COURSE CODE: MAEGD 303

COURSE NAME: MODERN FICTION

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF ARTS

ENGLISH

BLOCK II

Tezpur University
Centre for Distance and Online Education
Napaam, Sonitpur, Assam - 784028

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Vision

To grow to be a leading centre for human resource development through distance, open and universal learning system.

Mission

To provide quality higher education at door step through barrier-less, flexible and open learning mode in conformity with national priority and societal need.

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- **To undertake various research and academic activities for furtherance of distance education in the region.**
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MAEGD 303: MODERN FICTION

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BLOCK II

MODULE IV: KINGSLEY AMIS: *LUCKY JIM*	**UNIT 8: POST WAR BRITISH FICTION**
	UNIT 9: READING *LUCKY JIM*
	UNIT 10: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT
MODULE V: JOHN FOWLES: *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*	**UNIT 11: READING *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN***
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INTRODUCTION: BLOCK II

MODULE IV: Kingsley Amis: ***Lucky Jim*** has three units in it. ***Unit 8: Post war British fiction*** will discuss British fiction between 1945 to the 1990s. Realism and experimentalism and Women writing are few important developments in the field of novel writing that this unit will bring into fore. ***Unit 9: Reading Lucky Jim*** will have a discussion on the most popular novel of Kingsley Amis, namely, *Lucky Jim*. It is the post war British scenario that the novel has captured. The story of this novel is set in the 1950s and the effects of the World War II were not just an echo but present in various forms in the society. Which is represented in the novel. ***Unit 10: Critical analysis of the text*** will help you to learn how this novel has set a standard for several other writers in its depiction of the campus or academicians. Apart from this, in this unit several significant issues of the novel *Lucky Jim* have been focussed so as to give you a fair idea of the context, characters, critical reception etc.

MODULE V: John Fowles: ***The French Lieutenant's Woman*** presents a novel that is a mixture of romance and realism where the use of a historical setting is seen from the perspective of a contemporary narrator. The structure of the novel is derived from the archetypal romance plot of Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff. ***Unit 11: Reading The French Lieutenant's Woman*** will acquaint you with an overview of British fiction in the 1960s and the turn to post-modern fiction and familiarize you with the place of John Fowles as a novelist. Further, this unit will enable you to read a detail summery of Fowles' famous novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* ***Unit 12: Critical analysis of the text*** makes an attempt to see the novel critically from different postmodern aspects. Major thematic concerns, style of character delineation and narrative technique are few important aspects this unit will focus on.

MODULE VI: Julian Barnes: ***England, England*** is divided into two units. ***Unit 13: Contemporary British Fiction*** will see the position of British fiction in contemporary times. Contemporary fiction tends to be defined as so from the period of mid-1970s to the present. Literature has been divided into Politics; Class; Gender and Sexuality; Post colonialism, Multiculturalism and National Identity; and Youth and Subcultures etc a discussion of which will be taken in this unit. ***Unit 14: Critical reading of England, England*** we have included one of the most popular novels of contemporary times, Julian Barnes' *England, England*. As a critique of 'theme park culture', Barnes puts on his dark and satirical lens and questions issues like culture, national identity, simulacra, reality, art, myth, and all with his typically wry sense of humour.

We hope the carefully select novels of importance and prominence will enable you to gather a comprehensive knowledge on the fictional writing of modern and contemporary times.

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MODULE IV: KINGSLEY AMIS: *LUCKY JIM*

UNIT 8: POST WAR BRITISH FICTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Looking back into the history of the post-war British fiction, the role of coexistence between Modernism and Traditionalism plays a very important role. The Modernist writers were known for their angst about the Romantic sentimentalism and how realism worked in fiction. The modernist idea is said to have entered drama in the year 1950, at G.B Shaw's death. Samuel Beckett is given credit to have changed the course of well-made plays.

After the war, in the post-war era, the novelists had to make an individual choice between the traditional and the modernist. The traditional model was safe as it pointed at a suitable image of an individual in society with its changing times and space. The modernist on the other hand tried to experiment with the self who was caught in a disagreement

> " **Modernism**, in the arts, a radical break with the past and the concurrent search for new forms of expression. Modernism fostered a period of experimentation in the arts from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I."
>
> Source: Encyclopedia Britannica

between ones feelings and consciousness and the world outside.

The 20th century was known for its wars, right from Boer War till the World War II, and hence the literature is dominated by war. Loneliness, alienation, frustration, and isolation are common themes that run across the post-war literature, showcasing the mindset of the time. The influence of Victorian literature was another common feature in the post-war literature of the 20th century along with the themes of romance, justice, gothic literature, and supernaturalism. A rising theme of England's role in the world was gaining momentum, as England had risen to level of a superpower with its imperialism, colony building and political influence across the world. Sadly, this changed with the Second World War and the theme of England's power soon shifted to more relevant themes surrounding the rise of the labour organizations, equality of women, social rights and welfare.

> "According to the Traditionalists, there are primordial and universal religious truths which are at the foundations of all major world religions. The Traditionalists speak of absolute Truth and infinite Presence. Absolute Truth is the perennial wisdom that stands as the transcendent source of all the intrinsically orthodox religions of humankind. According to Traditionalists, the primordial and perennial truth is manifested in a variety of religious and spiritual traditions. The Infinite Presence in the words of Frithj of Schuon is the perennial religion (*religio perennis*) that lives within the heart of all intrinsically orthodox religions."
>
> Source: Wikipedia

Literature written in response to and after the Second World War marks a contrast to that coming out of the First World War. The writers of the twenties had revolted against the principles of their parents, and against the innocent idealism of progressivism. As Malcolm Cowley observes in his Literary Situation, they revolted because their elders had betrayed them and they thought that the world would be better if all the principles of the elders were set aside. The solders had gone to World War I with a sense of high excitement, with lessons of honour, courage, and heroism

to save the world for democracy. There was also a sense of adventure and relief from boredom that drove them to fight on the alien soil. But the writers who wrote after the Second World War "had little sense of a world born afresh." They strongly reacted not so much against war as against the fruits of victory, against the discrepancy that lay between their aims and endeavours on the one hand and their achievements on the other. They were cynical about the very motives of the military machines that had sent the soldiers to be killed. For the writers like Norman Mailer, James Jones and Joseph Heller there was no scope for adventure or relief from boredom, as they were the heirs to the disillusionment of not only the First World War, but the depression and the Second World War as well. Theirs was a world continually at war with itself and they lived, as J.W. Aldridge says, amidst "breadlines, strikes and milk riots" (9).

Instead of the traditional structure of the novel with its emphasis on a linear time and a fixable space, Vonnequt called for a fragmented story line and a fluid space. This novelty of telling the story of the Dresden experience through science-fiction techniques gave Slaughterhouse-Five a different style, a sort of fabulist fantasy which could still adequately capture within its fold the disruptive experience of war. By splicing Billy's fragmented life with his own in the beginning of the book, Vonnegut came close to the self-reflexive novelists like Thomas Pynchon and John Barth of the 1960s.

Mailer, Heller, and Vonnegut treated the war and the reality after the Second World War their impact on the nature of narrative. They were increasingly aware that the devastation caused by war and the kinds of forces it had let loose changed the structure of life and reality, which made the traditional mode of story-telling almost obsolete. The form of fiction was thus threatened by the pressure of events. But these novelists believed that the form by which the novel had been known until then could still hold itself against the threat, but only with stretching and expanding itself in order to incorporate new experiences. But the postwar experiences changed completely this faith in the efficacy of the novel form, in spite of its resilience and

expansion. The form finally exploded itself in the heat of the Vietnam experience by the surfeit of reality it was called upon to register.

Such a traumatic and transformative experience has made the literary representations of reality extremely difficult. The loss of a vital and nourishing link with a usable past, the overloading of information by TV and other mass media, the presence of a debased linguistic medium and the very complex nature of reality have called for new forms of narrative like personal memoirs, journalistic accounts, oral histories, documentary histories, novels, poetry, plays and other generative forms. Even such an explosive reality like that of Vietnam had become the subject of even a "Doonesbury" cartoon series in G.B. Trudeau's But This War Had Such Promise (1971). Such narratives have reflected the uniqueness of Vietnam with its terrain, climate and weather and its fluid front-line and have demonstrated how the war has broken down the boundaries of culture and their specificity in the frenzy of madness. By rejecting the conventional plot and characterization in favour of voices, episodes and fragments, they have tried to make sense of this difficult war from various perspectives. In this respect, the work of oral historians like Mark Baker, Al Santoli and Wallace Terry was significant, because these historians have rejected the documentary and statistical aspects of conventional history and have focused instead on the oral narratives as told by veterans themselves, thus imparting to their story a sense of immediacy absent in conventional narratives. Oral history has recently embraced the epistolary form of fiction in order to project the variety and complexity of the war reflected in the letters several persons. Bernard Edlmann's Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam (1985), a compilation of letters written from Vietnam during the war and collected for the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorials, tells the story of the American Gls in Vietnam from the Gls' points of view. Personal narratives like Ron Kovic's Born on the Fourth of July, Philip Caputo's A Rumor of War, W.D. Ehrhart's Vietnam-Perkasie have brought to light the strange interior images and sights and sounds of the Vietnam experience. Novelists like Tim O'Brien, Robert Stone, Michael Herr and

John Clark Pratt have expanded the scope of the narrative form in order to encompass within it the strange experiences of reality which had eventually destroyed the form of fiction by its

But the real Vietnam has remained somewhat murky. This is because the television and other communication networks have manipulated its images to such an extent that the writer's role as witness has been severely undercut. These networks have marginalized language and by juxtaposing pictures of death and dying with the commercial advertisements, they have banalized the intensity of experience in Vietnam and have challenged the viability of words to render the horror of the war. James Simon Kunen has tried to articulate the unspeakable, "the collective ineloquent Macbeth" (25) in his Standard Operating Procedure, in spite of his awareness that "our whole Vietnam vocabulary is a lexicon of distortion" (25). The novelist C.D.B. Bryan calls the voice of Vietnam "barely suppressed screams" (67); and The New York Times reviewer Michiko Kakutani has remarked that the Vietnam war is still "curiously resistant to fictional treatment" (1). It is no longer possible to gather a true picture of the war, as language as communication has failed and any attempt to work under the constraints of a conventional medium has distanced the writer from the "lived" experience.

The overloading of information, the 'lies' distributed through the minutae of details, statistical records, and handouts have made the truth of the Vietnam experience their first casualty. The real face of the war has remained hidden and the "truth" that has emerged is a collection of data of staggering details and not the essence of a felt experience. In John Clark Pratt's Laotian Fragments in Vietnam), Major Blake says about the explosion of information about Vietnam: "Perhaps the real tragedy of today is that we mistake bits and pieces for fact. Too much information- thus, massive ignorance" (188). Pratt knows that an all-encompassing picture of Vietnam is impossible to render into words and his book attempts to approximate the image of the war through "fragments – letters, memoranda, military

reports, diaries, orders and transcriptions. Later, he tries to structure his Vietnam Voices (1984) on a Shakespearean tragedy, with multiple scenes showing different wars at the same time. In his preface to the Vietnam Voices he says: "Only by reading all genres, I believe, can one begin to experience the panorama created by hundreds of differing perspectives on the war" (v).

What is new in such narratives is the realization that reality is not a successive wave of disruption but an overwhelming continuity; it is no longer an external backdrop engendering a literary device or a metaphor, but it is the chief protagonist who is puzzled by its randomness, uncertainty and confusion, and mocks the idea of coherence, organization and order in fiction. Writers like Tim O'Brien, Michael Herr, John Clark Pratt do not seek harmonious closures to their fictions, but deliberately leave them as open-ended and fragmented narratives of the previous era. These writers have neither tried to write stories of bildungsroman, dealing with the hero's rite of passage, nor have they attempted to erect private mythologies to contain their sense of chaos; they have seen in the failure of modernism not only a sense of discontinuity with the past, but also a projective thrust signaling a new kind of narrative possibility. Philip D. Beidler speaks about this new kind of narrative "to create a landscape that never was… a landscape of consciousness where it might be possible to accommodate experience remembered within a new kind of imaginative cartography endowing it with large configurations of value and signification" (16). Michael Herr has tried to fulfill this new role of the writer in endowing the Vietnam experience with "value and signification." Herr was in Vietnam in 1967-68 during the siege of Khe Kanh and the Tet offensive to cover the war for the Esquire magazine. He was aware that the television and other media had corrupted and vulgarized the language of communication and had distorted reality. So, in order to tell the story of the war as he had experienced, he had to reject the conventional methods of story-telling and to develop a new manner of depiction. In his Dispatches he experiments with new strategies. By rejecting the straight linearity of narrative in

favour of a hallucinatory realism of images and perceptions, he has created a fiction which undermines the rules of fiction.

As we have seen, the writers of the Civil War, the First World War and the Second World war had searched for a principle of transcendence within the given form of the novel, but the writers afer the Second World and the Vietnam War searched for new narrative modes lying outside the traditional form of the novel to describe their experiences. Often by challenging the order and coherence of the aesthetic form itself, they brought in innovations in their representations of reality. In their narratives, the narrator was no longer an organizer of events and experience; he was the chief protagonist for sustaining his narrative as well as his own experience, a function which resulted in the fusion of the subjective with the objective reality of Vietnam. Instead of closing the narratives with conventional resolution, they suggested a state of suspensiveness, of bizarre uncertainty about the reality which appeared to them real and fictive.

The devastation and violence unleashed by the Allies in Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki made people sceptical of the moral supremacy of the Allies. In his book On War Raymond Aron has written: “Beyond a certain point, technology no longer inspires admiration but horror” (103). The Second World War with its use of high technology spawned such images of horror as concentration camps, the mushroom cloud and the holocaust. The ultimate effect of the industrial revolution on war reduced the individual soldier, as Walter Mills has remarked, to “a lonely and frightened machine-tender” (79). The bombing of the cities destroyed the safety and security of a world away from the front lines and made the distinction between soldiers and civilians meaningless. Long range bombers and rockets made the Second World War “Increasingly complex, increasingly dependent upon industrial production, and increasingly brutal, devastating and impersonal” (Miller 57).

During the 1950s, the McCarthy hearings, the Rosenbergs trial and the “red” scare intensified the cold war situation and made the boundary between war and

peace disappear. Writers like Mailer, Heller and Vonnegut treated the war "not as a passing phenomenon, not as something that can be eradicated or ended, but rather as a fundamental, enduring part of modern life and a natural outgrowth of industrial society" (Lundberg 387).

The conventions of the traditional novel were utterly inadequate to capture and recreate the horrors of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Dresden. Language became one of the casualties of the war, and amidst assaults on people and cities, ordinary modes of communication degenerated into banality and deception. With the deterioration of language, man's faith in the power of narrative in giving purpose and direction to life was lost. In his attempt to capture the Dresden experience, Vonnegut saw the inadequacy of what Frank Kermode says "our paradigms of concord, our beginnings and ends, our humanly ordered picture of the world" (38).

Even after twenty-four years of the experience of the bombing, Vonnegut was very much alive to the explosion of war-time reality in political assassinations, and Vietnam, experiences which tore the fabric of the nation and made their fictional representations very difficult. The fact that this explosion, writes Raymond Olderman, had taken man beyond " the enormities of Buchenwald, and Auschwitz and Hiroshima to the experience of the fantastic within what should be the firm shape of everyday reality" (1) created problems for Vonnegut's rendering of his experience into a viable narrative mode.

Again, the Dresden bombing had no real witness from whom some factual information could be gleaned, for people who survived it had taken shelter in holes, meatlockers and other unusual places from where they could not fathom the intensity of destruction. In one of his interviews, Vonnegut speaks about "the terrible hole in the middle" (Bellamy 203), because he could gather some information only about the periphery of the event its margin, not about its centre which was completely blacked out. Wylie Sypher has stated on this aspect of the absence of any literature about the "centre": "we have almost no literature of modern frightfulness because the artist was

overborned by the calamity. We have lived through giant disasters, but they do not seem to be ours. To write about them would be a romantic luxury; we are struck dumb before such catastrophes" (70). Hence, Vonnegut says that his book resembles Heinrich Boll's Absent Without Leave – "stories about German soldiers with the war part missing" (Bellamy 203). The inadequacy of art and incompetence of the artist stemmed from the lies of the "good war," which only brought such shocking images of Dresden, Auschwitz, Belsen and Hisroshima. With the holocaust, writes Elie Wiesel, "not only man died but also the idea of man" (190) and after this the writers were exposed to the "indecency of eloquence," the futility of all such endeavours to make sense of history and its "contrived corridors" through fiction.

Instead, he took to the mode of fantasy as a dynamic mode, which he thought was appropriate for the surreal reality of Dresden. This was a necessary move in the wake of what Raymond Olderman says "the explosion of the ordinary by the fabulous" (5). By using fabulation as a mode to express the horror of the incident, Vonnegut tried to keep track of what Ann Swinfen says "the intrinsic reality of the created world, to observe a scrupulous inner consistency—in other words, to maintain the utmost 'realism'" (230). By disrupting mimetic reality and assulting its ground rules, he gave the war novel a new direction. In fact, in Slaughterhouse-Five the mode of fantasy is employed not to describe the domain of the marvellous, but what J.R.R. Tolkien says "man in the Perilous Realm" (16).

The turbulent period of the 1960s impinged upon his fiction a structure and a vision, which is characterized by cosmic foolery and sardonic humour. This fabulative fantasy, which is a heterogeneous mixture of several forms, became perhaps an appropriate mode for treating the subjects after the World War II and its impact on America in the 1960s because it tried to duplicate in its fictional mould the flux of external reality, and often destroyed this relationship between the solipsistic world of fiction and the external reality and questioned the very viability of fictional form.

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit shall –

- introduce learners to post-war literature.
- discuss the main themes used in literature and their influence.
- trace how literature developed in the given time.

8.2 1945 TO THE 1990S

Post-war Literature is defined by four main trends that suitably fall within the cultural context of Britain in the given period:

1) Commercialisation had taken on the hold of the book market. The market decided on the kind of book that would sell and that would not and the intensive nature just grew with every passing year.

2) The universities had expanded and the role of the English department became stronger. These departments decided on the things that could be included and that would work if excluded. These departments emphasized on the 'expansion of literary criticism and literary theory', which made all the change in the learning understandings of learners.

"**Postmodernism** continues the modernist critique of traditional realism, but it tries to go beyond or around or underneath modernism, which for all its formal experiment and complexity held out to the reader the promise of meaning…. A lot of postmodernist writing implies that … whatever meaningful patterns we discern in [experience] are wholly illusory, comforting fictions."

Source: Lodge ,1981:12

3) The rise of technological innovation also led to the rise of the audio-visual narrative media, which by many is blamed to be the cause of decline of Literature as a whole, and

4) The rise of Women Literature, in which the role of women was not just that of the protagonist but that of the writer, along with the growth of post-colonial writers.

The post-war novel along with drama and poetry has a history that shows a coexistence of Modernism and the traditional approaches of the Victorian period. The ideas of the subconscious, anti-sentimental, irrational and, individualistic were a reaction of the Modernist writers to the Romantic sentimentalism in poetry. The introduction of G.B. Shaw on the stage of the naturalistic drama developed by Ibsen started the revolution in the world of drama. But, Modernism was said to have entered the English stage in the year 1950 after the demise of Shaw and when Samuel Beckett through his plays questioned the authority of the well-made plays. The post war novels saw a sway between the Traditional Models which portrayed the individual in the changing society and the Modernist Models which were experimental in nature. Post 1945, the post- war novels tried to define the social reality of the times along with a slight inclination towards post-modernism. This period also saw a nostalgic undertone which was related to the past (pre-war time) drawing a comparison with the present, and the reality the people faced.

Some of the note-worthy novels of the post-war era are: Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (1953), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), William Cooper's *Scenes from Provincial Life* (1950), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Waine's *Hurry on Down* (1953), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Allan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (1958), Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1958), and David Storey's *This Sporting Life* (1960). Waugh and Hartley show the past, which acts as a mirror to the present. Golding shows the importance of one's childhood, as the seeds sown then bear fruit in the future. Cooper in his work tries to provide the scope to narrate the agony and discontentment of the post-war generation. The other writers in the list such as Kingsley, Waine, Braine, Sillitoe, Waterhouse and Storey present the juxtaposed nature of the individual who either benefits from the move upwards or falls flat, either because of the rigid social structure or by pure choice.

8.3 REALISM AND EXPERIMENTALISM

The period 1945-1960 saw the wave of fantasy enter into its domain. The head turners of this trend were: George Orwell who was the writer of the political 'dystopian' fantasies- *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The political fable *Animal Farm* was based on the Russian Revolution and the betrayal of Stalin. *Nineteen Eighty- Four* was more of a warning message against Nazism and Stalinism, located in an imaginary future. Mervyn Peake writer of the 'Gothic Gormenghast trilogy' - *Titus Groan (*1946); *Gormenghast* (1950); and *Titus Alone* (1959). This fantasy is about the inhabitants of Castle Gormenghast, a sprawling, decaying, gothic-like structure. John Wyndham wrote the science-fiction novel- *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), a post-apocalyptic novel about a meteor shower that blinds people and how an aggressive species of plant starts killing the same people. J.R.R.Tolkien wrote the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings- The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954); *The Two Towers* (1954); and *The Return of the King* (1955). This trilogy include philology, mythology, religion and was overpowered by the author's distaste for the effects of industrialization, as well as earlier fantasy works and Tolkien's experiences in World War I.

The idea of chronicle started in the genre of fantasy was quickly picked by other writers such as: Anthony Powell's *The Music of Time*, 1951-75, 12 volumes, C.P. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers*, 1940-70, 11 volumes, Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy*, 1960-62, and Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*, 1966-75, 4 volumes.

"Lawrence George Durrell in his Alexandria Quartet (Justine, 1957; Balthazar, 1958; Mountolive, 1959; and Clea, 1960) and his Avinyon Quintet (1974-85) is seen to have been questioning the very idea of the chronicle by returning repeatedly to the same events, which are narrated in each volume from the point of view of a different character. Reality, Durrell suggests, cannot be apprehended from a single point of view and is necessarily mediated by the consciousness through which it is filtered – a point that had already been made by the Modernists. As Durrell's work shows, the

experimentalism derived from Modernism found a new, if clearly minority, vein in the novel of the late 1950s, especially in the novels of Samuel Beckett and Nigel Dennis." (Alegre, 17).

The 1960s and 1970s saw the expansion of Experimentalism without removing the realists who were still in prominence. Writers such as Henry Green, Lawrence Durrell and Wyndham Lewis are seen to bridge the gap between the Modernist and Post-modernist period but there were others who enjoyed to alternate realism with experimentalism. "Anthony Burgess's *The Clockwork Orange* (1962), Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) are outstanding novels outside the realistic framework, but they were written nonetheless by novelists who were also proficient in the writing of more traditional realistic novels. A number of novelists heavily influenced by the French 'nouveau roman' –Andrew Sinclair, Julian Mitchell, Christine Brooke-Rose, John Berger– chose experimentalism rather than realism in the 1960s and 1970s." (Alegre, 17).

