPE POEMS where the structure of the poem is very carefully chosen to fit with the inner meaning of the poem. His poems typographically resemble the subject matter carrying hieroglyphic meaning. Poems like 'Easter Wing', 'The Altar' exactly take the shape of a lark's wing during flight or the shape of an altar accordingly. Though these poems are not prescribed

for your reading, you should refer to the poems for better understanding of what pattern poem is. You may notice the rise and fall of the wing in the shape of the structure of the poem

Easter Wings

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.



(Original text of the poem)

We find the poet trying to establish through a syllogistic structure the nature of God and his attitude towards his creations, more precisely to man. Many of the poems of Herbert display his complaint against god. The Collar and The Pulley belong to that category. There we can notice succession of words to reflect the flowing or unstoppable emotion of the poet. See the following example

So strength first made a way; Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure Here the words or images structured in a way to maintain the anxiety or restlessness within the soul.

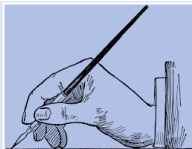
LET US STOP AND THINK



Hieroglyph/ic

Hieroglyph is a figure, device or sign having some hidden meaning; a secret or enigmatical symbol, an emblem. In the Greek language hieroglyphic stands for 'sacred carving'. In English also it has religious connotations. Apart from Herbert, in his age poets like Wither, Quarles, Benlowes, Joseph Beaumont, Robert Herrick, Christopher Harvey and also Traherne practiced hieroglyphic style. However, after the publication of Herbert's anthology *The Temple* pattern or hieroglyphic poems appeared in great abundance.

Herbert's argument may not be aggressive or dramatic like that of Donne but the structure is same as far as the logical propositions are concerned. At certain moments, the poet is so engrossed in his arguments that metaphysical poets are often blamed for being obscure. Perhaps the readers are not interested in being able to understand or exhaust the meaning of the poem and hence Metaphysical poets have enjoyed the limelight since long.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is a 'Pattern poem'?

2. Give two example of hieroglyphic poems George Herbert

9.3 USE OF WIT AND CONCEIT IN METAPHYSICAL POETRY

The poetry of the Metaphysical Poets reveals their use of wit and conceit. Wit is the use of ordinary words in an extraordinary ingenious way to bring attention to an otherwise overlooked subject. Wit may be the result of the use of pun or paradox. Conceit may be considered a further extension of the use of wit.

The conceit is a metaphor applied to compare two apparently unrelated concepts or objects. The term is derived from the Italian *conchetto*, which means “conception,” “notion,” “idea,” or “fancy.” A conceit may be very extensive extended throughout a poem, as may find in poetry of old and medieval period. It may also be focused, offering readers paradox as well as allusion and symbolism, a technique most popular in modern poetry.

The idea of the use of conceit was transformed by metaphysical poets, particularly by John Donne, to avoid the Petrarchan model of easy predictability in poetry. The metaphysical conceit was designed to undermine expectations of

the reader by developing unusual analogies. Donne's well-known compass reference in "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" and his comparison of the emotional effect of God to that of physical ravishment in "Batter My Heart" are strong examples of alteration of metaphysical conceits.

In the poem "Sunne Rising" Donne uses several conceits. He uses the conceit of the world to show the relationship between the lovers and the external world. The lovers become the whole world, a conceit here combining the large with small, sublime with the ordinary: "all here in one bed lay./She is all states, and all Princes, I,/Nothing else is." They become the logos of the universe, marginalizing everything that belongs to the external world. Another one of his most famous conceit is the use of the image of the two ends of a compass to represent the lovers in a relationship.

Even in the poem "The Pulley" George Herbert brings together two very dissimilar ideas – the idea of God giving his blessings to human beings and that of a container where water is being poured.

*Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let us," said he, "pour on him all we can.
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span."*

A much simple poem, yet its use of ideas to images is quite metaphysical in nature. Even the entire concept of the poem, that is God withdrawing benefits from human beings is compressed in the title 'Pulley' a structure used to lift heavy burdens.

In Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress", he uses metaphysical conceits almost in every stanza. He uses hyperboles of time and space to explain his love for his mistress. He compares the woman's chastity to a corpse that would be

eaten by worms. Such comparisons evoked the interest of the reader. See Donne's use of hyperbolic image in the following stanza

What merchant's ships have my sighs drowned?

Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?

Metaphysical poets borrowed concepts for their conceit from all over the universe. They borrowed concepts from astronomy, physics, chemistry, geometry and what not. You may refer to phrases like 'vegetable love' 'trepidation of the spheres', 'twin compasses', 'king's real, or his stampèd face' etc. to understand the vast knowledge of the metaphysicals and intelligent conversion of them to conceits. But the metaphysicals are frequently accused of using conceits that are too far-fetched and confusing to the simple readers.

While to its admirers, the metaphysical style seems to have peculiar merits, its detractors have attacked these poets mainly for two reasons. First, it is objected that such a style soon degenerates into the pursuit of logical ingenuity for its own sake.

The second allegation is that the metaphysical style is needlessly obscure, where according to them the intellectual imagery fails to communicate the poet's emotion. The metaphysical poets demand a continual breakdown of mental habits – experiences which have been kept apart in the mind are suddenly yoked together.

Samuel Johnson himself was much critical about Donne's style of poetry. Yet he admired the ability of John Donne in finding similarity in dissimilar things, which he called the unification of sensibility. Even Dryden had said of John Donne "If we are not so great wits as Donne, we are certainly better poets." Though the comment speaks adversely about Donne's

status as a poet, the admiration of Donne's use of wit cannot be overlooked.

Sir Philip Sidney wrote in his seminal "Defense of Poesy" (1595) that "the poet's talents stem from the fact that he is able to create from a pre-existing idea called the fore-conceit. Poetry is the link between the real and the ideal." He continued, "the poet . . . does not learn a conceit out of a matter, but makes matter for a conceit." The metaphysical poetry can also be defended in the same line of Sidney that metaphysical poets did not learn conceit out of a matter, rather made matter for a conceit. Donne and the metaphysical poets place themselves in the same line of great poets like Blake or modern poets like Yeats or by their use of extremely personal or private symbolism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is a metaphysical conceit?

2. 'The metaphysicals borrowed concepts from different fields of knowledge' ... Give few examples

3. Give one example of 'wit' used by any of the metaphysical poet

9.4 SUMMING UP

The Metaphysical poets introduced a unique style to poetry. Though termed as obscure and far-fetched, even the most abstract of its poems have produced interest through its dramatic structure. The Metaphysical poets possessed a unique kind of sensibility that could encompass any kind of experience in all sorts of diversities. Their poetic structure had a beauty and logic which blended with the meaning of the poem. In fact, the structure and the meaning of the poem were inseparable.



9.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the use of wit and conceit in the poetry of John Donne.

2. Bring out the major characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry with respect to the poetry of John Donne and Andrew Marvell with illustrations from the poems prescribed in your syllabus.
3. How does Metaphysical poetry differ from traditional Elizabethan poetry? Explain with reference to the poems prescribed in your syllabus.
4. Compare and contrast the style and structure of poetry John Donne and George Herbert.



9.5 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

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JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

MODULE IV: CAVALIER POETS

UNIT 10: CAVALIER POETRY AND POETS

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Learning Objectives
- 10.2 Historical background
- 10.3 Characteristics of Cavalier Poetry
- 10.4 Critical Reception
- 10.5 Summing Up
- 10.6 Assessment Questions
- 10.7 References and Recommended Readings

10.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the nature and content of the work of Cavalier poets, it is important to understand the period in which they were writing and the genre of their poetry as a whole. As such this section will deal with the Cavalier poetry as a genre.

Cavalier poetry came into being the 17th century in England with the emergence of a group of poets who wrote poetry to promote the crown and supported the monarchy during the English Civil War. Thomas Carew (1594-1640), John Suckling (1609-1642), Robert Herrick (1591-1674), and Richard Lovelace (1618-1657) are called the chief Cavalier poets. The critic Thomas Clayton was of the view that Cavalier literature is comprised of the poetry of these four poets and the nature of their poetry is what sums up Cavalier poetry. The Cavalier poets took the mundane little things from day to day life and presented them in a celebratory way.

They presented themselves as well-bred cultured gentlemen and believed in living for the moment. The Cavalier poets were also known as the “Sons of Ben” or the “Tribe of Ben” because of the influence on them of Ben Jonson. The Cavalier poets being inspired from Jonson, derived from him the clarity of expression and clearness of thought and style. Being a classicist, Ben Jonson practiced qualities of felicity and lucidness in his writing and he passed this on to the Cavalier poets too. The Cavaliers were politically inclined towards the Royalist cause and supported King Charles I. Thomas Carew, John Suckling and Richard Lovelace even fought in the war on the King’s side. But Robert Herrick was a clergyman and was not directly involved in the war although the style of his poetry classified him as a Cavalier.

The term Cavalier denotes a mounted soldier but when it was used to denote those poets who supported the King than it was used to mean boisterous spirited gallants and was meant to ridicule the poets but it became the term to denote those poets who supported the King. Just as the term roundheads was a name given to the Parliamentarians because they wore their hair short and kept their hair cropped round their head as opposed to the courtly men who wore long ringlets, so also the term Cavalier was a name given to the supporters of the King. Both these terms were meant to insult or be little. The term was used to present the Cavalier men as immoral who lived for only personal gain. But the Cavaliers redefined the term to suit their own purpose. They tried to present themselves as well-bred cultured men who supported the King out of loyalty. They believed in the ideal of the divine rights of kings and believed the king to be the messenger of God. They supported the King rather than supporting the King for what he was personally they supported him for being King because of their loyalty to the

monarchy and their devotion to God. They believed that going against the King is like going against God

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to study Cavalier poetry and poets. In order to understand the nature and content of their work, this unit will:

- Acquaint the learners with a broad overview of the social and cultural background of the age which shaped the writings of Cavalier poets
- Familiarize the learners with the different poets of this school of poetry
- Acquaint the learners with the general characteristics of this school of poetry

10.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The English Civil War began started in 1642 and continued until about 1651. The war took place because of the manner of the governance by the monarchy. The war ended with the Parliament being successful in capturing King Charles I. The King was then tried for treason which led him to be publically beheaded in 1649. It was only in 1660, when King Charles I's eldest son King Charles II returned to England after the death of General Oliver Cromwell, that monarchy was restored in England. During the war England was divided into two divisions – the Royalists, among who were the Cavaliers, in the North-west of the nation and the Parliamentary section in the South-east comprising of the Roundheads. The Parliamentarians opposed King Charles I because of his rule of absolute monarchy and the “divine right of Kings”. The Roundheads were in support of the Parliament and the British Commonwealth, which was led by Oliver Cromwell, as opposed to

the King. Whereas, the Cavaliers were in support of the King and opposed the Parliament. The Cavaliers supported not only the King but also his ideals and way of governance. The King practiced proper moderation, fulfilment of duty and was sensible and practiced elegance. These were not classical ideals and were rather ideals of the King and the court. So the Cavalier poets used ancient classical resources to promote these new ideals of the court. By doing so they were able to put their classical learning to use while also expressing their own ideas.

King Charles was a lover of arts and demanded that artists should create the kind of art he wanted to see. The King supported all artists who made art that suited his taste in the form of patronage and sponsorships. The Cavalier poets were a group of poets who catered to the artistic demands of the King and through their poetry satisfied the artistic cravings of the King. During the reign of King Charles, the court of England saw the most vibrant and artful court culture. After winning over Spain and France, the King saw a period which was politically stable and this gave to him the luxury to attend to his artistic cravings. The Royal treasury also recovered from the bankruptcy it faced in the late 1620s. This led to the King being able to attend to his artistic needs comfortably even financially. He was more of an aesthete rather than an intellectual and he had varied interests. So it was during his time that England saw its most vibrant court culture which centered on the artistic needs of the King and the royal couple.

LET US STOP AND THINK



Divine Right of Kings: It is a doctrine which states that a Sovereign is not conditional upon any worldly power and obtains his or her power to exercise authority from God's own will.

Roundheads: They were the defenders of the Parliament of England when English Civil War (1641-1652) was going on. They were against King Charles I and also the supported Charles I and believed in the divine right of kings.

10.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF CAVALIER POETRY

Although the Cavaliers wrote poetry in favour of the Loyalist principles, supporting the King but their poetry had a wide range of themes like religion, art, philosophy and expressed much more than just support to the King. Some examples of these are ‘To Celia’ and ‘Ballad upon a Wedding’. The subject matter of the poetry of the Cavalier poets was different from the traditional poetry. This is where they differed from traditional poetry. Instead of dwelling on the traditional subject matters like philosophy, art and religion and dealing with those in the traditional way, they focused on the simple joys of things to be celebrated. It is because of this that their work appeared fresh and new. It appeared to be livelier and made a better impact than the traditional poetry.

Most cavalier poetry represented Classical knowledge and learning and usually made classical references drawing on the works of classicists like Horace and Ovid. Using these subject matter and such classical resources as their base, they wrote poetry to meet the demands of the King, impress him and win his favour. Both pleasure and virtue found place in their poetry.

Most of the poems celebrated such virtues as love, beauty, honour, nature among others. Although these virtues and qualities are commonly dealt with in poetry but in cavalier poetry these virtues were presented in a unique way. There was a sensuality to be seen in the poetry.

One main attribute of their poetry was that it embodied an attitude which advocated living for the moment and making the most out of it. Their poetry promoted the attitude of seizing the opportunities presented and making the most out of those. A 'Carpe diem' poem carries the overall message of 'seize the day' which is to make most out of the present moment. This aspect of carpe diem poetry can also be seen in Cavalier poetry. The line "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may" from Robert Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" shows this attitude of carpe diem. They promoted revelling in the moment.

They had a slightly hedonistic view of life where they wanted to revel in the moment and in the society and achieve the most that they could in life with whatever they had. This attitude to revel in luxury often pointed to pleasure activities like drinking, making merry and other materialistic activities. A boisterous attitude could be seen in their poetry.

Along with these boisterous themes, Cavalier poetry also had platonic love, love for nature and upholding of honour as themes. In some poems, the women were made the subject of pure, selfless, divine love where the speaker would be seen almost worshipping his object of affection and she would be put in a high pedestal and her qualities would be admired and praised.

There were also use of vivid metaphors and elaborate fantasies in their poems. Although most of the Cavalier poets were courtiers but some like Robert Herrick were not but they were considered Cavaliers because of their nature of poetry.

