TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF ARTS

ENGLISH

CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

MEG 201: BRITISH POETRY II: NEO-CLASSICAL TO VICTORIAN

BLOCK I

CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)

TEZPUR, ASSAM -784028

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MEG 201: British Poetry II: Neo-Classical To Victorian

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BLOCK I

MODULE I: AUGUSTAN AGE

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course, MEG201-British Poetry II: Neo-Classical to Victorian is a continuation of the MEG102- British Poetry I: Chaucer to Restoration. This is the second of the three courses designed to introduce the learners to British poetic tradition. This course deals with the representative British poets and their major works from eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to see how they revise and transform their predecessors in order to present their own ways of seeing.

The course is divided into five modules, each dealing with different poets and their poetry stretching in multiple units in each.

Module I entitled **Augustan Age** discusses primarily two pathfinders of the period, John Dryden and Alexander Pope. **Unit 1**: **Trends of Augustan Poetry** gives you a broad idea of the Age. The Augustan Age in English poetry coincides with the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14), and George II. Its previous period, known as the Restoration period expands from 1660 to 1700 beginning with the restoration of King Charles II to the throne. Beginning with the socio-political background, this unit also presents a detail discussion of the dominant trend of the period, Neo-classicism and mock heroic as salient literary styles. This unit also covers few representative authors of the period. **Unit 2: John Dryden: *Mac Flecknoe*** gives an elaborate overview of the poem along with an extended write up on the life and works of Dryden. *Mac Flecknoe* is often considered as Dryden's most entertaining poem. The poem advances beyond criticism to a level of expressing rage at an extent of human stupidity. It is a satirical attack on Thomas Shadwell by Dryden and is the result of a series of disagreement between Shadwell and Dryden. **Unit 3: Alexander Pope: *Rape of the Lock* (Selections)** gives an indepth study of another masterpiece of the period *The Rape of the Lock*. First published in 1712, it consisted of two cantos (334 lines), and after the revision of the poem in 1714, it was expanded to a five canto poem consisting of 794 lines. This is another poem written in the

tradition of mock epic and narrates a minor 'trivial' incident and is contrasted to the epic world of gods.

Module II: **Romantics I** is divided into three units and covers the early Romantic poets like Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge. **Unit 4: Romantic Poetry and its trend** broadly discusses the emergence of Romanticism and its deviation from the previous age. This unit also gives you a considerably good idea of the characteristics of Romantic poetry and deals with the early and later Romantics in brief. **Unit 5** elaborately and critically discusses William Blake's poems like "The Lamb", "The Tyger", and "Holy Thursday" picked from his *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience.* **Unit 6** presents an extensive study of William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and S. T. Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", and "Ode to Dejection" and also evaluates the thematic and stylistic features of these poets.

Module III: Romantics II has taken few later and prominent Romantics such as Shelley, Keats and Byron. Through the representative poems prescribed for your study, the three units included in this module will cover a wide range of these poetic geniuses. **Unit 7** deals with P. B. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", and "To a Skylark" and critically evaluates his style. **Unit 8** comprises of John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "The Eve of St. Agnes" (Selections) while **Unit 9** will analyse one of the legendary figures of Romanticism Lord Byron through his poems like "She Walks in Beauty", and "Prometheus". It is expected that after the reading of Module I and II, learners will be able to acquire a comprehensive idea of Romanticism and its chief exponents.

Module IV: Early Victorians includes few select and well known poets of the period. Reading of this will make us aware that Victorian poetry is strikingly different from the previous trends in poetry. Instead of poet's imagination, the poetry of this period showed their concern in the doubt and uncertainties of the time through poetry. **Unit 10** will discuss Alfred Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot", and "Ulysses". **Unit 11** includes Robert

Browning's "Two in the Campagna" and "Fra Lippo Lippi", a poem based on the life of fifteenth century Italian painter Fra Lippo de Tommaso Lippi. The poem raises various questions on the role of art and artist, attitude and philosophy of Medieval and Renaissance artists on art etc.

Module V entitled **Late Victorians** includes three poets having different poetic temperaments. While Arnold turns to faith in human relationship, Hopkins showed deep faith in God and his creations in the world of Nature. Thomas Hardy as a novelist and poet though placed in the Victorian age, critics identified him as a bridging writer between Victorian and Modernism. Divide into three units, **Unit 12** deals with Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" and "The Scholar Gypsy". **Unit 13** includes Thomas Hardy's "Channel Firing", "Afterwards" and "The Oxen" while **Unit 14** gives emphasis on Gerald Manley Hopkins and his select poems like "Pied Beauty", "The Windhover" and "Inversnaid". Again we can say that after the reading of Module IV and V learner will be able to get a good idea of all the major Victorian poets and their stylistic and thematic treatments that suited the temperament of the Age.

Each unit has additional components like 'Check you Progress', 'Let Us Stop and Think', and 'Assessment questions' through which learner will be able to equip themselves well with the provided information in each unit. Along with this we expect the learners to access further information by using the sources given in the 'Recommended Readings' section.

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MODULE I: AUGUSTAN AGE

UNIT 1: TRENDS OF AUGUSTAN POETRY

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the Augustan Age and its importance in the history of English literature. The Augustan Age in English poetry coincides with the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14), the last of the Stuart rulers and George I (1714-27) and George II, the first two of Hanoverian kings, also known as Restoration period. This period is viewed as prolific as the reign of Emperor Augustus in Rome (27BC-14AD). With literary geniuses like Addison, Steele, Swift, Pope, Dryden etc., it is felt that England reached the same height with that of Virgil, Horace and Ovid during Augustus' time. This is also an age of enlightenment with a wide reading of the classical authors mentioned above. Dryden and Pope, whom we are going to discuss in forthcoming separate units, are said to have

exercised a greater influence on the neo-classic age of English literature than any other poets and critics, and their own age exercised a greater influence on them than on any other poets of the time. It is, therefore, helpful to know the Age to understand their unique poetic genius. We shall describe, in the following pages, the social, intellectual, literary, and religious aspects of the background of this age.

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to learn

- the socio-political background of Augustan Age
- the rise of neo-classicism
- literary trends of the age, specially the mock heroic style as dominant poetic diction

1.2 THE AUGUSTAN AGE

The Augustan Age in English poetry coincides with the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14), and George II. Its previous period, known as the Restoration period stretches from 1660 to 1700 beginning with the restoration of king Charles II to the throne. The end of Puritan rule and the restoration of Law and Parliament marked the period leading to a prolific time in literature and art in the coming age. The ban on theatre imposed by the Puritans was lifted and the control over public life which had lasted full twenty years was gradually fading. The forthcoming age, under the reign of Queen Anne was thus, one of the most prolific periods in English Literature, often compared to the reign of King Augustus in ancient Rome. The immediate similarity was seen in the restoration of the political order after a period of turmoil. Another similarity was in

the Restoration and early seventeenth century writers drawing from the great classical writers of Rome likeVirgil, Horace and Ovid. Another similarity was seen in the adoption of the Heroic verse both in drama and poetry.

The Augustans in England were those who wrote poetry, novels, political pamphlets, tracts, essays and often, the same writers worked in all of these genres and styles, with a shared code of decorum and technique. This period was also known as the Neo-classical Age in English Literature.

1.2.1 Socio-political background

Inspite of many changes, Britain was still a rural country with low expectations in everyday life. As we have already mentioned in MEG-101, the transition from the rural to the urban occurred with the gradual decline of feudalism. This transition was also marked by the rise of a new working class. Though there was a secularisation of society and politics, the upper class, however, got soon divided into Whig and Tory. The political agenda of the Whigs and the Tories had already been discussed in details in MEG-101. You may go back to that to refresh your understanding. It is worth mentioning that the change of ruling dynasty in England from Stuart to Hanoverian was no less revolutionary. The law was considered above the King and law and order made a deep impact on the people, both socially and intellectually. The lighthearted, careless way of living was replaced by a growing nationalism in English society. The social relations between the Whigs and the Tories were strained. The court was dominated by the Tories, while the common people who had been excluded so long from politics reentered with their support for the Whigs. Quite naturally this strained political atmosphere made a great impact on the literature of the period.

Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel(1681), the greatest political satire was called 'occasional' as it brought current political situations to poetry. It addressed the political issues from Royalists' point of view. While Dryden was a Tory, Thomas Shadwell whom he attacked in Mac Flecknoe was a Whig poetaster.

During this age the wealth of the state based on its trade in the colonies increased drastically and due to the victory of the seven years' war with France the supremacy over the colonies became stronger. With this a few visible changes surfaced, specially the emergence of a new middle class social structure. The development of foreign and colonial trade and the mercantilist policy adopted by the government strongly influenced the social life of the Augustan Age. Industry, agriculture and commerce all continued to expand. The peace and prosperity of Queen Anne's reign, gradual decline of the agrarian way of living and the rise of the business class accelerated this growth.