8.4 WOMEN'S WRITING

The emergence of "women's" literature can be traced to the social changes that came with the turn of the social happenings after the war. Changes such as the achievement of women's consensus, urbanization, women making a space in the man's world, the change in the definition of class, power, and prestige led to the change in mindset and gave the women writers the push they needed. A big contributor to the literary cause was the possibilities offered to women writers along with the 're-emergence' and steady high of the feminist movements in the final quarter of the century.

The Women's literature looked into the outlook held by women, their experiences, their cultural contributions, and the "Woman's tradition" in writing. "Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) exemplified the impulse in the

modernist period to explore a tradition of women's writing. Woolf, however, sought to explain what she perceived as an absence; by the mid-century scholarly attention turned to finding and reclaiming "lost" writers." (Post-war British Novels, 27).

Doris Lessing, widely acclaimed for her work and contribution to literature is known for her collaboration between the existential and intellectual. From experimenting with short stories to portraying larger canvases in novels, Lessing has shown the readers realism. Her works such as, *London Observed* (1991), *African stories* (1965), *Africa in her Children of Violence Sequence* (1953-69), *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), and *The Golden Notebook* (1962) have changed the way in which women writers were perceived by dwelling into topics which were real and needed an exposure – politics, the woman question, layers of identity, the inner space, and women's struggles.

> "In the second half of the century, a basic concern with woman as the object of fictional worlds and as textual subjectivity is typical of both the more generally 'traditionalist' (Fay Weldon, Margaret Drabble, Anita Brookner) and more experimental writing (in different ways, Iris Murdoch, Angela Carter, and A. S. Byatt). The merging of different genres had been one of the most important device, used by women writers to cope with an open idea of identity: for example, A. S. Byatt's work is marked by a constant interplay of fictional genres (*Possession: a Romance,* 1990), whereas Angela Carter is regarded as the representative of a new subgenre, the rewriting of fables and fairy tales, which she 'revisits' through gender concerns (*The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, 1979)." (Post-war British novels, 30)

Angela Carter was known for her use of traditional literary forms, coupled with romance along with realism and infused with elements that differ based on the nature of the tale told. She was a writer who shifted between the realms of imaginative prose and profane themes which added to her literary consciousness and acceptance. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) is a movement towards fantasy which moves beyond the society known which is dominated by men. Interesting after thoughts was what she was known for, as she reworked the age old fairy tales from a

women's point of view or for a stronger term, the feminist point of view. From the "Little Red Riding Hood" to "Beauty and the Beast", each one had received a changed feminist perspective. The stories told by Carter have a modern setting and greatly deal with women's role defined by society, family, relations, sexuality and even age.

Jeanette Winterson is a known realist who plays with myth, mysticism, politics, deconstruction of traditions and postmodern styles in her fiction. She is a writer of both realist fiction and factual fiction, which dwells in self-consciousness. The issues touched upon in her literature indulge in contemporary issues with an intertwining of other literary and non-literary genres. *Written on the Body* (1992) is one of her best works which is about the understanding of the body and the emotional state. Identity is not questioned and is in the background giving the readers a deeper understanding of the self, moving away from the fixed roles that the individual holds. "Written on the Body, breaks down the received ideas of gender, love, sex and sexuality, time and space. It is at once a love story, a scientific investigation and a philosophical meditation on the body, as both physical entity and objective correlative of our innermost selves -- our bodies as our embodiment." (Post- war British novels, 32-33).

A.S. Byatt works on the artistic process and offers an intellectual yet psychedelic representation of the world at the time. *Possession: A Romance* (1990) is a combination of a romantic piece along with the thrills of a thriller. "Through its paradoxically symmetrical and at times comically extravagant plot, Possession offers oblique comments not only on the 'realism' of Victorian fiction, but also on the more universal human desire for coherent narrative. The novel, after its kaleidoscope of poetry, letters and contemporary literary criticism, is brought to a conventional resolution by an old-fashioned omniscient narrator." (Post-war British novels, 33-34)

Realist Fiction is a genre consisting of stories that could have actually occurred to people or animals in a believable setting. These stories resemble real life, and fictional characters within these stories react similarly to real people. Stories that are classified as realistic fiction have plots that highlight social or personal events or issues that mirror contemporary life, such as falling in love, marriage, finding a job, divorce, alcoholism, etc. Realistic fiction stories tend to take place in the present or recent past. Characters are involved in events that could happen. They live in places that could be or are real. The characters seem like real people with real issues solved in a realistic way. The events portrayed in realistic fiction conjure questions that a reader could face in everyday life. This fiction is called as "art".

Source: https://libguides.merrimack.edu/RealisticFiction

Factual and fictional narrative are generally defined as a pair of opposites. However, there is no consensus as to the rationale of this opposition. Three major competing definitions have been proposed: (a) semantic definition: factual narrative *is* referential whereas fictional narrative has no reference (at least not in "our" world); (b) syntactic definition: factual narrative and fictional narrative can be distinguished by their logico-linguistic syntax; (c) pragmatic definition: factual narrative advances *claims* of referential truthfulness whereas fictional narrative advances no such claims. One could add a fourth definition, narratological in nature: in factual narrative author and narrator are the same person whereas in fictional narrative the narrator (who is part of the fictional world) differs from the author (who is part of the world we are living in) (Genette [1991] 1993: 78–88). But this fourth definition is better seen as a consequence of the pragmatic definition of fiction.
Source: http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/56.html

8.5 SUMMING UP

The Post-war novels can be categorized for holding onto realism and creating a synthesis with fantasy, autobiography and historiography. This element of the post-war novels is also seen in the post-modern writings. The reason for this synthesis is been discussed and critiqued by many over the years. The pragmatic approach to the

world of Literature is seen as a good reason followed by the popularity of the audio-visual narrative media. The post- war novels brought in changes to the literary Diaspora and caused repels that were seen for years.

"The post-war English novel is polyphonic, as it gathers many different voices. If there is anything that defines the English novel of the last fifty years it is its protean essence: thanks to its flexibility, the novel can now accommodate the experiences of different social classes, different genders, different nationalities and different literary projects, from realism to experimentalism.

The novel is certainly conditioned by the market forces that dictate literary fashions and make or break literary reputations, yet there is still room in the book market for very personal projects, provided they find enough readers to sustain them.

Contemporary novels in English do not seem to be at the ideological centre of contemporary culture –which has shifted to the media– but in all their variety they provide a comprehensive, highly critical and often pessimistic portrait of the realities and the fantasies that shape the world of the individual in the late twentieth century." (Alegre, 19-20).

8.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. "The post-war English novel is polyphonic". Explain

2. Write a brief note on the women writers of post-war era and their concerns in novel writing.

3. Write a note on the Experimentalist novelists of post-war period.

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UNIT 9: READING LUCKY JIM

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall have a discussion on the most popular novel of Kingsley Amis, namely, *Lucky Jim*. While reading this unit, you must remember that it is the post war British scenario that the novel has captured. The story of this novel is set in the 1950s and represented the British society of that time. This date must be noted because it was the period when the effects of the World War II were not just an echo but present in various forms in the society.

A discussion on the life and works of Kingsley Amis shall provide you with a better understanding of the text. Like the protagonist of his novel, Amis was also a teacher and records say that even Amis joined the army. So, you will be able to relate the text with its author after reading his biography.

However, some basic knowledge of post-war English fiction has to be kept in mind while reading the text. As mentioned earlier, the War had a devastated effect on the functioning of the society; here our concern is the British society. It was the period when class division persisted in the British society to a large extent. Kingsley Amis, by focussing his attention towards the academic world, renewed a sense of interest in the audience towards the politics of class hierarchy in educational

institutions like a university in particular and in the society as a whole. The most notable of all the changes after the World War in the field of education was "The Education Act of 1944". The British scenario completely changed with the implementation of this act. Primarily, this act made education free for all and concentrated on educating the working-class. This created havoc in the society as class division became prominent. The newly educated lower middle class positioned themselves against the middle class and bitterness prevailed among them for their inability to cope with the socio-cultural changes. As we read the novel, we come over the protagonist who expressed his disgust at the prevailing educational system which though catered to the lower middle class and working class yet produced a barrier in the society. It is in such a context that we are to read the novel.

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit introduces you to one of the finest novels of Kingsley Amis, namely, *Lucky Jim.* We will at first deal with the life and works of the novelist and then proceed towards the comprehensive analysis of the novel. We will also look into the genre of campus novel to which this particular novel belongs and at the same time attempt a critical reading of the same.

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- analyse the social context of the period in which the novel was written;
- learn the life and works of Kingsley Amis and situate him as one of the prominent voices of modern literature;
- acquaint yourself with the detail summary of the novel

9.2 KINGSLEY AMIS: LIFE AND WORKS

Kingsley Amis was an English novelist and poet whose contribution in the field of literature is worth appreciating. As a novelist, Amis has created a legacy with his involvement with the genre of campus fiction. In his novels, Kingsley Amis

presented the social condition of post war Britain. He has been associated with the group called "The Movement". The writers associated with this group are known for their rootedness in realism. Amis, like the other 'Movement' writers, critiqued the class structure that marked that period of the 1950s. The following subsections shall deal with the life and works of Kingsley Amis.

Born in London, Kingsley Amis (1922-1995) was a teacher by profession and earned fame as a poet, novelist and critic. His father, William Robert Amis was a clerk and his mother was Rosa Annie. On the educational aspect, it needs mention that Amis was academically very sound. This can be proved by his scholarships which he received twice during his student days. He received his education at the City of London School and shifted to St. John's College the very next year. His friendship with Philip Larkin, one of the notable writers of the twentieth century, bloomed during his stay at Oxford. Amis tasted varied choices in life in terms of his profession. Firstly, he worked in the army, then he served as a lecturer in English at Swansea and then at Cambridge. He also was associated with Princeton University as a Visiting Fellow. By the time he returned from the army during the World War II he made up his mind to become a writer. His contribution in the field of literature is noteworthy.

Kingsley Amis married Miss Bardwell in 1948 and they had three children. One of his children, Martin Amis, has followed the footsteps of his father and became a novelist in his own right. Unfortunately, Kingsley Amis broke up with his wife after meeting Elizabeth Jane Howard. She was also a novelist and they moved together in the northern part of London until they separated in 1983. Ultimately, Amis joined his first wife who was staying with her third husband then and lived with them till 1995 when he died of ailment. He was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium.

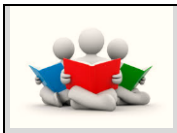
You must note that this great man led a distinguished life and was knighted in 1990. It must be mentioned that he was temporarily associated with the Communist Party when he was still at Oxford. British society during the 1940s called for a political involvement and the atmosphere at Oxford also brought forth the same. However, his

political thoughts were later directed for the betterment of the Labour Party. As an individual, Amis enjoyed drinking and writing simultaneously.

As you have been informed that Kingsley Amis was keen to be a writer, he had experimented with different kinds of writing, be it in terms of genre or techniques in writing. The collections of poetry that he is credited with are *Bright November* and *A Frame of Mind* which were published in 1947 and 1953 respectively. However, it was the publication of *Lucky Jim* that established Kingsley Amis as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. With its novel concept of setting and reflection upon the British society, *Lucky Jim* has been able to capture the literary scenario by reflecting upon the academic aspects of British society during the twentieth century. This novel has been intended as a satire on the society and the academics. The recognition of this novel found its way with the Somerset Maugham Award that was conferred to Amis. There are several other novels to his credit revolving around varied genres like campus fiction, detective fiction, science fiction, etc. His works include the novels, *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955), *I Like it Here* (1958), *Take a Girl Like You* (1960), etc.

Amis' fame chiefly rested in his first novel *Lucky Jim*, the novel under discussion. With this novel, he was tagged as a writer of comedy. As already mentioned, this novel was one of the first campus novels written by an English novelist where the hub is none other than an academic institution. Published in 1954, this novel brought him instant fame and appreciation. You would be interested to know that Kingsley Amis was also fascinated with detective stories and hence produced novels like *Colonel Sun* in 1968. It was written under the pseudonym Robert Markham. Apart from this Amis has been later attributed with many other novels in the genre of detective fiction. Some other works of this genre comprises novels as *James Bond Dossier* and *Every Man His Own 007*, both of which were published in 1965.

LET US STOP AND THINK



Apart from Kingsley Amis, the other novelists who have been associated with campus fiction are Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge. Bradbury is known for *Eating People is Wrong* whereas David Lodge who is generally credited for his contribution in the field of literary criticism is famous for his trilogy, namely, *Changing Places*, *Small World* and *Nice Work*

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Briefly comment on Kingsley Amis' association with the group called "The Movement".

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2. Where did Kingsley Amis receive his education?

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3. What was the award that was conferred upon Kingsley Amis for his novel Lucky Jim?

9.3 READING *LUCKY JIM*

The novel owed its origin in Kingsley Amis' visit to Leicester University and was finally triggered by the establishment of Redbrick University in England. The first hand experiences of Kingsley Amis provided the novel with an authentic picture of the ways and manners in which the educational society ran during the early twentieth century. As the title suggests, this novel tells the situations and events in the life of a professor, Jim Dixon who teaches in a provincial university. Amis' own involvement with this profession had contributed a lot towards the development of this character. With Jim as his mouthpiece, Amis attempted to satirise the policies of an academe. The learners must keep in mind the fact that since most of the events occur within the campus of the university, it has thus been called as a campus novel. Though before Amis, fiction involving campuses already persisted, this novel has been able to set a trend of campus fiction by dealing lightly with serious concerns. Mention may be made of other British novelists like C.P. Snow who through his novels like *The Masters* attempted to create campus stories; however, his' was basically a serious dwelling into this arena. As quoted by David Lodge in his "Introduction" to the novel, "Lucky Jim was the first British campus novel (as distinct from the Varsity novel, about the goings-on of young people at Oxbridge) — the first to take as its central character a lecturer at a provincial university, and to find a rich seam of comic and narrative material in that small world". (Lodge vii)

Kingsley Amis dealt comically with this genre and explored a novel trend which showed its influence on his successors like Lodge and Bradbury. Our concern in this unit is the novel by Amis which is titled as *Lucky Jim*. Let us consider the

novel in detail and relate ourselves with the main concerns and ideas that it portrayed. Structurally (following the Penguin edition), *Lucky Jim* comprised a total of twenty-five units.

The speciality of the university novels like *Lucky Jim* lies in its representation of problems and concerns not only within the setting but also in its embracing of the social and political conditions of that time. Though termed as a campus fiction, *Lucky Jim* explored issues both within and outside the campus, intermingling personal with the social.

The protagonist of the novel is Jim Dixon, a Professor of a provincial university in the department of History. He is shown to be a struggling Professor who set to establish himself both professionally and individually. His short-term experience as a Professor in the university led him realise that his job can only be saved with the approval of the Head of his Department, Professor Ned Welch. Hence, the novel is mostly about his experiences and challenges faced within the campus and particularly as an academician. Next, let us discuss the novel in greater detail.

Chapter 1 exposed Jim Dixon's association with Professor Welch as well as his emotional attachment with one of his colleagues, Margaret. Welch's **bourgeois** mannerisms induce Jim's irritation. Unfortunately, no other way left to make his job secured, Jim had to be excessively obedient to his senior. Jim's ignorance to match the lifestyle of his senior evokes sympathy among the readers. Through this, Amis aimed to represent the under-privileged intellectuals belonging to the lower middle class who had to work hard in order to secure a respectable position in the society. Here, a contrast between the two professors was brought into focus in terms of their status as well as physical charm. In imitating his senior colleague, Jim Dixon fell many times to unlikely situations; flattering Mr. Welch became a part of his life at the university. All this was done by him to get the favour of the Professor. The humourous side of Amis gets reflected as Jim Dixon pretended or we can say tried to pretend as Professor Welch. At all times, he tried to imitate his manners. The next part of this chapter captured Dixon's thoughts as he was to meet his colleague,

Margaret Peel who had a history of attempting suicide with 'sleeping pills'. Amis also highlighted the scenario of the academe where professors like Dixon "read as little as possible of any given book" (16-17) but imagined to talk about his discipline as "talked about in Oxford and Cambridge quadrangles" (8). And it is where the irony is captured. The chapter comes to a close with Dixon as the chosen one from the History department to deliver a lecture on "Merrie England".

In depicting Jim Dixon's **rebuff** at Professor Welch's attitudes and habits, Kingsley Amis threw light on his own contempt at the bourgeois lives that seemed to him hollow and superficial. Therefore, it was no surprise that with the publication of this novel, Amis was considered one among the writers of "Angry Young Men" group. The other writers included in this group comprised John Osborne and John Wain among others. All these writers shared a common feeling of **contempt** at the social, cultural and political conditions of the early twentieth century. Most of their protagonists are educated individuals like Jim Dixon (in *Lucky Jim*) and Jimmy Porter (in Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*) who strive to find meaning out of their lives in the prevailing rigidity of their respective societies which provided very less scope to such middle class intellects/person.

Chapter 2 related the past incidents in Margaret's life. Her suicide attempt was the outcome of failure in her love affair with Catchpole. The sympathetic nature of Mrs. Welch had been praised by Margaret with whose help she had recovered from such a situation. By this time, you must have noted Margaret's personality– "small, thin, and bespectacled with bright make-up" (18), and one who is prone to nervous breakdown. Her immediate interest in Jim Dixon, whom she called 'James' after her recent break up with Catchpole portrayed her as a figure who cannot stand on her own and always needed attention and support from others. While Dixon was in the company of Margaret, ironically he found himself more inclined to the barmaid and thought "how much he liked her and had in common with her" (25). Dixon imagined escaping from such a world that is full of pretensions and superficiality.

Chapter 3 focussed on Jim Dixon's meeting and discussion with Mr. Michie,

"an ex-service student who'd commanded a tank troop at Anzio while Dixon was an R. A. F. corporal in western Scotland" (27). Intellectual discussions were less favoured by Dixon who felt discomfort to converse with Mr. Michie. However, from the little conversation they made, it became clear that Dixon's area of study was "Medieval Life and Culture" (28). The acceptance of his article on 'shipbuilding' for publication created a faded sense of hope in Dixon. He discussed this issue with Mr. Alfred Beesley "who was a member of the College's English Department" (30). The expectations of Dixon in the light of contemporary British society are highlighted in this chapter. Also, an overt reference to the Second World War is implicit in this chapter. Just because medieval history was a soft option, Dixon specialised in it. It can be meant that his interest in medieval history is to be seen as mandatory for securing his job. He also pointed out how it had helped him to obtain a job by overthrowing an Oxford candidate "who **mucked** himself up at the interview by chewing the fat about modern theories of interpretation" (33). Amis, through this novel, undoubtedly held a mirror to show how the policies ran in academics.

In order to avoid spending the Sunday in the company of the Welches, Dixon sought help of W. Atkinson, "an insurance salesman some years older than Dixon" (30). The humourous Dixon planned to get rid of this by asking Atkinson to lie on his behalf telling anyone who inquired about him that his "parents have turned up here out of the blue" (34) and that he would return at the earliest possible date. The busy city life with its humdrum is very well depicted by Amis when he talked about "trolley-buses", "columns of car winding", "fashionable dress-shops and tailors", etc. Amidst the crowd, Dixon once again lost himself in the thought of his job, his relationship prospects with Margaret and his article. His interest in Margaret is however, one of "affection and flattery" (35).

Chapter 4 introduced another colleague of Jim, Cecil Goldsmith. Always on Professor Welch's side, Dixon protested any humiliation poured by others like John Evans on his senior regarding the latter's choice of music or incapacity of singing. Welch then introduced his son Bertrand to Margaret and Dixon who seemed to lay

his interest on Bertrand's partner, Christine. In this chapter, the social side of Dixon is focussed which has to be studied in relation to his professional life. Being a part of the academic world, his notions and views, though polished on the surface, are not a match with the Welch family. The Welch family is **exaggeratedly** engaged with music to Dixon's utter dismay. The division in terms of rank and class is visually narrated in this chapter where the characters of the novel engaged themselves in the **madrigal** singing session at Welch's place. The culture and tastes of the characters were exposed which brings forth the hierarchical dimension in question. People of higher social class like Bertrand's girlfriend were talked about by the other characters.

The major attraction of this chapter is the 'conference of the teachers of history' that was to be held at Leeds. Dixon was also one of the preferred representatives from his institution. Here, we also heard about Gore-Urquhart, Christine's uncle, who was "a rich devotee of the arts" and "made occasional contributions to the arts sections of the weekly reviews, who had a house in the neighbourhood where persons of distinction sometimes came to stay" (47). It is clear that Christine comes of a well to do family that lays significance on arts. As we read the novel, gradually it becomes clear that Bertrand is interested in Christine's uncle and wanted to become his personal assistant. Bertrand's indifferent attitude is also bought into light when he defended the rich and wealthy people who, according to him, are exploited by the government. He, however, considered the rich as the sole benefactor of modern society to which Dixon reacted very strongly. Bertrand held the view that:

And shall I tell you what else I happen to like? Rich people. I take pride in the contemporary unpopularity of the statement. And why do I like them? Because they're charming, because they're generous, because they've learnt to appreciate the things I happen to like myself . . . and that's why I don't want them soaked. All right? (52)

The bitter irony of Dixon is that even though he was aware of the defects in

his professional life, throughout the novel he strived to embark upon such a profession. Dixon seemed to be fighting for something that he hated the most– pretension and artificiality of the upper middle class. Kingsley Amis threw his comic vision into the novel when the various characters meet and people fight over issues as class, culture, sophistication, etc. It is indeed, Amis' satiric dealing of the above serious issues **subtly** by juxtaposing grave issues through **trivial** conversation. After all, Welch's aim to invite Jim Dixon to the musical function was to acquaint the latter with a sense of culture that he lacked. Rather than being lucky, Jim Dixon was succumbed by his own ideas of class and culture and hence it reminded us of the image of an 'angry young men'.

While writing this novel, Amis might have been influenced by William Cooper who is known for his diversion from the conventional writers in approaching the practical problems faced by the people through his writings. Hence, rather than being experimental, Kingsley Amis joined Cooper's legacy by dwelling upon realistic issues that predominated British society of that time.

Chapter 5 is significant for the exposure of Dixon's plain personality because most of the actions took place in his unconscious state of mind. Disturbed by the fight with Bertrand, Dixon gets over drunk in a local pub. In a condition not very stable, Dixon saw Bertrand and Carol Goldsmith in private moments while he struggled to reach Welch's driveway. He, however, promised himself to keep it a secret for the well being of others. Dixon's struggle to reach his bedroom is well articulated in the text below: "[a]fter a moment, he felt as if he were heeling over backwards, and the pit of his stomach seemed to swell so as to start enclosing his head within it" (55). It would be interesting to note that "his bedroom could only be approached by way of a large bathroom" and since it was occupied he stood there waiting. Just at that moment Margaret opened her door to find Dixon waiting near the bathroom. She rather invited him and led him straight away into her bedroom. Dixon was pleased with Margaret for extending him a helping hand and was delighted by her act of putting 'on some lipstick for him'. As a result, they began to enjoy each other's

company up till the point where limitations were required of them. To his utter surprise, Margaret rebuked him afterwards and asked his leave. Dixon battled within him the thought of Margaret's attitude towards him and on reaching his bedroom, fell asleep. Action, rather than words of praise, marked this chapter. Till this point in the novel, we found Dixon blindly following Welch just for an assurance of his job. But here, it can be interpreted that his actions spoke louder than words. For example, in deciding to leave the party of Welch or in his approach towards Margaret or by drinking at the pub, Jim Dixon seemed to set for a search for his identity long lost.