The Cavalier poets began writing during the rise of the English Civil War supporting their King with their poetry and it became a genre of poetry called the Cavalier poetry. But some poets who are considered as Cavalier poets like Thomas Carew and Sir

John Suckling died much before the war started but they are still called Cavaliers because of the political nature of their work. The Cavalier poets who wrote in support of the King became even more specifically oriented at writing for the upholding of the Royalist cause once the Parliament's rebellion against the monarchy grew stronger. The Cavalier poets had a nostalgic tone in their work because they supported the monarchy and its ideals and principles which were under scanner and attack.

10.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION

The light subject matter of Cavalier poetry did not get a good reception from critics who preferred serious subject matters. Alexander Pope was of the view that the Cavaliers were poets who could write with ease but modern critics viewed this writing with ease as lack of critical observation or examination. In *Imitations of Horace* (Epistle I, Book II, line 108), he calls them "The mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease". Manfred Weidhorn in *Richard Lovelace* (1970) states that even if there is not much critical respect for Richard Lovelace's work but some of his poems are very effective and can leave a reader moved and amused. Lynn Sadler in *Thomas Carew* (1979) comments on Thomas Carew's works in and says that his best poetry was when he took elements of his poetry from his fellow Cavaliers or from people like John Donne and Ben Jonson and mixes them up to make it his own. Some critics are also of the view that John Suckling's love poems shows that he is both complying to and subverting the tradition of the courtly love and that Cavalier poetry is more complex than it is taken to be and needs to be re assessed critically and that they are unconventional in their own way. Geoffrey D. Aggeler in *The rebellion in Cavalier drama* (1978) is of the view that the Cavaliers kept on writing plays

during the period when the theatres were closed down from 1642 to 1660. These plays were written and performed in a private way for a smaller audience. He says that their plays that came out in this period have lots of religious and political references. Michael H. Markel was also of the view that Cavalier poetry's themes were more complex than they seem to be and that they need to be critically examined.

In his work '*Perception and expression in Marvell's Cavalier poetry*', he also studied and tried to find out the Cavalier poetry's themes in Andrew Marvel's poems which was present in his poems but was laced with scepticism. Marjorie Swan and Joseph Scodel studied the way women were treated in the poems of the Cavalier poets. Swan states in 'Cavalier Love: Fetishism and Its's Discontents' that in Robert Herrick's poems women is usually objectified and then these images are broken down into images of body parts and sometimes images of objects, such as women's accessories or clothing are used as substitution for images of intimacy. Scodel explains in 'The pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry' that the Cavalier's image of the ideal women would be that of a woman whose bearing would be titillating, someone who would not totally satiate her lover but also not let her lover be dissatisfied.

Modern critics have admired Johnson and considered him as a forerunner in the movement of classicism. He is admired for his blend of the serious and the comic and his vivid depiction of the people of his age. Modern critical studies have focused on John Suckling's poems, his essays, dramatic works and short stories. Modern critics admire Suckling as an important poet among the Cavaliers because of his influence seen on later poets. Modern critics are mostly of the view that unlike his fellow Cavalier poets, Suckling's poems are futuristic and looks forward to the future.

Some critics are of the view that Suckling's poems have a deeper meaning beyond the apparent wittiness and cynicism. Modern critics admire him more as a poet than a playwright. They are also of the view that modern readers cannot connect well to his plays as they feel that they are complex and difficult to follow. During his time Andrew Marvell was more admired as an able politician rather than a poet of high calibre. Although his poetry was admired, it was considered to be of secondary importance to his political career. But it is only in the twentieth century that modern critics have focused on the ambiguities in his poems rather than just letting them be as simple and easy. There is an underlying central ambiguity in his poems that deals with the tension of duality of opposites. This is seen mostly in the duality of the soul and the body and the worldly and the spiritual. These dualities give his poems a moral edge because they usually show the human situation of having to choose from opposites.

10.5 SUMMING UP

In this unit we learnt about the nature and background of Cavalier poetry and also the poets we have seen how Cavalier poetry emerged in the 17th century in England with the emergence of the school of poets who wrote poetry to promote the crown and supported the monarchy during the English Civil War. The Cavalier poets took the mundane little things from day to day life and presented them in a celebratory way. They presented themselves as well-bred cultured gentlemen and believed in living for the moment. Both pleasure and virtue found place in their poetry. Most of the poems celebrated such virtues as love, beauty, honour, nature among others. Although these virtues and qualities are commonly dealt with in poetry but in cavalier poetry these virtues were

presented in a unique way. There was a sensuality to be seen in the poetry. One main attribute of their poetry was that it embodied an attitude which advocated living for the moment and making the most out of it. Their poetry promoted the attitude of seizing the opportunities presented and making the most out of those.



10.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How did Cavalier poetry differ from Metaphysical poetry?
2. Discuss the nature and style of Cavalier Poetry.
3. Why did the English Civil War take place?
4. Why did the Roundheads come to be known by this name?
5. What does the term Cavalier denote?



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JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

UNIT 11: BEN JONSON: “TO CELIA”, “TO PENSHURST”

JOHN SUCKLING: “BALLAD UPON A WEDDING”

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Life and Works: Ben Jonson

11.2.1 Reading the poem ‘To Celia’

11.2.2 Reading the poem ‘To Penshurst’

11.3 Life and works: John Suckling

11.3.1 Reading the poem ‘A Ballad Upon a Wedding’

11.4 Life and works of Richard Lovelace

11.5 Reading the poem ‘*To Lucasta, Going to the Wars*’

11.5.1 Theme of the poem

11.6 Reading the poem ‘*To Althea, From Prison*’

11.6.1 Theme of the poem

11.7 Summing Up

11.8 Assessment Questions

11.9 References and Recommended Readings

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Cavalier poetry came into being the 17th century in England with the emergence of a group of poets who wrote poetry to promote the crown and supported the monarchy during the English Civil War. The Cavalier poets were also known as the “Sons of Ben” or the “Tribe of Ben” because of the influence on them of Ben Jonson. The Cavalier poets being inspired from Jonson, derived from him the clarity of expression and clearness of thought and style. Being a classicist, Ben Jonson practiced qualities of felicity and lucidness in his writing and he passed this on to the Cavalier poets too. Thomas Carew, John Suckling and Richard Lovelace even fought in the war on the King’s side. In this unit we are going to learn about two of the most influential Cavalier poets, Ben Jonson and John Suckling.

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to study select works of the Cavalier poet Ben Jonson and John Suckling. In order to understand the nature and content of his work, this unit will:

- Familiarize the learners with the poems thematically and structurally
- Enable the learners to read critically the select poems
- Help the learners to grasp the major thematic and stylistic features of the poems

11.2 LIFE AND WORKS: BEN JONSON

Ben Jonson was an influential English dramatist, lyric poet and also a literary critic during the reign of King James I and was

considered the most influential dramatist after William Shakespeare. He was born in London on June 11, 1572.

He received his early education at Westminster School and was instructed by the classical scholar William Camden. After a short while he was taken out of the school and was made to work as a bricklayer which was his step father's profession. Not being pleased with the job he joined the army. After serving in the army for a short while at Flanders, he returned to England and established himself as an influential actor and playwright. Jonson started his career as an actor and playwright when he joined the theatrical company of Philip Henslowe in London on or before 1597.

Jonson's play, *Every Man in His Humour*, was performed in 1598 and it is believed that it had William Shakespeare in the cast. The play was set on the "comedy of humours". The actions of the characters in the play are based on whims and fake behaviour to impress others. After this play Jonson wrote *Every Man out of His Humour* in 1599 which was less successful. This was followed closely by *Cynthia's Revels* in 1601. These plays were basically satirical comedies and they are representative of his classical learning. *The Poetaster* came out in 1601 and in this play, he satirized the other English dramatists including Thomas Dekker and John Marston. Jonson's next play was the classical tragedy *Sejanus, His Fall* that came out in 1603 and was based on Roman history and here he presented his views on dictatorship.

During this period Jonson started writing masques too. When King James I ascended the throne, Jonson along with other poets welcomed the King. The King being a lover of art and entertainment, there was demand for masques and plays which Jonson fulfilled. The most successful of the masques that he wrote

were *Hymenaei* (1606), *Hue and Cry After Cupid* (1608), *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) and *The Masque of Queens* (1609).

These masques helped Jonson establish his position as one of the best masque writers in the Jacobean era. After this he was quite often called to function as a poet at the court. His masques contained some of his best lyric poetry and showed his versatility as a writer. His masques were, "... intended as entertainment for courts, but they were also meant glorify the court as ideal, orderly and virtuous"

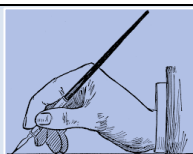
Jonson wrote his comedies between 1605 and 1614 and it helped in establishing his reputation as a playwright. Thomas N. Corns writes, "The comedies constitute unequivocal testimony that Jonson could indeed craft a play well, despite the untheatrical nature of his Roman excursions." The first comedy *Volpone, or The Fox* performed in 1605 was set in Venice and is considered his best comedy. It was directed at the rising merchant class in Jacobean England. The following plays, *Epicoene: or, The Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) were based on people who were easily deceived by others. In 1616 *Works* was published and it represents his own sense of his reputation as a writer. In the same year he was also assigned poet laureate and received royal sponsorship. The next play *The Devil is an Ass* came out in 1616 and was not very successful. The next play came out after nine years in 1625 and was called *The Staple of News*. The following plays after this *The New Inn* (1629) and *A Tale of a Tub* (1633) were not great successes too. His last play *Sad Shepherd's Tale*, was published after his death at 1641 and is unfinished. Jonson's plays were set in realistic settings and the characters were relatable. The qualities that the characters were shown to have were that of what all people experiences in daily

life. Sometimes he went so overboard with his characterization that his depiction bordered on the farcical.

Just like his drama, Jonson's poetry, was also representative of his classical learning. He was trained in the humanist manner in classics and this was evident in the way he used form and the style of his poetry. Many of his poems are translations based on Greek or Roman models. "...he knew what Roman historians to quote from and what phases of Roman life to refer to."

Jonson kept himself away from the debate about meter and rhyme and chose to use both rhyme and meter. By doing so he imitated the classical model of poetry based on qualities of clarity and simplicity. The first Jonson folio or *Works of Ben Jonson* appeared in 1616 contained different sections on plays, poems, masques, prose and his other works. The poetry section is divided into different sections like 'From Epigrams' and 'From Underwood'. Through these poems Jonson expressed his views through a wide range of attitudes and emotions. These were satiric take on various subjects including vents against women, fellow courtiers and others. The poems where he vents his complaints are short whereas the ones of praise are longer and are written for specific individuals. 'On my first Sonne' is from the Epigrams section. This poem is neither satirical or in praise of someone. It conveys his inner feelings and also marks the way for the genre of the "lyric poetry". It has some features of the sonnet so the spelling of the word son is as 'sonne'. His poems from 'The forest' are addressed to his aristocratic friends. His most famous and well known poems are the '*To Celia*' and '*To Penshurst*'. The section Underwood which was published in the 1640 folio contained a larger number of poems and of mixed nature. It has a sub section called 'A Celebration of Charis', and it is his most extended effort at love poetry; various religious pieces; encomiastic poems

including the poem to Shakespeare and a sonnet on Mary Wroth; the 'Execration against Vulcan' and others. The 1640 volume also contains three elegies which have often been ascribed to Donne. He was popular not only in the court and the public stage but he also gained favour from other aristocrats like Elizabeth Sidney and Lady Mary Wroth. It was this connection with the Sidney family that led him to write the poem 'To Penshurst'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How does the term 'Cavalier' come into existence?

2. Name the Masques written by Jonson.

11.2.1 Reading the poem 'To Celia'

'To Celia' is one of the most celebrated love poem of Ben Jonson. This lyrical love poem was published in Jonson's 1616's Folio under the section 'The Forest'. The poem is also known by

its celebrated first line 'Drink to me only with thine eyes'. The speaker in the poem is seen to be asking his beloved to drink to him with her eyes as that would be enough to quench his soul's thirst, which even the heavenly nectars cannot quench. As such the theme of the poem is spiritual love.

The poem opens with the speaker asking his lady love to show her love by gazing at him. In the form of a command, his plea is assertive and asks his beloved to drink to him with her eyes. For him this gesture would not only be an expression of her love but also a pledge. He makes this clear in the second line when he declares that he, with his own eyes, will return the pledge. A toast is usually made when one takes the first sip from a cup of wine so this reference to the cup that is commonly filled with wine becomes an apt metaphor for what he is seeking from his lady. The speaker wants his lady to make a pledge to him with her eyes by gazing upon him rather than while sipping wine from a cup as this pledge would be more close to her heart and so more valuable to him.

In the poem speaker is unsuccessfully trying to make his beloved share his feelings of love. In stanza two she returns the wreath of roses that was sent to her by the speaker so it is evident that she as yet does not love the speaker or she would have kept the roses. Thus the theme of this poem is unrequited love. The poem, with an inclusive "And" beginning the second and fourth lines, is indicative of the speaker's attempt to win her love. The tactics that are seen to be used by the speaker to try to win the lady's love is in accordance with the courtly love fashion of Jonson's day as poetic extravagance was a tactic used to express love and to win love.

In the poem, Jonson first compares her love to a drink that would quench a thirsty soul, and then her breath which can bring

back life or is life giving. The setting of the poem is not identified. It may be taking place at a social gathering where he cannot directly profess his love to her and he can only hope that the cups are raised for a toast, he hopes that she will raise a toast to him by gazing upon him to reveal her love. On the other hand, they may be standing near each other and the speaker is speaking directly. It may also be possible that they are at a public gathering and he is expressing his love to her by singing to her with an instrument following courtly fashion.

He just wants her to give him a sign that she loves him by drinking to him with her eyes and in return he will be encouraged to pledge his love and pursue her. If she expresses that she also loves him, he will promise his undying love in return. It is only her love which will act as the drink that quenches his desire that arises from his soul. He asks her to leave a kiss in the cup and he will not ask for wine. So he says that the thirst of his soul needs just her love to be quenched and that even divine nectar that would make him immortal would not be enough for him if he does not get her love back.

He sent her a wreath of roses as a token of his love for her. He also sent the roses to honour her beauty but says that the roses are not as beautiful as her but by staying beside her the roses will not wither away. On receiving the rose wreath, she did not accept it and returned it back. She kept it only long enough for her breath to fall on it and sent it straight back to the speaker as a sign of her rejection of his love. But he does not lose hope and says that although she returned the wreath and did not accept his love but the roses like his love will live and grow under the sweet influence of her life-giving breath on them.