Growing in power and prestige, this middle class was made up of traders, merchants, bankers and other professionals. The exotic imports from rich countries like India not only impacted the people a great deal, but also encouraged more foreign trade which later culminated in more and more colonial exploits. With these also emerged new social values, which were materialist, worldly, and pragmatic, upholding material prosperity over spiritual development. Society also witnessed an unequal distribution of wealth, where the prosperity of the middle classes was contrasted with the poverty and terrible living conditions of the lower classes. Though England was not still fully industrial, it grew in all spheres.
A religious movement, Methodism was a marked event of this period. It was an effort to bring moral dignity, piety and temperance in a world created by industrialization and the great fire and the

misery and squalor among the poorer classes caused by such an environment.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Methodism

Methodism, 18th-century movement founded by John Wesley that sought to reform the Church of England from within. The movement, however, became separate from its parent body and developed into an autonomous church. The members of this group, were known as Methodists because of their "methodical" devotion and study. Wesleyan Methodism became a middle-class church that was not immune to the excessive stress on the individual in material and spiritual matters that marked the Victorian age.Its growth was largest in the expanding industrial areas, where workers had to endure economic hardship. Because Methodism encouraged people to live simply, their economic status tended to rise.

1.2.1.2 Science, Religion and Skepticism

It was no mere coincidence that experimental science and the scientific attitude to the affairs of life emerged in England at this time. There were many factors that contributed to the emergence of a scientific revolution during this period. While Galileo's telescope discovered many truths about the universe unknown till then, Sir Isaac Newton's (1642-1727) laws of gravitation, his optics and calculus spread the spirit of scientific enquiry. His laws established the growing rationalism to a conditioned truth. Many of the seventeenth and eighteenth century notions that had roots in reason were illustrated with the help of Newton's successful combination of physics with mathematics. Further, the philosophy of the Deists, which believed in a universe controlled by God found a new emphasis due to Newtonian laws. Newton, who was an ardent Christian himself, proved that the whole mechanism functions according to the principles of rationalism.

The Royal Society was founded under the patronage of King Charles II in 1662. It took active initiative towards the institutionalization of

scientific thought and explorations. Though superstitions began to be exposed and discarded, sceptical rationalism tended to prevail in the intellectual and spiritual life. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) offended the clergy by describing the church as something like a spiritual police force. The 'new philosophy' raised great hopes of progress, but the changing views towards natural phenomena were a great blow to the long established position of the ancient thinkers. In the literature of this period, from Restoration to Romanticism the illustration of the principles of reason can be seen in the most pronounced and assertive form.

1.2.2 LITERATURE OF AUGUSTAN AGE

1.2.2.1 The Neo-classicism

The Augustan Age in literature marks the triumph of neo-classicism. Because Augustan writers looked to ancient writers as role models, Augustan literature is often called ***neo-classical***. The major influences on English neo-classicism were religion, the literary tradition and philosophical rationalism. The reaction against the Romantic extravagance of the Elizabethans made the new spirit more critical than creative, more rational than imaginative, more social than individual. Thus, satire, as a style of writing, came up during this period. It followed that the Augustans were also witty and used words like weapons.

The Neo-classicism of England is differentiated from the Roman classicism of Virgil, Horace and Longinus. English neo-classicism is sometimes described as ***pseudo classicism***, as the poets and the critics of this age were usually confined to the surface and external correctness of form. Rules and technique apart, the inner harmony of art and spirit was often wanting in the poetry of this age.

The tradition that dominated the literature of this period can be summed up in the following way:

- The literary trend of this period followed the tradition of the great authors of Rome and Greece known as 'classics' whose works have eternal impact since hundreds of years because of the excellence and perfection they had shown. By dint of this they had also established models for almost all literary genres like the epic, tragedy, comedy, pastoral etc. The Augustan writers followed such geniuses as their role models under the banner of the **Neoclassical**.

- They replaced the Renaissance emphasis on the imagination, invention and experimentation, with an emphasis on order and reason, on restraint, on common sense, and on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. Literature in this period was primarily conceived as 'art', a set of skills that requires, in spite of natural talent, perfection and refinement through deep study. It is subject to long practice and a deliberate adaptation of tools to achieve the expected end. Finish, correctness and attention to details are few inevitable rules followed by the neo-classicists in line with the classical writers. The neoclassicists strongly believed that to survive long, the essential properties used by the classical writers in all kinds of poetry must be followed. For example, Shakespeare was criticised by many neo-classicists for his non-observance of the unity of action considered to be essential by classical writers like Aristotle. Secondly, the imitation of ancient Greek and Latin literature was regarded as the height of achievement

throughout the Augustan Age in English literature. Virgil, the greatest Latin poet who wrote the epic *Aeneid*, had imitated Homer, the Greek epic poet. Horace, the poet-critic, recommended imitation and wrote satires. The 'Rules' and imitation were the two neo-classical principles of literary criticism. Neo-classicism is differentiated from the Roman classicism of Horace and Longinus. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* is a poetic summary of its tenets.

> Those Rules of old discovered, not devis'd,
> Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd.

Pope advised the critics to study Homer. His own translation of Homer is a great poetic rendering. He said.

> Be Homer's work your study and delight, Read them by day, and meditate by night

- The Augustans were famous for upholding general nature. They regarded poetry as an *imitation of human life*, "a mirror held up to nature" (Abrams, 184). Thus, human beings, as the integral part of social organisation, are at the centre. They maintained that man himself was the most appropriate subject of art, and saw art itself as essentially pragmatic—as valuable because it was somehow useful — and as something which was properly intellectual rather than emotional. And this fact is conveyed in a language which expresses its reality. Exhibiting facts of human activities with decorum was the primary motto of their literature, which was variously patterned and ordered. For the neo-classicists poetry war not only an art, rather an amalgam of pleasure and instruction.

- The literature that developed in this period reflected the philosophy of the neoclassicists. Apart from Satire, other favourite literary forms were the essay, the letter, the parody, the burlesque, and the moral fable. This age also saw the rise of the periodical with *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* being prominent. In verse specifically, it was undoubtedly the heroic couplet, which reached its greatest sophistication in the hands of Pope and Dryden. In the field of drama the age witnessed the development of the heroic drama, the melodrama, the sentimental comedy, and the comedy of manners.

1.2.2.2 The Mock heroic

The Heroic poetry is one which is used to describe actions between characters who are not human beings, mostly Gods, Goddesses and their grand adversaries. The examples of classical heroic poem or style can be seen in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. You may remember the characters of *Paradise Lost,* where God himself is engaged in a fight with his enemy, Satan. Now if you compare the theme, character and the verse style used in these epic poems with that of Dryden or Pope's Style in *Mac Flecknoe* or *The Rape of the Lock,*you may well understand the difference.

Thus, we may summerise Mock heroic or Mock epic as a form of poetry, as a type of parody that uses the elevated style of the classical epic poems for subject matter lacking the same grandeur of the former. Trivial matters are presented in the grandiose style of the traditional epic. The mock heroic style was found appropriate by Dryden and Pope as a tool to parody the follies and foibles of humanity in general and the foppishness of the aristocratic class of that time.

1.2.2.3 Major Poets and authors

The major figures of the neoclassical period are **John Dryden** and **Alexander Pope**. There is no iota of doubt that the spirit of the age reached its height in the hands of these two, through their magnificent treatment of heroic style for satirical purpose. There were other writers who, too, excelled in their respective fields whether poetry, drama or fiction.

The contribution of Dryden and Pope has been discussed elaborately in the succeeding units. Here we will briefly incorporate few other authors of the Age.

The poetry of **James Thomson** showed the spirit of the age in another direction. Instead of following the popular trends of the period, he directed himself towards writing nature poetry. Thomson's *The Season* is considered to be a classic of the eighteenth century. Divided into four sections of the season, *Winter* (1726), *Summer* (1727), *Spring* (1728) and *Autumn* (1730). This poem is also supported by the philosophy of order but through a thematic orientation. Though Thomson was not typically neoclassical, in his *To the Memory of Isaac Newton*(1727) he raised the most popular issue of the period, the union of reason and God.

Another prolific writer of the period was **Samuel Johnson.** Johnson was more famous for his literary criticism than for his poems. He comes at the end of the Augustan period and instead of breaking new ground, he was content to build upon the existing tradition**.** *London* (1738) is the most reputed poem by Johnson where he satirised the decaying culture of contemporary England in the style of Juvenal's third satire. He attacks the intellectual and moral poverty of the time where the courtiers and the city dwellers play the characters. Another representative poem of Johnson is *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). This, too, is a satire on some

contemporary figures wielding power. The poem is very much neoclassical because of its structured presentation of the contemporary situation with reference to some chosen points in history and the tragic irony used for the purpose.