In **Chapter 6**, Dixon found out that "[a] large, irregular area of the turned-back part of the sheet was missing' (62) and on realising that his cigarettes were the cause of it, he felt disgusted. He could not even talk about this to his hostess, Mrs. Welch. Fearing any disappointment on the part of his hostess, he did not admit his fault. His imagination of escaping the situation with Atkinson's help aroused a hope in him. But unsuccessful in his attempt, Dixon found his way into the breakfast room. Christine was eating at that time and Dixon "noted with mild surprise how much and how quickly she was eating" (67). On being asked the reason for his upset mind, Dixon told Christine all he remembered about the previous night and the burnt bed-sheet. Dixon admired her 'unmusical' laugh while relating the incidents. Compared with her attitude the previous night at Welch's musical party, Dixon began to think of Christine rather as an object of admiration. Her 'slightly irregular' teeth added to her natural beauty. Her beauty was one that Dixon praised from distant but after their conversation regarding the burnt sheets, Dixon realised that her beauty was one he could dare to love. Dixon is more impressed by Christine's attitude as she helped him cover up the loss done to Welch's household. Just as the two of them shared a good laugh over the concealment of the burnt sheets, Margaret opened the door and inquired about the situation.

Chapter 7 is a sequence to the preceding chapter. Dixon tried to relate the whole situation to Margaret who dismissed it as "rather silly and childish" (75). However, for the first time in the novel Dixon laughed heartily and considered his

own situation as ‘funny’. Margaret, insecure after witnessing Dixon with Christine, complained him of his behaviour the previous night. If we examine the whole episode of burning bedsheet, Dixon’s attempt to hide it, seeking Christine’s help to conceal it— all these can be said to lead towards the sudden change of Dixon’s views regarding Christine whom he thought to be indifferent till that point. His pleasure in discovering Christine’s another side is well reflected in the lines below:

How well, really, the Callaghan girl had behaved, in spite of her stand-offishness at times, and how sound her suggestion had been. That, and her laughing fit, proved that she wasn’t as ‘dignant’ as she looked. (78)

Dixon’s prayers were answered with Atkinson’s phone call. We have already discussed his plans with Atkinson in Chapter 3. After a few minutes of idle chat with Atkinson, Dixon gave a final touch to his plan and announced his companions about the sudden arrival of his parents in the town. He therefore required their leave in order to join his parents. The most notable aspect in this chapter is Dixon’s undiscovered feelings for Christine. This is initiated by his comparison of Christine’s spontaneous manners with Margaret’s pretentious character for she seemed to greet the people with a “long, exhaled, downward **glissando**” that appeared forceful on her part.

In **Chapter 8**, Dixon was called upon by Professor Welch to his office to have a discussion upon the possibility of Jim Dixon’s article that was going to be published in a journal edited by L.S. Caton. Welch informed Dixon of the “shady” character of his publisher. Welch was even aware of Caton’s “forged testimonials” which led the latter to lose the chair at Abertawe. Regarding Dixon’s possible publication, Welch advised him to inquire the details about the same from Caton. It must be noted that a reference to the War has been made early in chapter 3. But here, the effect of the War on the younger generation is quite obvious when Professor Welch admitted to Dixon’s situation as thus: “Yes, I know a lot of young chaps find some difficulty in settling down to their first job. It’s only to be expected, after a war, after all” (83). This statement by Welch very well put forward the social and economic problems of those times.

Gathering the courage needed, Dixon spoke to Professor Welch about his job. Welch reminded him that it was a contract signed for two years. To this, Dixon expressed his fear of being fired before his contract. Unable to get any confirmation from Welch and cursing himself for not being able to state his problems clearly to his Head of the Department, he entered the Common Room and saw Margaret beside whom "[a] large envelope full of examination scripts" (88) was placed. It was the time of examinations and hence lecturers were relatively free. Margaret apologised for her rude manners and forgiving her, Dixon invited her for a lunch. From Margaret, he learnt about the Summer Ball and also Bertrand's intention of accompanying Carol Goldsmith to the Ball rather than Christine.

Chapter 9 is significant for the comic episode of the phone call by Dixon in disguise. He was asked by the college porter to receive a call on behalf of Professor Welch. He later found out that it was Christine who was at the other end of the line. Christine told him that her uncle Gore-Urquhart has arrived in the town and that she may be able to plan a meeting of Bertrand with her uncle, probably at the Summer Ball. She showed her concern for Bertrand and unable to locate him, she had to call the Professor. Dixon assured her that he would himself inquire of Welch and convey the message. Dixon became aware of the fact that the three pretty girls, "Miss O'Shaughnessy, Miss McCorquodale, Miss ap Rhys Williams" (97) were not interested in the syllabi of Dixon's special subject except Michie. He almost seemed to lose the job and thus without much hesitation rang at the Welch residence. What followed is one of the most interesting scenes in the novel. Jim Dixon, disguised as Alfred S. Beesley, called from the phone at the Common Room. Mrs. Welch received his call and on being asked, Dixon said "[w]ithout stopping to think, he said, distorting his voice by protruding his lips into an O" (99) that he had called from the *Evening Post*, a local newspaper and wanted to talk to Bertrand about his arts. Next he began a telephonic interview with Bertrand about his arts for the newspaper. Dixon further mentioned that this interview was initiated by Christine and that a conversation with her will clarify Bertrand's doubts. The success over Dixon's little

deception was followed by "a long trombone-blast of anarchistic laughter" (103). Dixon's negativity led its way through the deceptive phone call to Mrs Welch and Bertrand. He was sure that by this or that means, he was about to lose his job. Dixon was, hence, relieved by his own act of deception.

Chapter 10 opened at the Summer Ball and marked Dixon's uneasiness at dancing. Dixon marked the naturally high culture that Christine carried within her, be it in her sense of dressing or others. Whereas the rest of the women in the Ball including Margaret "look like an **assemblage** of **granulated** half-tones" (107); theirs' was a self-imposed kind of culture. Even Dixon observed Christine's uncle who "was not nearly as spectacularly 'faultless' as might have been predicted" (109). Class difference was overtly present in presenting the high class people like Christine and Gore-Urquhart on the one hand and the Welches, Bertrand and Margaret on the other, who strived hard to be of high class. From this chapter, Jim Dixon's luck seemed to rise with Gore-Urquhart's new found interest upon him.

Chapter 11 also narrated the incidents of the Ball. Along with Christine and Bertrand, Dixon left for the bar. It is, indeed very funny to witness Dixon controlling "his features to stop them doing what they wanted to do and breaking out into an imbecile smirk of excitement and pride" (113). Christine and Dixon's closeness is represented by their dance at the Ball. But Dixon's decision to hide about Bertrand's initial plan to bring Carol at the Ball denoted Dixon's wise nature as well as his character. His intention was not to ruin the relationship between Christine and Bertrand. Similarly, most of the actions in **Chapter 12** accounted the events that took place at the Ball. This time, it was Carol Goldsmith who with her straightforward personality attracter the readers. Even Dixon admired Carol for the words spoken by her as it laid bare his own feelings regarding the whole situation that he was in. Particularly speaking, his unstated feelings for Christine were noticed by Carol who directly admitted of having interest in Bertrand. Rather than creating confusion, she suggested Dixon to spoke aloud his feelings for Christine. Carol also warned Dixon regarding his relationship with Margaret who is interpreted as someone weak and

dependent upon others: "[t]hrow her a lifebelt and she will pull you under" (121). This chapter brought out Dixon's self realisation. The way things worked was not what Dixon perceived to be nor did he have a proper understanding of other characters. This is overtly portrayed in the following quote from the text when Dixon questioned Carol of hiding her secret affair with Bertrand to which she answered: "I would't dream of doing anything behind his back" (123) and hence "Dixon felt silent again, reflecting, not for the first time, that he knew absolutely nothing whatsoever about other people or their lives" (123). This is quite interesting because Dixon's encounter with the realistic side of life helped him to improve his thinking for the better. Both of them then went on to join Gore-Urquhart, Margaret and Bertrand in the bar. Encouraged by Carol, Dixon approached Christine by telling her to accompany him and also promised Christine that he would drop her at the Welches' residence safely. Without being sure if she would join him, Dixon went out to call a taxi.

Chapter 13 to 14 provoked laughter by depicting Dixon's situation when he did not find a taxi after several minutes of waiting. Since this is a novel where "luck" found prominence, hence a taxi had to arrive by luck. It, however, came for Professor Barclay who ordered for it. Pretending to be Barclay himself, Dixon managed to get the taxi. The taxi episode added another exposition of Dixon's character before Christine. Previously, she shared two other funny moments with Dixon— hiding the burnt bed-sheet and the prank phone call at Welch's residence. It is to be noted that Dixon managed to be witty in all these situations and in turn, Christine also never seem to mind his deeds. Dixon's romantic side also got highlighted in this chapter and "[f]or once in his life Dixon resolved to bet on his luck" (136). As an individual, it is seen that Dixon had developed by holding on to his wishes and by throwing out any 'hypocrisy' on his part. Towards the end of this chapter Dixon "felt secure" and realised that "[d]oing what you wanted to do was the only training, and the only preliminary, needed for doing more of what you wanted to do" (146).Though it became clear for the readers that Dixon wanted Christine, he was himself not very

sure of his intention towards her. It was because though Christine was physically present beside Dixon in the taxi, yet it was Bertrand whom she loved.

Chapter 15 marked a turning point for Dixon. He was still in the process of self-discovery. He expressed his feelings for Christine and their closeness also developed, leading them to be more intimate. Dixon's honest exchange of thoughts with Christine, when compared with those of Margaret, revealed an important side of his personality. He was impressed by Christine's response of sharing the taxi fare and compared it with Margaret's insistence on her drinks be paid by Dixon. Dixon's comparison is, however, proof of his indecisiveness. Dixon might have thought that comparing them would lead to his clarity of thought regarding both of them as well as his relationship with them.

Chapter 16 is the starting point of the "Merrie England lecture" (153) that will ultimately decide upon Dixon's luck. However, here, Dixon faced Margaret directly and untied himself of any kind of emotional relationship with her. For the first time, Dixon put his thoughts straightforwardly before Margaret rather than throwing a 'life jacket' for her. Though he panicked by witnessing Margaret's hysterical fit, yet he managed to control the situation and was very rational in his outlook. As we read the novel, it can be seen that after every succeeding chapter, Dixon had grown into a more matured and reasonable person. Also, the kind of frankness on the part of Dixon that is overt in this chapter has not been found before.

Chapter 17 provided a good example of the corruption at Dixon's workplace. Professor Welch asked Dixon to write a lecture that Welch was to deliver the next day. This demanded a lot of hard work from Dixon: "Dixon now had some of the basic facts clear. He was being asked to fill certain gaps in Welch's knowledge of the history of peasant arts and crafts in the county. . ." (173). In fact, many professors like Welch are there who pressurise their subordinates for selfish motives. As a result, Dixon had no choice but to search the library for information regarding Welch's topic. As a whole, at this point in the novel, Dixon seemed to be overburdened both emotionally and academically.

In **Chapter 18**, Dixon sensed a faded hope of making his job secure by helping Welch out in penning down his lecture. To add to his confused state of mind, Prof. Welch invited him for dinner. However, on reaching home, Welch cancelled the dinner with Dixon for he had fixed some other plan before. Unfortunately for Dixon, at Welch's place, he had to finally face Mrs. Welch and had to apologise for the burnt bed sheet. Mrs. Welch and her son Bertrand, directed their anger towards Jim Dixon and further inquired about the phone call from the "*Evening Post*." It was doubted that Dixon made the call. But one must note Dixon's smooth handling of the situation "by pretending misunderstanding" (183). Once again, Dixon's mixed feeling are portrayed; as he was losing hope of getting Christine, he asked Margaret to join him to the picture. It must be noted that Welch was interested "in the English tradition" (176) unlike Dixon. While reading the novel, you must have observed Dixon's frustration regarding his own class when "he experienced nothing worse than a small rage at the thought of little louse like that having a flat in London. Why hadn't he himself had parents whose money so far exceeded their sense as to install their son in London? The very thought of it was a torment" (178).

Chapter 19 shall lead the learners to the following three points– Dixon's disappointment at Christine's rejection of him, his unsuccessful talk with his publisher and a phone call from Catchpole. The action in this chapter chiefly revolved around these three points mentioned above. By now, his "Merrie England lecture" was almost ready. Till **Chapter 20,** Dixon was not seen participating in any kind of violent acts. Bertrand was informed of Dixon and Christine's secret meeting by Johns. Thus, in this chapter, he and Bertrand began to argue over the issue and ultimately landed up with a bad fight:

Dixon stepped aside, but his feet slipped and before he could recover Bertrand's fist had landed with some force high up on his right cheekbone. A little shaken, but undismayed, Dixon stood still and, while Bertrand was still off his balance after delivering his blow, hit him very hard indeed on the larger and more convoluted of his ears. Bertrand fell down . . . (209)

As the fight ended, Michie visited Dixon telling him about his special subject and wishing him luck for his lecture on 'Merrie England'. Dixon learnt from him that he was the only one who had opted for this subject. Dixon, however, began to make preparations for the lecture at night.

In **Chapter 21**, Gore-Urquhart and Dixon talked about the absurdity of his lecture; it might possibly bring him good luck and "save me getting the sack" (214). It could be made out by now that he was much interested in Dixon and asked about his schooling. Dixon drank more than was required. The hall was full and pertaining to his nervous state, Dixon did not refuse the 'Scotch whisky' offered by Gore-Urquhart at the last moment. Dixon stood there at the platform for the lecture but "found that he felt rather drunk" (221)

The most important aspect of the novel is the lecture. **Chapter 22** provided the detailed representation of the lecture episode. Being drunk, at the opening of his lecture, Dixon imitated Professor Welch and then the Principal. Then unconsciously he began to speak in a "northern accent as the least likely to give offence or to resemble anybody else's voice" (225). It was humourous on Dixon's part to have asked Atkinson pretend 'faint' if the situation was out of control at the lecture. Although he could win over his accent, Dixon in his half-conscious state of mind found it impossible to hide what lay "inside of his head" (225). Therefore, by inculcating a tone that was 'sarcastic' Dixon read his lecture in the bitterest fashion possible by "spitting out the syllables like curses, leaving mispronunciations, omissions. . ." (226). Dixon's character was fully exposed through his lecture. The frustrations and remorse that was hidden suddenly burst out through the lecture. His lecture was originally meant to impress Prof. Welch but ultimately it ended up with the contempt of scholarship as well as his job.

Chapter 23 marked the changing fate of Dixon. He was to discontinue his job immediately after the lecture. On one of the Italian journals, he found an article by Dr. L. S. Caton. He was shocked to see that the "article was either a close paraphrase or a translation of Dixon's own original article" (229). At this, Dixon

furiously reflected how things work in the academe. After his informal farewell from the College, Dixon sought to revenge upon Johns for ruining his date with Christine by spying on them. Since Jim Dixon brought luck with him, he got the job that Bertrand was trying for. However, ironically, it was his "disqualifications" (234) that changed his fate. He got the job that required "sort of private secretarial work" (233) for Gore-Urquhart with a handsome salary and a life in London that Dixon so much desired. However, the thought of Christine disturbed Dixon internally and was jealous of Bertrand who "still had Christine" (234).

Chapter 24 began with Catchpole and Dixon's meeting at the pub where Margaret's character was discussed. Catchpole informed Dixon that Margaret "feed on emotional tension" (235) and that they were never involved as lovers. After getting facts about Margaret clear from their conversation, Dixon felt uncomfortable to end his relationship with Margaret because "she had fixed herself too firmly in his life and his emotions to be pushed out of them by mere recital of facts" (238). Atkinson informed him that Christine called upon him and added that she will leave the town by train at 1:50; Christine perhaps had some message to convey to Dixon but he was given a choice whether he wanted to meet her. Reaching the train station on time, Dixon felt confused because the conductor informed him that the train had already left at 1:40. However, at a distance halted Welch's car and Christine stepped out of it. In **Chapter 25**, the last chapter of the novel, everything was in favour of Dixon, making him the luckiest of all. Christine broke up with Bertrand after Carol Goldsmith told her about Bertrand's secret affair with her. Christine was amuse to learn that Dixon got the job that "Bertrand thought he was going to get" and was joyful to listen to the ending of Margaret episode in Dixon's life. As the climax of a happy ending demanded, they saw Welch and his family outside a tea shop. Dixon finally rebuffed Mrs. Welch and Bertrand by "a **howl** of laughter" (250). The novel ended with the Welches driving away and Jim Dixon's victory over them as well as his fate.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How did Jim Dixon manage to get the job of Gore-Urquhart's personal secretary?

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2. What, according to you, does the Merrie England lecture by Dixon signify? Discuss.

9.4 SUMMING UP

By your reading of this unit, you have become familiar with the life and works of Kingsley Amis. You are now able to point out the themes of the novel *Lucky Jim*. Some of the themes may be outlined as socio-cultural division in British society, class hierarchy and education, the comic vision of Kingsley Amis, role of satire, etc. among others. The summary has helped you to broaden your understanding not only of the novel, but also of post war British society as realised by Amis. You have become familiarised with the various characters that encompass the novel. These characters have been intentionally brought by Amis to represent different social class of the British society. To conclude, this unit has been designed to arouse a sense of

interest in you about contemporary British fiction, particularly post-war fiction, and encourage you to read more of this kind.

9.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How did the 'Education Act of 1944' affect the society?

2. What is a Campus Fiction? What is the speciality of Kingsley Amis as a writer of campus fiction?

3. Describe the literature of the post-war period with particular reference to Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim.

9.6 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 10: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Reading of the storyline of *Lucky Jim* in the previous unit must have helped you to learn the situations and happenings taken place in various course of action in the novel's context. This reading will also help you to understand why and how this novel has set a standard for several other writers in its depiction of the campus or academicians. However, Amis, in this novel came as a sweet surprise for his readers because it is very different from the post war writings in its comic depiction of the "situation and style" (Lodge v). Though a comedy, this novel also has a serious side to it which shall be discussed gradually as we read the unit.

Apart from this, in this unit several significant issues of the novel *Lucky Jim* have been focussed so as to give you a fair idea of the context, characters, reception as well as the summary. The following sections of the unit will help you clarify the important themes of the novel along with other important facets.

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to understand

- the novel *Lucky Jim* with particular reference to its themes and characterisation;
- the basic features of the 'campus novel' and read this novel as one of its kind;
- the literature of post-war period as a whole keeping Lucky Jim as a reference.

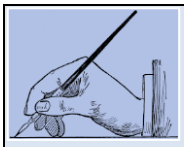
10.2 MAJOR CHARACTERS

As far as characterisation is concerned, the novelist has incorporated varied but a limited number of characters belonging to different social strata. His aim in this novel is to highlight the follies that gulped the British society in general. As this novel belonged to the genre of campus fiction, the characters naturally are either Professors or students chiefly. In his characterisation, Amis has given a comic touch so as to make the novel "funny". The characters ranged from aristocratic to lower middle class, from "neurotic" to boastful and from pretentious to refined ones. The protagonist of the novel, Jim Dixon, evoked laughter with the shabby nuances that he made throughout the narrative. As the novel began, he found himself as a junior lecturer of a provincial university in the department of History. He has a past of working in the army during the War. Immediately after the War was over, he got a job at the university. However, unfortunately it was a contractual one and hence most of his actions were directed for securing financial security. Amis has portrayed Jim Dixon as an opportunistic character. As a result, his luck showed up in a fairy tale manner to give him whatever he wished for. He has been attached with two women in the novel– one is the neurotic Margaret who is emotionally dependant on others and the other is Christine whom Dixon heartily wanted. As an individual, Jim Dixon is easy going and loved to drink. There are many occasions in the novel when he is shown to be drinking. However, towards the ending, Jim Dixon was heavily drunk and his real character was exposed. Even though he tried to pretend sometimes, he

hated those who led their lives on pretension and artificiality. The novel is an account of Dixon's struggle in the academic world as well as his efforts for self-betterment. Professor Ned Welch is the head of the History department of the university where Dixon worked. Showing a hopeful prospect for Dixon's job, he had exploited Dixon for his own benefit. He and his family pretended to be of high class by laying their interests on music and refinement. Academically unsound, Welch did not have even the basic knowledge of his subject. On asking Dixon to find him book, Welch earned disrespect from the readers. His wife, Mrs. Welch lives on pretension and is an arrogant woman. She is very rude to Dixon and considered him with disappointment. However, they have two sons. The one crucial to the narrative is their older son, Bertrand. His character is filled with much hatred for the people of lower classes. Considering himself to be of high birth, Bertrand even goes on to declare his right on women as a birth right. He is the most arrogant of all the characters in the novel.

Women in this novel are focussed as powerful ones, be it Mrs. Welch or Christine or Margaret. They all are educated and hence play powerful roles. Margaret was Dixon's colleague; she was his senior though. She loved to be pampered by others, particularly men, and was emotionally weak. She is a clever woman and tried to earn sympathy from others. Her neurotic character was finally exposed and her overall impression is not likeable. Firstly, a man named Catchpole, then Dixon– these two men sympathised her and she pretended them to be her lovers. Whereas in actuality, she had no lovers; they were attached to her because they were unaware of her hysterical nature. On the other hand, Christine is a lovable character in comparison to Margaret. Throughout the text, Dixon's comparisons between them are enough to draw their characters. Christine is of higher class and unlike Margaret, do not believe on pretension. Her natural self is a contrast to the artificial and hypocritical Margaret. Dixon admired her because she was always spontaneously graceful. It was through Christine that Dixon met one of the renowned persons and this ultimately landed him up with a job as well as a life in London city which he so much desired.

Another important character who served as the medium of Dixon's good luck is Gore-Urquhart. He may perhaps be called as a 'genie' in Dixon's life. He is a popular figure and belonged to an aristocratic class. However, it is him who instigated Dixon to find his individuality at the end. Before the Merrie England lecture, they talked about the absurdity of organising such a lecture. Both of them also shared a common liking for beer. As the story of Jim Dixon ended in a 'fairy tale' manner, Gore-Urquhart's contribution towards it was immense. Dixon got the job at the end only because of him. Luckily, Jim Dixon earned the sympathy and interest of this man and got everything he wished for, even Christine.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Jot down few important features of the art of characterisation of Amis' in *Lucky Jim*.

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1. What are the salient features of the social hierarchy that existed in the British society that are depicted through the characters in *Lucky Jim*?

10.3 MAJOR THEMES

Let us discuss the various themes that are crucial to the text. However, the ones that are discussed below do not comprise all the themes. After reading the text, you may have across other themes too. Those mentioned below are significant in terms of the text and hence a discussion on them is necessary. The themes have been highlighted for grasping your attention.