The poem has a rhyming scheme of *abcbabcb* and is written in the first person. The poem has a dreamlike, persistently optimistic and vulnerably innocent tone throughout. The poem is in iambic pentameter and the rhythm is pensive and runs smooth. The speaker's love and desire to win the love of his beloved can be felt intimately by the readers. The first stanza, metaphorically expresses the speaker's love to his beloved by comparing his love to drinking wine, and Jove's Nectar which is an elixir for immortality. The reader gets the idea that just like the wine the speaker is intoxicated by the love for his beloved and desires her. In the first line "Drink to me, only with thine eyes And I will pledge with mine", he is asking his beloved Celia to gaze upon him and express her love for him so that he gets a sign that she loves her, he will in turn promise himself to her. The line "Or leave a kiss but in the cup And I'll not look for wine" means that if he has his beloved with him than he would not want to drink wine. "The thirst that from the soul doth rise Doth ask a drink divine", the desire and love he has for her is something that has arisen from deep inside his soul. "But might I of Jove's nectar sup I would not change for thine", this means that if he were given a chance to partake of Jove's Nectar and become immortal he would pass it just to be with her.

By metaphorically comparing his love for her to the rosy wreath, in the second stanza, he expresses eternal love for her as a wreath is a symbol of eternity. Besides being a symbol for eternity, the wreath can also represent an apology. In the first line of the second stanza, "I sent thee late a rosy wreath Not so much honouring thee", may mean that he is referring to the mistakes made and the use of the word late may imply that he was too late in showing his love to her, and is now not able to have her, honouring being another word for having. "As giving it a hope that

there It could not withered be”, he is telling her he loves her hoping their love is not lost. “But thou thereon didst only breath and sent\st it back to me”, means that she only let out a sigh and did not accept his apology. “Since, when it grows and smells, I swear, not of itself but thee”, means that his love for her is eternal and will always remain the same.

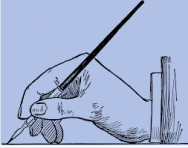
Metaphors, personification, irony, hyperbole are some techniques used in this poem. Metaphors such as drinking the wine, the elixir of eternal life, and the rosy wreath are used to describe his love for Celia. The use of personification can be seen when the poet personifies Celia’s eyes, saying they could speak to him, and is also seen when thirst takes a human quality and rises to ask for a drink. Irony can be seen when Celia sent the wreath back, does not return his love but the speaker still remained persistent in his effort to express his love for her. Hyperbole can be said to be used in this poem as it is extremely exaggerated, and in particular, the lines “But might I of Jove\s nectar sup I would not change for thine”, and “Since, when it grows and smells, I swear, Not of itself but thee.”

The poem is influenced by the use of words, tone and symbols in it. Word choice is important in this poem, because the words used give the reader a detailed understanding of what the poet is trying to say. The words also create the imagery of the poem, and set up the meaning of the symbols used throughout. The words like drink, wine, nectar, cup, thirst used in the first helps the reader understand that the speaker is comparing his love to drinking wine, and the nectar of Jove’s and that her love intoxicates him. In the second stanza, the word late may mean that a mistake had been made, rosy wreath suggests eternal love, withered suggest lost love, breath may imply her failure to love him in the form of a sigh, grows suggests that his love for her will

only grow stronger, smell implies a sense of lingering of the essence of her presence and swear implies that he will love her forever.

The tone of the poem as stated above is dreamlike because of the flowery language used, persistently optimistic because he is hopeful that his beloved will return his affections, and vulnerably innocent because even if she does not return his love but still he continues hoping and loving her. The rhythm of the poem, being smooth and pensive also contributes to the tone.

The symbols used in the poem are also interesting as they lead to discover an underlying meaning to this poem. The beloved's eyes and breath, Jove's Nectar and the rosy wreath are all symbols used in the poem. The eyes symbolize the pledge of love that the speaker hopes will be given to him by his beloved. Jove's Nectar symbolizes the speaker's love for her which will never die. The rosy wreath symbolizes eternity and Celia's breath symbolizes her failure to return back his affection. These symbols are very influential in the way the poem is interpreted.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
1. Find out the symbols and metaphors used in the poem	

11.2.2 *Reading the poem 'To Penshurst'*

Country house poetry is a sub-genre of Renaissance poetry and was first written during the seventeenth century. This genre of poetry is similar to patronage poetry, in which poets praised their patrons to flatter them and win their favour. The country house poem 'To Penshurst' by Ben Jonson was composed to celebrate Sir Robert Sidney's Kent estate. The poem draws out a contrast between the city life and the country life by idealizing country life. The title 'To Penshurst' indicates that the poem was meant to be a gift, written in praise of Penshurst. Through this poem Jonson shows his idealized vision of lordly hospitality and by doing so he locates himself within the landscape of the poem. He also shows the idealized notions of harmonious relations of lords and the tenants.

The "estate poem" which describes a lavish house of the nobility and the landscape attached to it was used to meditate upon the relationship between nature and the society, the individual and the community, became popular the 17th century and 'To Penshurst' marks the beginning of it. The poem consisting of 102 lines is a poetic letter written in heroic couplets and mimics Horace's pastoral poems and Martial's invitational poems. Although the poem talks about the physical reality of the estate but it also uses elements of myth. Penshurst is admired for its natural beauty and its social system and not because of its luxurious structure. In this regard Penshurst is different from the other lavish country estates and was not dependent for its reputation on only on "polished pillars" or "a roof of gold." The poem gets divided at line 46. The first part of the poem talks about its natural beauty and the second half talks about the social system it epitomizes.

The poem begins with Jonson telling us what Penshurst is not: “Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show . . . nor can boast a row of polish'd pillars . . . thou hast no latherne. [1] From this we come to know that this estate was not built to be a testimony of how wealthy its owners are and is far from ostentatious. By listing the qualities that cannot be found at Penshurst, Jonson makes it appear humble and down-to-earth compared to the other lavish country houses which was the trend of the time. This was done by Jonson in order to prevent resentment arising from the peasants on the lavish spending on luxurious things by the rich and wealthy. It might have also been done in order to make a subtle but potent criticism of the other flamboyant estates. By doing so Jonson seems to be taking a Christian standpoint by upholding values like modesty and shows his distaste and criticism for the lavish spending on the name of luxurious estates. He says in the poem that Penshurst boasts of natural attractions: of soyle, of ayre, of wood, of water: therein thou art fair. By this he means that these natural resources are richer in this estate than in any other. By drawing attractions to natural attractions, he tries to show that nature is the real beauty of a place and no amount of artificial decoration can live up to it. The natural abundance of the estate is shown in a mystical way and it mystifies the labor of Penshurst's farmers, hunters and peasants. The natural beauty of Penshurst makes is what makes it stand out than the other lavishly decorated estates.

Classical allusions are used in the beginning of the poem in order to get the reader's attention. The first lines otherwise show Penshurst as a rather dull place but these allusions add a mystery to it. This also gives a feeling of a pagan society to its readers and brings to mind the mythological stereotypes related with the countryside. He also tries to change the pre conceived ideas about

the countryside. It was usually thought that country life was pagan and uncivilized but he says that in reality it is also Christian as we are told towards the end of the poem that "His children...have been taught religion". It was also believed that country folk were not intelligent but it is known that Penshurst was where Philip Sidney was born as the poem mentions the birth of the poet Philip Sidney: "At his great birth, where all the Muses met."

The lords of the estates were usually shown as a stock figure and were written satirically about. To be always absent from their estates and living in the city wasting their money and time there, some were shown to be alcoholic and illiterate and some like the types of the Sir Tony Lumpkin or Sir Tunbelly Clumsy, who never left the country at all, or if he did only make himself ridiculous. Philip Sidney who was a poet, courtier, soldier, advisor to the Queen was seen as the model of a Renaissance man and his whole family was patrons of the arts. By showing Sidney and his family's connection with Penshurst, he shows that Penshurst was the epitome of a cultured and educated household.

Jonson's portrayal of Penshurst and the country life has a satirical edge too. He says that "fat, aged carps runne into thy net" and that when eels in water see a fisherman coming, they "leape . . . into his hand." The crops "never failes to serve thee season'd deere", "each banke doth yield thee coneyes (rabbits)", "the painted partrich lyes in every field . . . willing to be kill'd". This description of the wildlife seems satirical as it is too good to be true. Animals, being biological beings have survival instincts and they would not give up their lives for their masters or as it is said in the poem, "for thy messe". This satire and irony might have been used by him to show that country life is not trouble free. The theme of capitalism can also be seen in the poem. Only the prepared food is shown to be laid on the table but the butchering of

the animals remains unseen. We are told that "thy walls...are rear'd with no man's ruine, no mans grone." As if no man died, or even groaned while the building Penshurst but we do not see the toil that went behind its making. During the feast it is seen that all people who come makes their own little contribution to it. Everyone is treated equally and is allowed to dine together. Everyone is allowed to eat "thy lords owne meat", beer, wine and bread. Everyone is allowed to eat whatever amount they want. "Here no man tells my cups", and we see a harmonious sense of sharing and communality: "That is his Lordships, shall also be mine."

The landscape is shown in a gendered way as Jonson locates the lady of the house on the margins between nature and culture. The lady of the house is compared with the bountiful nature. Penshurst's hospitability and the kindness of the lady of the house, makes the place welcoming. The children of the estate are described as children who "suck innocence" from both mother and place.

The beautiful harmonious portrait of the estate is contrasted by the biblical allusion introduced in lines 39-44: "The Earely cherry...fig, grape and quince...hang on thy walls, that every child may each." This might be a reference to the biblical story of the Creation, as Adam and Eve covered their naked bodies with fig leaves and Eden was surrounded by a wall. This allusion points to the fact that although the world of the estate may seem flawless but it is only a matter of time till this flawless world will see its end and it is inevitable.

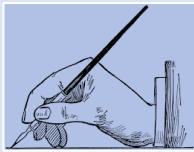
It is shown in the poem that there is no kind of hierarchy followed in Penshurst. Everybody who comes there are treated as equals and due importance is given to everybody. Penshurst is shown as the kind of place which welcomes and embraces all the

classes including the lower classes as it is evident as they are allowed to dine together with the King. Penshurst is shown in a way in which the estate is shown as a model for the harmonious relationship that can exist between the upper classes and the lower classes. It is shown as a microcosm of a harmonious society where all classes are mutually co-operative and respectful of each other.

Penshurst is shown as a welcoming and hospitable place. Unlike some other estates of the time which were unwelcoming, Penshurst was a place of modesty and its owners are shown as generous people. In the feast no one came "empty-handed" and there was surplus of food and beverages for all the guests. From beer to meat and from clean linen to warm fire every provision was made and everything was in plenty. This shows that Penshurst was a place of bounty and hospitality. When the King made a sudden visit to the estate, he found the house to be neat and tidy, "as if it had expected such a guest". Receiving the King used to be a costly affair so the King used to visit the people he liked the least as it led to the bankruptcy of the owner. But the fact that the King found the house worthy of receiving him even when he visited without prior notice shows that Penshurst was not like the other estates. The King is also portrayed as a humble figure because he chose to sit and dine with all classes of people at Penshurst. By doing so Jonson in a way praises the King and is likely to win the King's favor by doing so. In the poem Jonson fuses both specific historical facts like King James 1 visiting the estate and also the imaginative and the mythical elements like the landscape inhabited by dryads and satyrs.

The social criticism seen in the poem is not apparent but is shown in a subtle way. For example in the poem it is seen that provisions are acquired almost without any effort and the animals being unrealistically submissive. Country house poems were

usually written to admire and praise the lavish estates but still a strong sense of irony can be seen in the descriptions. There is social criticism present in this poem and because it is so unexpected in the poem so it has more effect. This aspect of showing importance of labor in the pastoral way of life can also be seen in Raymond William's *The Invention of the Countryside*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is an 'Estate poem'? What quality of an Estate poem do you find in *Penshurst*?

11.3 LIFE AND WORKS: JOHN SUCKLING

John suckling was one of the notable Cavalier poets from the court of Charles I along with the likes of Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace and Robert Herrick. Suckling led a life of a gallant aristocratic courtier and an amateur poet before falling from grace and untimely death in exile. His works are known for the satirical tones used in the matters of heart, indifference and cynicism towards love in general and contemporary courtly expressions of it in particular. He wrote sonnets, ballads, riddles, verse songs, occasional poetry as well as plays along with love poems.

John Suckling was the poet of reaction to the conventions of Caroline era- shaken and soon to be dilapidated by the civil war. The contemporary norms of the society; be it literary or amatory, were targeted by him in his verse. During 1630s when the trend of platonic love was still on the soaring height on the Caroline court, he dared to challenge it with his characteristic subtlety. He eschewed the continental models of lyrics adopted by other cavalier poets such as Jonson and Thomas Carew and veered towards native forms such as the ballad and the riddle which were considered “sub-literary”. On the adolescent iconoclast zeal, Suckling even rejected the title ‘poet’ for it had fallen into the garb of ungentlemanly professionals, or so he believed. For the most of his short span as a poet, he was an iconoclast rather than an innovator. Except his final poems, it is more evident what is he attacking than what is he proposing vice versa. Poems written in the last years are more ripen with the balance between idealism and cynicism and hence manifest a direction overlaying a newfound confidence of good humour and sense. The most representative one of this class is of “A Ballad upon a Wedding.”

Suckling’s poetic career, a short one nevertheless, could be divided into four periods. The earliest poems mainly consist of a Christmas devotional sequence and two meditations on faith and salvation, presumably written in and around 1626. Though these works do not entail a great literary value, they reflect young Suckling’s receptive attitude towards influences and stylistics even outside the norm. Two of the eleven poems carry significance because of their selection of themes- which would run through Suckling’s later verse as well. In ‘Faith and Doubt’ the speaker dwells on the mysteries of incarnation and redemption- straight from Christian legends. The speaker dangles between a desire to believe and inability of the rational faculties to reach that state of

belief. He prays for the experience attained by the apostle Thomas-confirmation of faith through the senses. This doubt on the part of the speaker casted here could be interpreted as the prologue to the libertine scepticism in Suckling's amatory verses. Another significant aspect of these poems is the exuberant expressions of rusticity- usage of rustic customs and superstitions as an integral part of suckling's poetic vision. This expression of rusticity which was recurrent in his later verse as well could be amply traced in 'Upon a Christmas Eve'. Suckling's celebration of his rural upbringing and country life in general derived from a sensibility much like Robert Herrick's. The theme of rusticity emerges even in his most famous poem 'A Ballad upon a Wedding'- perpetuating through the elegant courtliness it exhibits.