In prose, the 18th century saw the development of the novel as a new literary genre, for it was during this period that Daniel Defoe (c. 1660-1731) wrote his *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) published his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726, amended 1735). Subgenres of the novel during the 18th century were the epistolary novel, like *Pamela Or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761); the sentimental novel, like *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), by Laurence Sterne (1713-1768); histories, like The *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788), by Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) and the gothic novel, like The *Castle of Otranto* (1764), by Horace Walpole (1717-1797).

1.3 SUMMING UP

In this unit we have tried to give a considerably elaborate overview of the Augustan Age. In doing so we explored the dominant philosophy of the age, that is reason, instead of imagination. The emphasis laid down by the poets and writers of the period has been extensively discussed for your benefit. We also tried to see the causes of the rise of reason as a primary philosophy of the litterateurs. While two of the most significant poets of the period, Dryden and Pope, are discussed separately in the coming units, we incorporated other poets and authors of Augustan Age for your understanding of the period. It is hoped that after reading this unit your will have a fairly good idea about the age and its literary trends.

1.4 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how the rise of science in the age of Dryden affected religion.
2. Why was satire popular in the age of Dryden and Pope?
3. English poetry was more social in the Age of Dryden and Pope than ever before and after. Discuss.
4. What were the salient features of the neoclassical poetry that emerged during Augustan period?

1.5 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 2: JOHN DRYDEN'S 'MAC FLECKNOE'

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

We have already discussed the Age of Dryden or the Augustan Age in details in the previous unit. The current unit will examine *Mac Flecknoe* as a product of its age, along with its salient features as a representative work of its time. You have learnt that the Restoration of 1660 brought visible changes in sensibility along with a social division of Whigs and Tories (discussed in MEG:101). This also culminated in a class division that was more political than social. Reading of this unit will make you aware of that in terms of language, satire and wit used by Dryden in *Mac Flecknoe*. You will also be able to justify what made T.S. Eliot to comment on the poem as 'the piece of Dryden which is most fun, which is the most sustained display of surprise of wit from line to line'.

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to familiarise you with one of its major exponents of satire in eighteenth century England, John Dryden and his works. After reading this unit, you should be able to

- familiarise yourself with the life and works of John Dryden
- understand the detail text of *Mac Flecknoe*
- critically understand the theme and background of the poem
- relate the poem to the specific features and conditions of the post Restoration and the Neo-classical Period.

2.2 JOHN DRYDEN: LIFE AND WORKS

John Dryden (1631-1700), the great poet of his age, is well celebrated for his poetic style, that was both flexible and eloquent, convincing and at the same time conversational. His poetry is not only remarkable in itself but a benchmark in the history of English literature. A great poet, a good playwright, a powerful critic, a fine translator, and a satirist par excellence, Dryden was a prolific writer and the most remarkable man of his age, whose works are still worthy of utmost admiration.

Born in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England, Dryden was the eldest of fourteen children of Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering. He belonged to a family of Parliamentary supporters with Puritan teachings. He attended Westminster School as a king's scholar under Richard Busby and was a keen and enthusiastic student of the classics. Dryden published his first verses, while at Westminster, an elegy *Upon the Death off Lord Hastings* in 1649. In 1650, Dryden entered Trinity College, Cambridge, and received his graduation in 1654.

He moved to London in 1657 and first gain attention with his 'Heroic Stanzas', which he wrote on the death of Cromwell. Dryden's preciseness and literary polish is quite evident in this poem, which is also marked in his other works. Though his early training was Puritan, the Restoration had its own influence on him and the change is very much visible in his writings. The Royalist climate of the Restoration, that was favourable for Dryden, helped him in his literary career. He wrote *Astraea Redux* welcoming Charles II on his return to England, and the 'Panegyric to his Sacred Majesty' for the coronation. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1662. As the theatres had been reopened, the demand for entertainment was increasing, and Dryden was all set to write plays. The prose comedy of humours, *A Wild Gallant*, was Dryden's first play. It was followed by *The Rival Ladies* and *The Indian Queen*, but the theatres were again closed due to the outbreak of plague in London. The King's court was shifted to Oxford and there Dryden was successful in establishing his reputation as a playwright with his heroic drama, *The Indian Emperor*.

The year 1666 was eventful in the history of England due the chief events of the four days' naval battle with the Dutch and the Great Fire of London. Dryden commemorated the events in his *Annus Mirabilis*, an ambitious historical poem written in 304 quatrains. This poem helped Dryden in securing the Poet Laureate's position in 1668. In the same year he also received his post graduation by the Archbishop of Canterbury. For Dryden, 1668 was the beginning of a fruitful period of both critical and dramatic writing. *The Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) was Dryden's first major critical work, which was followed by *A Defence of an Essay* (1668) and *Essays on Heroic Play* (1672). The plays written by Dryden in this period include *Secret Love* (1667), a comedy, *Tyrannic Love* (1669), a heroic drama, *Conquest of Granada* (1670-

71) and the comedy *Marriage a' la Mode* (1672). *The State of Innocence* (1674), a musical adaptation of *Paradise Lost*, was published by Dryden as a tribute to Milton, but was never performed. *Aurangzeb* (1676) was Dryden's first tragedy in blank verse and it was followed by his masterpiece, *All for Love* (1678), an adaptation of the story of *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Dryden's fame and success generated enmity amongst a section. He was ridiculed in Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671) and brutally attacked once in Rose Alley, Covent Garden. It was suggested that Lord Rochester was responsible for hiring the ruffians who attacked Dryden.

Dryden left his career as a dramatist with the publication of his *Limberham* (1678), a prose comedy, a poor adaptation of Troilus and Cressida (1679) and Spanish Friar (1681), and turned his attention to writing satire. *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), is his first political satire on Monmouth and Shaftesbury. During the Exclusion crisis, this great satire brought Dryden further favour from Charles II who was pleased by Dryden's attack on the Whigs. *Absalom and Achitophel* was followed by *The Medal* in 1682 as another attack on Shaftesbury's supporters, which naturally gave rise to counterattacks on Dryden. Thomas Shadwell's *'The Medal of John Bayes'* was one such attack and Dryden in response to it wrote *Mac Flecknoe*, ridiculing Shadwell. This poem, published in 1682, proved to be his most entertaining.

Dryden's keen interest in theology is very much reflected in his writings like *'Religio Laici'* (1682), meaning "A Laymen's Faith". This long religious poem presents Dryden's argument on Christianity over Deism, the Anglican Church over the Catholic Church and the Bible as the guide to salvation. Other poems written by Dryden in this period include the Pindaric ode *Threnodia Augustalis* (1685), written on death of Charles II, *To the Pious*

Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew (1686) and *A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* (1687). Dryden himself had suffered through religious uncertainty and after the accession of James II, a catholic, to the throne, Dryden converted to Roman Catholicism in 1686. After that he published an allegorical fable, *The Hind and the Panther*, and criticized the Anglican Church in it. The Revolution of 1688 had another remarkable impact on Dryden's life and career. William III, a Protestant, came to the throne and this resulted in Dryden's losing his poet-laureateship. He was replaced by his old enemy, Thomas Shadwell.

With Don Sebastian (1690), Amphitryon (1690), King Arthur (1691), and Cleomenes: the Spartan Hero (1692), Dryden returned to theatre. *The prologue of Love Triumphant* (1694) announced it as Dryden's last play but it was a failure. With this Dryden turned his interest in writing translations which includes the satires of Juvenal (1693), sections from Homer and Ovid, and Virgil's *Aeneid* (1697). His splendid ode Alexander's Feast, one of his most enduring poems, was written in 1697 and three years later, Fables, Ancient and Modern, his last work, was published. This contained miscellaneous works of his last days and poetical pieces of the tales of Chaucer and Boccaccio. Publication of Fables, Ancient and Modern in 1700 also marked the style of new prose and later that style was widely used by Dryden's followers.

Though Dryden's last days were turned bitter by obscurity and criticism and many ups and downs, those can be considered as the best days of his literary career. He died on April 30, 1700, due to inflammation caused by gout. He was buried near Chaucer in Westminster Abbey.

The glory of the Roman Augustan age is held in comparison to this period of the eighteenth century. This age originally refers to the brilliant literary age of Virgil, Ovid and Horace during the reign

of the Roman Emperor Augustus, who ruled during the period around 27 BC-14 AD. In the context of England, this name is applied to the literary age from 1700-1745, covering the reigns of Queen Anne, King George I and George II and called the Neoclassical Age (also Augustan Age, after the great period of the Roman Empire under Augustus I). In this age literature in England flourished and acquired greater variety. England had recovered from the Civil Wars of 1642 and also the Glorious Revolution that took place in 1688. The rise and explosion in the form of political satires, changes in poetry and drama, development of English prose and the rise and development of the novel towards the latter half of the period marked the salient features of this age. With both political and moral implications, the literature of this age came out as very satirical and neo-classical ideas dominated the minds of the writers. This age ended with the death of writers like Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift but created a literary benchmark in the history of England.