Class structure

One of the significant themes of the novel is the depiction of class structure. From our reading of the novel, one thing becomes prominent that Dixon throughout the novel was a victim of class division. British society during the 1940s laid emphasis on class and this novel is replete with varied characters from different

backgrounds. In the field of education, a division existed between the different classes:

> Education provides status and opportunity, yet research has shown that there have been marked inequalities in educational opportunity. In particular, much of the research in the 1950s and 1960s has pointed to the class inequalities that exist within the educational system. (Obelkevich 138)

In the novel, the Welches are representative of the middle class who are satirically portrayed. Professor Welch is the Head of the History department. He and Mrs. Welch had two sons– Bertrand and Michel. Bertrand played an important role in the narrative. An artist by profession, Bertrand is a class conscious person. Throughout the text of the novel, he looked down upon Jim Dixon who did not belong to the same class as himself. Thus, Bertrand in particular and the Welches in general, were targeted by Kingsley Amis. Pretension only could not bring them upwards in the social hierarchy without intelligence. Gore-Urquhart and Christine on the other hand represent the upper class and hence dignified. They are refined and aristocratic people. But the middle class, whom Kingsley Amis depicted through the Welches and Margaret, lives a life of pretension and artificiality. Dixon, the protagonist belonged to a lower middle class family and his university education owed to a scholarship. He was junior to Professor Welch and sometimes had to pretend artificially 'cultured'. From the beginning, one could find Dixon's dismay at the hypocrisies of the middle class. Until his lecture, it was not overtly mentioned. In his drunken state, Dixon lectured upon the most "unmerie" state of British society. The get together and social functions in the novel displayed an overt display of class structure or hierarchy.

Realistic representation of the post war scenario

The War had turned the British society upside down. Jim Dixon is representative of the people who were the worst sufferers. Since this novel discussed issues within the academe, let us consider it. Dixon who got his university degree by a scholarship joined a provincial university. Though he did not admire Professor Welch yet he had to deal considerately with him because only he can save Dixon's

job. Dixon previously worked in the army, R. A. F., during the war. He, therefore, could not adjust himself in the academic world and felt uprooted. Rather than intelligent talks, Dixon seemed interested in beer and pretty girls. It has been mentioned in the novel that "insecurity is the greatest enemy of concentration" (84). After the war, the soldiers like Dixon, were switched to other professions and therein lies the difficulty of adapting one's thought to the changing circumstances. Dixon himself joined the university for a term of two years. His job is insecure and throughout the novel, he tried hard to impress his senior so that he gets a permanent post.

Lucky Jim as the mouthpiece of the novelist

In realistic novels like the one under discussion, the protagonist is usually the mouthpiece of the author. Here, in this novel, Jim Dixon's rebuff against the hypocrisies of the middle class is the main intention of the novelist. Like his protagonist, Kingsley Amis was educated and won a scholarship that led to his admission in a reputed institution. Another point of similarity between them is both of them dedicated their services to the army during the War. By now you must have noted the effects of War on the social structure of Britain. On top of that the various acts like the Education Act of 1944, that made education free for all, for the well being of the masses, created a negative impression upon the lower class. It widened the gap among the people. Unable to cope with the middle class, the people of lower middle class origin, like Dixon, felt a rift in their acceptance in the society. In the novel, the middle class is represented by the Welch family. They looked down upon Dixon, the newly educated representative from the lower middle class, and this in turn created "immense depression and fatigue" (225) in him. Throughout the novel Dixon tried hard to stand on the expectations of Professor Welch but in vain. You must also note that after the War was over, the army personals were recruited in various government jobs. Dixon's job at the university was related to such a notion. Kingsley Amis also threw light on the insecurities related to such jobs. As a matter

of fact, Dixon's post was contractual and thus insecure. Financially weak, he always dreamt of being born in a rich family.

The politics in an educational institution

Most of the actions in the novel took place within the campus of the university. Kingsley Amis' speciality lay in directing his importance to the teachers rather than the students. Workings of every institution have a positive side as well as a negative side to it. Amis, however, concentrated on the negative aspect. In this novel, we found that Professor Welch exploited his junior, Dixon to read on his behalf and prepare his lecture. Dixon had to be obedient to Welch for securing a permanent post at the university. At another occasion, Dixon accidently saw an article in a journal where his ideas were translated, published and credited to some other fellow, named, L. S. Caton. It must be noted that he had sent an article to Caton for a journal many days ago. On being asked repeatedly, Caton answered Dixon that publication is time-consuming and that he cannot give an estimate of when it will be published. But as it could be seen, Caton's article comprised a few translated paragraphs from Dixon's article and this is representative of the hypocrisies in the academe. Through Professors like Welch and eminent educational personalities like Caton, Amis staged his rebuff for the double standard attitude of the academicians.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Mention few examples of class differentiation that the post war social structure create in the novel.

10.4 LUCKY JIM AS A CAMPUS NOVEL

It must be mentioned that campus novels were written even before this novel by Amis. However, those were distinctively limited in terms of setting. The situations and plots were exclusively executed within the campus. What is unique about *Lucky Jim* is perhaps the representation of the frustrated minds that the World War II had impinged upon the people as a whole. Jim Dixon came of a middle class family and a scholarship got him through to complete his studies which finally established him socially as a Professor of History. Most of the incidents are a part of the campus though on several other occasions, the setting may have changed. The life in an academic world is well depicted through this campus fiction. Amis shifted his attention towards the professors rather than the students and the readers get many realistic impression of the working of a university immediately during the post war scenario. The campus fiction confines itself to the university life by dealing with the life and struggle of professors, the struggle for academic power, the competition in the academic world and so on. All these aspects have been dealt with by Kingsley Amis in this novel. By representing the university that is full of different characters, Amis has been able to draw our attention to the larger context of the society. Indeed, he has been relatively successful to portray the social and cultural condition of the British society through his campus novel. Amis' interest in campus fiction may, however, be attributed to the growing interest of education of the masses as well as

the establishment of many provincial universities during that time. As a campus novel, *Lucky Jim* has been widely appreciated and received by the readers as well as the critics. This is proved by the numerous critical works through which the novel has been studied.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Mention the nature of Campus novel that you find in Lucky Jim.

10.5 LUCKY JIM AS A COMEDY

The novel also catered to the comic veins of the readers. Exaggeration, pretension, and artificiality– all these added to the comic facet of the novel. The incidents as well as Jim Dixon's personality are a boon to make the novel funny. Mimicking is used as a means to gain comic relief. During Dixon's lecture, he imitated Professor Welch and then the Principal; finally, he spoke with a different

accent. This resulted in entertainment of the audience in the novel as well as the readers. Also, we must note the prank phone calls that Dixon made at the Welch residence. In each of the calls his voice was distorted and when imagined visually, his 'distorted mouth' triggered a sense of laughter among the readers. Dixon also is not far behind while making faces. As evident from these, the comedy in this novel is, however, a kind of intentional one. The protagonist make faces, distorts it in the means to achieve a comic end. You must acknowledge the comic deviations that Kingsley Amis employed in this novel in the light of the following quote: "Within Amis' world the comic image or comparison is so important that it frequently interrupts a crucial scene or relationship. Digression and irrelevance are continually played against presumably important action or revelation" (Gindin 37). Hence, the importance of comic relief is a major feature in the novels of Amis including *Lucky Jim*. David Lodge has rightly said that comedy prevailed in the novel in two ways, "situation and style" and in "the violation of a polite code of manners (Introduction vi).

A serious-comic binary is a feature of this novel by Amis. Under the wings of a comic surface, Amis aimed to deal with a more serious and aggravating condition that created upheaval in the British society of that time. Writing during the 1940s, Kingsley Amis could not ignore the educational system because "any survey of social trends since the Second World War, should mention education. As with class, with which education in Britain has been inextricably linked for two hundred years and more, social change here has been more sluggish than many social engineers might have wished" (Obelkevich 16). As a realistic writer, Amis dwelt upon this issue by incorporating the educational scenario to some extent in his novel where the incidents are mostly confined within the campus of the university. Therefore, by pointing out the struggle of Jim Dixon in such a social set up demanded a satirical dimension to it. In Amis' novel, irony formed an essential component of the narrative. The greatest irony is Jim Dixon's survival strategies in such a social milieu. It was against the so called hypocritical society that Dixon aimed to settle himself. In the narrative, Dixon

overtly criticised and showed his hatred for the Welches but at the same time he could be seen trying to create a good impression upon them. With the literary device of irony, the novelist tried to focus the readers' attention to the social condition of that time. By exposing the corruption in the university, which is the microcosm of the then British society, the novelist has in fact attained success in some respects.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Mention few comic elements that you find in the novel

10.6 SUMMING UP

To sum up, Amis' contribution in the field of English literature is noteworthy. He has been credited with poetry collections apart from novels. Amis is also known for his innovations in the genre of 'campus fiction'. You must have known by now that in campus fiction, most of the actions and incidents revolve around the university and the professors, or sometimes the students. Amis in this novel has concentrated

upon the academicians rather than the students. The politics in the academic world is reflected through the novel. You have also gathered ideas of how the socio-cultural background has been reflected through the novel. The Education Act has been primarily responsible for the differences felt by the lower middle class.

10.7 ASSESSSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Why is the novel *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis considered to be a campus novel?
2. In what way does the novel *Lucky Jim* represent the class division that prevailed in Britain during the 1940s?
3. Explain the comic elements that pervade the novel *Lucky Jim*. Do you think the comic element has affected the seriousness of the novel?
4. Analyse the major themes of the novel, *Lucky Jim*.
5. Explain how the comic elements pervade the novel, *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis.

10.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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MODULE V: JOHN FOWLES: *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*

UNIT 11: READING THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Modernism covers a large variety of styles and techniques. It is not a single movement but a cluster of movements. This is evident in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, which on the surface seems to be a sea-adventure story but encompasses within it various levels of meaning. It explores the moral and psychological questions with subtlety and complexity. The English novel with Conrad becomes a psychological study of human mind and moral problem of an individual in an alien world. The first half of the twentieth century saw prolific writing, both in scope and variety, in the major novelists. The trend of the English novel after the Second World War was that of loss and to describe its characteristics, would inevitably mean distortion and oversimplification.

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to introduce learners to the shift in British fiction from the Modern to the Post-modern, particularly through John Fowles' novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. To this end, this unit will:

• acquaint you with an overview of British fiction in the 1960s and the turn to post-modern fiction

• familiarize you with the life and works of John Fowles

• enable you to read critically Fowles's famous novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

11.2 JOHN FOWLES: LIFE AND WORKS

John Fowles was born on 31st of March, 1926 in Leigh-on-Sea, which is a town located some miles away from London. Fowles was educated at Bedford School and New College, Oxford. He studied French and German, which is clearly displayed in his novels and stories. After studying French and German, Fowles spent the following four years at Oxford, studying the French existentialists, particularly Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. He received a degree in French in 1950. Fowles, after his education, travelled and worked in France and Greece and finally returned to England to teach and write.

The time he spent in France and Greece proved to be crucial to John Fowles. He attempted to write many novels but offered none for publishing. His first novel *The Collector* was published in 1963, and is a parable of the confrontation between reactionary ignorance and progressive self-awareness. *The Magus*, published in 1965, is his second novel which is an existentialist tale of personal growth. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is Fowles' third novel, and is a formally experimental novel that tells the tale of palaeontologist Charles Smithson's affair with the notorious and enigmatic Sarah Woodruff. With the publication of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* he won many awards including the Silver Pen Award and the WH Smith Literary Award and was also hailed as the paradigm of the new postmodern generation, who acknowledged the tradition of literature by subverting it.

John Fowles died on November 5, 2005 after a long illness. He is particularly remembered for his narrative innovations, of combining traditional story telling with postmodern vigour.

Some of his other works include *The Aristos: A Self Portrait in Ideas* (1964), *Poems* (1973), *The Ebony Tower* (1974), *Shipwreck* (1974), *Daniel Martin* (1977), *Islands* (1978), etc.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name some of the literary works of John Fowles

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2. Name two existentialist philosophers whose works influenced John Fowles.

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3. What are some of the characteristics of his writing style?

11.3 READING THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a mixture of romance and realism by using a historical setting seen from the perspective of a contemporary narrator. The

structure of the novel is derived from the archetypal romance plot of Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff. Charles Smithson is a palaeontologist who is engaged to the nouveau riche Ernestina Freeman, heiress to a fortune. Sarah Woodruff is a former governess who now works under the rich Mrs Poulteney. The novel begins with Charles and Ernestina walking along the harbour when they spot Sarah staring out to the sea on the Cobb, or the harbour breakwater. She had a bad reputation as she had an affair with Varguenes, a shipwrecked sailor. She lost her virginity to him and ruined her reputation, subsequently earning the nickname of 'the French lieutenant's whore'. Charles is instantly drawn to the mysterious figure in black. Despite their differences in status and the fear of being caught they meet several times in the undercliff. Charles falls in love with Sarah and follows her to Exeter, where he has sex with Sarah and discovers that she is a virgin. He breaks off his engagement to Ernestina and is further disgraced when Sam, his servant, tells Ernestina's father about his affair. Charles wants to marry Sarah, but on his return to Exeter, he finds that she has left the place. Charles hires a private detective to look for Sarah and leaves London for America. Sarah is found two years later in London working with the famous painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The novel has two endings, once Charles and Sarah meet after two years. First is the closed one where they form a reunited family with their daughter and second is the open one where Sarah rejects Charles's offer of marriage and Charles returns to America alone, but with the chance of leading a free life. The novel offers a third ending when the narrator re-appears outside the house at 16 Cheyne Walk and turns back his pocket watch by fifteen minutes. Events are the same as in the second-ending version until Charles meets Sarah, when their reunion is sour. The new ending does not make clear the parentage of the child and Sarah expresses no interest in reviving the relationship. Charles leaves the house, intending to return to the United States, wondering whether Sarah is a manipulative, lying woman who exploited him, wondering whether Sarah is a manipulative, lying woman who exploited him.

11.4 DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

Chapter 1- 5

It is March 1867, and on the quay at Lyme Regis a couple is walking. The narration is done through a third figure. They are well dressed and appear to belong to the upper class and very much in love. On the far end of the quay, there is a mysterious figure who is looking out to the sea and is dressed in black. The two figures walking are Charles Smithson, a dilettante scientist and Ernestina (Tina) who are engaged to be married. Tina tells Charles about the mysterious black figure who is locally known as the Tragedy, or more vulgarly as French Lieutenant's Woman, who works for Mrs. Poulteney. Charles greets the woman as he crosses her, but she does not reply and the couple retrace their steps to the Cobb. The story shifts back to the mind of the observer (Author) who introduces Charles family to the reader. Charles has little money inherited from his father and his major fortune lies with his unmarried Uncle. We are also introduced to Mrs. Poulteney, a wealthy resident of Lyme Regis, and Mrs. Fairley, her house keeper who is as unkind as her mistress. Mrs. Poulteney had sheltered Sarah, because she wanted to do a charitable deed as she feared for her soul. The local vicar had suggested that she do it for Sarah. In chapter five, we are also introduced to Ernestina and it explains why she is staying with her aunt. We see the slightly un-Victorian side of Ernestina, as she stands half dressed in front of the mirror and admires herself.

Chapter 6-10

The story returns to Mrs. Poulteney and through her discussion with the vicar we learn of Sarah Woodruff's past life and background. Sarah was a governess in the family of Captain John Talbot, in the nearby village of Charmouth. A French ship was washed ashore and the Captain had taken in one of the injured, a French lieutenant who had injured his leg. When the Frenchman recovered he went to Wyemouth in order to take the passage home and Sarah followed him there,

apparently living with her cousin, but losing her name. Mrs. Talbot offered to take back her as governess but Sarah refused. Sarah is of course now the French Lieutenant Woman. The Vicar presumes that she is now suffering from melancholia and Mrs. Poulteney offers to take her on as a companion. The scene shifts from Sarah to Charles who wakes up to a beautiful morning but a grumpy servant Sam. Sam is in a bad mood because Aunt Tranter's pretty maid has been humiliating him. Charles realises that it is the beginning of a love affair and teases Sam about it. Ernestina wakes up the same morning only to feel a little unwell, herself. Charles decides to take the day off for himself and asks Sam to buy some flowers for Ernestina and suggests Sam to send a bunch to Mary too. In Chapter 9, we see that Sarah has been Mrs. Poulteney's companion for over a year now. She finds Sarah's companionship satisfying; particularly in the way Sarah manages the household and remembers little things. However, she is also annoying as she goes out alone, is extremely frank, to the point of being blunt, and still very much taken in by the French Lieutenant too. This chapter ends, with the housekeeper who is extremely jealous of Sarah complaining about her to Mrs. Poulteney, that Sarah has taken to walking alone in Ware Commons. Chapter 10 begins where the previous left off at Ware Commons. The chapter describes the beautiful surroundings and has romantic implications. Charles was walking in Ware Commons (in Chapter 8) and lost his way, he was trying to find his way back to Lyme Regis. He sees a figure lying asleep on a secluded ledge and it was none other than Sarah. As he stares at her, she awakes and is startled to her feet. Charles apologises to her and goes on his way.

Chapter 11-15

The scene shifts to Ernestina who spends a depressing morning at home and is slightly relieved by the arrival of flowers from Charles. She vents her annoyance on Mary, whom she suspects of flirting with Charles and is jealous because of her beauty and vivacity. The 11th chapter also recounts the details of Tina's family and events that lead her engagement to Charles. We find Charles walking on Ware Commons and as he emerges from the wood, he comes upon a dairy where he buys

a bowl of milk. As he sees Sarah emerging from the wood, the dairyman describes her as a 'whore'. This enrages Charles. Charles tries to talk to Sarah, but is rebuffed by her and she walks on alone. Charles returns to Lyme Regis and visits Ernestina. He recounts his day to her, but omits the part where he meets Sarah. Sarah is rebuffed by Mrs. Poulteney for walking around Ware Commons. Sarah contemplates committing suicide, but also is assured by the author that she would not do so. Chapter 13 is important for its narrative comment by the author. In this chapter, the author looks at varied functions of the author in Victorian times and now. He broaches the idea that characters have a life and a mind of their own and suggests their freedom from authorial control. The author finishes by declaring his role as a reporter and sums up the significant facts of the happening at Ware Commons. The story continues with a visit to Mrs. Poulteney by Mrs. Tranter and the engaged couple. Heated arguments take place regarding the servants and Charles and Ernestina are on opposite sides of the argument. Charles decides to teach Ernestina a lesson. Charles realises that Sam is serious about Mary and promises to talk to Mrs. Tranter about it.

Chapter 16-20

The story continues with the author deliberately intruding into the text by his comments and explanations. After their quarrel Ernestina is a little deferential towards Charles and he is slowly getting tired of their conversations and interactions, particularly about the future that they are about to build together. He is 'allowed' to go off on a geological expedition and he makes his way to Ware Commons once again where he meets Sarah Woodruff. Sarah is not pleased to meet him there and their meeting ends with her telling him that the French Lieutenant will never return because he is a married man. In the 17th chapter, Charles accompanies Mrs. Tranter and Ernestina to a concert of religious songs, where Charles realises his entanglement with Sarah, and regards his engagement to Ernestina as a mistake. However, the author's cynicism gets the better of the narrative, and Charles thinks that all will be well once he and Ernestina are married. Sam and Mary's relationship are held in

contrast against Charles and Ernestina's particularly with regard to honesty. After a few days in company of Ernestina and Mrs. Tranter, Charles is free to go to Ware Commons and finds Sarah who holds out two tests to him which were of immense help. Charles and Sarah have a conversation. Though Charles wants to escape it, Sarah convinces him to stay and lend her an ear to her past. In Chapter 19, Charles entertains Tina, Mrs. Tranter and Dr. Grogan to dinner at his room at the White Lion. When alone with Dr Grogan, the conversation moves towards Sarah Woodruff who he diagnoses as suffering from extreme melancholia and says that she wants a sympathetic ear. Meanwhile, Sarah sleeps with Millie in Mrs. Poulteney house, and the author advises his readers not to think of lesbianism. Charles meets Sarah once again and she makes her confessions to him, about meeting the sailor, Varguenes, and about how she fell in love with him and gave herself to him.

Chapter 21-25

Sarah completes her confession and Charles asks Sarah to leave Lyme Regis and go away never to return. As they talk they see Sam and Mary coming towards them, flirting and kissing each other. It is an emotive moment for then, and Charles is deeply attracted to Sarah. However, all crisis is averted and they part ways, Sarah leaving a little ahead of Charles. Charles decides to quit all his involvement with Sarah but he soon receives a letter from his Uncle to go and meet him. He informs Ernestina and she hopes that he gets Winsyatt itself. In Chapter 23, Charles enters Winsyatt Manor with a proprietorial air, only to realise that his Uncle is getting married and might have an heir. Charles returns to Lyme and informs Ernestina who goes into a rage and behaves in the most unladylike fashion, much to Charles' dismay. He also finds out that Mrs. Poulteney has dismissed Sarah and all fear that Sarah has committed suicide. Sarah writes to Charles and begs him to meet her. In spite of the rain and storm Charles rushes out and forbids Sam from telling anyone of his whereabouts.

Chapter 26-30

Sam thinks of blackmail and it takes us back to the time when Charles is informed of his Uncle's marriage. The change in Charles's fortunes puts him at a considerable disadvantage with regard to his forthcoming marriage to Ernestina. Charles, at present however rushes out to meet Dr. Grogan to whom he gives a slanted account of his relationship with Sarah. Dr. Grogan goes instead and leaves Charles with a few case histories to read. Charles reads and decides otherwise and blames himself for what transpired between Sarah and him. At dawn he makes a decision. Charles, in Chapter 29, decides to go and look for Sarah. He starts to the Undercliff. He enters the stone hut where he expects to find Sarah only to find her black bonnet hanging from a nail in the wall. Chronologically, Chapter 30 follows Chapter 23 and sees Sarah return home to Mrs. Poulteney to be very angry and enraged. She has been poisoned by Mrs. Fairley and dismisses Sarah from service.

Chapter 31-35

We return to Charles who finds Sarah sleeping peacefully in the hut. Though he wants to run away but as he reaches for the door she awakens and professes that she had deliberately allowed Mrs. Fairley to see her. It seems to Charles that she was in love with him desperately and they fall into each other's arms. Charles realises what is happening and he rushes out of the door. Ernestina on the other hand has a restless night after her disagreement with Charles and she confesses the same to her diary. Sam is packing their bags to leave for London and Mary gets a few hours to be with Sam before they leave. As Charles rushes out of the hut he meets Sam and Mary and the circumstances are all very suspicious. He offers them a bribe which they do not accept and also gives some money to Sarah asking her to leave Lyme and go to Exeter. When Charles returns to Lyme he goes to meet Ernestina and tells her that he has to go to her father and explain his changed status. He buys Mary's silence with a sovereign. The next chapter is a digression and compares two periods, the Victorian and Modern.