The period of 1626 to 1632 marks as one of transition-when the poet was still seeking for his definite personal style. While most of these work exemplify the popular forms of the time such as the riddle, the character, the ballad; there are some other works which demonstrate serious attempt on the part of the poet to create court lyric. The last type of Suckling's verse blends the popular and courtly forms to create parody in some instances and humor and compliment in others. These poems predominantly dealt with themes of love and sexuality, albeit there are some exceptions.

John Suckling was born in a wealthy and established family in Twickenham, Middlesex around 1609. His father, the elder Sir John Suckling was a Member of Parliament and courtier to the king, serving in numerous government capacities. His mother, Martha Cranfield, belonged to a wealthy London mercantile family. After a brief period of being tutored in home, he entered Trinity College of Cambridge in 1623. He left Cambridge without completing his studies, and in 1627 he was admitted to Gray's Inn,

where he sought to complete it. Because of a guaranteed fortune from the father's side, Suckling lived a life of gambling and opulence during his student years. Then, after his father's death soon after his admission to Gray's Inn made him consider other options than merry student life. Meanwhile, thirty years war had started and Suckling enrolled himself in the military service and accompanied the Duke of Buckingham and his entourage to the island of Rhe. He also took part in the Low Countries campaign by Lord Wimbledon. In middle of the expedition, Suckling also attended the University of Leyden for a brief period in 1631. He received knighthood from the King the same year and returned to the European continent as a soldier to the Swedish envoy to the King.

Upon his return to England the next year, he again engaged in the lifestyle of wastefulness and spendthrift practices. Reportedly, he soon amassed an outstanding amount of gambling debts. Thereafter, Suckling pursued heiress Anne Willoughby as his love interest- most probably out of economic considerations as well. However, he failed in this endeavour after years of intrigue, owing to opposition by her father and other suitors.

Throughout his life, Suckling was engaged in gentlemanly pursuit of literary practice- mostly poetry composition along with a few dramas. His dramas saw production mostly in the last years of 1630's. Of total four plays, the tragedy *Aglaura* (1637) and the comedy *The Goblins* (1638) are notable. During these years, Suckling became increasingly involved in politics which led to his role as an accomplice to the Army Plot of 1641- where plotters tried to free the Earl of Strafford from the tower of London. After the plot was foiled, Suckling was forced to flee to Paris as he was charged with high treason. It has been suspected his death the next year was a result of self-inflicted poisoning, an act of suicide- most

probably disgraced by his circumstances. In 1646, five years after his death, his first anthology of verse was published- named *Fragmenta Aurea*.

Apart from poems, *Fragmenta Aurea* contains Suckling's plays and other writings such as sonnets, satires, love poetry, epithalamia, and songs. It opens with a poem celebrating the occasion of New Year's Day of 1640, written for the king. Suckling's poems carry semblance to John Donne's; however, the characteristic wit and cynicism made the former apart from the later- as it can be seen in one of the early love poems of Suckling, 'Loving and beloved'. This frivolous attitude towards love can also be traced in his another oft-quoted poem 'Why so pale and wan fond Lover?' where the speaker gives advice to one youth suffering from unrequited love. Suckling's attitude towards love is more reflected on two pieces called 'Against Fruition' where he puts forward the idea that love, even if achieved, can only lead to disappointment- therefore fruition of love is nothing but disappointment. This cynical tone of Suckling's prose can also be seen in his sonnets- with inverted Petrarchan patterns and conceits posed to mock the poseurs of courtly love. In another poem 'Women's Constancy', misogynistic overtures can be traced, portraying women in a whimsical and impulsive light in terms of their passions, which essentially is a renaissance stereotype. Poems from the later part dealt with mostly social and occasional themes. His 'A sessions of the Poets' or 'The Wits' depicted an assemblage of his familiar poets, intellectuals, courtiers, and scholars meeting for granting laurel bays- marker of excellence in poetry. Here, Suckling aptly used the device 'sessions' or literary trials to render the narrative better suiting for criticism or satire.

Suckling wrote four plays in total of which *Aglaure* (1637) is the most cited. Staged twice in front of the king Charles I, the play

had two different endings- one happy and one tragic. Though it wasn't a grand success, the play is remembered for the song 'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?' - Because of its cynical yet wonderful lyrical capacity as a poem. In 1638, *The Goblins*, a comedy by him was staged which is considered to be his best play. The influence of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and Beaumont and Fletcher is quite evident in the play.

Suckling's poems reiterate his impression as 'natural, easy Suckling'. His characteristic uniqueness rests upon the lyrics. Influenced by Donne's Anti-Platonic deflation of exuberant high-flown expression of love, his lyrics are more cynical and careless.

Suckling treated poetry quite casually- being truthful to his characterization as natural and easy. Because he never took poetry as a serious business his poems suffered from irregularity and lack of depth in feeling. These shortcomings bar him from comparison with John Donne, like whom he also used extended metaphors and intense passion in language. Suckling's 'Love's World', 'Farewell to Love' and 'Sonnet III' states his debt to John Donne. Other poems such as '*Ballad Upon a Wedding*', '*Love, Reason, Hate*' etc. can be said to be influenced by Robert Herrick. '*Ballad Upon a Wedding*' can be termed as Suckling's masterpiece- it was modelled in style and meter of a street ballad.

Suckling's other minor poems, especially riddles and characters quite frequently touch the theme of sex. In 'A Candle', for example, Suckling describes the 'thing' a 'maiden female' would 'use' in the night. At last the riddle proves to be about a candle. Similar instances of Double Entendre could be found in other riddles and characters such as 'A barley-break', 'A Barber', 'A peddler of small-wares', 'A soldier' etc. these were remarkable in smuttiness and leering wit.

11.3.1 Reading the poem 'A Ballad Upon a Wedding'

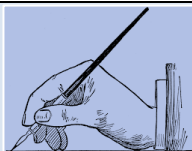
John Suckling's 'A Ballad Upon a Wedding' (1646) describes his experiences of attending the marriage of Roger Boyle, who was also known as Lord Broghill and later Earl of Orrery, to Lady Margaret Howard, who was the daughter of the Earl of Suffolk. The marriage took place in 1641. He presents the poem through a conversation with a person called Dick. It is by telling Dick about his experience at the marriage that he also makes his readers experience every little detail of the marriage. The reader is able to feel the vibe of the marriage and share the speaker's experience as the poet brings out his experience at the marriage in a very lively way in each scene that every stanza creates. Through his conversation with Dick, the poet brings out the vive and lively excitement of the marriage that he is attending. The poem has an optimistic tone and it creates a happy vive. The description is done very vividly and is full of passion, making it possible for the readers to imagine the experience of his attending the marriage celebrations.

Besides being optimistic, there is also a sweetness and gracefulness to be found in the tone of the poem. The optimistic cumulative effect of the poem is not to be found in any other poem of the poet in the way it is found here in this poem. He not only describes his experiences of attending the marriage but also paints a beautiful picture of the bride's comeliness. There is wit and humour present in his description of the marriage. The poem is written in such enthusiasm that at times it seems to border on imagination. But it is the grace and simplicity of the poem that makes it his most celebrated poem. It is not only in content but also in form that he parodies Spenser's Epithalamion. Instead of long

elaborate verse, he talks about his experiences of the wedding in his own way, using colloquial language that would suit the setting and in simple comic rhythm. This poem is an epithalamium, which is a poem written for the bride. In this epithalamium, Suckling describes the bride's charm in a very beautiful and vivid manner.

The images he draws of female beauty may not be as precise and complete as other poets of his time, but they are by far the most attractive because he does not draw the full picture and gives just a glimpse leaving the rest to the imagination of the readers. It is not only in content but also in form that he parodies Spenser's style. Instead of long elaborate verse, he talks about his experiences of the wedding in his own way, using colloquial language that would suit the setting and in simple comic rhythm.

In this poem, Suckling is seen to be using Edmund Spenser's much celebrated marriage odes and presents a parody of those. Ruth Glancy writes, "The scene is now the seamier side of London, the bride and groom an uncultured pair, the wedding banquet a pub, and the bride's desire as lusty as the groom's." (149)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. When did the poem first publish?

2. What is the occasion of writing *Ballad upon A Wedding*?

11.4 SUMMING UP

This unit studies the life and work of two Cavalier poets Ben Jonson and John Suckling and their poems, 'To Celia', 'To Penshurst' and 'A Ballad Upon a Wedding'. Jonson's poetry, was also representative of his classical learning. He was trained in the humanist manner in classics and this was evident in the way he used form and the style of his poetry. In the poem 'To Celia', the speaker in the poem is seen to be asking his beloved to drink to him with her eyes as that would be enough to quench his soul's thirst, which even the heavenly nectars cannot quench. As such the theme of the poem is spiritual love. Through the poem 'To Penshurst' Jonson shows his idealized vision of lordly hospitality and by doing so he locates himself within the landscape of the poem. He also shows the idealized notions of harmonious relations of lords and the tenants. John Suckling treated poetry quite casually- being truthful to his characterization as natural and easy. Because he never took poetry as a serious business his poems suffered from irregularity and lack of depth in feeling. 'A Ballad Upon a Wedding' The description is done very vividly and is full of passion, making it possible for the readers to imagine the experience of his attending the marriage celebrations.



11.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Ben Jonson's acquaintance with whom led him to write the poem 'The Penshurst'?
2. What does the speaker in the poem 'To Celia' ask the lady to drink to him with?

3. Is the setting of the poem 'To Celia' identified? What can be the possible setting for the poem?
4. What did the speaker of the poem 'To Celia' send his lady love as a token of his love?
5. Discuss the poetic techniques used in the poem 'To Celia'?
6. Whose estate is Ben Jonson celebrating in 'To Penshurst'?
7. Discuss the elements of communism and capitalism in the poem 'To Penshurst.
8. What differentiates Penshurst from the other estates of the time?
9. Whose marriage is the subject of the poem 'A Ballad upon a wedding'?
10. What is the name of the person the poet is speaking to in the poem 'A Ballad Upon A wedding'?



11.6 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

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UNIT 12: RICHARD LOVELACE: “TO LUCASTA, GOING TO WARRES”, “TO ALTHEA, FROM PRISON”

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.0 Introduction: Life and works: Richard Lovelace

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Reading the poem ‘To Lucasta, Going to the Wars’

12.2.1 Theme of the poem

12.3 Reading the poem ‘To Althea, From Prison’

12.3.1 Theme of the poem

12.4 summing up

12.5 Assessment questions

12.6 References and Recommended Reading

12.0 INTRODUCTION: LIFE AND WORKS: RICHARD LOVELACE

Richard Lovelace (1617–1657) was a seventeenth century Cavalier who fought on behalf of the King during the English Civil War. Richard Lovelace was born on 6th December 1617. Although his exact birthplace is unknown but he is believed to have been born in a Kentish family. He being the oldest child had seven other siblings. His father was in the military and they were a wealthy family. At the age of eleven, he attended Sutton’s Foundation at

Charterhouse School, at London. He studied five years there. It was here that here met his fellow Cavalier poet Richard Crashaw. But there are no records of his attending because coming from a wealthy family he studied as a boarder and not as a scholar. It was in 1631 that he became a 'Gentleman Wayter Extraordinary' to the King, a paid honorary position. In 1634, he went to Gloucester Hall, Oxford. He attended the University of Oxford. Here, he was given the Master of Arts degree when he was eighteen years old. While there he continued building his image as a cavalier. He was more of a social person than a reserved scholar. Given his beautiful looks and amiable gentlemanly nature he was very popular among his female friends. Being a cavalier poet he was more inclined to humanity and wrote about various aspects of life, especially love. While at Oxford, he also wrote a comedy called *The Scholars* (1635) and then he left for Cambridge University.

Lovelace's experiences in life influenced his poetry to a great extent. Influence of political activity of his time and eminent personalities of his time is also in his poetry. After becoming a 'Gentlemen Wayter Extraordinary' to the King and at the age of nineteen he wrote a verse that was contributed to a volume of elegies commemorating Princess Katharine. In 1639 Lovelace he served in the Bishops' Wars first as a senior ensign and then as a Captain after joining the regiment of Lord Goring. The sonnet 'To Generall Goring', the poem 'To Lucasta, Going to the Warres' and the tragedy *The Soldier* were all inspired by his experience in serving in the Bishop Wars. Bishop Wars occurred in 1639 and 1640 because of the rights and powers of the King and the way of governance of the Church of Scotland. This

war is usually considered a prelude to the English Civil Wars. When he returned home after the War in 1640, he, for the first time, experienced civil turmoil, regarding politics and religion. He then served as a justice of peace and as a gentleman.

1641 he led a group of men to seize and destroy a petition for the abolition of Episcopal rule. Then the following year he presented before the House of Commons, Dering's pro-Royalist petition which was supposed to have been burned. These actions led to his imprisonment for the first time. Then he was released on bail on the condition that he kept no touch with the House of Commons without prior permission. This decision kept Lovelace away from participating at the first phase of the English Civil War. Although he could not participate in the war but he did his best to remain in the King's favor always. He again took part in the political upheaval in 1648. He was again imprisoned for nearly a year. He was released in 1649 and by that time the King was already executed. So the cause he fought for was lost. But it influenced him in a way that he felt spiritually liberated and this experience led to creative production and his first volume of poetry, 'Lucasta' was released.

Lovelace's literary career began in his Oxford days. He started writing poetry there and wrote around two hundred poems in his lifetime. His first work was the drama called *The Scholars*. This was never published but was performed in his college and later in London. He also wrote a tragedy based on his own military experiences in called *The Soldiers* in 1640. When serving in the Bishops' Wars, Lovelace wrote the sonnet 'To Generall Goring'. 'To Lucasta, Going to the

Warres', written in 1640 is one of his most famous poem. When he was imprisoned in 1642 he wrote his other famous poem "To Althea, From Prison". Later that year he wrote the poem "The Rose," following with "The Scrutiny". His sonnet 'To Generall Goring', was written while serving in the Bishops' Wars. His poems appeared in two volumes, *Lucasta* (1649) and *Lucasta: Posthume Poems* (1659). The first volume was influenced by the outbreak of the second Civil War and the poems here are inspired by war and show no regret for a life in arms. In all these poems he portrays himself as a diehard cavalier and has an air of chivalry and martial tone. His poems 'The Grasse-hopper', 'The Snayl', 'The Ant', 'The Falcon', 'A Fly caught in a Cobweb' and 'A Fly about a Glasse of Burnt Claret' are poems which shows that the natural world is minutely observed by him. These poems also give a sense of the defeated cause of Royalist values by showing the futility of the creatures' endeavours. His earlier poems show his image as an active and uncompromising Cavalier, who goes out to war and gets exiled. In the posthumous collection, the poet appears as a passive figure, depending on fate, outcomes of chance and works according to the decision of others. In conclusion it can be stated in the words of Andrew Sanders that his poetry conveys an impression of "... smug male assurance in dallying with love and the emotions of women, but through them there echoes the alternative, but also exclusively male, martial urgency of the 1640s."