2.3 READING THE POEM 'MAC FLECKNOE'

Mac Flecknoe, or A Satyr upon the True Blue Protestant Poet, T.S, published in 1682, is a poem written in the tradition of the mock heroic epic. As already mentioned in the previous unit, this poem is often considered as Dryden's most entertaining poem. *Mac Flecknoe* advances beyond criticism to a level of expressing rage at human stupidity. It is a satirical attack on Thomas Shadwell by Dryden and is the result of a series of disagreements between Shadwell and Dryden.

The poem is set in London, referred to as Augusta in the poem. For the mockery of Shadwell, Dryden has chosen Augusta for the name of the city that Shadwell is to rule as a King of Nonsense. The narrator of the poem speaks in the third person but Richard Flecknoe, the elderly King of Nonsense, is allowed to express his views to tell why he has selected Shadwell as his successor. In writing *Mac Flecknoe*, Dryden not only imitates Homer's epic but also those of Dante, Virgil and Milton.

Like Augustus Caesar, Flecknoe has been entrusted with the responsibilities of being a ruler and leader when he was very young. He is well known in the empire of Nonsense in the fields of both poetry and prose and nobody has the guts to challenge his position. When time came for the elderly Flecknoe to choose his heir among his sons, he selected the one who was worthy to continue his legacy. It was Thomas Shadwell who inherited the throne as Mac Flecknoe, 'Mac' meaning son. Richard Flecknoe, thus, describes his son's qualifying features as-

> To reign, and wage immortal war with wit;
> Cry'd 'tis resolved; for nature pleads that he
> Should only rule, who most resemble me:
> Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
> Mature in dullness from his tender years.
> Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he
> Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity. (Lines 12-18)

Shadwell is held perfect for the throne by Flecknoe because of his witlessness. He does no more thinking than a monarch oak shading a plain. Even other people such as Heywood and Shirley were in the contest for the throne with similar virtues. But none could match Shadwell, not even his father. Flecknoe was truly a dunce, but merely a harbinger, preparing the way for his son as the ultimate

dunce. Nitwit writers that came before Shadwell displayed the dimmest glimmer of intelligence occasionally but it was Shadwell who stood at the top. He never wrote a line that made any sense, thus placing him on the winning side. When Mac Flecknoe's royal barge, for the first time, makes its way down the river Thames, people gather to shout his name and little fishes throng around his boat. Elderly Flecknoe was happy to see his son doing good and he "wept for joy/ In silent ruptures of the hopeful boy." As the ideal king of Nonsense, no one can argue against Mac Flecknoe as his writing, his plays in particular, upholds an unbeatable dullness.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Thomas Heywood was an Elizabethan actor and playwright, known for his prolific output rather than for quality. His play, A Woman Killed with Kindness was presented on stage in 1603. His plays were generally farcical in nature which is why Dryden includes him in his ridicule in *Mac Flecknoe*.

James Shirley was a playwright and poet who worked through the reign of Charles I to the Restoration of Charles II. He wrote tragedies, comedies and tragi-comedies. He was prolific and known for elevating the commonplace to undeserved heights. He worked along familiar lines on commonplace themes and characters. He also collaborated with John Ogilvy in Dublin.

Augusta, where Shadwell will rule as Mac Flecknoe is described as a place with rising brothel houses indicating the sense of corruption. Nearby, in a nursery, children will be trained to be actors. Plays of Fletcher and Jonson will never be staged in this place but all the dull and nonsensical plays by Shadwell will be presented before the audience here. He is presented as holding a

mug of ale in his left hand and the manuscript of his play Love's Kingdom on his right and describes it as the ornamental baton (sceptre) that is the sign of his power and the way he ruled his people. "His temples last with poppies were o'er spread" presents that he wears a wreath of poppies on his head indicating Shadwell's use of opium, an addictive drug. It also hints at the quality of Shadwell's play which induces sleep in the audience and the reader. His tragedies provoke laughter while his comedies cause drowsiness.

From his left hand twelve owls fly which resembles the event in which twelve vultures heralded the reign of Romulus, another legendary co-founder of ancient Rome. Owls, generally a symbol of bad omen, are used in the case of Shadwell in a mock heroic tradition. Dryden continues with the old Flecknoe hoping that his son Shadwell will hold sway over the earth one day through his production of new dull plays which will spread delight amongst the dim-witted people. He writes:

> Then thus, continued he, my son advance
> Still in prudence, new ignorance. (Lines 145-146)

Flecknoe Senior expresses his hope that his son will continue to flourish on his chosen path of dullness.

He also asks other writers to imitate his son. Shadwell's characters are supposedly unique in nature for his father and will illustrate his stupidity. Those will turn out to be the concrete evidences of the author's stupidity and added that the only difference in them will be the name. He advises his son to avoid straining to choose "false flowers of rhetoric" but to trust only his natural instincts and his writings will never fail to be dull. He hopes that

Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep,
Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep.
(Lines 197-198)

The older Flecknoe himself wants to be Shadwell's inspiration and asks him to imitate his father and not wits like Ben Jonson:

According to Flecknoe, though Shadwell may have passionate ideas in his head, they will never die if he manifests those with his pen. He advises Shadwell to quit writing plays and devote himself to writing acrostics. He adds that, perhaps he should write songs and sing those songs in accompaniment to a lute.

Or if thou would'st thy different talents suit
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute
(Lines 209-210)

The first two lines of the poem depict a flamboyant platitude on Life being transient and of eventually Fate winning over Life where everyone—including monarchs and kings—is bound to surrender. Flecknoe comprehends that his long reign over the kingdom of dullness is coming to an end. Like Augustus, Flecknoe had begun his tenure at a very early age and continued it for a long time. Herein lies the similarity between himself and Augustus. If Augustus controlled the vast Roman empire, Flecknoe reigned supreme over the empire of dullness. In the fields of verse and prose, Flecknoe is undoubtedly the man whose qualities for being the King of Nonsense cannot be surpassed. With an ample production of dunces or fools, he wants to choose a worthy heir for his kingdom. Thus, based on his observations on Shadwell right from the beginning of the latter's literary career, Flecknoe selected him as his successor.

Dryden has also satirized the poetical and musical pretentions of Shadwell by saying that a dissonance or cacophony is superior to the noise produced by Shadwell. After a series of sarcastic attacks on Shadwell, Dryden goes on to describe his coronation as Mac Flecknoe. The condition of Augusta, i.e. London named in a sense of mockery, has already been discussed earlier in this section. Dryden has used elements of pun, satire and verbosity to describe the city of Nonsense. The whole city of London is preparing for the coronation ceremony and in honour of Shadwell, worthless works were scattered on the pathway in lieu of a red carpet.

Dryden parodies the scene in Book V of the Aeneid where Aeneas, the hero declares that his son will become his successor upon his death. Shadwell is described as being surrounded by a cloud of dark ignorance forming a halo on his head. Idiocy is set on his brows like thick fog as Shadwell pledges that he will support and promote stupidity with utmost devotion. Flecknoe asks Shadwell to promise to be an enemy of good sense and he does, as Hannibal took the oath to remain Rome's enemy instructed by his father Homiclar. Shadwell was often attacked with the charge of plagiarism and said to have incorporated stolen passages from others, especially, the plays of Sedley. He is told that such an action adulterates the purity of his stupidity reflected through his writings.

The poem ends with Dryden using another instance from the Bible in mock heroic tradition. The event of Flecknoe disappearing is held in contrast to Elijah ascending towards heaven and leaving his mantle to Elisha. Speaking about his son, Flecknoe vanishes through a trap door set by Bruce and Longvil. Then the royal robe of the king is carried by the wind and falls upon Shadwell, the new King of Nonsense.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Richard Flecknoe was an Irish priest who mistakenly considered himself a poet. He was also known as a dramatist and was once ridiculed by Andrew Marvell in a mocking poem, '*Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome'*. In *'Mac Flecknoe'*, Dryden has portrayed Richard Flecknoe as the fictional King of Nonsense. In Dryden's assumptions, the Irish Flecknoe finds his true heir in the non-Irish Shadwell. When the time came for the old king to choose a successor for his kingdom, he selected Shadwell due to his qualities of dullness and stupidity.

2.4 MAJOR THEMES

As already mentioned above, 'Mac Flecknoe' is a satire written to attack Thomas Shadwell. Dryden and Shadwell differed on many grounds. Once they were amiable towards each other but the ever-increasing differences in their views made them enemies soon. *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), is Dryden's first political satire on Monmouth and Shaftesbury. In collaboration with Nahum Tate, Dryden in 1682 came up with *The Medal* as another attack on Shaftesbury's supporters, which naturally and eventually gave rise to counterattacks on Dryden. Thomas Shadwell's 'The Medal of John Bayes' was one of such attacks and Dryden in response to it wrote 'Mac Flecknoe', ridiculing Shadwell.