Chapter 36-40

We move to Exeter and to the Endicott's Family Hotel where Sarah has taken up residence. It is a sordid hotel and Sarah has taken two rooms there and purchases a few things, such as a nightgown, an elegant shawl and a roll of bandage. Charles on the other hand, goes to London to meet Ernestina's father and explain the circumstances to him. After he reads the letter he is convinced that the marriage must go on. He offers Charles a partnership in his business and he is too polite to refuse. However, he is repulsed by the idea of trade and goes to the pub. He meets his old University friends who take him to a striptease club. Charles goes home with a woman who reminds him of Sarah. The girls' room is clean but when at the point when Charles is about to take her, she says that her name is Sarah and he is overcome by disgust and vomits into her pillow.

Chapter 41-45

Sam,is not pleased at seeing his master drunk and complains to the house keeper about worse revelations. When Charles summons him, we are taken back to the last night when Charles leaves some money for the prostitute and her daughter. When Charles awakes the next morning he receives two letters; one from Dr. Grogan and the other contains an address which Sam has spied into. Sam continues to blackmail Charles. On the train journey, Charles vows to break all relations with Sarah, marry Ernestina and live a happy life. Deciding not to stay the night, he is firm on his decision and goes to sleep. Here is the beginning of the traditional moral ending of a Victorian novel in which the hero is reformed and vows to be faithful. On reaching Lyme romantic scene issues, where Charles confesses everything to Ernestina, she forgives him and they get married. However, this is the first ending and there are still eighteen chapters to go. This is the ending of a Victorian romance not that of a twentieth century novel. The author confesses that this is what could have been, not what actually was. Sam is asked to take the luggage to Ship's Inn

whereas Charles makes his way to the Endicott's family hotel, unaware that Sam is already there watching Charles's moves.

Chapter 46-50

Charles meets Sarah in the room and after a few minutes talk are wildly drawn to each other. They make passionate love and he is taken with guilt over treating Ernestina and her father the way he has. He now wants to break off all ties with Ernestina and marry Sarah instead. He also realises that Sarah is a virgin. He also realises that Sarah has trapped him and finally rejects him. She begs him to leave and Charles leaves the room without a word. Charles walks aimlessly around Exeter and enters the Church. As an agnostic, he finds himself in agony and he decides to be true to his vision of Sarah. Charles is now resolved to break all with Ernestina, and writes a letter to Sarah offering her marriage. However, he waits till the next morning to send the letter with a brooch. Sam does not deliver the letter and he gives the brooch to Mary. He finally deserts Charles. Charles goes and breaks off all ties with Ernestina. Ernestina does not take it well and threatens legal action. Charles leaves her with a resolve to write to Ernestina's father.

Chapter 51-55

Charles goes to Dr. Grogan and tells him all that has happened. He asks him to attend to Ernestina. Charles decides to write to Ernestina's father and return to Sarah in the evening. Dr. Grogan gives Ernestina a sleeping draught and finally accuses Charles. However, they make peace and he advises Charles to leave Lyme immediately. Charles leaves Lyme for Exeter and discovers that Sarah has left the hotel. He also comes to know that no letter has been delivered to Sarah. Charles takes the train to London the next morning and is joined by a man wearing a top hat, who is none other than the author and a lengthy discussion regarding the narrative technique ensues. In order not to show any prejudice he tosses a coin to decide about the endings, the significance of which we learn later.

Chapter 56-61

Charles hires a detective to look for Sarah, but he finds no trace of her. He is summoned by the Court for 'a breach of promise' and he is asked to sign on a demeaning document on which he signs and goes abroad for some time. The narrative jumps forward to twenty months, February 1869, and Mary, now married to Sam sees Sarah alighting from a cab. Sam is going through some guilt about Charles and is trying to expatiate it. Charles on the other hand has been constantly travelling and returns to see Montague and returns to America. Charles loves America, but Sarah constantly is on his mind. Through the offices of Sam he realises that Sarah has been found and he returns to London. Montague learns that Sarah has been going under the name of Mrs. Roughwood, and is living with a group of Pre-Raphaelite artists, including Rossetti. During their conversation, Sarah tells Charles that she is no man's mistress and that she does not wish to marry.

Charles wishes that she should accept him and Sarah tells him that she knew all along that he was looking for him. She did not want him to find her. A little girl is brought into the room and on close inspection finds that she is his daughter. Chapter 60 ends with reconciliation with Sarah and they live happily ever after. However, this is the penultimate chapter and in the final chapter (Chapter 61) we see the Victorian narrator/author sets the watch sometime back in time to the time when Charles is confronting Sarah. Earlier when Charles wishes to leave, Sarah detains him. But now she does not stop him and he leaves. He even sees the little girl, but he makes no move to stop or meet the child, and he takes himself out of Sarah's life forever.

11.5 SUMMING UP

Postmodern literature is literature characterized by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, and the unreliable narrator/ multiple narrators, epigraphs and the reader's choice coming to play. Postmodern works are

seen as a response against Modernist approaches to literature. However, having said that, it would be impossible to note, in almost all Post War novelists, particularly in The French Lieutenant's Woman, an interesting technical resourcefulness. It is a blend of the 'conventions' of novel-writing along with a self-questioning post-existentialist modern text of the 1960's. In this unit while going through the details of the storyline, you will also prepare yourself to a critical reading in the coming unit where the postmodernist issues dealt in the novel will be examined in details.

11.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. After reading *The French Lieutenant's Woman* do you find that a paradigm difference between two people can produce two divergent readings of a single text?

2. Do you think that the responses of a man to the novel would be in any way different from that of the responses of a woman? If you are a male reader, what according to you, would be the main action of the novel? Would it be a different book altogether for a female reader?

3. How does one look at the two endings to the novel?

4. Do you think that a literary text has/should have a single correct meaning, or a whole host of possible meanings?

5. Do you think that the language you speak in any way affects your identity, the way you think who you are? Do you think that people who speak French or Mandarin live and think differently from people who speak English or any other language?

6. How does literature help us in understanding people from cultures different from our own?

7. What are the characteristic features of postmodernism you find in *The French Lieutenant's Woman?*

8. Outline the three different endings to the novel and consider in what ways each is appropriate.

11.7 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

Stephenson, William. Fowles. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. London and New York: Continuum, 2008. Print.

Stevenson, Randall. *The British Novel since the Thirties: An Introduction*. London: B. T Badsford, 1987.

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UNIT 12: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE TEXT

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.0 INTRODUCTION

The French Lieutenant's Woman by John Fowles is the best example of a Post-modern text. In this novel we witness a transition from the Victorian to the Modern and to the postmodern sensibility. In this unit an attempt has been made to see the novel critically from different postmodern aspects. Major thematic concerns, style of character delineation and narrative technique are some important aspects this unit will focus on.

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to learn:

- the major thematic concerns and subtle nuances of the novel

- character sketch of the major characters of the novel.
- the narrative technique of the text.

12.2 MAJOR THEMES

12.2.1 Postmodernism and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

This section tries to understand the widely used term Postmodernism and also situate The French Lieutenant's Woman as a postmodernist text.

Postmodernism is a complicated term and is hard to define. It is a concept which encompasses a wide variety of disciplines including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology and communications. By ranging across arts and culture it seems to be the defining term of the sensibility, but at the same time it is hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it is not clear when postmodernism begins.

Postmodernism is supposed to suggest incredulity towards the grand narratives of history, philosophy and religion upon which Western culture is based and which claim to offer some final truth or revealed knowledge. Frederic Jameson explicitly describes it as a "cyclical moment that returns before emergence of the new modernisms in the stricter sense."

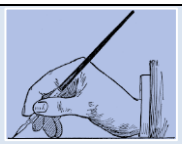
Postmodernism like modernism, is possessed typically of a self-reflexive element. It follows most of the same ideas, rejecting boundaries between high and low forms of art, rejects rigid genre distinctions, emphasises pastiche, parody, bricolage, irony and playfulness. Postmodern art and thought favours reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and its discontinuity (especially in narrative structures), ambiguity and simultaneity. The presence of these factors has led critics to read *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a postmodern text.

Fowles not only criticises the manners and society of the Victorian Age, but concomitantly examines its more rigid conventions for the novel. This involves him both in analysis of the nature of the Victorian literature and also in self-conscious discussion within the narrative of form and technique of his own fiction. Use of an extensive vocabulary, engagement with philosophy and literary theory and play on popular conventions, such as alternating chapter dealing with separate plots to increase suspense and the erotic tension are some of the techniques and strategies that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* utilises to secure for it a place in the postmodernist movement.

The French Lieutenant's Woman has also been categorised by many critics as historiographic metafiction, intensely aware of its own fictionality and forcing the reader to notice this phenomenon while experiencing the narrative structure itself. The next section will deal with the text as historiographic metafiction. Nevertheless, one of the most consistent signs of the postmodern is its ironic self-reflexivity. Fowles' novel at once is traditional and postmodern, traditional because it is modelled on the Victorian novels with a Victorian plot and postmodern because it is self-conscious, uses an intrusive author, and has multiple endings, anachronistic references and epigraphs at the beginning of every chapter.

Fowles succeeds in giving the text a Victorian ambivalence but it retains a typically twentieth-century preoccupation with issues such as psychology, feminism and self-realisation. The novel thus attracts readers seeking a recreation of Victorian fiction but also those looking for an engagement with contemporary concerns. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of Sarah. There is a constant blurring of the idea of Sarah as a 'femme fatale' or as the 'heroine' of the novel. Similarly, the blurring of time is very evident in the text for it is based on the confrontation of two epochs – the 1860s and the 1960s with Ernestina representing the first and Sarah the second.

By setting the story in a time of doubt and contradiction, Fowles creates a world in which the twentieth century was born. Fowles' novel asserts the 'presence' of the characters of the novel, their selfhoods and their stories as well as the postmodern character of modern authorship. Fowles' way to an art of the present is by way of appropriating all he can manage from the art of the past. "Behind the modernity of many of his surface elements stood both as homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition (as quoted in Bradbury) – a definition of the ironic quotability that has been a major element of Postmodernism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What features of Post modern fiction do you find in this novel?

12.2.2 *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as 'Historiographic Metafiction'

As quoted in the last section, critics in 1980s began to read *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in terms of its postmodernist parody; a paradoxical combination of 'homage' and 'thumbed nose' to an old tradition. Entwined with this is the idea of 'historiographic metafiction' as claimed by Linda Hutcheon. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, according to her, was a historiographic metafiction, that is to say, a postmodernist novel that aspired to historical reference and yet also knew it to be fiction, as it demonstrated that history, theory and the novel have a shared basis in narrative. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) she says:

> In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative, be it on lit, history or theory – that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made on the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (Hutcheon 1988:5)

Historiographic metafiction is one kind of post-modern novel which rejects projecting present beliefs and standards onto the past and asserts the specificity and particularity of the individual past event. It also suggests a distinction between events and facts that is shared by many historians. Since the documents become signs of events, which the historian transmutes into facts, as in historiographic metafiction, the lesson is here that the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted. Modernist and postmodernist questioning challenged the authority of histories by acknowledging that the "fact" presented is the author's subjective opinion. Historiographic metafiction bridges the fissure between the historical and fictional works by recombining two genres, and questioning them through the stance of common use of conventions of narrative, of reference and even at times their implication in ideology. The readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are never allowed to forget the lessons of the past or the implications of those in the present.

The ambivalent juggling of the real and the virtual world is noticeable in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* This occurs in historiographic metafiction particularly, and in texts which include multiple story versions. The particular novel of Fowles has both a double ending with two possible outcomes and the reader is allowed to choose between them. With metafictional playfulness this novel allows a character's virtual construction of a future world to temporarily pass off as a representation of actual events. In historiographic metafiction, the idea that history itself consists of one verifiable actual world is undermined by the suggestion that actuality itself is a constantly shifting classification and dependent primarily on subjective belief.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Give few examples from the novel to prove it as a historiographic metafiction.

12.2.3 *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Existentialism

The novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* echoes its existentialist ideology. Existentialism is a school of philosophical and artistic attitude that investigates into the nature of being. As the novel says that "life… is to be, however inadequately, emptily, hopelessly […] endured" (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*). Existentialism privileges existence over essence. Nineteenth century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard and early twentieth century German philosopher Martin Heidegger are regarded as the founders of Existentialist philosophy. Existentialism caught on after the World War II, once the disillusionment with social relations and social institutions set in. It reflected on an absurd world devoid of a God/creator/protector, where every human being must create his own individual meaning and be solely responsible for his actions, and therefore his fate. This idea finds expression in the literary works of many writers namely Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Samuel Butler, Jean-Paul Sartre, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and also John Fowles.

John Fowles's text *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has been read by many as an existentialist novel, particularly because of the two endings. Robert Huffaker says, "*The French Lieutenant's Woman* is about freeing modern humanity" (92). Barry Olshen describes Sarah as an existentialist character (78) whose authenticity shocks Charles into a transformation of his own. Fowles himself defines existentialism as "the revolt of the individual against all those system of thought, theories of psychology, and social and political pressures that attempt to rob him of his individuality" (*The Aristos* 115). Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, as already mentioned wielded considerable influence on John Fowles who read them extensively. Sartre's works focussed on themes such as dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom and nothingness as fundamental to human existence. Fowles too encapsulates the nature of freedom in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* not only by challenging the norms of novel writing but by allowing the reader to exercise the individual freedom and choose the end of Fowles' tale. Fowles' view on freedom is

reiterated clearly in *The Aristos* where he states, “Freedom of the will is the highest human good” (26).

The French Lieutenant’s Woman proclaims Fowles’ ideas and precepts on existential philosophy. In ‘Notes on an Unfinished Novel’ (1969) he clearly states:

My two previous novels were both based on more or less disguised existential premises. I want this one to be no exception and so I am trying to show existentialist awareness before it was chronologically possible. Kierkegaard was, of course, totally unknown to the British and American Victorians, but it has always seemed to me that the Victorian Age, especially from 1850 on, was highly existentialist in many of its personal dilemmas.

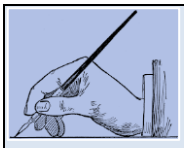
Fowles’s view on Victorian England prompted him to use the 1860s as the setting of his novel *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. Though he used the preceding age as the setting, Fowles skilfully uses it to comment on contemporary issues; issues pertaining to social conventions and forming of one’s own identity. The novel also raises doubts as to whether the twentieth century was better thoughtful than the nineteenth century.

In keeping with its focus on the basic existentialist dilemma, of living with or without social norms, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* clearly models its protagonists Charles and Sarah along similar lines. Charles is a palaeontologist and a baronet’s nephew. Charles though seems to be an heir to the baron’s fortune, he sounds apologetic for being a scientist. But he follows his calling no matter what the society said. Sarah is a “tragedy” and is repeatedly referred to as “the French Lieutenant’s Woman” or worse as the “French Lieutenant’s whore” by the locals. Despite the slight on her character and her name, Charles does get attracted to Sarah and sleeps with her. Both Charles and the reader are shocked to realise that Sarah is a virgin. The reader soon realises that Sarah has willed the small population at Lyme Regis to believe that she is a “fallen” woman, so that she could escape the social constraints of being a Victorian woman. Sarah’s scandalous choice of freedom allows

her to pursue what her heart desires, but at the price of seclusion and isolation from the society. Right from the beginning Sarah is the epitome of Fowles's existentialist freedom.

The most significant aspect of the existentialist theory which governs Charles and Sarah is that we exist and we are entirely responsible for our own lives, that there is no one/ no God to be blamed if something goes wrong. We exist in a world which has its own laws, morals and traditions and we cannot distance ourselves from it. Existentialist 'angst' exists because in every point of our lives, choices have to be made, we are completely free to choose between possibilities, but equally shoulder/share the responsibility once the decision is made. We alone have weighed upon our past actions and therefore have shaped the future needs. Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has designed and formed her future life, and both- Charles and Sarah's life are shaped by existentialist concerns.

John Fowles in his role as a narrator clearly tells his readers that he does not exercise 'absolute authority over the characters' and in essence he also rejects "the idea of the universal creator", abdicating himself from "the throne of literary omniscience". Therefore, the final existentialist exemplar is the reader himself who recognises the ambiguity. As Bradbury observes, the real point is not the alternative endings but the existentialist freedom to the two main characters: they are left indeterminate, free to 'emerge' as they wish from the end of the story.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Mention few examples of Existentialism that you find in the novel.

12.3 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Sarah Woodruff

Sarah Woodruff is the protagonist of the novel and is a quintessential twentieth century feminist born before her time. She is born in the Victorian age, born poor, educated beyond her station with no place in the world, though she craves for a place of her own. She is born in a humble background and we know nothing else, except that she comes to work as a governess in the house of Captain Talbot.

As the novel progresses, we see Sarah as not a beautiful woman, but still possessing something very compelling and intriguing about her face. She has auburn hair, dark eyes, strong nose and a brown complexion, unfashionable in Victorian times. Until the last two chapters Sarah is seen as obeying the dictates of her poverty and the expectations of the upper class. Yet we are constantly aware that she is not what entirely what she seems. She makes deliberate choices to follow what she wants in life. It is not however until the last two chapters that she emerges as the 'New Woman' that Charles failed to see earlier. The contrast between the Sarah we meet in the first chapter and the Sarah in the last represents the enigma of Sarah.

The desire of independence in Sarah is a twentieth century trait and her desire for happiness seems to be universal. It is expressed in what she tells Charles in

Chapter 61, 'I never expected to be happy in life. Yet I find myself happy where I am situated now...I am happy. I am at last arrived, or so it seems to me, where I belong'. (194)

Sarah, like the nineteenth century women did not seek for happiness or fulfilment in marriage or motherhood. She might have expected it of Vargueness, but single parenthood is a twentieth century practical possibility which she seems to have chosen Charles to fulfil for her. She discovers a sexual need in the form of Charles and she is willing to sacrifice her hard-won independence of spirit, scheming to lose her job and throw herself to Charles. But, ultimately she does take the decision to fulfil herself sexually before disappearing from his life altogether. She exonerates Charles and takes full responsibility for her actions. It shows her existentialist spirit at work. Both the solutions at the end of the novel leave Sarah with the existential angst: the choice between love and happiness in marriage without independence and independence sans the security of love and marriage.

Thus, we are finally left with a woman who never fully reveals herself, a character which has been invented by the author and the reader.

Charles

Charles, the male protagonist of the novel, is less complex than that of Sarah and a Victorian hero. He is tall, handsome, of aristocratic lineage, and the perfect desirable nineteenth century husband. Though his father is dead when we meet him, he is expected to inherit a family title and fortune from his elderly bachelor uncle. Well educated and with the upbringing of gentleman, he toyed with the idea of taking the Holy Orders until, he settled for a lifetime of travel and sin. He, however, did not abandon his academic pursuits for by the time we meet him, he has become an amateur scientist, with paleontological, geological and biological interests.

He too, like Sarah, prizes his independence enough never to have allowed himself an emotional involvement with a woman of his own class, and he is trapped

by Ernestina's scheming. It is for the same reason of his innocence he appears to have been easy prey to Sarah. Though his treatment towards Sarah, at the beginning was that of concern and one of the gallantries of a gentleman towards a person of the opposite sex, it is these very qualities that make him to be the perfect prey for Sarah.

In the original pursuit of Sarah, he was fueled by his own aristocratic lineage. However, once he has intercourse with Sarah, he is a man who is struck by love and follows his own heart, even at the cost of losing all material hopes for the future. He at this point does not belong to the Victorian aristocracy, but as a man struck by feelings. He finds no stone unturned to look for Sarah and immediately returns to Europe once he finds some news of her. But, at the end of the book, he does realise that forgiveness is not an option and that he is responsible for his own life and his own actions.

Ernestina

Ernestina is the typical figure from Victorian fiction. Rich, pampered, pretty, empty-headed with no personality of her own she seeks a husband and Charles seems to be the perfect candidate to be the same. Ernestina has cunning wiles and she employs all of them in order to trap Charles into a marriage forever. Born into trade, into a nouveaux rich family, she has none of Charles's gentility and kindliness. She is harsh to people below her stature, particularly Mary, and is fond of spiteful gossip about Sarah, which she revels in revealing to Charles at the quay. In the first part of the novel the reader has no sympathy towards Ernestina, particularly because of her attitude towards Charles' kindness towards women less fortunate than her.

Once Charles breaks off his engagement with her, we see the more vicious side to Ernestina and she threatens Charles of breach of promise, which is unknown to the twentieth century sensibility. This is done, further, after she feigns to faint once Charles is leaving her. The broken engagement reveals to Sarah her real, if rather shallow feelings towards Charles and she is more hurt about the lowering of her self-

esteem. But she redeems herself to a certain extent when she stops her father from destroying Charles. We become aware of her hidden reserves of character only when she disappears from the novel.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Compare and contrast the characters of Sarah and Ernestina.

12.4 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a text unlike many in which the authorial voice is enmeshed with the reader. The story is as much developed by the reader as it is told by the author. The story is never pre-determined and it changes shape right in front of our eyes.

The first chapter of the text introduces us to two different narrators. The first being an intrusive nineteenth century character who indulges in dialogue with his readers. The second is an observer, a man with a telescope, who looks objectively at the scene and characters before him. The presence of a third person narrator can be discerned in the last paragraph, is seen in the form of an omniscient narrator who views the scene, the characters and also the objective narrator and foretelling his inadequacy when it comes to Sarah. As the story proceeds, all the three have a hand in it: in the true spirit of the Victorian novel the reader is drawn into the discussion of the characters, is accused in the fashion of Anthony Trollope of particular reactions, "…you may despise Charles for his overburden of apparatus, you perhaps despise him for his lack of specialization…" (Chapter 8) and is persuaded out of his prejudices with, "…But you must remember…" A second narrator observes and describes, whilst a third, erudite and unpredictable, hovers over (or outside) the plot, insisting simultaneously that its telling is "all imagination" (Chapter 13", that he is playing the god-game and that, "…to be free myself, I must give [Charles], and Tina, and Sarah, even the abominable Mrs. Poulteney, their freedoms as well…I do not fully control these creatures of my mind…"

Despite the presence of the omniscient narrator, the novel maintains the stance of the First Person account, not the person who is part of the action, but one who is part of the 'illusion'. Therefore, in Chapter 55, at least one of the narrators is fleshed out, in the image of John Fowles himself, who sits in the train compartment of Charles and asks him quizzically about what he was going to do with Charles. Ultimately, he does nothing but lets the readers two possible versions of the ending, both dependent on the same plot and allows them to choose between them, a technical trick which belongs to our own century. The enigmatic reappearance of this character, in Chapter 61, heralds the offer of an alternative ending: if he has presided over the first and Victorian ending he removes himself from the second twentieth century ending, apparently letting the readers choose for themselves, yet an "I" is

still there to address the reader, to philosophise as Charles walks away from Sarah and from love.