11. 1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to study two of the works of Richard Lovelace. This unit will:

- Familiarize the learners with the Life and works of Richard Lovelace
- Enable the learners to read critically the select poems
- Help the learners to grasp the major thematic and stylistic features of the poems.

11.2 READING THE POEM 'TO LUCASTA, GOING TO THE WARS'

The poem *'To Lucasta, Going to the Wars'* seems like it is a letter originally written from Lovelace to this woman named Lucasta, who can either be real or a fictitious woman. This poem has a very personal tone. In the poem Lovelace describes how he has to go to war leaving Lucasta, his lady love behind. This war that Lovelace talks going to, leaving Lucasta behind, about is the English Civil War. Lovelace had to fight in France and Holland from 1643-46, in order to support King Charles I, as part of the Cavaliers. In the poem describes the theme of love versus duty. Lovelace also had to leave behind his dear ones to go and fight in the war. Eventually Lovelace was captured and jailed by the Royalists in 1648. He wrote this poem, among others, while he was imprisoned and published it under the volume of the same name in 1649.

This poem has three stanzas each containing a quatrain. The poem is written in a conversational poem and it seems the narrator is directly addressing Lucasta. In stanza one the narrator speaks asks this lady Lucasta not to be upset about his going to war. He contrasts Lucasta's chastity with the war. He compares her to a nunnery and calls her breasts chaste. He describes her as chaste and says how he is

leaving behind this chastity and faithfulness for the futility of the war. On one hand he talks about the futility of war which is a public domain and compares it with the private domain of his personal life and his beloved. So in this stanza he contrasts the chastity and faithfulness with the violence and futility of war and also expresses the idea that he fears and does not want Lucasta to be upset about leaving her loving presence behind for the futility of the war. He asks her to not think of him as unkind for leaving her gentle presence, her chastity and quiet mind for the violence of war.

In stanza two, he refers to the enemies he will meet in the battlefield as his “new mistress”. He again uses the term new mistress for his enemies because he will be chasing new enemies in the battlefield one after another. The theme of faithfulness seen in the first stanza is continued here. By calling his enemies new mistresses he is linking war with unfaithfulness. By doing this he contrasts war to Lucasta’s faithfulness. He says he will seek refuge in the weapons of war to keep himself alive as his new mistress or his enemies are unfaithful. In order to deal with that unfaithfulness, he will keep the weapons of war close to him and his put faith in them.

In the third stanza he rounds it off by saying that instead of being upset and sad about his leaving her behind for war, Lucasta should instead understand and appreciate his decision of going to war. He says Lucasta should be proud of him and love him even more because a man who cannot love his country cannot love anyone else. The fact that he loves his country so much shows his integrity. He

believes he can honour his commitment to her only when he first honours his commitment to his country.

11.2.1 Theme of the poem

The main theme seen in this poem is that of the conflict between love and duty. Throughout the poem Lovelace talks about the conflict between loyalty to love and honour to duty. The narrator is torn between his love, honour of commitment and his faithfulness to his ladylove and his duty towards his country. But in this poem he tries to resolve this conflict by showing that love and honour goes hand in hand because if he cannot first love his country and honour his commitment to his country than he cannot be with or deserves to be with his ladylove. Although the poem is addressed to Lucasta but it seems that more than trying to convince Lucasta, he is trying to convince himself about his going to war. He is trying to contrast his love for Lucasta with his love for his country and trying to bring this conflict to a resolution. The resolution he reaches is that he believes he can honour his commitment to her only when he first honours his commitment to his country. He believes that his duty to his country comes first because his commitment to his country was made before his commitment to Lucasta. His commitment to his country is linked with his integrity as a person. He believes only if a man is able to honour his country than only he can honour others. but the only difficulty is that his faithfulness to his country demand his being unfaithful to Lucasta as he will have to leave her behind and go to war. Throughout the poem, he talks about faithfulness of different kind. First he mentions the faithfulness of Lucasta referring to her chastity. The narrator's faithfulness to Lucasta comes out of his love for

her. But it seems his faithfulness is in question as he is leaving her behind for the war. Lastly, the narrator talks about his faithfulness to his country which comes from his love and sense of duty for his country. Being true to the honour of his country is remaining true to his idea of honour. He believes he can be true in his love for his ladylove only if he remains faithful to his country.

LET US STOP AND THINK



Initially the collection of poems by Richard Lovelace known as *Lucasta* was supposed to be titled as *Going beyond the Seas and Going to the Warres*.

11.3 READING THE POEM 'TO ALTHEA, FROM PRISON'

'To Althea, From Prison' was written by Richard Lovelace in 1642 when he was imprisoned in Gatehouse Prison and it remains one of his best written poems. In this poem the speaker is seen to be imprisoned. While in prison he imagines Love bringing his beloved Althea to his prison. He feels he is hearing her voice and also thinks that he is feeling her skin. He later realizes that it was not real and just a dream. Then the speaker thinks of attending a celebration with passion in hearts and drinking from cups filled with water from the river Thames while wearing crowns made of roses. Then coming back to his present state in prison he says that he will sing praises for his King, fighting for whom he is in prison, from his confinement itself. Then at last he

says that prisons cannot confine him because his mind is free.

In the first stanza, the narrator personifies love and imagines love to take a bodily shape and bring his ladylove Althea to him, in his prison. Then he imagines being with her in her physical promiscuity. He imagines spending peaceful moments of love with his beloved being tangled to her hair and fettered to her eyes. By using words as tangled and fettered he shows that the only confinement he faces is that of his love for Althea. Nothing of this happens in reality and he imagines all of these but this imagination show that his love for her is his true freedom. Although he is bound in prison but he is free in his mind and his love for Althea brings him closer to this. He goes on to say that the freedom that Althea's love brings to him in the confinement of the prison is something that even the Gods do not know of. The most supreme Gods who are free and roam freely in the air also cannot and imagine or feel the kind of liberty he feels. The fact that he feels more liberated than the Gods themselves who are supposed to be the most supreme, shows how powerful and freeing love can be.

In the second stanza, the speaker talks of attending a celebration with other confined people like him. He imagines attending the celebration with careless minds and hearts full of loyalty and passion. This shows that although confined in prison but they are still loyal to their King for whom they fought. He imagines wearing crowns of roses and drinking from overflowing cups. All of them drink away their grief and are not sad about being confined because they have entered prison for fighting for their King and they are proud of it. He goes on to say that the kind of liberty that

they feel is something that the fish swimming freely in the depths of ocean also know nothing about. By mentioning the fish in the depths of the ocean he tries to prove the point that the kind of freedom he feels is something that not even in the Gods in the highest heaven or other creatures in the depth of ocean can feel.

In stanza three, the speaker compares himself with linnets. He calls these birds committed because even when they are caged they do not give up singing. The speaker says that he also like these birds will not stop praising his King. He is a prisoner of war. He was put in prison for fighting for his King but he is loyal to his King. Even being imprisoned cannot change or diminish his loyalty for his King. In fact, he with a voice shriller than that of the linnets will sing the praises of his King from prison itself just like the birds sing from their cages. He goes on to say that when he will sing how great his King is, he will feel a freedom which is greater than that of the winds. The wind has no boundaries and is limitless. It is supposed to be the freest thing moving at its will but the speaker says that his freedom will be greater than that of the wind.

In this stanza, the speaker says that the stone walls that make his prison cannot confine him. He says as long as the mind is free no stone walls can make a prison or iron bars can make a cage. Although he is physically imprisoned but as long as his mind is free he cannot be imprisoned he says that innocent and quiet minds will turn any prison to a hermitage where they can stay in peace, look within and connect with themselves and feel free. He says that his love has the power to bring him freedom and make his mind and soul free and as long as his mind and soul is free no prison

can imprison him. In the other stanzas he talked about what other things cannot be as free as him but in this stanza he says what things can be free as him. Here he says that the freedom that he experiences can be felt only by the angles soaring high above in the sky. Being messengers of peace and symbols of love and innocence it is only they who can feel the freedom that the speaker feels.

11.3.1 Theme of the poem

The poem deals with the themes of freedom and love. These are the two main themes in the poem. The theme of freedom is seen throughout the poem. Although the speaker is confined in a prison but he does not get upset with that. With the help of his imagination he imagines being with his ladylove Althea. He imagines being with her in prison and spending moments of peace and love with her which in turn makes him feel liberated. He says that he is as free as anyone else and no prison can imprison him till his mind is free. This shows that the speaker has strong mental determination and clarity of thought. He is determined not to be brought down by the fact that he is in prison. He understands that if a man is physically free even then he cannot be fully liberated if his mind is physically free even then he cannot be fully liberated if his mind is not free and he is mentally a slave to someone or something else. The speaker feels that as he is free in his mind and soul so he is liberated in the right sense and free than most other creatures and even the Gods themselves. Every stanza of the poem ends with “know such liberty” implying that others would not know of the freedom he feels. Only the last stanza ends in “enjoy such liberty” as in this stanza he says that kind of liberty he enjoys will be known only by the angles

that soar high above. Thus, freedom is one of the most important themes of the poem. The other important theme is that of love. In the very first sentence, the speaker personifies Love and sees it as a bodily embodiment bringing his ladylove to him. He says that the love that he says for Althea gives him mental strength and frees his mind. His love liberates him. He shows that the power of love is such that it is liberating and can free the mind of a person and set him free even when in prison. As such, both love and freedom are the most prominent themes in the poem.

11.4 SUMMING UP

This unit discussed the life and work of the Cavalier poet Richard Lovelace. It is seen that being a cavalier poet his poetry was more inclined to humanity and wrote about various aspects of life, especially love. The first poem '*To Lucasta, Going to the Wars*' deals with the theme of conflict between love and duty. But in this poem he tries to resolve this conflict by showing that love and honour goes hand in hand because if he cannot first love his country and honour his commitment to his country than he cannot be with or deserves to be with his ladylove. The second poem '*To Althea, From Prison*' deals with the themes of freedom and love. Although the speaker is confined in a prison but he does not get upset with that. With the help of his imagination he imagines being with his ladylove Althea.



11.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the main theme of the poem 'To Lucasta, Going to the Wars'.
2. Discuss the theme of the poem "To Althea, From Prison".
3. While in prison, Richard Lovelace imagines Love bringing him something in the poem "To Althea, From Prison", what is it?
4. What does the poet personify in the first stanza of the poem "To Althea, From Prison"?
5. When was King Charles I executed?
6. Why does the speaker compare himself to linnets in the poem "To Althea, From Prison"?
7. Why does every stanza of the poem 'To Althea, From Prison' ends with "know such liberty"?



11.6 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

MODULE V: JOHN MILTON

UNIT 13: READING THE AGE OF MILTON

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.2 Learning Objectives
- 13.3 Background of the age
- 13.4 Life and works of Milton
- 13.5 Milton and his times- Political, Social and Religious
- 13.6 Other Writers of the Age
- 13.7 Literary Characteristics of the Age
- 13.8 Summing Up
- 13.9 Assessment Questions
- 13.10 References and Recommended Readings

13.0 INTRODUCTION

John Milton lived during the Commonwealth Age or Puritan Age which was dominated by the English Civil War. This age saw the transition from the earlier ages in the economic field, in politics, in religion and also in literature. This age is also known as the Age of the Puritans. The aim of the Puritans was to make men honest and free. The major poets of the age includes John Milton; John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and other Metaphysical poets; and the Cavalier poets like Thomas Carew, Robert Herrick and others.

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The focus of this unit will be on reading the Commonwealth Age which was dominated by the poet John Milton. After going through this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Know about the background of the age

- Know about the life and works of Milton
- Familiarize with the other writers of the age
- Understand the literary characteristics of the age

13.2 BACKGROUND OF THE AGE

This age saw the gradual shift from the age-old doctrine of the divinity of the king towards democratic ideals. Puritanism or an extreme form of Protestantism was replacing Roman Catholicism in England though there remained a sizable number of people clinging to the Catholic Church. The English Parliament, dominated by an increasing number of Puritans, was gaining prominence. The Puritans were wanted to purify the Church of England from its Catholic practices. Charles I was put to death by the Parliamentarians under the leadership of Cromwell in 1649. England was ruled by the democratic government or Protectorate under Cromwell from 1649-1660. However, in 1660, Charles II was recalled from France and restored to the throne. After the death of Cromwell, his son tried to hold the country together but it was a mere matter of time when the Parliament and general public welcomed monarchy. The Puritans were arrested and prosecuted in large numbers after the restoration of the king. Rural economy was giving way to urban economy during this age.

13.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF MILTON

This section will take the learners through a discussion on the life and works of Milton. John Milton was born on 9 December 1608 in Bread Street, Cheapside, London. He was born to Sara and John Milton, Sr. His father was a money-scrivener and professional composer who changed his religion from Catholic to Protestant, to the displeasure of his father (Milton's grandfather).

Milton's early education was with private tutors at home. After this he was educated at St Paul's School, London, where he remained until 1625. Then he was admitted at Christ's College, Cambridge, on 12 February from where he matriculated on 9 April. Milton took his B.A at Cambridge in 1629 and his M.A in 1632, then retired to his father's house in Horton, Buckinghamshire, to continue the task of preparing himself to be a great poet. Milton tells us in his *Second Defence of the English People* that he read voraciously in his childhood and his stress on his early literary interests, pursued with his father's encouragement, is significant.

The great debate on religion and politics which divided the English nation in the middle of the seventeenth century helped to determine the course of Milton's career and the shape of his literary ambitions. In 1629, while still at Cambridge, Milton wrote his first wholly successful English poem. This was 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity.' Other poems which belong to this phase of his life include 'On Shakespeare' (1630) and 'On Arriving at Age of Twenty- three' (1631). These poems show Milton's command of impressive diction and his high ideals, both literary and religious. Milton's first published poem was 'On Shakespeare' in the Second Folio of Shakespeare's *Works* (1632).