2.5 STYLE/FORM/MOCK EPIC

As already mentioned earlier, Dryden's poetic style is unique in itself, flexible and eloquent, convincing and at the same time conversational. His poetry is not only remarkable in itself but a benchmark in the history of English literature. The section on

Dryden's life and literary career also includes his prolific nature and from your reading of the section you might have already gathered the idea regarding the variations in Dryden's poetry, the forms that he used and his developments. Johnson has remarked of Dryden that, "There was before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts." According to critics, Dryden's prologues and epilogues to his plays has helped him in achieving the utmost strength. He found it congenial and called it "occasional poetry". Although he was a good playwright, a powerful critic, a fine translator, and a satirist par excellence, yet his poetry secured him a very special place in the history of English literature. A variety of elements is observed in his poetry- irony, extreme senses of anger, indecency, humour, are just to name some. Most of his poetry has a critical, controversial and satirical notion. In his works like *Absalom and Achitophel* and *Mac Flecknoe*, one can have the essence of Dryden's clear and summative exposition in narrating. Essentially, written in a heroic style, both the poems presents Dryden's genius in different ways. One being a Biblical allegory and the other a satire on a rival, such poems reflects on Dryden's keen observation on social, political and personal levels. His writings are very much representative of the seventeenth century. He brought many new influencing elements to English literature by establishing heroic couplet as the trend used for writing descriptive, satirical and didactic poems, by developing an easy and direct prose form and developing literary criticism as a form of art.

2.6 SUMMING UP

After reading the unit, you must have found out how Dryden and Pope have used the mock epic or mock heroic tradition in

convenience to the subject of their satirical works, in special reference to the prescribed poems that you have just read. Their writings are the intense reflections of the ages that they lived in. Their personal lives also have the effect on their literary career which is very much evident in their writings. Throughout the unit we have tried to familiarize you with their lives and literary careers. We have tried to introduce you to the form of mock epic and analyzed the poets in the light of their poems and present before you a picture of the late Restoration and Augustan period. You have learnt in the unit about the writers not only as poets but also as social critics and realized how it polishes their writings. Before proceeding to the next unit, please complete the SAQs provided for you and check your progress.

2.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by mock-heroic or mock epic? Discuss *'Mac Flecknoe'* as a mock epic or mock heroic poem.
2. In *'Mac Flecknoe'*, Dryden has attacked Shadwell. Is Dryden successful in effectively attacking Shadwell or does the poet invoke sympathy for Shadwell in the readers?
3. Discuss Dryden as a satirist in the light of the poem prescribed for you.
4. Comment critically on the salient features of Dryden's poetry from your reading of the poem *'Mac Flecknoe'.*
5. How did the political and social conditions of the late seventeenth century England is reflected in Dryden's poetry? Answer in context to the poem *'Mac Flecknoe'.*

2.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 3: ALEXANDER POPE'S *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The later part of 17th Century in London was a stable period which allowed for the free flow and growth of literary writing. The 'polite' London people were the centre of attraction for the writers because of the new reading class created by them. Coffee houses and periodicals opened up numerous possibilities for everyday gossip for the new 'middle class aristocracy' consisting of women of leisure, young literates and urban professionals. All these transformed the pre-industrial England to a mass consuming society. Consequently, the taste for classical epics, tragedy and high brow poetry began to decline, replaced by a new bourgeoisie commercial writing. These classes demanded to see them as participants in the literature rather than as passive readers. This opened the eyes of writers like Pope to write poetry that is social and familiar. He had chosen the mock heroic as an appropriate tool to expose the hypocrisy of the new aristocrats of his time. In this

unit you will able to know one of the greatest satires not only of Pope, but also of whole of eighteenth century, *The Rape of the Lock.*

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to familiarise you with another major exponent of eighteenth century England, Alexander Pope. On reading this unit, you should be able to:

- familiarise yourself with the life and works of Alexander Pope
- critically read the text of *The Rape of the Lock*
- understand the theme and background of the poem
- relate the poem to the specific features and conditions of the post Restoration and the Neo-classical Period.

3.2 ALEXANDER POPE: LIFE AND WORKS

Alexander Pope's masterpiece of its kind, *"The Rape of the Lock"* is another poem written in the tradition of mock epic and narrates the tale of Lord Petre's cutting off a lock from Arabella Fermor's hair. The young lady resented the act and the two families were plunged into a quarrel that became the talk of London. This poem was published in 1712 and revised in 1714. Before going into the detailed analysis of the poem, let us first go through a brief biographical sketch of Alexander Pope and his literary career followed with the chief characteristics of his poetry. It will enable you to have a better understanding of the poem, its form and the background.

For the better understanding and appreciation of Pope's writings, familiarity to his personal life is required. Thus we have

given a brief outline to his life and literary career, which you should go through first before moving to the next section of the unit.

Alexander Pope was born on 21May, 1688, in a moderately well to do Catholic family. His father was a linen merchant and he spent his childhood in London in very comfortable circumstances. The Glorious revolution broke out during this time and the Catholic King James II was removed and replaced by the Protestant William III and Mary II. Being a follower of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope and his family had to undergo the constraints of the Anti-Catholic laws of England. Restrictions were imposed on Catholics in practicing their relationships, education and political roles. However, around 1700, after his father retired from his business, Pope and his family moved out of London and settled in Binfield in Windsor Forest. Pope had little formal schooling, partly educated by priests at home and partly at a catholic school in Twyford, near Winchester. Subsequently, he studied under the tutelage of a former fellow of University College, Oxford. Moreover, he educated himself by studying extensively, especially poetry. His father used to encourage him to write poetry and to focus on rhyming perfections. Being a Papist, he was excluded from the universities and all sorts of public careers.

Pope was healthy during his infancy and early childhood but his health started to deteriorate towards his late childhood and he was taken severely ill by the contraction of Pott's disease, a form of tuberculosis. The illness affected his bones and resulted in slight deformity in his body and he never grew much taller. Due to the curvature of his spine, he was required to wear stiff canvas braces to support his body. Constant headaches, nausea, and abdominal pains used to bother him. His physical appearance was often ridiculed by his enemies but it gave an edge to Pope's

writings, especially his satires which were aimed at human weaknesses in a humorous sense. In spite of these, he was generous in his affection towards friends and warm by heart.

Encouraged by friends and his father, Pope first started his literary career by the publication of his *The Pastorals* (1709), his ambitious work *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) and the first version of *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). In his *The Pastorals*, Pope presented his precocious metrical skills at the age of 16.*The Rape of the Lock* surprisingly brought him success and made him famous. It was a lengthy humorous poem written in the tradition of the mock heroic. We will discuss the poem in details later on.

During this time Pope developed a friendship with some of the famous and leading literary figures including Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell, John Gay and Dr. John Arbuthnot. Pope started to associate himself with literary men in the world of taverns and coffee-houses after he received their attention due to his early poetry, and he liked to play the rake there. From 1706 onwards Pope was acquainted with writers like Congreve, Steele, Addison, Walsh and most them were Whigs. But in 1710, when the fall of Whigs happened and under Robert Harley the Tory Government was formed, Pope started an association with another group of writers. This new group included all Tory writers like Swift, Gay and Arbuthnot. In 1714, the Scriblerus Club was formed by this group and it was meant to satirize false learning. Pope and Jonathan Swift were the most prominent authors among the members of the Club. Swift's *Gulliver's Travel* (1726) and Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728) are the products of such associations with the club.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Scriblerus Club: The Scriblerus Club was a London based informal group of writers formed in the eighteenth century by the prominent figures of the Augustan age. Formed around 1714, this group aimed at satirizing false learning. With the efforts of satire, the group also created 'The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus', though left incomplete, and later published only as one volume. Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift were the most important members of the group, other members being John Gay, Henry St. John, Thomas Parnell and John Arbuthnot. This group kept alive until the death of its founders and ended in 1745.

Pope's career in translation works began with poetic imitations and translations of writers like Virgil and Homer. His 'Messiah' (1712) was an imitation of Virgil. A version of Chaucer's poetry in the contemporary English was done by Pope. But his greatest achievement as an imitator and translator happened when he created his version of Homer. He took the translation of Homer's *Iliad* as he was in need of money. The translation work kept him occupied till 1720 and came out as a great financial success. He was highly praised by critics and also he made himself independent of the supports of all forms of literary patronage. But this also brought numerous pamphlet attacks on Pope regarding his personal, religious and political life. Pope did a version of Homer's *Odyssey* from 1725-26. Pope stated that Homer enabled him in the observation of human beings in relation to nature. Along with his translation works, Pope also undertook many editorial works. Parnell's Poems (1721), an edition of the late Duke of

Buckingham's works (1723), and six volumes on the works of Shakespeare (1725) are some of those works. The latter contained edits and explanations that were notoriously impulsive, far from being scholarly. He was attacked by the publication of Lewis Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored* (1726). This text showed that the author of the book possessed better editorial techniques than Pope. Being upset by such an outcome, Pope made Theobald the original hero of his *'The Dunciad'*.