Apart from the question of the identity of the narrator, Fowles uses many more conventional and narrative devices in the novel. In some ways we might see the story as beginning in media res, since much of what is significant to the plot has already occurred when we meet the main characters, including the recounting of the background of Sarah and of Charles and Ernestina. Though things are said about Sarah in Chapter 9 we have already learnt much about her from the gossip which Ernestina recounts to Charles and from the milkman. This becomes significant much later in the novel, that stories regarding Sarah around Lyme are actually untrue. We have been misled, not by the narrator but also by Sarah who agreed to the rumours about her. Charles too realises that he had had intercourse with a virgin and the fact that he has to revise his opinion of Sarah.

The plot of the novel too is never straightforward. The author, John Fowles, plays with time in one form or the other. Parallel events are shown sequentially, so that the effect of one is heightened by the imposition of the other. For example, Charles's direct encounter with Sarah happens in Chapter 10 and 12, whereas in Chapter 11, we see Ernestina unwell in bed. However, Charles returns to meet Tina and conceals his meeting with Sarah in Ware Commons. This is parallel with Sarah's return to Mrs. Poulteney's house and the manner in which Sarah too, evades the truth about going to Ware Commons because she wants to be alone. These two lies; immediately following each other, strengthen the connection between Charles and Sarah in the readers' mind. At other times events are presented in the reverse order, when Ernestina talks about Charles's uncle going to be married in Chapter 24, whereas the actual revelation happens in Chapter 26. Similarly, Charles learns of Sarah's dismissal in Chapter 24 but is presented to the reader only in Chapter 30. The most striking example, of Fowles' play with time is its dislocation. The events of Chapter 42-44, when Charles seems to get over Sarah and unite with Ernestina is a rude shock to the sensibility of the modern reader. It is only in Chapter 45 that we

realize that the preceding ending is not what happened but what Charles imagined would happen.

Other narrative techniques that John Fowles uses are diary entries and letters which have been used in novel-writing. The interception of the letters by Sam is the more significant part than the letters themselves.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What are the purposes of two different narrators in the novel?

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2. How does Fowels use letters as one of the narrative techniques?

12.5 SUMMING UP

The French Lieutenant's Woman by John Fowles is the best example of a Post-modern text. This novel redefines the word 'postmodern' and shows the transition from the Victorian to the Modern and to the post-modern sensibility. Though it is set

in the Victorian times, which is also known for its range of novels, this novel subvert all that the reader understands about novels and novel-writing. Its innovative use of time, setting and the unusual characters redefines the whole discourse of the novel and brings into sharp focus the expectations a reader has from the text. The most interesting part of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the manner in which John Fowles intrudes into the text to tell his readers about the lack of 'authorial' control, and that the way as to how the readers should learn to choose what they prefer.

12.6 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How is *The French Lieutenant's Woman* a postmodern text?

2. Outline the three different endings to the novel and consider in what ways each is appropriate.

3. Who were the Pre-Raphaelites? What were their tenets? How are they important in the novel?

4. What contribution is made to the plot of the novel by Sam and Mary?

5. Consider the suitability of the marriage planned between Charles and Ernestina?

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MODULE VI: JULIAN BARNES ENGLAND, *ENGLAND*

UNIT 13: CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.0 INTRODUCTION

The British novels in the contemporary period have contended with the issues around literary form that were established in the 1950s and 1960s, issues which were themselves offshoots of the debates of the 1920s and 1930s.

Some of these writers who engage with the dominant literary modes and styles of the previous generation see themselves as continuers of tradition, others as radical innovators, and some as a mixture of both. One such engagement of contemporary British fiction is postcolonialism, a term embracing a range of discourses and issues relating to national identity, race, immigration and multiculturalism.

One of the legacies of Empire is that the English language and English literature were exported to many parts of the world resulting in a generation of writers emerging in the 1950s, 60s and 70s from South-East Asia, Africa and the Caribbean who were producing work in English. In the hands of these writers from the former colonies, English, the language of the masters that was used as an instrument of power became an instrument of liberation to voice the sorrows and sufferings of the

marginalized, and gradually it acquired a distinct tang and flavor and identity of the country where it was planted.

The sexual revolution of the late 1950s and 1960s and the work of the feminist movement during the period have also profoundly challenged and changed the way in which men and women relate to each other socially, economically and culturally. The make-up of the family, same-sex relationships and our understanding of sexual identity have also brought in a cultural revolution. There are also novels which address and rewrite the past and suggest the interconnectedness of history and memory and the role fictional narratives play in recuperating and/or constructing the past.

The importance of geographical location and different interpretations of cultural space has had a profound effect on the British novel over the last few years.

One of the factors in this context is the shifting understanding of regional and national identity. Politically the United Kingdom is a unified state, but culturally it is an amalgam of social, ethnic and national identities. The relationship between geographical space and the way discrete regions are constructed in the collective imagination has proved fertile ground for a number of recent novelists. The interrogation of the concepts of Irishness, Welshness, Englishness and Scottishness, for example have accorded a new meaning to contemporary British literature.

In spite of the fears about the anticipated demise of the novel at the beginning of the 1970s, we mark the healthy state of contemporary British fiction. The novel has continued to flourish even when there was this skepticism, running throughout most of the twentieth century about the ways first film, and then television, would replace the novel as the primary media in presenting narratives to an interested and engaged public.

The moment a book gets published it falls into a ‘contemporary’ genre as it becomes a part of literary history and is instantly divided into different periods and time frames. Post second world war literature was divided into two time zone namely pre-world war and post-world war, but this caused a problem as Britain was involved

in lot of wars after that, which resulted in confusion regarding the time period of these 'contemporary novels'. It seemed more appropriate to divide the novels into two time periods, earlier period and later period. Contemporary Fiction, then, tends to be defined as the period from the mid-1970s to the present. This is somewhat of an arbitrary division but has precedents in a number of recent books. Another concern is in defining the term British, or rather how to decide which writers have been or want to be labelled with a national tag, which unknowingly may determine the way in which their work is read. Salman Rushdie, for example, was born in India, moved to Pakistan at a young age then moved to Britain, and at the time of writing lives in New York. It is somewhat problematic, therefore, to call him straightforwardly British would be wrong. He has, however, most often been categorized in those terms at most times.

British fiction has been roughly divided into these genres – Politics; Class; Gender and Sexuality; Post colonialism, Multiculturalism and National Identity; and Youth and Subcultures. And the main characteristics of this literature was the lack of a push or a resolution, the I factor, cynicism, a realistic look at things, subversion of gender roles, and bridged lines between the artificial and natural.

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit shall –

- introduce learners to contemporary British fiction.
- discuss the main themes which influenced the literature of the given time.
- try to draw a connection between what the writers have shared and what is our understanding of these writers.

13.2 THE ROLE OF POLITICS AND FALL OF CLASS FICTION

In a perceptive overview from 1998, David Cannadine shows how three mutually exclusive versions or models of the class system have recurred in British

perceptions: “the hierarchical view of society as a seamless web; the triadic version with upper, middle and lower collective groups; and the dichotomous, adversarial picture, where society is sundered between ‘us’ and ‘them.’” of these three models, Cannadine writes: “all of them are ignorant over-simplifications of the complexity of society. Yet they have remained remarkably enduring, and they are still in existence today.” For all the confusion, he is surely right to conclude that the very persistence of these competing explanatory models is itself evidence enough that “Britain cannot possibly be described as a ‘classless society’” (Cannadine 1998).

Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government heralded a series of economic and social policies that radically challenged some of the foundations of the British system as it had been established by the first Labour government in the period after the end of the Second World War. The development of Thatcherism rested fundamentally on policies that shifted responsibility for social welfare from the state to the individual. These political issues have been addressed in differing ways by contemporary novelists. Iain Sinclair, for example, has continued to produce fiction that is critical of the Thatcher government’s policies. Jonathan Coe has been critical of both Thatcherism in his *What a Carve Up!* (1994) and *New Labour* in his 2004 novel *The Closed Circle* which includes a cameo of Tony Blair. Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty* (2004) includes the other major political figure of the period; in one scene Margaret Thatcher appears at a party and dances with the novel’s main character.

The rise of Thatcherism had seen changes that had changed the very nature of class in society. From curbing of union powers to the imposition of strict productivity regimes, and the disappearance of traditional working-class communities, Thatcherism had changed it all, and had created a very new working environment. Britain had seen a steady decline in manual labor in post-industrial era which contributed to the breaking of the class division. But inequality had not vanished; it just had changed its form and appeared as a division between the consumers and producers. The salaried middle class was a group that shared their

solidarity with each other through their social conscience and financial status became an emerging economic power.

The ideological divisions of the 1980s and early 1990s represented by the political differences of the Labour and Conservative Parties were primarily based on issues of social class. The division of society into the three broad economic classes of working, middle and upper relies heavily on social and economic theories influenced by Marxist theory (although Marx tended to identify just two classes: the ruling class and the proletariat, the former being an amalgamation of middle and upper classes). This continued debate and confusion over the subject of class has provided a rich source for much of the fiction produced during this period. The field is still dominated by what could be broadly called middle-class writers such as Monica Ali, Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, J. G. Ballard, Julian Barnes, A. S. Byatt, Jonathan Coe, Margaret Drabble, Alan Hollinghurst, Nick Hornby, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian McEwan, Jane Rogers, Salman Rushdie and Sarah Waters. There has been, however, a rise in the number of novels that are set in working-class locations or engage with working-class issues.

Writers such as Alan Sillitoe, Keith Waterhouse, John Braine and David Storey produced novels that were situated in working-class life and as writers could claim to be a part of that social group. The 'working-class' novel as it came to be known, has become a staple of British fiction from the 1950s onwards, although, significantly the tag itself has become unfashionable.

> "It is clear that recognizable and stable class identities have disappeared from British society, and from the novel in Britain. The novel of underclass experience, clearly registering a new form of inequality, has achieved some prominence, but has usually been written in a mode that is devoid of any concept of community or collective action: the rhetorical effect is to make grim predicaments seem generalized, hard facts of the contemporary political landscape. With hindsight, the disappearance of the novel of class from British literature can be said to have been signaled by deep contradictions in the novels of working-class realism that were already

evident in the heyday of the 1950s and 1960s. For the past 30 years and more the engine of the novel has been fuelled by other concerns, such as gender, migrancy, ethnicity, and, more recently, by globalization, genetics, cognition. It is in response to these concerns that writers like Rushdie, Winterson, and McEwan have made their names; and it is these concerns that now throw into relief the most pressing questions of inequality." (Head, 246)

13.4 THE WAVE OF CHANGES

> "When Francis Russell Hart's *Study of The Scottish Novel* was published in 1978, campaigning had already begun on the proposals put forward by James Callaghan's Labour Government to establish a devolved parliament in Scotland… Scottish opinion was, therefore, in a permanent minority within the UK. As long as Scottish politics divided along roughly the same lines as English politics, however, this had no serious constitutional implications, and the imbalance was to some extent ameliorated by the fact that Scottish politicians played disproportionately prominent roles in all of the major political parties." (Craig, 121)

Scottish writing has seen a renaissance in the last forty years or so with such notable figures as Janice Galloway, Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, A. L. Kennedy, Ali Smith, Alan Warner and Irvine Welsh. But "Hart detected a conflict between the desire to maintain local realism and the attempt to shape the local in terms of some universal paradigm… the Scottish novel necessarily reflected the problem of Scotland's divided history and culture, which had produced a "dissociation of sensibility" – a lack of balance between emotion and reason, between heart and head… there was the problem of how an English writing narrator related to a community of Scots-speaking characters… What happened in the aftermath of 1979 was that these perceived weaknesses of the Scottish tradition, as viewed through the lens of the more

"standard" development of the English novel, were adapted and exploited by Scottish novelists in what, retrospectively, appears as a deliberate act of artistic devolution – if not, indeed, as a declaration of cultural independence." (Craig, 128)

The second wave of feminism can be seen through, Simone de Beauvoir published book *The Second Sex* (1949). One of the central themes of the book was summed up by the line, 'I am not born a woman I become one'. This position recognized that although individuals are born as male or female, the development of masculinity and femininity is not determined at birth, but is learned through the process of socialization. In America, Betty Friedan, one of those involved in the development of the new wave, advocated a form of feminism based on equal rights for women and a sharing of the roles that society currently divided between the genders. In her important 1963 book whole basis of Western language and philosophy has been based on 'dual, hierarchical systems' such as Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature and Man/Woman. Contemporary British writers such as Jeanette Winterson and Janice Galloway have experimented with language in a way that evokes this kind of gendered writing.

The success that feminism achieved in the 1970s and 1980s in changing cultural perceptions of the accepted roles for men and women in society began to be more noticeable in the 1990s, to the extent that some cultural commentators and theorists began to talk of a post-feminist situation. The emergence of new genres of popular fiction given the provocative titles of chick lit and lad lit reflected this concern with the new parameters of femininity and masculinity and how individuals growing up in contemporary society are forced to negotiate these new constructs. Chick lit novelists like Helen Fielding and Jane Green produce coming of age narratives in which female protagonists attempt to find their place in the world, usually in heterosexual partnerships with men who appear to effortlessly combine the benefits of both older and newer forms of masculinity: new men, who are not too new. In terms of the theoretical approaches to sexuality, 'queer theory' developed amongst intellectuals in the late 1980s and 1990s and aimed to disrupt the way in

which sexual and gender identities are constructed in society. Like French feminism, it was highly inflected with ideas from poststructuralist theory, and in particular the seminal work produced by Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (1976).

"Fiction about gays and lesbians, by writers who themselves avowed same-sex or bisexual desire, rapidly emerged as an identifiable and important literary category in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. Building on post-1945 representations of homosexuality by homosexual and heterosexual authors alike, encouraged by decriminalization of homosexuality between consenting adults in 1967, and inspired by post-1968 political movements in favor of dissident minorities, gay and lesbian fiction stimulated a growth of publishers (Gay Men's Press, Onlywomen Press) and bookstores devoted to gay and lesbian markets, and had an impact on publishers' lists in general. By 1993, the Writers and Artists' Yearbook was including separate listings of publishers of gay and lesbian books, and the general booksellers had begun to dedicate specially designated shelves to gay and lesbian texts. Such successful courting of public attention to representations of homosexual life was unprecedented." (Caserio, 209). The work of Julie Burchill, Hanif Kureishi, Alan Hollinghurst, Adam Mars-Jones, Jeanette Winterson and Sarah Waters are a great contribution to this form.

The term Post Colonialism has been coined to define the new state of affairs in which India had emerged as a new sovereign nation and a series of theories and discourses had arisen in many fields to explain and assess the impact of this enormous shift in the political organization of the world. Britain has continued to maintain links with many of the former colonies through the establishment of the Commonwealth, which is an association of many of the countries that used to be ruled by Britain. For the postcolonial writer, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have noted, English is in one sense the language of the oppressor and many of the writers mentioned above have been forced to negotiate this fact. Much contemporary fiction, then, has been keen to engage with the shifting positions of national identity over the

last thirty years especially in the discussion of the representation of Englishness in Julian Barnes's novel *England, England* (1998).

From the 1950s onwards Britain has developed into a multicultural nation as groups of people moved from parts of the Caribbean, South East Asia and Africa (as well as other parts of the world) and settled in Britain, often in communities that gathered together in Britain's urban areas. British literature has been a cultural space in which the experiences of immigrants and broader political issues associated with these experiences have been articulated. One of the dilemmas of postcolonial fiction is the attitude the colonized writing takes towards the literary paradigms and values of the colonizing nation.

One significant theme in contemporary British fiction is the representation of youth and the experience of growing up in Britain. The coming of age narrative, or the Bildungsroman has been a staple of the British novel since the birth of the form in the early eighteenth century, and it is a form that aids the combination of a narrative plot line with the description of the social and cultural environments through which the main protagonist moves. Formally, either through the use of first-person or third-person narratives, the coming of age story allows for the workings of society to be described as if from a fresh perspective, and through the technique of de-familiarization, a cultural critique can be produced of some of the practices of contemporary society encountered for the first time by the protagonist. Works such as- Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* (1992), Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001), A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance* (1990), Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Julian Barnes's *England, England*, whilst Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) also include coming of age narratives within their broader framework. Within the genre of the Bildungsroman a more specific trend in fiction has developed since the 1950s that could be described as sub-cultural fiction. These are novels that set out to explore the inner world of certain youth cultures that have their own codes of

practice, fashion and artistic styles and are usually identified by a particular style of music.

In the 1980s and 1990s this trend continued through a range of different youth subcultures, especially in the 'club culture' narratives of the late eighties. These texts explored the world of alternative sub-cultural spaces such as illegal raves and gatherings and the use of drugs and other forms of criminality. The writers in this genre that emerged during this period include Irvine Welsh and Nicholas Blincoe. The representation of youth subcultures in fiction has fed off work done in cultural studies. The British New Left in the 1950s became increasingly interested in the sociological and political factors behind the rise of youth culture. Sub cultural influences can be seen to affect several characters in the novels including the younger characters in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, and perhaps most significantly in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which in part, takes the transition of sub cultural styles from hippies to glam rock to punk as one of the narrative threads in the novel.

Finally, there have been a number of key international events that have impacted on Britain over the last thirty years and have been used as source material for British writers. Perhaps the most significant event of the last thirty years or so, in terms of its consequences, was the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001and such a historic event was bound to find itself addressed in fiction written after that event. In Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), the event is observed on television by the main character, and the novel describes the impact it has on the multi-ethnic area in which the main character lives in East London. Ian McEwan in his 2005 novel *Saturday*, uses the context of 9/11. The context of terrorism and the political and ethical questions it raises is also a key feature in J. G. Ballard's novels *Millennium People* (2003) and *Kingdom Come* (2006).

13.5 NOTEWORTHY GEMS OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION

1. Kingsley Amis – Lucky Jim (1954)
2. Iris Murdoch – Under the Net (1954)
3. John Fowles – The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969)
4. J.G. Ballard – Crash (1973)
5. Alasdair Gray – Lanark: A Life in 4 Books (1981)
6. William Golding – Rites of Passage (1981)
7. Graham Swift – Waterland (1982)
8. Martin Amis – Money (1984)
9. Iain Banks – The Wasp Factory (1984)
10. Julian Barnes – Flaubert's Parrot (1984)
11. Angela Carter – Nights at the Circus (1984)
12. Jeanette Winterson – Oranges are not the Only Fruit (1985)
13. Jan Morris – Last Letters from Hav (1985)
14. Alan Hollinghurst – The Swimming-Pool Library (1988)
15. Kazuo Ishiguro – The Remains of the Day (1989)
16. Hanif Kureishi – The Buddha of Suburbia (1990)
17. AS Byatt – Possession (1991)
18. Irvine Welsh – Trainspotting (1993)
19. Louis de Bernières – Captain Corelli's Mandolin (1994)
20. Zadie Smith – White Teeth (2000)
21. Ian McEwan – Atonement (2001)
22. Mark Haddon – The Curious Incident of the Dog of The Night Time (2003)
23. David Mitchell – Cloud Atlas (2005)
24. James Lever – Me, Cheeta (2009)
25. Hilary Mantel – Wolf Hall/Bring up the Bodies (2008/2012)

These novels bring about the change that contemporary fiction holds, they express the difficulties one has to face in order to adjust to the new found modernity after the long colonial rule, to adapt to the suburban life and the new things that come along

with it, and the grueling process of acceptance and rejection of the movements that started in the given age.

13.6 SUMMING UP

Contemporary British fiction fed of the devastation, hopelessness, and the multitudes of problems left behind by World War II. Displaced identity was strong but the other characteristic features of the age cannot be overlooked and sidelined. This age witnessed the celebrity culture, rise of the film industry, start of post colonialism, growth of new ethnicities, flight of women writers, emergence of queer fiction, and the demise of class fiction. The aftermath of the war definitely strengthened the belief of the people about their rights and privileges, which came into the forefront even in the writings and can be seen in the fiction of the present day as well.

13.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss about queer fiction and its place in contemporary British fiction.
2. Explain how women writing played a role in the given age.
3. Politics and class played an important role in the literary works. Explain

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UNIT 14: CRITICAL READING OF *ENGLAND ENGLAND*

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.0 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary fiction in England is not so much concerned with the project of carving out a new beginning for England, as it is still steeped in nostalgia, in the consolidation of the conservative discourses of decline, in highlighting narrative reflections on the process of remembrance, decline, commemoration, and nostalgia

But the lament is not without the ambivalent gesture of questioning and re-examining to interrogate and disturb and corroborate and in the process to revisit these narratives of national identity and to remind them of their constructedness and historicity. Often there is this talk of critically revising the heritage of England's past within the terms of the discourse of decline itself ,knowing fully well that it is not possible to deliberately abandon such an inheritance, to cancel it as though it were a page that can now be torn out of the history book. Rather one is better advised to come to terms with such a heritage, to revisit it, to live in its ruins, its gaps, and openings and fragments to grasp a wider sense of the possible.

These narratives perpetuate the legacy and myths of Englishness in the late-twentieth century, and question the conditions of England's paralysis not to hark back to a mythic ideal of the past, but instead to lay to rest, to "wake," the ghosts of England's pasts. We find, in fact, not an idealized picture, or a forgotten one, but rather something stressing the sense of England's continual, relentless, imminent disappearance, and paradoxically the very possibility of its transformation, or regeneration. Reading *England, England* would be a starting point to better understand the tenor and complexity of itching out a new distinct space and identity for a new beginning for England.

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

So far in the course you have studied British novelists of the modern era. In this last unit you will learn about Contemporary British fiction and take up an in depth analysis of a novel by Julian Barnes, one of the major figures writing in contemporary England. At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- have a broad overview of the major figures of Contemporary British fiction and its contours
- familiarize yourself with the life and literary career of Julian Barnes
- study in detail his novel *England, England*
- analyse thoroughly the major thematic concerns in the novel and the major characters
- understand the socio-political and cultural settings of contemporary Britain which is reflected by the text

14.2 JULIAN BARNES: LIFE AND WORKS

The author of ten novels, two volumes of short stories, three collections of essays, and four detective novels published under a pseudonym, Julian Barnes can be referred to as one of the most accomplished writers in the postmodern era. His

works are critically acclaimed all over the world, and several have been nominated for and/or have won prestigious literary awards. Julian Barnes is the second son of Albert Leonard and Kaye Barnes, both of them French teachers. He was born in Leicester on 19th January 1946. The family moved to Acton, six weeks later, a western suburb of London and then in 1956 to Northwood from which Barnes commuted via Metropolitan Line for several years to attend the City of London School. This north-western suburban area, known as Metroland would give rise to Barnes's idea of his first novel years later.

Julian Barnes studied at London City University and graduated with honours in Modern Languages from Oxford University in 1968. Upon graduation Barnes worked as a lexicographer for *The Oxford English Dictionary* supplement for several years. He then worked as reviewer and editor for *The New Statesman* and *The New Review* as well as television critic for *The New Statesman* and *The Observer*. Barnes remains a regular contributor to publications including: *The London Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The New Yorker* for which he was the London Correspondent from 1990 to 1995.