In May 1642 he married Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist. After a month, tiring of the austere life of a Puritan household, she abandoned her husband, who promptly repudiated the marriage. Marriage was meant to be a perfect companionship, spiritual, intellectual, and physical, and if through well-meaning misjudgement it turned out to be something very different, release should be made possible. His *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, published in August, 1643, and his *Tetrachordon* are the arguments to justify his position. These roused a storm of protest in England. In 1645, however, Mary returned to live with Milton. Their daughter Anne was born on 29 July 1646. Their second

child, Mary, was born on 25 October 1648. Their third child John was born on 16 March 1651, but he died on 16 June 1652. Deborah, their fourth child was born on 5 May 1652.

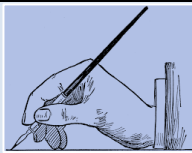
In Book IX of *Paradise Lost* we see the perfect companionship in the relation of Adam and Eve before Satan visits Eden. They worked together in Eden and led a peaceful life. They never dared to trespass God's commands. Satan, in order to take revenge against God, infests the mind of Eve to work alone. Eve then puts the proposal in front of Adam, who agrees at last to the proposal after initial arguments. Satan tempts Eve to taste the fruit of the Forbidden Tree. She eats the fruit and reveals her act of transgression to Adam. Out of his love for Eve and so that they could share the punishment for this act, Adam too eats the fruit of the Forbidden Tree. As a result, they incur upon themselves the wrath of God.

Around 1650, Milton began losing sight of his left eye and by February 1652 he was totally blind. For nearly twenty years, until the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Milton devoted himself to politics, not poetry. As his abilities became known through his prose pamphlets, his position changed; and in 1649 he was given an official post in Cromwell's Government, his immediate task being to write in defence of the recent execution of Charles I. His *Defence of the English People*, written in Latin to reach a European audience, vindicated the seriousness of Cromwell's purpose, and the aspirations which had driven England to Civil War and revolution; this success in controversy also earned Milton a European reputation, which was sustained by the *Second Defence* and the *Defence of Himself*, written in answer to the attacks of continental scholars.

In 1652 Milton was given an assistant secretary and in 1655, when the controversy over Charles's execution came to an end, he relinquished his official work. He was free to turn from politics to

literature, as far as his blindness would allow. Some of Milton's important works include 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso', 'Comus', 'Lycidas'. "L'Allegro" and 'Il Penseroso', are companion poems in octosyllabic couplets dealing with the respective experiences of that gay and thoughtful man. *Comus* was written to be performed at Ludlow Castle. Milton originally titled it "A Mask presented at Ludlow Castle". It was first published anonymously in 1637 with a dedication to the son of the Earl of Bridgewater by Henry Lawes. 'Lycidas' (1637) is an elegy on his friend Edward King, who was drowned in a voyage to Ireland. The real subject of the poem, however, is the uncertainty and torment occasioned in Milton's mind by his realization that death might forestall the achievement of the fame which was his ambition. Out of his sonnets, the best are "On his Blindness" and "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont".

Among his prose works *Areopagitica* (1644) has perhaps the most permanent interest and is best worth reading. It is the most famous plea in English for the freedom of the press. *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were written when he was blind and suffering and form the basis for Milton's immortal fame as a poet. After Cromwell's death the Republican rule became weak and the Commonwealth finally crumbled under Cromwell's son and successor, Richard Cromwell. After the restoration of monarchy in 1660, Milton had to suffer imprisonment for a brief period. Milton saw the collapse of the Puritan theocracy and the Republican government. But in spite of the agony for the loss of his ideals and his personal sufferings, Milton produced his best poetic work in this period: *Paradise Lost* (1668), *Paradise Regained* (1670) and *Samson Agonistes* (1670). Milton died in 1674, November 8th. He was buried in St Giles' Church, Cripplegate.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. When did Milton write his first wholly successful English poem? Name the poem.

2. Name the companion poems composed by Milton.

13.5 MILTON AND HIS TIMES- POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS

As pointed by James A. Freeman, “Like many of his late Renaissance contemporaries, learned or not so learned, Milton accepted as absolute several religious premises that our culture usually entertains as merely possible. He knew, for example, that the Bible coexisted with non-theistic literature celebrating earthly love and secular activities, yet for him Scripture was the final arbiter of truth” (51).

In ‘The Fall of Man and Milton’s Theodicy’, Dennis Danielson states that, “Milton’s presentation of his various literary characters can be controversial because so many people still believe in , or worry about, the actual existence of some of his most important ones: Adam, Eve, Satan, Jesus. But Milton’s God is especially controversial . . . Milton never presents his God as if he is not really God, the eternal and almighty Being who created the heavens and the earth, who reveals himself in the Bible and in the life and person of Jesus Christ, and to whom all

beings owe thanks and worship for his goodness and greatness. Moreover, so believe or not to believe in this God is such a fundamental thing that one cannot realistically join the conversation created by *Paradise Lost* and expect one's belief or unbelief to go unaddressed" (113).

In the very first paragraph of *Paradise Lost*, Milton very clearly announces that he will try and justify God's ways to man. Milton also "confesses his own 'darkness' and 'lowness' and his need to be illuminated, raised, and supported before he can adequately tell his story and present his theodicy. Yet throughout his epic he not only provides us with repeated reminders that we are fallen creatures ourselves, but also presupposes and appeals to our ability truly to recognize that which is good" (Danielson 115).

Dennis Danielson, moreover, states that, "A vital component of Milton's theodicy is the 'Free Will Defence', the model or argument according to which God, for reasons consistent with his wisdom and goodness, created angels and human beings with freedom either to obey or disobey his commands. Such an act of creation represents a self-limitation on God's part; it means that he cannot manipulate the free choices of angels and humans, though this claim is no mark against his omnipotence, because the 'cannot' is a logical entailment of his own exercise of power. The Free Will Defence, furthermore, claims that, although innumerable such free creatures have in fact disobeyed God's commands and so created an immense amount of evil, the amount of goodness that presupposes the exercise of freedom ultimately outweighs the total amount of evil. For without freedom, what value would things such as honesty, loyalty and love possess?" (117) "The doctrinal or philosophical question of whether God's foreknowledge and human free will can coexist remains an interesting and keenly debated one- as it was in Milton's day. For Milton and for many of his

contemporaries, to accept any kind of determinism was to abandon free will, and to abandon free will was to abandon theodicy . . . the notion of free will upon which Milton's theodicy is based takes on an ambiguity that it would not have possessed had God uttered his judgment only after the fall, epic time....Milton had to build into his narrative both the necessary conditions for Adam and Eve's falling, and the necessary conditions for their standing. One of the main ways he does this is to expose Adam and Eve to some kind of trial or temptation before they must face the temptation. Eve, for example, almost becomes infatuated, Narcissus-like, with her own image in the lake; but she hears and responds to the Voice that leads her to Adam.... Eve is tempted to fall for her own image, Adam is tempted to fall for his image, and both Adam and Eve are told the story of how Satan does fall for Sin, who is his image. They hear how Abdiel resists the temptation of Satan, who also enters Paradise and inspires in Eve a bad dream, which makes Eve cry and for which Adam and Eve must seek at least a partial explanation. They must work in the garden, organize their chores, and show hospitality to angels" (119-123).

In Eden, Adam and Eve are given freedom except to taste the fruit of the Forbidden Tree. God gave them conscience to judge and distinguish for themselves right from wrong, and good from evil.

Harold Bloom, in his 'Introduction' to *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: John Milton*, argues that "God and Christ in *Paradise Lost* embody reason and restraint, and their restriction of Satan causes him to forget his own passionate desires, and to accept a categorical morality that he can only seek to invert. But a poet is by necessity of the party of energy and desire; reason and restraint cannot furnish the stuff of creativity. So Milton, as a true poet, wrote at liberty when he portrayed Devils and Hell, and in

fetters when he described Angels and God. For Hell is the active life springing from energy, and Heaven only the passive existence that obeys reason” (4).

Thus, Dennis Danielson concludes that, “In constructing his theodicy, then, Milton’s imagination is at work seeking to present recognizably good things-both actual joys and prospects of even greater- as the Creator’s gifts, and so also to establish the undesirability of humankind’s falling. ‘Soul-making’ and Free Will Defence work together to explain how the relative riskiness and decision-dependence of Adam and Eve’s perfection create the necessary conditions of their falling; the Fall is conspicuously possible. And at the same time, through Milton’s dynamic presentation of life in Eden, they provide grounds for believing that the risk may have been worth it (124). Milton’s theodicy “responds not only to the concrete demands of narrative, but also to the spiritual needs of human beings. The goodness of God has to be asserted not simply out of a kind of theological purism, but out of a recognition that one’s actual worship of God, if it is to have any integrity, is predicated on a conviction that the object of one’s worship is wholly worthy of it....Milton’s theodicy too is thus evangelical and pastoral. It performs this role not merely by declaring the goodness of God, but by doing so in the face of evil, which experientially is theodicy’s first datum, as it is of Paradise Lost: ‘first disobedience’, ‘moral taste’, ‘death’, ‘woe’, ‘loss’. Poetically and actually, we are thrust not into the midst of things but into the midst of evils-including, of course, the evil of sin” (126).

13.6 OTHER WRITERS OF THE AGE

Apart from Milton, the other writers who gained prominence during this age were the Metaphysical poets and the Cavalier

poets. The term “Metaphysical poets” was first used by Dr Johnson to denote the work of a group of poets who were influenced by Donne’s poetry. This group includes John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Thomas Carew, Abraham Cowley, and Andrew Marvell.

The Cavalier poets dealt with the theme of love and war. This group includes Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, John Suckling, and others.

13.7 LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE

This age saw the prominence of poetry over drama. The poetry of this age dealt chiefly with the theme of love or religion. Drama declined during this age.

In prose, sermon writing occupied a significant position. The religious strife of the time played a major role in the enormous output of sermons.

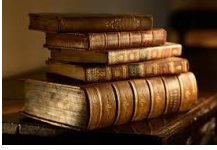
13.8 SUMMING UP

To sum up, this age saw the rise of the Puritans and their ideals. The Metaphysical poets gained popularity. Milton is one of the important writers of this age.



13.9 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief account of the works of Milton.
2. How did the socio-political and religious temperament of the period impact on the works of Milton?
3. Write a note on the prose works of John Milton.



13.10 RECOMMENDED READINGS

Lewalski, Barbara. *The Life Of John Milton: A Critical Biography*. Malden, MA And Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Lewis, C. S. *A Preface To 'Paradise Lost'*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Parker, William Riley. *Milton: A Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Shawcross, John T. *John Milton: The Self And The World*. Lexington, KY: University Press Of Kentucky, 1993.

UNIT 14 - PARADISE LOST BOOK I (SELECTIONS)

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Learning Objectives
- 14.2 Reading *Paradise Lost*: The Arguments
- 14.3 Reading *Paradise Lost* book I (selections)
- 14.4 Summing Up
- 14.5 Assessment Questions
- 14.6 References and Recommended Readings

14.0 INTRODUCTION

Paradise Lost was begun as early as 1658 and published in 1667. Milton began to compose it in 1658 when he had been totally blind for over five years. At first it was divided into ten books or parts, but in the second edition it was again divided into twelve. Milton had moved from a meditation on the political disappointments visited on ‘God’s Englishmen’ to an epic treatment of ‘Man’s First Disobedience . . . Death . . . woe . . . loss’. Milton’s subject was the failure of humankind to live according to divine order and its slow but providential deliverance from the consequences of the Fall.

In his “Introduction” to *Bloom’s Modern Critical Views: John Milton*, Harold Blooms argues, “The form of *Paradise Lost* is based on Milton’s modification of Vergil’s attempt to rival Homer’s *Iliad*, but the content of Milton’s epic has a largely negative relation to the content of the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*. Milton’s “one greater Man,” Christ, is a hero who necessarily surpasses all

the sons of Adam, including Achilles and Aeneas, just as he surpasses Adam or archetypal Man himself. Milton delights to speak of himself as soaring above the sacred places of the classical muses and as seeking instead “thee *Sion* and the flow’ry brooks beneath,” Siloam, by whose side the Hebrew prophets walked. For *Paradise Lost*, despite C.S. Lewis’s persuasive assertions to the contrary, is specifically a Protestant and Puritan poem, created by a man who finally became a Protestant church of one, a sect unto himself. The poem’s true muse is “that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases.” This Spirit is one that prefers for its shrine, in preference to all Temples of organized faith, the upright and pure heart of the isolated Protestant poet, who carries within himself the extreme Christian individualism of the Puritan Left Wing. Consequently, the poem’s doctrine is not “the great central tradition” that Lewis finds it to be, but an imaginative variation on that tradition. Milton believed in the doctrines of the Fall, natural corruption, regeneration through grace, an aristocracy of the elect, and Christian Liberty, all of them fundamental to Calvinist belief, and yet Milton was no orthodox Calvinist, as Arthur Barker has demonstrated. The poet refused to make a sharp distinction between the natural and the spiritual in man, and broke from Calvin in his theory of regeneration. Milton’s doctrine of predestination, as seen in *Paradise Lost*, is both general and conditional; the Spirit does not make particular and absolute choices. When regeneration comes, it heals not only man’s spirit but his nature as well, for Milton could not abide in dualism. Barker makes the fine contrast between Milton and Calvin that in Calvin even good men are altogether dependent upon God’s will, and not on their own restored faculties, but in Milton the will is made free again, and man is restored to his former liberty. The

hope for man in *Paradise Lost* is that Adam's descendants will find their salvation in the fallen world, once they have accepted Christ's sacrifice and its human consequences, by taking a middle way between those who would deny the existence of sin altogether, in a wild freedom founded upon a misunderstanding of election, and those who would repress man's nature that spirit might be more free. The regenerated descendants of Adam are to evidence that God's grace need not provide for the abolition of the natural man" (2).