The Rape of the Lock (1712), revised in 1714, is considered as his most famous poem. By transforming a trivial event into the structure of an epic is an evidence of Pope's extravagant quality in the treatment of mock heroic themes. '*Eloisa to Abelard'* and *'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady'*, both published in 1717, were modelled on Ovid's Heroic Epistles. *'The Dunciad'* (1728), was his first moral and satirical poem. Other major poems that he published during this time are *'Moral Essays'* (1731-35), *Essay on Man'* (1734), *'An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot'* (1735), *'Imitations of Horace'* (1733-38), *'Epilogue to the Satires'* (1738) and an extended version of *'The Dunciad'* (1742) in which Theobald was replaced by Colly Cibber as the hero.

Followed by his father's death and the earning from his literary job, Pope moved to Twickenham in 1718 with his mother. As Pope grew older he became more ill. He never married in his life. In Twickenham, he lived in an elegant country house till he died on 30th May, 1744.

LET US STOP AND THINK

The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations includes almost 212 quotations by Alexander Pope. Some of the famous quotations are-

- "What reason weaves, by Passion is undone",
- "And die of nothing but a rage to live"

- "To err is human, to forgive, divine",
- "Charm strikes the sight, but merit wins the soul."

3.3 READING THE POEM THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

After reading the former sections, you must have acquainted yourself with the theme and the subject matter of the poem. You must also have gathered the idea of mock epic and understood *The Rape of the Lock* as a poem belonging to this tradition. This mock heroic poem is based on a true event in which Lord Petre stole a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor and the consequences of family conflict that this incident led to. Around 1711, young Lord Petre cut a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor's head. She was his distant relative, a lady who was famous and well known for her beauty. This incident created conflict between the two Roman Catholic families though they were good friends before. John Caryll was a common acquaintance and well wisher of both the families and also a good friend and patron to Alexander Pope. He recounted the incident to Pope and urged him to make a jest of the incident by writing a poem based on it. He suggested to Pope to write something slight and amusing so as to lighten the conflict that was created by the incident. This inspired Pope to write *The Rape of the Lock* which was first published in 1712 with two cantos and later revised in 1714 by adding three more cantos. Originally, the poem begins with a letter to Arabella Fermor, in which Pope has clarified to her that he does not mean any offence to her personally but his poem is intended to reveal something about the contemporary young ladies. In the dedication of the poem to Arabella Fermor, it was addressed to the women with good sense and good humour and those who possess a proper understanding of such elements so that they can laugh at the

follies of their own sex. Moreover, the poem was intended to restore peace and harmony amongst the two families who were estranged by the incident of the stolen lock. As you already know, Pope has adopted the elevated style of writing the poem in mock-heroic tradition and also given a sub-title to the poem as 'a heroic-comical poem'.

A few things on the background of the poem would not be out of place here. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is one of the finest specimens of mock-heroic poetry in English literature. First published in 1712, it consisted of two cantos (334 lines), and after the revision of the poem in 1714, it was expanded to a five canto poem consisting of 794 lines. As already mentioned it is a satire on a minor or 'trivial' incident and is contrasted to the epic world of gods. Let us first go through a brief summary of the poem before going into the details. As the poem is very lengthy, so in this section we are going to discuss the first two cantos of the poem. But we advise you to read the complete text.

As the poem begins, Belinda is still asleep and a dream is sent to her by her guardian Sylph, Ariel. In her dream she met a handsome youth who told her that she is being protected by several spirits, who will also guard her chastity. Among those spirits, the airy Sylph was appointed to flatter and serve Belinda who was a carefree but graceful lady. Belinda was warned by Ariel that something dreadful or terrible was going to happen that day. As she woke up from her sleep and received some love-letters, she forgot about her dream. During the ritual of dressing, she is touched by narcissism as she looks at her own image in the mirror and sees a "godly" or "divine" image in it. The Sylphs get ready as Belinda prepares to go out on her social engagements. By boat on river Thames, Belinda sets out for Hampton Court. Belinda is accompanied by "Nymphs", some showy ladies and some

gentlemen. The Baron, one among the gentlemen, was an admirer of Belinda's lock of hair. So he decided to steal it for himself. That morning he woke up early and prayed for his success in the task. For this he even sacrificed many of his former tokens of affection—garter, gloves, love-letters—and presented himself before a pyre with burning flames. The gods listened to his prayers and decided to partially satisfy him.

As the journey continues on the river, everyone is frivolous on board except for Ariel. He is constantly reminded of the fact that something bad is going to happen. He summons a troop of Sylphs and some duties were assigned to all of them. He reminds them with the great ceremony about their duty, that after regulating celestial bodies and the weather and guarding the British monarch, they are supposed to "tend the fair"—to keep watch over ladies' powder, curls, perfumes, and clothing and to "assist their blushes" and "inspire their airs." As something threatening is going to happen to Belinda, the army of Sylphs is summoned to protect her as her bodyguards. Brillante was asked to guard Belinda's earrings, while Momentilla her watch. Crispissa was appointed to keep an eye on her locks. Ariel himself takes on the responsibility of guarding the lapdog, Shock, and a group of fifty Sylphs were to protect the important petticoat worn by Belinda. Ariel also announces that those Sylphs who fail to perform their duty will be severely punished. So they all disperse to their assigned posts and prepare for destiny to unfold while they complete their journey to Hampton Court.

As the boat arrives, the gathering starts with a pleasant round of gossiping and chatting. With two men, Belinda sits to play a game of cards. Pope describes this event as a most striking one, in terms of "heroic battle". The rituals continue with the serving of coffee and the aroma of the steaming coffee reminds the Baron of his plan to cut Belinda's lock of hair. Clarissa, an attendant at Hampton Court,

draws out her scissors and gives it to the Baron for his task. He attempted thrice but in vain. The Sylph's efforts in protecting her were successful. Ariel, finally getting access to her brain, is surprised to learn of an earthly lover lurking in her bosom. In the meantime, the lock of hair is cut, Belinda cries and screams furiously, while the Baron exults in victory.

After this incident, the Sylphs withdraw from their duty being disappointed and an earthly gnome named Umbriel flies down to the 'Cave of Spleen'. The first bag of ill temper was unleashed on Belinda by Umbriel that increased her despair and anger. Thalestris, Belinda's friend, protests against the cruelty of the act and asks her to take dire revenge. She then goes to her beau, Sir Plume, and asks him to demand the Baron return the lock of stolen hair. But the Baron refuses to do it. Out of utter grief and sorrow, Belinda regrets not having listened to the warning of her dreams and laments for her sole remaining curl. Clarissa, who helped the Baron in the theft, now urges Belinda to give away her anger and grief in the name of good sense, good humour and moral qualities that will definitely outlast her vanity. But her moral lecture is ignored by Belinda. Instead, she starts a fight between the ladies and the gentleman and tries to restore her honour by recovering her lost lock of hair. But in the confusion of this mock-battle, the lock of hair is lost and the narrator of the poem consoles Belinda by saying that her lock of hair has been taken up to the heavens and is also immortalized as a constellation.

You will notice that in the first canto, Pope has described Belinda's beauty as a divine thing, from the very beginning. This statement has been created in the light of the event when Belinda metaphorically creates an altar of her own image. Pope has exhibited the appreciation of physical beauty as an art form, a blend of respect, fear and disapproval. Certainly, this praise is ironical in some sense

and offers a critique of the social values wherein external or physical characteristics are held more important than intellectual and moral characteristics. The conventional epic subject of love and war has been introduced from the beginning and it also includes an appeal to the Muse and a dedication to the historical John Caryll.

In this section, Pope presents a sense of towering rage which seems to be out of proportion with the nature of the offence. Interestingly, the poem is celebrated by actual people, whom the poet thinks are very intimately concerned with the poem's beginning and also in its reception. In support of the first line, the second line confirms that the "amorous causes" is not the one that is comparable to the great love of heroes, but developed from a trivial version of that same emotion. Unlike the anger of Achilles as narrated by Homer, or the arms and the man by Virgil, Pope is getting the readers ready with a very trivial event such as cutting off a girl's hair and thus the poet starts with a mockery. Pope introduces some sort of supernatural powers through Belinda's dream, but that power influences human actions. The Sylphs and the sprite, Ariel, are positioned to mock the ancient Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, who are often engaged in earthly deeds, and are sometimes very kind and charitable but can be harmful too.

"Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
Her guardian sylph prolonged the balmy rest:
'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed
The morning dream that hovered o'er her head"

As already mentioned Belinda's dream draws attention to the use of supernatural machinery in the poem. Ariel explains how women are transformed to spirits after death. That, women according to their personality types are categorized as gnomes, sylphs, nymphs

and salamanders, in tune with the four elements of earth, air, water and fire.. The poem touches upon the frivolous interests of the women as well as the men of that period. Frivolity is presented by the instances of playing card games fashionably and comparing it to a great battle.