A prolific and challenging writer, Julian Barnes has been the recipient of numerous awards and honours including three nominations for the *Man Booker Prize* in Fiction (in 2005 for *Arthur & George*, in 1988 for *England, England*, and in 1984 for *Flaubert's Parrot*. In 2004 Julian Barnes received the *Austrian State Prize* for European Literature and was made *Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Minister of Culture, having first been made *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in 1988 and *Officier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in 1995. Other honour include: the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung FVS Shakespeare Prize in 1993; the Prix Médicis in 1986 for *Flaubert's Parrot* and the Prix Femina in 1992 for *Talking It Over*. In fact, he is the only non-French writer to have been awarded both prizes. Also, in 1986, he was awarded the E. M. Forster Award in 1986. The Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize in 1985, also for *Flaubert's Parrot*; and the Somerset Maugham Award in 1981 for *Metroland*.

Julian Barnes began his career as a novelist in 1980 when he published *Metroland*, a novel about a youthful London suburbanite, through his travels in Paris, les *événements* (events) of May 1968 and his life upon returning to suburban London. In 1982 this work was followed by *After She Met Me*, a novel chronicling love, obsession, and jealousy. Two years later, in 1984 *Flaubert's Parrot* was met with much critical acclaim, including nomination to the short list for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction. *Flaubert's Parrot* details the travels of a retired British doctor in France against the backdrop of his fascination with Gustav Flaubert. As is emblematic of Barnes' work, *Flaubert's Parrot* transcends the boundaries of traditional literary conventions and genres, combining fiction, literary criticism, and biography.

Two years later, Barnes published *Staring at the Sun*, (1986) investigating the 'ordinary' life of a woman over the course of 100 years, beginning in the 1920's. Throughout his early career Julian Barnes led a literary double life publishing four crime novels under the alias Dan Kavanagh. Titles include: *Duffy* (1980); *Fiddle City* (1981); *Putting the Boot In* (1985); *Going to the Dogs* (1987). The tetralogy features Duffy, a bisexual ex-detective crime sleuthing through the dark side of Soho, London's Heathrow Airport, the English countryside, and minor league soccer.

A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters was published amidst the historical and momentous turmoil of 1989, to much critical acclaim again. Described by Salman Rushdie as "Frequently brilliant, funny, thoughtful, iconoclastic and a delight to read," the work once again transcends genres of history, literary theory, and fiction thus establishing Barnes as an interdisciplinary intellectual, postmodern in his questioning of the grand narratives of modernism, and his transgression and admixture of theoretical boundaries, literary conventions, and narrative structures. As appropriate to the explosive historical moment, the collapse of the Berlin wall and the restructuring of European political and conceptual life, Julian Barnes' methodology in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* has been described as 'pyrotechnical', combining the intensity and fire of passion as art.

Indicative of Julian Barnes' mining of subject matter across a vast and varied terrain, his next novel, *Talking it Over* (1991), focuses on the lives of three people

involved in a love triangle, exploring and challenging literary conventions through writing only in the first person. This work was awarded the Prix Feminina Étranger in France.

Leaping across borders and boundaries once again, Julian Barnes published *The Porcupine* (1992), a novel set amidst the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. The novel explores and questions themes of nationalism and history. Barnes then released his first work of non-fiction, *Letters from London* (1995), a compilation of essays written during his tenure as literary correspondent to *The New Yorker* (1990-1995). Next, Barnes released *Cross Channel* (1996), a collection of short stories exploring the confluences and divergences between England and France.

In *England, England* (1998), Julian Barnes focuses his dark and satirical lens on what he critiques as 'theme park culture', exploring topics such as simulacra, reality, culture, art, myth, and national identity all with his typically wry sense of humour. With this volume, once again Barnes found himself on the short list for the *Man Booker Prize* for Fiction.

The year 2000 saw the publication of *Love, etc.*, a sequel to *Talking it Over*, (1991). In 2002 Julian Barnes translated the largely forgotten Alphonse Daudet's *In the Land of Pain*, introducing this important work to an English readership for the first time. That same year, Barnes, a confirmed Francophile, released another collection of essays on French culture entitled *Something to Declare: French Essays*, focusing on such diverse topics as the Tour de France, French gastronomy, and Gustav Flaubert.

The Pendant in the Kitchen is a compendium of articles previously published in *The Guardian* in 2003. This was followed in 2004 with the publication of *The Lemon Table*, a collection of stories relating to the themes of death and old age. In 2005, Julian Barnes was for the third time short-listed for the *Man Booker Prize for Fiction*, this time for *Arthur & George*, a fictionalized account of the true story of a solicitor accused of brutally slaughtering cattle in the English countryside, saved from false accusations by the intervention of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In 2008 Julian Barnes published a memoir meditating on life and its unavoidable end, titled *Nothing*

to be Frightened Of. This book would make it to the *New York Times Book Review* list as one of the "10 Best Books of 2008". In 2011, Pulse, a collection of short stories in which Barnes explores themes of the body, of love and sex, of illness and death, as well as of connections and conversations came out with great anticipation.

14.3 READING THE NOVEL ENGLAND, ENGLAND

The first part of Julian Barnes's new novel is a child's memory of an England gumming the last sweet crumbs of its past. The second part, a balloony satire, is England as a trendy dystopia of the near future. The last part (the child, Martha Cochrane, is now an old woman) sombrely rejects the dystopia. The three parts of the novel are told in contrasting tones. Although Martha figures in all three, she is different in each. In the first she looks out with the child's keen and fertilely mistaken eye; in the last, with the worn, aridly exact eye of age. Both these Marthas are inveterately human; at his best Barnes wrestles his characters skyward while letting them keep a foot on the ground.

In the middle and by far the longest section, on the other hand, human Martha is stretched into a cartoon. This is deliberate, and it plays out the author's message: Until recently, we conceived life as a tangible reality. The post-modern world -- Barnes blends in everything from deconstruction to the manipulation of entertainment and imagery to electronic communication -- is edging us into a virtual reality. The price will be paid. Reality will reassert itself on a mortally injured retreat. Let us begin with the smart and accomplished "England, England" section which occupies four-fifths of the whole. It plays out a lavish satire on Britain today extrapolated into a day or two after tomorrow. Its protagonist, Sir Jack Pitman, is a publishing mega beast with traces of Lord Coppers (in Waugh's "Scoop") and the late Robert Maxwell (hulking frame and faint East European accent). Mostly, of course, he is Rupert Murdoch, with his Communications Empire and unwalled expansiveness, though carried here to kinky extremes. (Sir Jack patronizes a brothel where he gets his kicks as a diapered baby.)

Determined upon a last feat of personal empire, and after considerable reflection – his excesses are coupled with some shrewd insight – Sir Jack buys the Isle of Wight. He hires the inhabitants and gets the local councillors to set up a parliament, declare independence and ask to join the European Union. His aim is a Disney World carried to its ultimate conclusion. Having taken a poll to determine the things that visitors most associate with Britain (among them the royal family, thatched cottages, Shakespeare, bowler hats, breakfast and double-decker buses), he reproduces them all, apart from a few he finds insulting (not washing/bad underwear).

Barnes' satiric relish for Sir Jack's history scam runs at glorious full tilt. The ironies set in very pleasingly indeed. And they do not just involve what the great money-bags gets up to at Aunty May's brothel for sexual retards. The mess of the human has a most discomfiting way of unsettling heritage fictions. So the actors playing Robin Hood and his Merrie Men quickly get a real taste for real poaching and real violence; Dr Johnson turns genuinely smelly and morose.

Still more arresting is what happens to Martha Cochrane. She appears in the wonderful opening section of the novel, remembering herself as a little girl playing with a Counties of England jigsaw. Her daddy hides Staffordshire, say, in his pocket; then deserts her, leaving her to make up plausible first memories, and invent spry blasphemies about father-figures.

Martha seems a representative seeker for truths about origins, her own and England's. Instructively, she doesn't last long as Sir Jack's Henchwoman. Martha has finally been sacked from her job, and Paul has become the new CEO, and Sir Jack gives her only six months to abandon the Isle. She is also declared "persona non grata". Afterwards we found that she prefers lighting out for the run-down mainland. Anglia, as it is known, is a dustier Portugal, demoted to the fringe of Europe. It is likened to a kind of paradise, some kind of genuine old England, where tourism and new technology are banned. You write with a fountain pen, dial 0 for operator, and go to the village church.

Martha Cochrane's life (from her unhappy childhood to her involvement with England, England, to her eventual return to a small English village much like the one she grew up in), it is sad and often touching -- as effective in evoking the entire arc of a woman's life as his 1987 novel, "Staring at the Sun." The problem, however, is that in forcing Martha to inhabit two novels, one comic and one not, Barnes has given her a split personality: She behaves like a sharp-tongued boss lady in the story of England, England and like a melancholy spinster in her own biography; like a two-dimensional cartoon in the former and like an old-fashioned, realistic heroine in the latter.

Barnes uses his profuse talents as a writer -- his lapidary prose, his eye for the askew detail, his ear for the indirect expression of contemporary speech -- to turn the saga of England, England into an uproarious farce that mocks both our postmodernist suspicion of the authentic and our Disney-like willingness to turn that embrace of the artificial into a money-making machine. He examines the arbitrary nature of history writing and the cyclical nature of history, and he satirizes the ideas that the English hold about themselves.

14.4 MAJOR THEMES

The Novel as an Identity Analysis

What do we mean by the concept of identity and how is it constructed? What is ‘Englishness’ and what makes somebody truly English? These are some of the questions that Barnes poses in his novel *England, England,* which brought about divided opinions of the critics, some of them seeing this work as a masterpiece, while some as a total failure. There are numerous factors according to which our character is formed, and Martha Cochrane, the protagonist of the novel, is in search of the tiny parts of her identity puzzle in order to piece it together. She keeps asking herself “how could you build your own character?”, which being a recurring sentence throughout the novel, serves as a sort of leitmotif expressing one of the leading ideas of the book. Postmodernist writers, such as Julian Barnes himself, were interested in

the theme of construction and deconstruction of identity, both on the personal and on the broader national level. Not only is Barnes concerned with personal and collective, that is, national identity, but also with memory as being a crucial element in the process of identity formation. We tend to shape our memories, thus our identity, in a way that it suits our own present needs, because memory is a living, changing material, as well as our identity is fluid and ever changing. Similarly, the nation creates its national history selecting only the convenient and suitable parts from the past, therefore generating a highly limited and selective, but most of all subjective picture. So, both personal and national identities are mere constructs that are culturally, historically, socially and economically conditioned. Another postmodernist idea being dealt with in the novel is Baudrillard's 'simulacrum', a copy without an original. Here, the original is substituted by the more favoured replica; England is left behind by its miniature version called "England, England", and this newly created 'hyper reality' affects some of the characters' identities as well. In this novel, Barnes elaborates on the theme of identity formation by focusing on "Englishness" and memory. A certain list of the 'Fifty Quintessences of Englishness' is created which is supposed to contain the very items representing all the essential qualities of the English. But can we really define a nation by means of a simple list? In this paper, firstly I will be focusing on the perception of identity, the connection between personal and national identity, as well as on the analysis of memory as a starting point and formative influence on the creation of one's character and national history; then I will reflect on the construction and deconstruction of identity in terms of Englishness; and lastly, I will be dealing with the main characters' identity formation. Furthermore, the idea of replica and hyper-real will be touched upon when it comes to identity analysis.

Altered perception of identity

The end of the 20th century brought several changes which crucially challenged the traditional views of identity. Hall provides a very relevant explanation of that altered identity:

> [t]his concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already 'the same', identical to itself across time. Nor […] is it that 'collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves" which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common, […] Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured (Hall 3-4).

These changes in society demanded an altered perception of national and personal identity, since everything is in constant motion, from which identity is not an exception either. While the modernists see identity as unified and authentic, the postmodernist writers believe in the fragmented nature of identity, since the world itself is fragmented and shattered, dominated by mass media and popular culture, materialism and consumerism, leading to alienation of people. This spiritually barren 'wasteland' is unable to generate a complete authentic self, but rather it creates a complex identity comprising several layers, which is thus fragmented, and leads to the "breakdown of the individual's sense of identity". Matter also points out that "the postmodernist theory radically undermines the very notion of the cohesive self" and that "national identities are perceived as no longer stable, collective identities but instead flexible and fragmented". The postmodernist belief is that everything is a construct; artificially and consciously built. This can relate to history, culture, nation and to personal and national identity as well. All of these are liable to alteration and change; as nothing is fixed, identities are also fluid. As Charles Guignon describes in *On Being Authentic*, humans are seen as "polycentric, fluid, contextual subjectivities, selves with limited powers of autonomous choice and multiple centers with diverse perspectives" (qtd. in Mattner 101).

Personal identity is closely related to national identity, and in this novel this connection is highlighted by Barnes' drawing parallel between the two. Martha tries to construct her identity by means of memory, just as the country fabricates its history by returning to the past. Martha's identity is even equated with the national, collective identity.

In the world of mass media, technological developments, globalization and migration, it may be of utmost importance to return to the self through introspection, and set out on the path of self-discovery and self-knowledge, though sometimes it is more difficult than it may seem to be. To find one's peace in the chaotic hectic world where nobody has time to stop to think about themselves is a challenging but enticing goal to reach. The individual may choose to find refuge in the inner world, turning inwards and trying to reveal the way how the self is constructed, to examine it inside out. This is exactly what Martha attempts to do; she is prone to introspection and in that way she tries to find her true inner self and wishes to figure out how one's character is built.

Personal and collective (national) identity

Barnes is concerned with the theme of personal and collective identity, drawing parallel between personal memory and collective history not just in this novel but in some of his previous novels as well (for example, in Flaubert's Parrot or in A History of the World in 101/ 2 Chapters). When it comes to personal identity, memory is a crucial factor since one forms one's identity in terms of memory. The first part of the novel called "England" depicts the life of Martha Cochrane and the attempt to construct her identity. To what extent memory is a defining factor in one's life becomes clear from the fact that the very first sentence of the book addresses this matter (also written in capital letters for the sake of emphasis): 'WHAT'S YOUR FIRST MEMORY?' someone would ask. And Martha would respond with 'I don't remember' (Barnes 12). But although others see that first memory as a very significant, if not a life-defining event, Martha (that is Barnes) knows that:

> It wasn't a solid, seizable thing […] A memory by definition not a thing, it was a memory. A memory of a memory a bit earlier of a memory before that of a memory way back when (Barnes 12).

This leads us to the recurrent theme of Barnes novels, the unreliability of memory, "the elusive nature of memory, which is "tied up with confusions about individual and national identity" (qtd. in Nünning by Fern).

Martha mistrusts memory since it is "coloured by what had happened in between" (Barnes 15) the present moment and the past. According to Martha, all first memories are mere fabrications; they are lies, so she chooses to lie, too. She calls her first memory an "artfully, innocently arranged" lie (Barnes 13) which is linked to her country (she played with the Counties of England jigsaw puzzle). As Berberich underlines this in the following quotation,

> This fabricated memory connects her childhood to the country in which she grew up. As the child Martha learns to assemble the jigsaw according to the counties' colours and shapes, so she begins to assemble her own sense of self within a collective national English identity (171).

Barnes draws analogy between the personal memory and national history by saying "It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself" (Barnes 15). So, just as personal memory, national history is also shaped in such a way that it would meet the people's present needs and expectations. Here, the postmodernist term 'fabulation' can be introduced, which is used by Barnes in A History of the World where he explains it as follows "we make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation; we call it history." That is how Martha constructs her first memory, since, as in history, she also makes up things and fills the missing gaps in her memory by fabulation. Therefore, both personal memory and national history are consciously formed constructs which are in a direct correlation with identity. The way how personal memory shapes the individual is similar to how the national history forms the nation; and individual identity is built within the framework of national identity.

Englishness

The concept of "Englishness" is a very important notion in this novel where Barnes deals with the construction and deconstruction of it. There are "several versions of Englishness" as Nünning notes and Barnes engages in the process of how these versions are "invented and upheld" (Nünning)

What it means to be English is rather different from what it denoted in the past. There are certain characteristics which are considered to be typically English but, generally speaking, it is almost impossible to define an individual, let alone a whole nation by taking only these traits. That is why Barnes first attempts at constructing the English identity, only to deconstruct it later. As David Gervais says, "'Englishness' has become a theme for speculation rather than dogma; twentieth-century writers have found it an elusive and ambivalent concept, a cue for nostalgia or for a sense of exile or loss" (1). Barnes himself said in an interview that the novel is concerned with what "you might call the invention of tradition" that is, with Englishness. As Nünning marks "the novel exemplifies the great current interest in the fictional exploration of Englishness […] it questions and revises conventional notions of Englishness" (7).

Throughout the course of the novel, it is accentuated that Sir Jack is a patriot wearing only home-made English clothes and shoes. "His tweed deerstalker, hunter's jacket cavalry twills, gaiters, hand-crafted doe-skin boots, and fell-walker's stave. All made in England, of course: Sir Jack was a patriot in his private moments too" (Barnes 44). In the description of Pitman, we can feel a hint of irony Barnes uses. Pitman works hard to present himself as a true Englishman and an ardent patriot, but we know it well that identity is much more complex and layered, and it cannot be reduced to a set of certain traits let alone can be restricted to one's appearance, i.e. the clothes one chooses to wear.

As far as the construction of Englishness is concerned, list-making is an important element of this work. The novel abounds in different lists: a list of the most important historical dates, list of English food and English islands, but it definitely

reaches its peak with the 'Fifty Quintessences of Englishness', a list which is supposed to include all the essential markers of the English identity, but which in itself ridiculous, futile and superficial. And as Berberich points out "incidentally, the sheer number of 'lists' on things English to be found in Barnes' novel might be yet another ironic stab at the subject of 'Englishness'. The Fifty Quintessence list is based on a carefully conducted research by Pitman's team, which has surveyed people's conception of Englishness, that is, the Concept Developer is asked to conduct an opinion poll taking place worldwide. Some items which Pitman finds displeasing are discarded from the list, since they do not fit the perfect picture of Englishness he wants to generate in order to attract as many tourists as he can:

> Sir Jack prodded a forefinger down Jeff's list again, and his loyal growl intensified with each item he'd crossed off. This wasn't a poll, it was barefaced character assassination. Who the fuck did they think they were, going around saying things like that about England? His England. What did they know? (Barnes 86).

The visitors demand "an idealized version of Englishness that is adjusted to the tastes of the present" (Nünning 13).

The negative traits such as hypocrisy, perfidy or emotional frigidity are crossed off, which stresses the constructed nature of Englishness. The English identity as a national identity is artfully composed in order to serve people's needs, just as personal identity is a fabrication of the facets which one wishes to present to others. Either consciously or subconsciously, we send signals to others of who we are or who we wish to be. We also tend to 'erase' certain negative characteristics which are unfavourable and displeasing for us, so in that sense Sir Pitman's crossing off is not so strange and unacceptable or reprehensible. He strives to make a profiting business out of the newly created theme park, and for that purpose he is ready to sacrifice sincerity and honesty, and to 'tidy up' the list. Pitman creates this mini version of England, a heritage park not just for the sake of becoming rich but also as an act of

proving his patriotism. England cannot face the truth that it has lost its old glory as the master of the British Empire; that it is not a world power anymore and the sun finally set on the Empire; Pitman wishes to retain the appearance of a great country as it was in the past at all costs. Mattner also mentions this: "The English locate their national identity in a glorified past, yet they find it hard to bridge the divide between the nostalgic notion of the good old days of the Empire - and the opposing morals of the late twentieth century" (Mattner 46).

National identity is also fluid and is a matter of interpretation. As postmodernists see history as a mere narrative, as text which is filtered through different perceptions and is never unprocessed, 'pure', but always mediated, in such a way is identity a product of an individual or a nation, in case of personal or national identity respectively. Consequently, how we define and perceive ourselves (and how others see us) as individuals or as a nation is crucial in the process of identity creation.

Time is a significant factor when it comes to Englishness and national identity in general, since how it changes and progresses it entails the change of identity, which can be seen from the fact that Englishness in the past meant something different from what it means now. The boom of "tourism and advertising as well as the greeting card industry [appeared with consumerism], are responsible for creating the so-called 'Quintessences of Englishness' in the first place" as Ousby points out.

Certain myths and personages are revived and emphasized in order to 'sell' the English culture and history, and for that matter 'cultural heritage' is created which became prominent in Margaret Thatcher's period in the end of the 20th century. In England, England the myth of Robin Hood being a "primal English myth" (Barnes) is paid special attention to by the Pitman committee and by using that and other myths they try to sell the English culture.

In this novel, as Pristash argues, traditional forms of Englishness are depicted as problematic and negative" and "alternative Englishness do not provide an answer either. Instead, the novel depicts a range of responses to Englishness that indicate that the choice between traditional and alternative is misleading since all versions of English national identity are merely constructions.

Also, in the construction of Englishness 'real' historical events are not taken as foundation, as Nünning points out "actual events of English history play a minor role both in England, England and in 'England, England'. This cavalier treatment of historical events is in keeping with many constructions of Englishness, for 'real' history is rarely taken to be the basis of national identity" (15). National identity is evolved from what people believe to be their history, but Barnes also "deconstructs the notion that educated citizen's knowledge of history provides any reliable basis for the retrieval of specifically English traits" (Nünning 15).

This can be seen when Dr Max conducts a survey asking the subject what happened at the Battle of Hastings, to which the subject's reply is 1066, the date of the battle, but the subject is unable to provide any further more detailed information about the battle. People's general knowledge of history is superficial, thus it cannot provide them with a firm basis for their identity construction. Nünning also points to this:

> Any attempt at forging a national identity therefore has to reckon with elusive memories, lack of knowledge, and highly distorted patriotic views of history, […] the attempt to trace Englishness always involves the invention of something new under the guise of a time-honoured tradition (Nünning,15)

In England, England, Dr Max, the historian of the Project explicitly states his opinion about history and identity:

> We may choose to freeze a moment and say that it all "began" then, but as an historian I have to tell you that such labelling is intellectually indefensible. What we are looking at is almost always a replica, if that is the locally fashionable term, of something earlier. There is no prime moment (Barnes 116).

All the members of the committee are well aware of the fact that the whole Project is a construct, make-believe but Dr Max also notes that he does not find this so

extraordinary since all of us are mere constructions: “As for being constructed … well, so are you, Miss Cochrane, and so am I, constructed. I, if I may say so, a little more artfully than you” (Barnes 116), and he also adds that “[m]ost people, in my opinion, steal much of what they are. If they didn’t, what poor items they would be. You’re just as constructed” (Barnes 117). So, all of us behave in a certain way so as to present ourselves in the best possible light. Usually, we are diplomatic in our responses in order to avoid conflict or provocation, restricting ourselves by not behaving naturally and not saying what is truly on our minds. We consciously generate a picture of ourselves, wearing different masks at work, with friends or at home with family. But of course it should not be like that. Martha tries to stick to her own self, strives to be herself at the expense of others deeming her pert or headstrong, and other rather negative adjectives are used to label her as well.