In his "Introduction" to the edition of *Paradise Lost*, A.W. Verity argues, "We must indeed recognize in *Paradise Lost*, the meeting- point of Renaissance and Reformation, the impress of four great influences: the Bible, the classics, the Italian poets, and English literature. Of the Bible Milton possessed knowledge such as few have had. There are hundreds of allusions to it: the words of Scripture underlie some part of the text of every page of *Paradise Lost*; and apart from verbal reminiscences there is much of the spirit that pervades that noblest achievement of the English tongue. Scarcely less powerful was the influence of the classics. Milton's allusiveness extends over the whole empire of classical humanity and letters, and to the scholar his work is full of the exquisite charm of endless reference to the noblest things that the ancients have thought and said. That he was deeply versed in Italian poetry the labours of his early editors have abundantly proved; and their comparative studies are confirmed by the frequent mention of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto and others in his prose works and correspondence" (iv). We have included the comments of few select critics here to understand the reaction *Paradise Lost* received over the years.

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The focus of this unit will be on John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* Book I. After going through this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Know about the content of *Paradise Lost* Book I
- Comprehend the arguments from Book I to Book XII
- Familiarize with a comprehensive discussion on Book I

14.2 READING PARADISE LOST: THE ARGUMENTS

Book I: This first book proposes first in brief the whole subject, Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed: Then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many Legions of Angels, was by command of God driven out of Heaven with all his Crew into the great Deep. Which action passed over, the Poem hastes into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his Angels now fallen into Hell, described here, not in the Centre (for Heaven and Earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed) but in a place of utter darkness, filthiest called Chaos: Here Satan with his Angels lying on the burning lake, thunderstruck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in Order and Dignity lay by him; they confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his Legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded; They rise, their Numbers, array of Battle, their chief Leaders named, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the Countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his Speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining

Heaven, but tells them lastly of a new World and new kind of Creature to be created, according to an ancient Prophecy or report in Heaven; for that Angels were long before visible Creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this Prophecy, and what to determine thereon he refers to a full Council. What his Associates thence attempt. Pandemonium the Palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the Deep: The infernal Peers there sit in Council.

Book II: In Pandemonium the consultation begins whether to undertake another battle in order to recover Heaven or to forget about it. Satan undertakes to take a journey to find the world and the creature created by God. Satan starts his new journey to discover the new world.

Book III: God sees Satan flying towards this newly created world and shows him to his Son. God foretells the success of Satan in tempting mankind. As man had offended the majesty of God by aspiring to God-head, God will not extend grace towards mankind unless someone devotes himself to answer the offence of mankind and undergo his punishment. Then the son of God offers himself and God accepts this offer.

Book IV: Satan finds the Garden of Eden and sits on the Tree of Life in the shape of a Cormorant. He listens to Adam and Eve's discourse and finds out that they were forbidden to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Gabriel, who was in charge of the gate of Paradise, was warned by Uriel that some evil spirit had entered Paradise. Gabriel appoints two strong Angels who find Satan at the ear of Eve trying to tempt her. He is questioned by Gabriel and he flies out of Paradise.

Book V: God sends Raphael to Paradise. He discloses to Adam the possible danger and the enemy. Raphael also narrated how Satan became the enemy.

Book VI: Raphael continues by narrating the battle of Michael and Gabriel against Satan and his Angels. On the third day, God sends Messiah, his Son. Messiah is able to make Satan and his companions to leap down with horror and confusion into the place of punishment prepared for them in the Deep.

Book VII: Adam requests Raphael to narrate how Paradise was first created.

Book VIII: Adam, in return, narrates to Raphael whatever he remembers since his first creation, and departs.

Book IX: Satan returns to Paradise by night and enters the body of a sleeping serpent. In the morning Eve proposes division of labour. Adam refuses as they were warned of possible danger and enemy. Finally, Adam gave his consent. Finding Eve alone Satan, in the form of a serpent, speaks to Eve. Eve wonders how a serpent could speak, to which the serpent answers that by tasting the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The serpent persuades Eve to eat the fruit. After tasting the fruit, Eve brings the fruit to Adam; Adam too commits the sin by eating the fruit.

Book X: Son of God descends to Paradise and clothes Adam and Eve. Sin and Death, who were sitting at the gates of Hell, follows Satan. They paved a broad highway over Chaos to make the way easier from Hell to Paradise to and fro according to the track that Satan first made. Satan arrives at Pandemonium, where he and the other angels are transformed into serpents. Adam laments over his present condition.

Book XI: The son of God presents to his father the prayers of Adam and Eve. God accepts their prayers. Michael, with a band of cherubim, is sent to dispossess Adam and Eve from Paradise. Michael leads Adam to a high hill and sets before him, in vision, what shall happen till the Flood.

Book XII: Michael narrates what will happen after the Flood. After this, he and Adam descend the hill. Michael leads Adam and Eve out of Paradise.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1 When did Milton begin *Paradise Lost*?
When was it published?

2. Into how many books is *Paradise Lost* divided? Mention the theme of each book in one lines.

14.3 READING PARADISE LOST BOOK I

In the very first lines of *Paradise Lost* Book I, Milton states the subject of his epic:

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and of our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us (1-5)

After stating the subject, following the epic tradition Milton invokes the Muses to help him:

Sing Heav'nly Muse (6)

As suggested by F. T Prince, "Milton's Muse is not one of the nine Muses of Greek mythology who dwelt on Olympus and inspired all forms of art and learning. She is 'Urania', 'the heavenly one', and is the Muse of religious poetry who inspired the poets and prophets of Israel as well as all Christian learning and poetry" (103- 104).

Milton then presents the cause of Man's Fall. Satan was the reason behind Man's Fall from Eden:

Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stirr'd up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind (34- 36)

Milton gives a brief summary of Satan's revolt and defeat and brings his readers to the point at which the action of the poem begins, with Satan and his followers lying prostrate in Hell. Milton continues by following the epic tradition by beginning *in medias res* or in the middle of things. Satan and his companions fell from Heaven for the duration of nine days and nights as calculated by mortal human beings. Hell was the place which had flames all around but no light. It was dark and removed from God and light of Heaven. It was a place where torture without end constantly afflicted its victims and where a flood of fire raged, fed with ever-burning sulphur that never exhausted. The distance of Hell from Heaven is three times the distance from the Earth, which is at the centre, to the outermost shell of the Universe:

As far remov'd from God and light of Heaven
As from the Centre thrice to th' utmost Pole. (73-74)

In line 82 of Book I, Milton for the first time gave the name of Satan. He speaks to Beelzebub, who is next to him in power and crime. In lines 84- 124 Milton presents the first speech of Satan after his fall from Heaven. Satan is surprised to see that Beelzebub is changed. Satan is determined not to accept defeat and fight back. For him acceptance of the power of God would be a disgrace and a shame worse than his downfall.

Milton extensively uses epic similes in his epic. Through a simile he introduces some fact or comparison which enhances the reader's understanding of the poem. In lines 197-208 we get the first of the great epic similes of *Paradise Lost*. In these lines, Satan's gigantic size is emphasised. In Book I, Satan is magnificently drawn. Satan is shown still lying on the lava lake, his head "uplift above the wave" (line 193); the rest of his body "Prone on the Flood, extended long and large/ Lay floating many a rood" (lines 195-196). He is compared to the legendary Titans, then to the "Sea- beast Leviathan" (lines 200-1). Milton develops old sailor's reports of a sea- creature larger than the whale, which had often been mistaken by the sailors for an island against which they tried to fasten their ships. Only after a few lines of such detail do we return to Satan: "So stretcht out huge in length the Archfiend lay/ Chain'd on the burning Lake" (lines 209-10). The other fallen angels lie stupefied upon the burning lake even after Satan and Beelzebub have awakened from the stunned unconsciousness and reached the shore. Only at the call of their commander do they begin to awaken from lethargy. Each of the similes in the long passage (lines 301- 360) is noteworthy. All the comparisons have one thing in common: namely, that the fallen angels are innumerable. In the first simile two aspects are emphasised: the

vast number and confusion. Milton's mind went back to his Italian journey for the first comparison: the angels lay "Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks/ In Vallombrosa" (lines 302-3). In the second comparison, Milton goes to one of the familiar stories in the Old Testament: the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, pursued by Pharaoh whose chariots and horsemen were destroyed and lay floating in confusion and a countless number of carcasses and chariots.

LET US STOP AND THINK



Epic similes are formal, sustained similes in which the secondary subject is elaborated far beyond its specific points of close parallel to the primary subject to which it is compared to. The epic simile is a long comparison of an event, object, or person with something essentially different. As a means of comparison it is very useful. The epic simile helps Milton to link the main events of his narrative with earlier literature or with non-literary fields such as exploration, scientific discovery, or even domestic concerns.

Epic Catalogue: An epic catalogue is a long, detailed list of objects, places or people that is characteristic of epic poetry.

The epic simile which starts in line 338 shows the Fallen angels in flight as they respond to the call of their general. These angels are compared to the swarm of locusts:

As when the potent Rod
Of Amrams Son in Egypts evil day
Wav'd round the coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
Of Locusts, warping on the Eastern Wind,

That ore the Realm of impious Pharaoh hung

(338-342)

The angels are innumerable and the comparison is with countless multitude of flying pests that descended upon the land. From line 376 onwards, Milton puts forward the Epic Catalogue: Milton identifies the Fallen Angels with the heathen gods. Moloch's name is at the beginning (392). He was a sun-god, worshipped by Ammonite in Rabba, in Argob and in Basan, with the sacrifice of children by means of fire. He was associated with violence, savagery, cruelty and noise. Next in order comes Chemos, who was also worshipped like Moloch (406). Baalim and Ashtaroth comes next (422). They can assume either sex or can assume both. They are soft and uncompounded. For such false deities, the people of Israel often renounced their true God:

For those the Race of Israel oft forsook

Their living strength, and unfrequented left

His righteous Altar, bowing lowly down

To bestial Gods (432- 435)

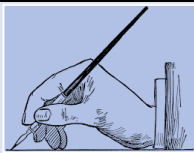
The moon-goddess of the Phoenicians, '**Astoreth**', is then described by Milton (438). '**Thammuz**' follows her (446). The story of Thammuz is better known in European art and poetry in the Greek version, as that of Venus and Adonis. Thammuz was a beautiful youth loved by the Phoenician Venus, Astoreth; he was slain by a boar while hunting, but returned from the dead. His death and revival were celebrated every year in a festival of mourning which turned to rejoicing. Milton, referring here only to the mourning, describes the grief of the young Syrian girls on the occasion of this ceremony and tells us that the river Adonis was crimsoned with the blood of Thammuz who was believed to be

wounded every year. The festival of Thammuz- Adonis was a vegetation or fertility cult based on the death of the sun in the winter solstice, and his return in spring. ‘**Dagon**’ was the chief god of the Philistines (462). The upper portion of his body was that of a man and the lower part that of a fish: “Sea Monster, upward Man/ And downward Fish” (462-463). ‘**Rimmon**’, the next Fallen angel, was a god worshipped in Damascus (467). After these Milton presents the names of ‘**Osiris, Isis, Orus and their Train**’ (477). They had monstrous shapes. ‘**Belial**’ was the last of the Fallen angels described by Milton (490). He is a vice personified, and the account of his power and cult is therefore quite different from those of the previous. He was not worshipped in a particular temple or at any altar. These were the prime Fallen angels in order and might. As described by F. T Prince, “Milton has given first place to the heathen deities of Syria and Egypt because they were a part of the history of the Chosen People; they stand out in monstrosity and corruption against the background of true religion, and are obviously fitted to be identified with the rebel angels as enemies of God. The summary of the Greco- Roman pagan gods which follow has a different effect: their evil natures are hardly brought out, and the emphasis is rather on remote and beautiful landscapes” (126). **Javan, Titan, Saturn, Jove, Azazel** belongs to the latter category (508-534).

Milton then shows the mass of rebel angels and how they rebelled:

Ten thousand Banners rise into the Air
With Orient Colours waving; with them rose
A Forest huge of Spears; and thronging Helms
Appear’d (545-548)

The rebel angels were all geared up to rebel; they were just waiting for the command of their ‘Chief’ (566). Satan’s heart was filled with pride as he saw the gathering of the Fallen angels ready to wage a war against God. He was bright among all the angels but his face had deep scars from ‘Thunder’, which was God’s weapon (601). He speaks to his force (622-662). Through his speech Satan tries to motivate his followers. The rebel angels ‘confirm his words’ (663). The rebel angels work together to build ‘Pandemonium, the high Capital/ Of Satan and his Peers’ (756-757). The angels gather at Pandemonium.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Write a note on Hell as described by Milton?

2. In which line of *Paradise Lost* do you, for the first time, come across Satan’s name? How was he described?

14.4 SUMMING UP

To sum up, *Paradise Lost* book I deal with Satan's revolt against God and his defeat. Satan is determined not to accept defeat and fight back. At the beginning of the narrative, Satan is presented attractively. Satan had just fallen from heaven and carries the angelic aura that was his in heaven. But as the poem progresses, the readers will notice that Satan loses the initial angelic aura. Milton intensively does so to show the readers the consequences of Satan's actions.



14.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q. 1. Write a note on Hell as described by Milton?
- Q. 2. Give a brief of the each book of *Paradise Lost* with an emphasis to the major topic discussed



14.6 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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JOT DOWN IMPORTANT POINTS

UNIT 15: 'PARADISE LOST' BOOK IX (SELECTIONS)

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.0 Learning Objectives

15.1 Introduction

15.2 Reading *Paradise Lost* Book IX (Selections)

15.3 Major themes in *Paradise Lost*

15.4 Milton's style in *Paradise Lost*

15.5 Summing Up

15.6 Assessment Questions

15.7 Recommended Readings

15.0 INTRODUCTION

In Book IX, Milton decides to give a twist to the story. After the departure of Raphael, an angel whom God sends down to earth to talk to Adam and Eve and warn them against temptation, the story no longer consists of conversations between heavenly beings and humankind. It is Raphael who ends up narrating to Adam the rebellion and war in heaven and the creation of the world. It is through his voice that we hear God's justification for the events we see unfolding. This voice forms an interesting connection between the heavenly and the earthly. In Book IX Milton explains that he must now turn to Adam and Eve's actual act of disobedience. The poem must now turn tragic, and deviating from Virgil and Homer, Milton asserts his intention to show that the fall of humankind is

more heroic than the tales of these Greek epics. For the supreme accomplishment of his purpose he invokes Urania, the “Celestial Patroness” (IX.21) and muse of Christian inspiration. He urges her to visit him in his sleep and inspire to create his words. For a great event like the Fall of Man he fears that he is too old and lacks the creative powers to accomplish the task himself. In this unit we will learn in details the Fall of Adam and Eve and the temptation offered by Satan in the form of a snake. Satan deceives Eve to taste the fruit of the forbidden tree and Adam eventually following her.