> "And though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
> Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
> And love of ombre, after death survive."
>
> (Lines 54-56, Canto 1)

The protection of chastity, which turns out to be one of the central concerns in the poem, runs parallel to the dalliances popular amongst the sexes at that time. It points towards the ladies who marry for advantages and from a very early age they prepare themselves for that purpose. They acquire the qualities of manipulating their suitors and promote themselves in all possible ways. The Sylphs are allegorically presented governing social behaviour by women in an acceptable way. Basically, women are not backed by moral obligations, but a social mechanism and more significantly by supernatural forces.

In the first canto of the poem, the dressing table episode in which Belinda is portrayed as a divine being is itself the fuel given to the mock-heroic intentions that dominates the rest of the poem. Belinda's toilette is given the treatment of a religious ceremony, where she worships herself. The cross that Belinda wears possesses more of the ornamental sense rather than religious.

In the second canto, the sexual allegory of the poem is developed to a fuller sense. Pope has cultivated the suggestion of cutting down of Belinda's hair from the title itself and via the dream that Belinda had in the first canto. The cutting and theft of Belinda's hair contains explicit sexual act of conquering and is shown by use

of metaphorical language such as using words like "ravish" for the act of "rape" -

"Th' advent'rous Baron the bright locks admir'd;
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;"
(Lines 29-32, Canto 2)

In a sense of mockery, Ariel's summoning of the troop for Belinda's protection is presented and the parody of appointing individual Sylphs for the protection of her hair, earrings, petticoat, her lapdog, all depicting her chastity, is an attack on the aristocratic women and their obsessions of that age. Belinda's petticoat is compared to a battlefield for which ample of strength is required to win the war.

To fifty chosen Sylphs of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the Petticoat:
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale....
(Lines 117-120, Canto 2)

Humour and moralization are common in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* with its ironic representation of contemporary manners in the eighteenth century. The satire with the high spirited wit, and the comparisons between apparently different objects and events, are handled with sensitivity by the poet. The battle compared to the tiffs of gambling and flirting is one such metaphor. Abundance of allusions, the ironical presentation of the plot, the parody of events, characters and the themes are the dominant characteristics of the poem. It is a scaling down of all things magnificent which further highlights the tradition of mock heroic poetry. Thus, we can now gather the idea that Pope's satire is combined with a moral purpose

as he gently rebukes people for their absurd pursuits and mixed priorities.

Let us go now discuss all the Cantos in details-

Canto I

Lines 1-45: The poem opens with a formal invocation to the epic muse along with a dedication to John Caryll who had commissioned the poem. Unlike the traditional epics, however, this poem will address not great battles of love and war but petty conflicts arising out of amorous causes. If the subject is "slight," the treatment, as the poet promises, is anything but light. This makes clear the mock-heroic purpose of the poem

The assault on the lady, Belinda, by the lord is the cutting off of a lock of hair but it evokes mighty rage in her bosom. The scene opens with Belinda still asleep and dreaming in her comfortable bedroom of being admired and cherished by many. This dream is the handiwork of her guardian spirit Ariel, who wants her to have a good rest. In her dream she is told by a handsome youth that she is protected by an army of sylphs who attend to every aspect of her person. Though invisible, they fly around her to safeguard her honour. More than the pages who attend on her, it is this army of spirits who look after her. While cynical people might not believe in their existence, women and children surely know otherwise.

Lines 46-89: These sylphs were once women who have now become spirits without losing their interest in women's affairs. They also retain the personality types from their lives on earth and depending on those types they assume different identities in the spirit world. The fiery types become Salamanders, the softer types

become Nymphs, the Prudes become Gnomes and the light Coquettes (who indulge in mild flirtations) become Sylphs.

It is the Sylphs who take it upon themselves to protect the chastity of women who despite being good, live through risky social engagements and entertainment. What is called a woman's honour is nothing but the protection of the sylphs above.

Some women, however, fall prey to gnomes when their overtures are spurned by the men. Their vanity makes them look for other means of attracting men and they resort to coquettish behaviour, putting their reputations at risk.

Lines 90-120: Whenever women commit indiscretions as they flit from admirer to another, it is the Sylphs who protect "the Toyshop" of their hearts. The men are equally engaged in risky behaviour as they challenge each other for the attentions of some lady. The hectic round of activities is overseen by the Sylphs who put on the brakes whenever some dalliance threatens to compromise the main actors.

That morning, Ariel warned by the Sylphs, cautions Belinda about the danger lurking in the air. They could not pinpoint the trouble but could only tell where the danger lay: in men! Even as Ariel tries to warn Belinda, her dog Shock awakens her. Soon her eyes fall on the love letters placed by her bedside and in the process of reading through all the promises of love and passion, she forgets her dream.

Lines 121-148: This section offers the famous description of Belinda at her dressing table. It is covered with vases and containers full of cosmetics, and as Belinda looks at herself in the mirror, she cannot help admiring herself. The attendants help Belinda with her

makeup as various beauty aids are lovingly applied. Next she puts on her jewels and perfume to complete her toilette.

The poet cannot help describing the array of objects vying for space on Belinda's dressing table. Apart from the cosmetic aids, there are exotic combs and brushes made out of ivory and tortoise shell. Then there are numerous pins, as well as "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux." These objects are notable for odd combination. Bibles and Billet-doux (love letters) are given the same space as they are accommodated amongst the puffs, powders, patches and all the other cosmetic aids.

The poet mischievously suggests that the face that Belinda presents to the world is the face that she acquires at her dressing table. The army of Sylphs attend to minute details as they strive for perfection in Belinda's appearance and the observers mistakenly think that it is all the result of the maid, Betty's, efforts.

Canto II

Lines 1-46: In public, Belinda was accompanied by a group of well dressed young men and women, who shone around her on the Thames. Belinda not only looked beautiful, her sprightly eyes reflected her quick mind. But the poet points out that her mind, like her eyes, kept flitting over different things. Belinda was generous with her smiles but not with her favours. Her demeanour was so charming that she could reject the overtures of admirers without offending them. Added to that, her beauty made people forget her faults if they found any.

Her looks were enhanced by her carefully maintained locks of hair which graced her neck in ringlets. The whole effect was so eye-catching that the poet observes that they acted as snares to trap men's hearts. The Baron who admired these locks of hair decided to obtain them as a trophy. Not knowing how best to approach the

matter, he decides to offer earnest prayers to the deity in his fashion. As reported he lights a pyre with tokens of love from earlier affairs but the altar interestingly is built of twelve well bound French romances. As he prostrates himself in prayer, they are partly answered and the rest apparently blown away.

Lines 47-90: Despite the Baron's dark designs, for the time being Belinda unaware of any doom, was happy to glide over the river under the careful watch of the Sylphs. The same could not be said for Ariel as he prepared for the impending danger by calling upon his fellow spirits to be vigilant. Accordingly, all the Sylphs took their respective positions after being reminded of their responsibilities by their leader. Not only did they look after and operate amongst the elements, they also were pledged to protect the British throne.

Lines 91-122: Ariel reminds them that their "humbler province" was to look after the fairer sex and ensure that the ladies under their charge looked fresh and charming. He warns the Sylphs to watch out for the doom that threatens their charge and gives them special duties to take care of. However, there was no way he could identify the source of trouble as it was hidden under the darkness. They could only presume that Belinda's person, her honour, her jewellery or her pet dog were at risk from something dark and ominous. As many as fifty Sylphs were assigned the task of guarding Belinda's elaborate petticoat, the implied protector of her virtue.

Lines 123-142: Ariel promises dire punishment for those Sylphs who neglect their duties. The following lines give details of the nature of the punishment which ranges from being stopped in vials to being stuck in glue or transfixed on a sword to being fixed on a turning wheel like Ixion. Although the punishment is serious,

the effect is hilarious as their duties entail watching over Belinda's dress and person which are anything but ordinary. After this briefing, the spirits flock around and over Belinda as they wait for Fate to intervene.

Canto III

Lines 1-30: Belinda was on her way to Hampton Court where Queen Anne held court and also met people. Despite the august company, men and women engaged in idle gossip and ruined reputations as they passed the time of the day in useless activities.

Meanwhile, those engaged in serious work were as callous in execution of their duties. People were summarily sentenced so that judges could close their cases. As other men bring their day's work to an end, women manage to complete their toilette. Belinda, too, prepares to tackle two opponents at Ombre (card game).

Lines 33-66: As soon as Belinda sits down to play cards the protective spirits take control of all the cards in her hand. The rest of the lines offer details of the game how Belinda with special assistance, triumphs over the others.

Lines 67-104: The next few lines detail the Baron's progress in the game till Belinda looks pale and shaken. Then one of the spirits intervenes with an ace and she manages to win a particular hand. Belinda exults and this draws the comment that thoughtless mortals swing from one mood to the other extreme without looking before or after.