The identity formation of Martha Cochrane

Having discussed identity in general, now we have to deal with the formation of particular characters in the novel, first of all that of Martha Cochrane, the protagonist of the book. Conscious character building can be discerned in her case, which becomes obvious from the fact that she repeatedly asks herself “how could you build your own character?” (Barnes). Here, an important question arises posed by Clarke in his work Culture and Identity: “Do we choose our identity or is it beyond us?” (3). Martha consciously tries to construct her character through memory or history but she distrusts every means because nothing is fixed or fully reliable. One’s identity to a great extent depends on interpretation, and on the circumstances the person is in. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt from the novel:

> Photographs of Martha would show her frowning at the world, pushing out a lower lip, her eyebrows clenched. Was this disapproval of what she saw, was it showing her unsatisfactory ‘character’ – or was it merely that her mother had been told (when she was a child) that you should always take

> pictures with the sun coming over your shoulder?" (Barnes 21) […] "was this her nature or only her mother's poor photography? (193)

She believes that one should build one's character in order to become grown up but she is uncertain of how to achieve it, and she concludes: "In any case, building her character was not her chief priority at this time" (Barnes 21). This construction of the self is symbolically presented in Martha's first reconstructed memory. She couldn't finish the jigsaw puzzle because her father took a piece of the puzzle, Nottinghamshire, with him in his pocket, thus leaving Martha's jigsaw unfinished, […] with it her sense of self (Berberich 171). She finds a 'bewildered comparison' at the village walls for character building: "blocks of stone, and mortar in between, and then a line of angled flints which showed that you were grown up, that you have built your character." (Barnes 20). But she also adds that it makes no sense.

While Martha struggles to find her true self, England also attempts to find its authentic national identity (Mattner 7). The past is a deciding factor regarding the nation's history and the person's memory, but since everything which happened is mediated and processed through interpretation, the past is questionable and unreliable. Martha also realizes that, saying: "She did not know whether she was meant to remember or to forget the past. At this rate she would never built her character" (Barnes 24). We are taught that we have to define ourselves through our past memories, not just through our personal ones but our country's history as well. The problem arises when we realize that history is arbitrary and by no means fixed, so it is not surprising that we are confused when we are supposed to rely on that past as the basis of our identity.

Although Martha tries to build her character and to achieve maturity, at one point in the novel it is stated that "she grew up, as her character was built" but it actually boils down to her becoming "headstrong rather than pert, and clever enough to know when to hide her cleverness" (Barnes 28), and her creed becomes that "after the age of twenty-five, you were not allowed to blame anything on your parents"

(Barnes 28). She simplifies and banalises maturing a bit too much. Her growing up comes down to a few simple "rules" which she tries to obey. She also makes attempt at discovering herself in a relationship with Paul but she realizes that in that relationship she is not true to herself, whereas she also feels that it seems impossible to identify her true self (Mattner 9). She appears to lose heart and gives up the fight of finding herself, since deep inside she feels that all is in vain. She reaches old age, but she fails to become mature too, which is a frequent phenomenon among people. Maybe she gets to understand many things about herself and the world, that of how things function, but she cannot really implement and apply that knowledge in practice.

When it comes to other characters' identity, Paul Harrison, the "Ideas Catcher" in the Pitman project and Martha's boyfriend, is a kind of a product of the contemporary society since his identity is formed through mass media. Therefore, he is also a critique of that very society. He fantasizes about women and reads magazines in order to examine the women in them. Additionally, he modifies, adjusts himself according to what is expected from him. He succumbs to those who are in superior positions to him, in that way making it impossible to form his own character, to take the reins in his own hands. Actually, it seems that he does not even care about creating his authentic personality because he finds it easier to give himself up to others willing to control him.

As Carey notes both Martha and Paul construct their sexuality out of replicas and imitations in their adolescence. Carey highlights this by saying:

> Paul, like many males, discovered girls in magazines and kept them, neatly torn out, in manila envelopes under his mattress. Martha's ideals are subtler but no less fake. Never having met a man to match her dream, she concentrates, in love-making, on the dream, and ignores, as far as possible, the male who is pleasuring her. "I'm still here," Paul pants reproachfully as he gamely does his bit.

Most of the characters in the novel play different roles, and nobody reveals their true selves, as "some even invented multiple identities to themselves" (Mattner 7). For example, Sir Pitman wishes to epitomize the true Englishman armed with 'sincere patriotic sentiments' but at some points the authenticity of his character is questioned. Mattner claims that "Sir Pitman is not really a patriot, since he accepts England's decline, which is to a great extent caused by his project" (10).

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The Postmodern Condition: Reality and hyperreality

Julian Barnes' England, England plays with postmodern questions of reality and authenticity and highlights the idea that there is no such thing as an 'original'. Barnes discusses the elusive nature of reality and knowledge and thus demonstrates the constructedness of identities and nations.

The development of theme parks described in England, England focuses on the capitalization of a prevailing nostalgic longing for the past, in which a representation of the authentic is subordinate to the needs of the tourism industry.

The novel is therefore rooted in the ideas of postmodernism, which Mike Featherstone discusses in *Undoing Culture*. Postmodernist ideas emphasize the 'decentring of the subject, whose sense of identity and biographical continuity give way to fragmentation and superficial play with images [and] sensations'(17). Julian Barnes' characters, are shown to be dissatisfied with the postmodern, disenchanted world. Sir Jack Pitman creates wholeness in hyperreality, embracing the collapse of the distinction between high and popular culture, and between original and copy, and thus creates a theme park replicating everything he reckons to be distinctively English. In contrast, Barnes' protagonist Martha Cochrane endeavours in a lifelong search to find her true identity.

Postmodernist theories debate the paradigms of modernism, and question the fundamental ideas of the Enlightenment: The ideas of the Enlightenment premise a stable, coherent, knowable self, a self that knows itself and the world through reason, or rationality, and can produces an objective form of knowledge, namely science. The postmodern view emphasizes epistemological doubt and thus highlights the constructedness of our world. Barnes repeatedly addresses the flexibility of truth and reality, and ultimately the secondariness of these notions in a postmodern society. One example is Martha Cochrane's interview for the position of the 'Appointed Cynic'. Sir Jack examines her CV, and asks: 'Lets see, you are forty. Correct?' – 'Thirty- nine.' [...] 'But if I said I was thirty-nine you'd probably think I was forty-two or –three, whereas if I say I'm forty you're more likely to believe it.' [...] – 'And is the rest of your application as approximate as that?' – 'It's as true as you want it to be. If it suits, it's true. If not, I'll change it.'18 The postmodern pattern of thought

is marked by a habitual sceptical approach to any kind of information. In this exchange, Martha anticipated Sir Jack's scepticism and decided to falsify her date of birth, in order to make it appear more believable. This hints at the postmodern idea of hyper reality, which suggests that the fake can appear more real than reality. Barnes shows that truth seems to be a matter of acceptance – the approved version is presumed to represent the truth, which is thus a matter of interpretation. This emphasizes the postmodern notion of the constructedness of truth and reality. In the postmodern consumer culture, the question of authenticity and reality is secondary, since any reality will be reworked for consumption.

Martha knows how to present herself in a world where the boundaries between believable illusion and reality are blurred. Nevertheless, all her life she searches for truth, trying to find meaningful relationships, and, most notably, trying to find her true, inner self. The basic assumption built into the ideal of authenticity is that there is a 'true self' lying within each individual. This real, inner self contains 'the constellation of feelings, needs, desires, capacities, aptitudes, dispositions, and creative abilities that make the person a unique individual.'

Martha tries to determine her true self through introspection. She attempts to examine her memories, but, as Julian Barnes highlights on the first page of his novel, Martha knows that memories are unreliable. They are not 'solid, seizable things', they are 'lies', 'processed', 'coloured by what happened in between', 'propaganda', 'self deception', 'impure and corrupted'. (Barnes,1-7). Martha perceives a fragmentation between her brain and herself, and between her heart and her mind: 'So while her heart opened, her mind remained anxious.'(Barnes,135)

The postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty rejects notions of truth and rationality, and follows the emphasis upon a decentred self by arguing that there is no underlying coherent human essence behind our various social roles. Rather than being something unified and consistent, the self should be conceived as 'a bundle of conflicting 'quasi-selves', a random and contingent assemblage of experiences.' (Featherstone, 45)

Martha Cochrane tries to construct meaning for her life based on the idea that she can consciously build her character and become who she always wanted to be, a mature personality. She admits her mother's rule, enhancing it to her own: 'they made their mistakes, now you make yours. And there was a logical consequence of this, which became part of Martha's creed: after the age of twenty-five, you were not allowed to blame anything on your parents (Barnes, 22).

Martha is torn between the existential demand, between reality and hyperreality to freely create her inner world, her own self and her own truths and convictions, while trying to fulfil expectations of the outer world. In the final section of England, England she thinks back about her attempts to create her own identity, and reasons that, in the end, it was not in her hands. A neighbour's child calls her an old maid: Well then, that's what they saw. (Barnes,34) She accepts the meaninglessness of life in the absence of grand narratives, and gives up the pointless search for truth, facing the unreliability of all knowledge and the randomness of a subject's identity. But Julian Barnes displays this awareness of incoherence and randomness rather as a feeling of capitulation, instead of, as postmodern thought suggests, a feeling of achievement.

Sir Jack's project invents an improved version of Englishness, which leaves out any unfavourable characteristics. On the Isle of Wight, renamed 'England, England', a 'repositioned patriotism' emerges: 'on the island, they had learnt how to deal with history, how to sling it carelessly on your back and stride out across the downland with the breeze in your face. Travel light: it was true for nations as well as for hikers.'(Barnes, 230). The islanders have discarded their history and accepted a more flattering version, which was offered by the hyperreality of Pitman's project. This reality is completely fake, but as the project's historian, Dr Max, explains, the public does not wish for authenticity and reality: 'Reality is rather like a rabbit, if you'll forgive the aphorism (Barnes Julian,133).

Visitors to Sir Jack's island accept the events and of the holiday, but by not identifying with them in the knowledge that they are only staged events and experiences, the visitors act in a postmodern way. Julian Barnes satirises an imagined

future world that follows the logic of a consumer culture, in which the authentic has lost its value. The inhabitants of 'England, England' has given up on the idea of authenticity.

Although Mike Featherstone highlights the ability of the postmodern mind to participate in staged events in an 'as if' manner, in which the awareness of inauthenticity creates only 'little sense of nostalgic loss' (Featherstone, 77) , the inhabitants of 'England, England' cannot truly identify with their 'nation'. Obviously, a state that is run by a company, and whose 'citizens' have no rights and are deported in case of illness, cannot seriously be seen as the future model for nation states. Yet, Julian Barnes describes the theme park as a great success with tourists, who prefer the convenient reproductions on the island to the original sites in England: 'From now on, only those with an active love of discomfort or necrophiliac taste for the antique need to venture there.' (Barnes185)

14.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Martha Cochrane

At the outset of the novel, Martha as a child plays endlessly with a jigsaw puzzle of England, fitting all the counties into their appropriate places. Her lifelong cynicism is launched when her father, who always used to tease her by hiding a puzzle piece in his pocket, leaves and doesn't return to her life until Martha is grown. He has taken a piece of the puzzle with him.

Here, Barnes sets the stage for the—secret heart of his satiric treatise by linking the concepts of memory and history. Having been abandoned by her father, Martha tries to dismiss the importance of memories as a survival tactic: "If a memory wasn't a thing but a memory of a memory, mirrors set in parallel, then what the brain told you now about what it claimed had happened then would be coloured by what had happened in between. It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself." Through the connection between Martha's drive to obliterate memories of her past and England's

willingness to abandon its heritage in a misguided belief it will help it succeed in the modern world, Barnes establishes Martha as a metaphor for England.

The three parts of the novel are told in contrasting tones. Although Martha figures in all three, she is different in each. In the first she looks out with the child's keen and fertilely mistaken eye; in the last, with the worn, aridly exact eye of age. Both these Martha s are inveterately human; at his best Barnes wrestles his characters skyward while letting them keep a foot on the ground.

In the middle and by far the longest section, on the other hand, human Martha is stretched into a cartoon. This is deliberate, and plays out the author's message: Until recently, we conceived life as a tangible reality. The post-modern world -- Barnes blends in everything from deconstruction to the manipulation of entertainment and imagery to electronic communication -- is edging us into a virtual reality. And so the titles of each of the parts: "England" for Martha's tangibly recalled childhood and "England, England" for her adulthood among the simulacra of a lampooned near future. "Anglia" is her old-age withdrawal into a counterpart English remnant: rural, cut off from the world, technologically stripped, uncomfortable, devoid of ambition or modern conveniences and very far from utopian.

Martha plays Sir Jack's assistant, and then a temporary successor even more copper-bottomed than he. The virtual world makes virtual people, so this is appropriate, but we do not easily accommodate the loss of the Martha we glimpsed in the first part, even for demonstration purposes. Neither, perhaps, does Barnes: he writes an incipient romance in which she and her rabbity lover touch body and soul for an inveigling moment before stiffening back into their roles. Rabbit remains there; she departs.

Though it makes two awkward joins, the 30 pages of child Martha at the start and another 30 of old Martha at the end give "England, England" (the book, not the section) its Barnesian light. First, Martha at 12 assembling a jigsaw puzzle of the English counties, learning English history by rhyming rote, and perusing the reassuring variety at the country fair (three kinds of beans, four of shallots, six of dahlias). And, since revolt long over is fair human order, her Lord's Prayer parody:

"Alfalfa . . . / Bellowed be thy name. / Thy wigwam come. / Thy swill be scum / in Bath, which is near the Severn."

This is one use of the past: the magic distortions of memory, so different from the lethal replication of Sir Jack's England, England. Then there is another use, far bleaker. Years after fleeing Sir Jack, Martha settles in a rough, peeled-back England that has relinquished power, prosperity and any attempt to fit the modern world. There is horse transport, laborious farming, little heat or power, virtually no foreign trade or immigration and no television or computers. It is Olde England, neither as remembered in a child's inklings nor as flogged in Sir Jack's simulacrum, but as it was. Except, of course, for the ambition and desire that launched England into the world and gradually decayed into England, England.

Jack Pitman

Barnes, protagonist Sir Jack Pitman at first seems like a mere cartoon of the monster media entrepreneur (based at least slightly on the late Robert Maxwell). A colossal egotist of mysterious provenance, Pitman has achieved all the material success a man could desire-all, at any rate, that an ordinary man could imagine. Like others of his ilk, he now feels patriotic stirrings within himself, or perhaps more accurately, he now feels the need to impose his personality in a new fashion: the creation of what some might call a historical amusement park.

For Pitman, though, the place is to be a distillation of the British spirit, (and, of course, a profitable one). He summons his inner circle of sycophantic functionaries: his Concept Developer, his Ideas Catcher, his official Historian, and recruited at the last minute, His Appointed cynic, a world-weary woman named Martha Cochrane, through whose eyes most of the story is told.

The enterprise that emerges is monumental in scope: Duplicated or acquired are Robin Hood and his band, London taxis, and double Decker buses, the Battle of Britain, rustic shepherds, the Houses of Parliament, and a dozen more seemingly disparate nuggets of Englishness. The space requirements appear overwhelming, but for those who think big, nothing is impossible: Pitman convinces the inhabitants of

the Isle of Wight that they would be better off cutting loose from Great Britain and turning themselves over to his management as an independent nation called *England, England* .

Most of the novel's other character, while hardly ordinary, provide a sort of realistic background to Sir Jack Pitman. (the monarch, a dim witted pilot who goes by the nick name Kingy- thingy, might easily fit into the royal family.) but it is Sir jack who really makes the book go.

14.5 STYLE/GENRE

The first one, 'England' (23 pages), focuses on Martha Cochrane as a teenager, fond of jigsaws, suspicious of religion and of the mechanisms of memory. The second part, 'England, England' (210 pages), is set in the near future and presents a fantasy: media mogul Sir Jack Pitman and his associates (amongst them a cynical and sceptical Martha approaching middle age) turn the Isle of Wight into a gigantic theme park called England, England, in which one finds replicas of England's best known historical buildings, sites and figures. The Island Project is a great success while the mainland suffers a vertiginous decline. The third part, 'Anglia' (25), takes place decades later when Martha, now an old and wiser woman, has gone back to the former England, which has reverted to a pre-industrial era. The novel plays the satirical public story of Sir Jack's megalomaniac venture against the private story of Martha's development from teenager to elderly lady. As Matthew Pateman suggests, the focus on 'a woman looking back on her life', who is supposed to 'represent simplicity, honesty, and truth', may remind the reader of the narration of Jean Serjeant's life in *Staring at the Sun*.

Though unique in Barnes's production, *England, England* addresses some of the key issues developed in his previous novels, in particular the evasiveness of truth, the construction of history and the elusive nature of memory. To quote Barnes, the book is about 'the idea of England, authenticity, the search for truth, the invention of tradition, and the way in which we forget our own history'. This accumulation of

possessiveness the inevitable transformation, distortion and gradual disappearance of original facts.

Critics variously referred to the novel as a 'satirical comedy', and Barnes's mastery of satire, irony and parody. Satire is the term that appears most frequently in analyses of the novel, and yet it is one which Barnes feels awkward with: 'the purpose of satire or the real function of satire is to console the dispossessed, is to mock the mighty for the consolation of the weak and the poor. . . but I don't see myself . . . as actually writing satire'. The writer adds that his novel 'is farcical rather than satirical', and he thus prefers to refer to it as a 'semi-farce'. The farcical element is mostly due to the character of the megalomaniac newspaper tycoon Sir Jack Pitman, who, as the author and several reviewers have suggested, is reminiscent of British publishing magnate Robert Maxwell and Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch, both of whom are referred to in Barnes's essay 'Fake!' in *Letters from London* (30, 38).

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In their incompleteness, both history and memory resemble the jigsaw of the counties of England which is partly reproduced on the cover of the original Jonathan Cape hardback edition, and whose pieces Martha would try to assemble as a girl. This apparently innocent image in the first part of the novel provides a metaphor for the essence of history and memory, whose wholeness is a mere illusion. The malleability of history and the unreliability of collective and individual memory are what enable the creators of the theme park on the Isle of Wight to rewrite, simplify and caricature national history so as to meet the expectations of tourists.

The name of the venture sounds both patriotic and ironic as the doubling of 'England' seems to grant a doubled value to the fake country while the original England has been erased from the history of the world. The title of Barnes's novel

thus resonates with patriotic intertextual echoes, but the glorified consideration of national history and Englishness is tainted with irony. As Vera Nünning suggests, the 'patriotic view of history' is 'exemplified by the peculiar way history is taught at Martha's school'. (Nünning, 61)

Patriotism may seem to be an uneasy position to hold at the dawn of the new millennium, when the British Empire no longer exists and England is declining. Sir Jack solves the problem by evacuating the present, instead on England's past and glorious history. The Island Project which he invents has been called a utopia by Patrick Parrinder,[25] i.e. an imaginary world that is supposed to be perfect, more pointedly referred to it as 'a trendy dystopia' and a 'merry dystopia', by some critics i.e. an imaginary world which is supposed to be perfect but seems, in some respects, to be worse than our own.

The design team carefully prunes the list so as to retain only the glorifying items of the past, and to make the experience palatable for worldwide tourists.

Sir Jack Pitman and his Co-ordinating Committee marvel at the success of the theme park which has eventually replaced mainland England or Old England, and propagate negative views of the original land, where 'people were burdened by yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that. . . . By history' (203). England, which has been dispossessed of all its historical characteristics and most of its population, is redefined as 'a nation fatigued by its own history' (253)

In an interview, Barnes remarked that *England, England* was 'about the creation of false truths about a country, and these coarse icons that are made to stand in for real things'.

By foregrounding the construction of national history, *England, England* problematizes issues relating to the art of representation, the simulacrum, and the relationship between the replica and the original, a theme Barnes had already approached in *Flaubert's Parrot* through the figure of the stuffed parrot, and in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* through Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa*. Right from the start in *England, England*, Sir Jack Pitman asks a central

question: 'What is real?'(31), and warns his employees: 'I could have you replaced with substitutes, with . . . simulacra' (31).

As satire, this book is at its best skewering the tourist industry at large and heritage tourism specifically. Barnes has created *reduction ad absurdum* (reduction to the absurd) with *England, England* showing his revulsion at commercialized travel marketed as educational experience. And that there is a very real market for sham culture, wrapped in a package of glamorous accommodations and fine dining.

Julian Barnes has given us a novel that raises important questions about contemporary life and how it perceives the past. *England, England* challenges us to look closely at the corrupting effects upon our world-wide culture caused by heritage tourism in its relentless and cynical exploitation of history for gross commercial purposes.

14.6 SUMMING UP

"Englishness" is an important notion in the novel, which is also being constructed by the Pitman committee according to the "Fifty Quintessences of Englishness", and at the same time deconstructed by making some alterations to that list. Not only England is being deconstructed then reconstructed on the Isle of Wight, but the protagonists also try to construct their own characters, especially Martha Cochrane. However, her attempts at finding her true self prove to be unsuccessful. Sir Jack Pitman wishes to embody the perfect Englishman and a true patriot with more or less success, while Paul subjects himself to his superiors. Thus, nobody is truly authentic; everybody strives to present a pleasing picture of themselves. All of them are replicas of their true selves, and in this world the replica is unfortunately more valuable than the original itself. Martha states that if they should choose between "an inconvenient 'original' or a convenient replica, a high proportion of tourists would opt for the latter." (Barnes 156). Consequently, for the sake of financial gain the Pitman committee will provide them with replicas. The actors in the newly created miniature England have become 'simulacra', since they have

become the characters they are acting out, while the theme park represents a 'hyperreality'. So, we should appreciate Martha's effort because at least she makes an attempt at building her character. As Camus says in his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus,* "[t]he struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." On the other hand theme parks and heritage sites conduce to the feeling of belonging to a historical community and thus support the idea that a sense of identity and belonging is to be found in the past on making profit. Instead of presenting history in a careful, questioning approach, theme parks and heritage sites represent realities in a way that pleases their customers. Tourists visit heritage sites and theme parks in search for entertainment and the feeling of wholeness a hyperreal environment can offer.

The longing for an idealized past can be seen as a reaction to the increasing complexity of contemporary culture, which focuses on the deconstruction of traditional values and truths without providing alternative explanations of the world. Julian Barnes explores the elusive nature of reality, and thus highlights the feeling of disorientation of the postmodern era. Julian Barnes' novel can be viewed as a contribution to the on-going debate about Englishness, suggesting that England should discard its historical image and think about what Englishness could mean in the postmodern world. He describes the contemporary English mistrust of the European Union, but in consequence of a rejection of supranational organizations he describes the decline of England. Julian Barnes suggests that England should leave behind the glorified yet inauthentic past, and look into the future, which promises prosperity within supranational structures.

14.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Describe the major themes which encompassed the British contemporary fiction and also mention the major novelists of that era.
2. Describe the postmodern condition as depicted in the novel *England, England.*

3. Describe the simulacrum of national identity as shown in *England, England.*
4. Describe Julian Barnes as a modernist novelist and highlight his major novels.
5. *England, England* as a novel of identity crisis in a post-modern era. Explain.
6. Discuss reality and hyperreality as depicted in the novel *England, England.*
7. Critically explain the concept 'fifty quintessence of Englishness' as a major satirical concern of the novel.

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