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The focus of this unit will be on John Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost* Book IX. After going through this unit the learners will be able to:

- Know about the content of *Paradise Lost* Book IX
- Familiarize with a comprehensive discussion on Book IX
- Understand major themes in *Paradise Lost*
- Comprehend Milton’s style in *Paradise Lost*

15.2 READING PARADISE LOST BOOK IX (SELECTIONS)

Milton states the focus of Book IX at the beginning of the Book. He warns his readers that the tone of the poem will be tragic one now on: “I now must change/Those notes to tragic” (5-6). The poem will no longer deal with God or angels but with the fall of Adam and Eve. He admits that this is a sad task but at the same time his subject is no less heroic than the action of *Illiad* wherein the great Greek hero Achilles pursues his enemy Hector. It is also as heroic as *Aeneid* where there is conflict between Aeneas and Turn us because of Lavinia, who had promised to marry each of them. For Milton, the subject of his book can be compared to that

of *Odyssey*. Milton again invokes “celestial patroness” with whose aid he began his poem (21). He needs the blessings of “Heavenly Muse” to carry forth his subject. This Muse visits him at night dictates him verses and also helps him to write without any premeditation.

After invoking his Muse and dictating her contribution to his writing, Milton presents Satan. Satan, had been earlier chased away by Gabriel, comes back to Eden with firm determination:

When Satan, who late fled before the threats
Of Gabriel out of Eden, now improved
In meditated fraud and malice, bent
On Man’s destruction, maugre what might hap
Of heavier on himself, fearless returned. (53-57)

Satan returned only at midnight because Uriel, Archangel of the Sun, had cautioned the angels ‘Cherubim’ who kept watch on the earth (61). For seven nights continuously Satan ‘rode with darkness’ (63-64). On the eighth night he somehow found an entrance into Eden. There was a place where the river Tigris going underground at the ‘foot of Paradise’ ‘Rose up a fountain by the Tree of Life’ (71/73). Satan sank underground with the river and rose with the fountain. He searched everywhere and observed every creature. He finally found that the serpent will best serve his purpose of guile and deception, as it was the cleverest of the living creatures in Eden. He decided to enter into the serpent.

For Satan, Earth is a better place than Heaven as it was created in the second instance after the experience of creating Heaven, with improvements upon what shortcomings were there in the old experiment. He searched for a serpent everywhere and found one sleeping: “Him fast sleeping soon he found,/In labyrinth of many a round self-rolled” (182-183). Satan entered the serpent’s

body through his mouth without disturbing his sleep. At dawn, Eden was filled with the holy and warm light of morning sun. When the whole ambience was overflowing with 'grateful smell' came out the 'human pair' (197). Eve spoke to her husband about division of labour: "Let us divide our labours" (214). Adam was at first reluctant to her advice. For him a woman is best safe and secure when she is with her husband.

The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,
Who guards her, or with her the worst endures. (267-269)

With much persuasion, Eve at last gets the consent of Adam to work alone. She withdraws her hand from Adam's hand. Eve works alone unaware of the fact that the greatest enemy of mankind is waiting for his prey. Eve was busy giving support to flowers. She was unconscious of the fact that she was the most unsupported flower as her husband was not with her:

Oft stooping to support
Each flower of tender stalk, whose head, though gay
Carnation, purple, azure, or specked with gold,
Hung drooping unsustained: them she upstays
Gently with myrtle band, mindless the while
Herself, though fairest unsupported flower,
From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh. (427-433)

Satan knew that he could not deceive Adam, so he selects Eve to carry forth his revenge on God. He speaks to Eve and tries to tempt her with his words. In Eden she is surrounded by wild beasts and there is only one admirer of her beauty, that is, Adam. He suggests that beauty like that of Eve's must be seen, admired and served by numberless angels:

In this enclosure wild, these beasts among,
Beholders rude, and shallow to discern
Half what in thee is fair, one man except,
Who sees thee? (and what is one?) who shouldst be seen
A Goddess among Gods, adored and served
By Angels numberless, thy daily train. (543-548)

Eve was amazed at the fact that a serpent could speak the language of man. She inquires how the serpent acquired the language which has been denied to mankind. Satan, getting a chance to deceive her, replies that at first he was similar to the other beasts. But one day, he happened to spot a tree at a distance 'Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mixed/ Ruddy and gold' (577-578). He was lured by the smell of the golden apples and he could not resist himself from eating them. After eating those apples, his inward powers of 'reason' and 'speech' increased, although he retained his shape (600).

Eve is eager to know the location of the tree whose fruit gave such powers to a beast. Satan guides Eve to the tree and seeing the tree she recognizes the tree. It is the tree whose fruit they cannot taste or touch as they are commanded by God: "But of this tree we may not taste nor touch;/God so commanded" (651-652)

God has warned them, if they eat or touch the tree or its fruit, they would die: "Ye shall not eat/Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (662-663).

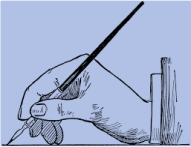
Satan, being a good orator, persuades Eve to eat the fruit. He has eaten the fruit and he is alive. He argues that God wants to keep Adam and Eve as his worshippers. In fact, He does not want that they gain knowledge and power. So God has forbidden them from eating the fruits Tree of Knowledge: "Why then was this

forbid? Why but to awe,/Why but to keep ye low and ignoran't
(703-704).

Eve plucked a fruit and began to eat. At this act of Eve,
'Nature . . . gave signs of woe/ That all was lost' (782-784). She
feels that she is now free from the great 'Forbidder' and his spies.
Adam was eagerly waiting for Eve to return. She returns with a
'bough of fairest fruit' (851). She narrates to Adam her experience
throughout the day. Adam was horrified at 'the fatal trespass done
by Eve' (889). Adam also ate the fruit because he wanted to face
destiny along with Eve and 'Nature gave a second groan;/ Sky
loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops/ Wept at
completing of the mortal sin' (1001- 1003). After eating the fruit,
they realized that they were naked, abandoned by honour,
innocence, faith and purity. They gathered leaves of fig tree and
sewed clothes. They began to accuse each other:

Thus they in mutual accusation spent
The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning;
And of their vain contest appeared no end. (1187-1189)

Both of them accused the other but none had the courage to take
the responsibility. Paradise is no more. Its place has been taken by
guilt, shame and blame.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
1. What is the tone of Book IX?	
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2. After how many days did Satan manage to enter Eden?

15.3 MAJOR THEMES IN PARADISE LOST

The theme of *Paradise Lost* is the Fall of Man from Eden. Adam and Eve lived a blessed life in Eden. They were expelled from the Garden on account of their sin. God had given them all the freedom except tasting the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Satan, in order to take revenge on God, persuaded Eve to taste a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam also tasted a fruit after Eve. This transgression of God's command led to their expulsion from Eden. The epic is about man's disobedience and the consequences.

In the very first lines of *Paradise Lost* Book I, Milton states the theme of his epic:

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and of our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us (1-5)

However, the Fall of Man was a blessing in disguise. The eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge brings him the gift of free will. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived a happy life - a state of ideal bliss. They were obedient to God. Due of their act of disobedience "they lost Eden, but they gained a conscience". In their stay at Eden, Adam and Eve were half angels and half human. After tasting the fruit they gain conscious of sin. Their innocence,

purity, simplicity and holiness depart, and they become painfully conscious of shame, their nakedness and treachery to God. They accuse each other of frailty, inconstancy and deception but to no avail. They repent and blame each other, Book IX ends in this state of mutual recrimination:

Thus they in mutual accusation spent
The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemnings
And of their vain contest appear'd no end.

The theme of *Paradise Lost* is universal. The interest of *Paradise Lost* transcends the limits of a nation. Explaining the universal character of Milton's theme, Johnson says: "The subject of an epic poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion against the Supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace". Dr. Johnson continues, "This poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through the ages, bear the same relation to Adam and Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves" (72-73).

15.4 MILTON'S STYLE IN PARADISE LOST

Paradise Lost is known not only for the epic theme but also for the grand style. Thomas Greene in 'Milton' states that there are two styles fused together in *Paradise Lost*. One is the classical simple style while the other is one 'verbal cleverness,

grotesqueness and obscurity,' its 'primitive ... zest.' This mixing of styles was a result Their diversity springs not only from Milton's acute sense of decorum but from the several conceptions of language which had once lain in incipient conflict within his mindThe debt of Milton's style to classical Latin has become a truism, but the truism is meaningless if it fails to distinguish the effect of *Latin* poetry from the effect of *latinate* poetry in *English*. Milton enriched many English words by restoring to them their Latin meanings (like his use of *enormous*, in line 297 of Raphael's descent, to mean "exceeding the rule"), but in thus roughening his language he did not imitate Virgil. Virgil allowed his language a certain shadowiness when he chose, but never so much as to dim its continuous clarity. Virgil's language is seldom so *thick* as Milton's. Moreover the deliberate rearranging of normal English word order may *remind you* of Latin, but it creates an effect quite unlike Latin. English does not commonly permit the rearrangement Milton attempted, so that he arrived at something very unlike the Virgilian style" (67-69).

Greene, moreover, adds "*Paradise Lost* is the only epic to incorporate the celestial descent into a larger, and indeed a comprehensive pattern of imagery, a pattern which includes the poem's two major events—the falls of Satan and of Adam. Milton interweaves those events into a fabric of multitudinous references to height and depth, rising and falling, which appear on virtually every page and bind every incident of the narrative into a closer unity. Sometimes witty, sometimes ironic, sometimes simple and transparent, appearing now in an epithet, a phrase, a simile as well as in the sweeping lines of the action, the subtle workings of this pattern turn incessantly a moral or metaphysical mirror upon objective events, and conversely translate moral events into spatial terms" (73). "The richness of Milton's similes is unique in epic poetry. The finest of them are marvels of compression, and their

relationship to their respective tenors seems almost inexhaustible” (79-80).

In “The genres of *Paradise Lost*”, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski argues that “Milton employs specific literary modes in his epic to characterize the various orders of being: the heroic mode for Satan and his damned society; mixed for the celestial society of the angels; pastoral (opening out to georgic and comedic) for prelapsarian life in Eden; tragic (encompassing at length postlapsarian georgic, pastoral, and heroic) for human life in the fallen world. These modes establish the affective quality of the several segments of the poem, through appropriate subject matter, motifs, tone, and language, and each mode is introduced by explicit literary signals. As the narrative begins, the epic question and answer present Satan and hell in heroic terms, with reference to a range of epic passions, motives, and actions: ‘pride’, ‘glory’, ‘ambitious aim’, ‘impious war in heaven’, ‘battle proud’ (1.34-44).... These several modes import into the poem the values traditionally associated with them: great deeds, battle courage, glory (aristeia) for the heroic mode; love and song, otium, the carefree life for pastoral; responsibility, discipline, the labour of husbandry for georgic; the easy resolution of difficulties through dialogue and intellect for the comedic; the pity and terror of the human condition for the tragic. These contrasting modes and their modulations, together with the mixed modes which present life in the heavenly society, engage us in an on-going critique of the various perspectives on human life which they provide” (83-84). Lewalski, moreover, adds that “Rhetorical and dialogic kinds are embedded in *Paradise Lost*: rhetorical speeches in the three classical genres (judicial, deliberative, demonstrative); several kinds of dialogue (Platonic, Boethian, biblical); and also formal debates....Also, many lyrics are embedded in the narrative, set off by specific generic conventions, signals of commencement and

closure, and integrity of structure, tone, and subject matter. Milton's epic employs a much more complete spectrum of lyrics, for a larger array of purposes, and in a more complex and conscious way, than does any previous epic....In *Paradise Lost* characters reveal their natures and their values through the lyrics they devise" (88).

Paradise Lost is the first English epic to be written in blank verse. Milton, moreover, uses a large variety in rhythmic pauses. To quote Robert Bridges: "Rhyme occurs in *Paradise Lost*, but only as a natural richness among the varieties of speech; and it would seem that it cannot be forbidden in a long poem but by the scrupulosity which betrays art" (xii).

Milton uses short and long similes, following the epic tradition, to produce a number of effects. The most characteristic Miltonic simile is the epic simile. The epic simile is a long comparison of an event, object, or person with something essentially different. As a means of comparison it is very useful. The epic simile helps Milton to link the main events of his narrative with earlier literature or with non-literary fields such as exploration, scientific discovery, or even domestic concerns.

Epic similes are formal, sustained similes in which the secondary subject is elaborated far beyond its specific points of close parallel to the primary subject to which it is compared to. Milton draws epic similes from classical mythology, natural sciences, Nature. For instance, he compares the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovered at the time:

His ponderous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast. The broad circumference

Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fesole.
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.

Through a simile Milton introduces some fact or comparison which enhances the reader's understanding of the poem. In lines 197-208 we get the first of the great epic similes of *Paradise Lost*.

To conclude in the words of Barbara Keifer Lewalski, "The mixture and multiplicity of literary forms in Milton's epic are an index of its comprehensiveness and vitality. As cultural signposts common to author and reader, they also provide an important key to the interpretation of *Paradise Lost*. No poet has ever exploited them more extensively and more deliberately than Milton" (92).

15.5 SUMMING UP

To sum up, John Milton's Book I of *Paradise Lost* deals with the revolt of Satan and his defeat. It also shows how he was thrown out of heaven by God. It narrates further how he and the other fallen angels rise and plan to wage a war against God.

In Book IX, Milton describes how Satan takes revenge on God through Adam and Eve. Satan, in the shape of a serpent, persuades Eve to eat the fruit of the Forbidden tree. Adam eats the apple because he does not want to lose Eve.



15.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Trace the appearance of autobiographical details in *Paradise Lost*. How are these details important to the story? What is the identity and role of the narrator?

Q2. Satan is the most developed character in *Paradise Lost*. Is he a sympathetic character? Examine one of his soliloquies and identify the character traits and poetic techniques.

Q3. Milton places great emphasis on man's autonomous reason and free will. Do Adam and Eve show evidence of being ruled by reason before the fall?

Q4. Examine the passages in which Milton discusses the nature of women as compared to men. Do you think it is correct to label Milton a misogynist?

Q5. What is epic simile? Write a note on the use of epic simile by Milton in *Paradise Lost*?

Q6. What is an epic catalogue? Describe the Fallen Angels after Milton.



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Note: *The quotations of Book I are from Paradise Lost Books I and II, edited by F. T Prince and Book IX are from Paradise Lost Books IX and X, edited by A. W Verity.*

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