Lines 105-154: As tea and coffee were being served and drunk, the spirits took care to spread themselves to protect Belinda's dress. The refreshing coffee sent new ideas to the Baron's mind on ways to secure the lock of hair. To assist him Clarissa an attendant at the Court offers a pair of scissors which he accepts.

True to mock heroic fashion, the poet presents this as a lady arming her knight for battle. Although the Baron tried to wield the weapon, the efforts of the Sylphs helped to frustrate his attempts. Finally Ariel tries to connect with Belinda's heart and is devastated to find an earthly lover in her bosom. He realises that she wants to be passionately loved and this robs him of all his protective powers. As he withdraws, the baron succeeds in cutting the lock of hair.

Lines 154-178: Belinda's cries hit the skies and were in keeping with the mournful shrieks of women on the loss of their husbands or favourite lapdogs, or even on the breaking of precious Chinese vases, as the poet remarks. The Baron, however, is triumphant, and declares that he has earned his share of immortality. Singing praises of steel which has put civilizations to the sword, he declares—how can an ordinary lock of hair withstand its power!

Canto IV

Lines 1-100: Belinda's rage knew no bounds and the poet tries to compare this loss with other great losses suffered by humanity. After the departure of Ariel, Umbriel the Gnome known for its unhappy nature stepped onto the earth. He visits the cave of the goddess of Spleen and appeals for her help in infusing Belinda with anger. The goddess offers him a bag containing "the force of female lungs, /

"Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues." Not only that, she also fills a vial with "fainting fears,/ Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears." Loaded with all these elements of spleen, Umbriel returns to Belinda's presence and releases them around her. The effect was like that of unleashing the Furies.

It may be noted that Umbriel's journey to the Cave of Spleen resembles the journeys to the underworld undertaken by the Classical epic heroes.

Lines 101-145: Meanwhile Belinda, who had been quietly sobbing in her friend Thalestris' arms, erupts in anger. Thalestris inflames Belinda further by reminding her of all the care she took to nurture her famous locks. Those same locks, now in the possession of the Baron, would be displayed as a prize trophy amongst the men. She implies that the loss of that lock of hair is paramount to losing her honour, and nobody would like to befriend her in that condition. So saying, Thalestis urges her beau Sir Plume to ask the Baron to return the stolen hair to Belinda. Sir Plume, not understanding the significance of the lock of hair or the insult implied therein, awkwardly speaks to the Baron to return Belinda's hair in the name of civility.

Lines 146-187: The Baron, however, swears that he would never part with his trophy and while there was life in him he would display it on his wrist. Under Umbriel's influence Belinda indulges in tears and recalls some of the warning signals sent to her by the helpful Sylphs. Her regret over venturing out to Hampton Court spills over everybody as she bemoans the loss of her favourite lock of hair. The poet takes care to suggest that Belinda's feelings were not all genuine and points to her mixed priorities where vanity takes precedence over all else.

Canto V

Lines 1-34: Despite Belinda's impassioned speech the Baron remains unmoved. Her friend Thalestris joins in the fruitless appeal and the poet is moved to remark that surely Aeneas must have been more ready to give in to the appeals of Dido and her ladies than the Baron in this case. Amidst this melee Clarissa puts

up her hand and speaks about the vanity of man which values good looks without caring if beauty is attached to good sense. She reminds them of the useless activities that they engage in which are full of artifice and affectation. She adds that since everything is subject to decay and they are expected to make the best of the opportunities life offers them, the loss of something should also be accepted with a little humour instead of tantrums. Her final comment is that beauty and charm may win the round but ultimately it is genuine merit which touches the soul.

Lines 35-66: The speech, however, is not well received by Belinda and Thalestris. The latter calls for combative action and flies at the adversary. Soon everybody joins the fray and fight in earnest. The poet observing the combat is reminded of the gods fighting in Homer. While Umbriel enjoyed the show from a safe vantage point, the rest of the spirits did what they could to help. Those in Thaletris' line of attack perished "in metaphor" or "in song": one spoke of living death while another of being impaled on a cruel gaze.

Lines 67-102: The focus shifts to other characters till Belinda finds her target in the Baron. He manfully endures her pinches but as she throws snuff around him his eyes start watering and he breaks into sneezes. Not content, Belinda next attacks him with an elaborate hairpin which had adorned her family members in different shapes. The victim cries out that Belinda should not be triumphant as he had sought to die with her, his only regret being that he has to die alone. Still, he would prefer to stay alive and burn with love for her.

Lines 103-150: Belinda cries out for the lock to be returned in a tone equalling Othello's cry for the lost handkerchief. Heaven, however, decides that such a precious thing should not remain the

property of man and accordingly, it disappears from the earth. Only vigilant Sylphs saw it flash its way up to heaven. At that Belinda is advised to forget the lock as it had become celestial property for mortals to invoke or swear by. After her passing away from this world the lock which had earned so much fame in the hands of the poet, will continue to shine in man's imagination.

3.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Belinda

The central character of the poem *The Rape of the Lock*. She is the depiction of the real life character of Arabella Fermor (1696-1737). She was the daughter of Henry Fermor of Tusmore in Oxfordshire and Helen, daughter of Sir George Brown of Great Shefford Manor in Berkshire. She was widely celebrated by poets and painters due to her beauty and charm. Pope's 'Rape of the Lock" made her very much famous and endured her name. Lord Petre, a young man of some twenty years was found guilty of stealing a lock of her hair. This event was made into a parody by Pope in his mock epic poem, which you have already read in this unit.

The Baron

In the poem *The Rape of the Lock*, the Baron is one among the gentlemen who accompanies Belinda during her journey to Hampton Court Palace. He admires Belinda's beautiful locks and desires to steal them for himself and even completes the task resulting in utter confusion and tension in the situation. He is the portrayal of Lord Robert Petre, 7th Baron Petre, son of Thomas Petre and Mary Clifton. He is said to have a very peculiar and strange habit of spending at least six hours in grooming his hair and also wear his wig in an unconventional way. In 1711, he created

outrage and indignation in the family by cutting of a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor's head.

John Caryll

Alexander Pope's friend, Caryll was the son of Richard Caryllanf Frances. He succeeded his uncle in 1711 and became the second Jacobite Baron Caryll of Durford. He was the one who recounted the event of ArabelleFermor's lock of hair being stolen to Alexander Pope and also urged him to write an amusing piece based on the incident for the reconciliation of the families.

Ariel:

Belinda's guardian Sylph, who look after a troop of army formed by invisible deities. He is concerned with Belinda's protection and keeps a keen eye on her and her lapdog in particular.

Umbriel

The chief of the gnome, who goes to the Cave of Spleen and brings back tears and sighs due to the indignation caused to Belinda.

Brillante, Momentilla, Crispissa

The Sylphs who were appointed to keep eye on Belinda's earrings, watch and her favorite lock respectively.

Clarissa

A woman attendant in Hampton Court Palace. She supplied the Baron with a scissor to cut Belinda's hair. Later, after the theft she gave a moralizing lecture to Belinda but was ignored.

Thalestris

Another friend of Pope and wife to Sir George Brown, she is the historical Gertrude Morley, and was portrayed in the poem as Belinda's friend. She urges Belinda to avenge her indignation and demand the return of her stolen lock. The nomenclature is taken from the Queen of the Amazons.

Sir Plume

He is the pseudonym for Sir George Brown, husband to Pope's friend Gertrude Morley and one among the members of Pope's social circle. In the poem, he is referred to as "the beau" and after the theft he makes a challenge to the Baron but it proved to be ineffective.

3.5 SALIENT FEATURES OF POPE'S POETRY

The dominant features in Pope's poetry are its subtlety, delicate imagination, wit merged with irony and use of mock-epic tradition. Humour with affection is another element that keeps his poetry inclined towards a variety of melancholic tendency and results out in a great difference between the realities of social life and human occupations. In Andrew Sander's words, "Popes careful cultivation of poetic technique, his concern with precision and propriety, and his ambitious determination both to define and to refine the tastes and ideas of the age render him more than an exclusively satirical poet" (Andrew Sanders 288). Pope's vision of himself as an artist and his social position always remained in a paradoxical state. Around 1733, he could complain that "Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory" but he shifted his stern sympathy with the Tories, as he found it congenial in standing to one side of the cultural mainstream. He used satire as his chief weapon against the society that seemed to him being full of bullies, supercargoes, thieves, and people that exploits the land both economically and politically. Pope's earlier poems were more urban and had optimism in it, but later his poetry, except 'Essay on Man', shifted towards an opposite direction with more Swiftian influence. For him poetry was not only a way of expression but also a platform for social criticism.

Pope's poetry might have been bad-tempered as that of his rivals, but it had a range that created all the difference. It carries the sophistication, an unmatched energy, and a delicacy that is detailed and accurate. None of his contemporaries could match Pope in his poetic technique. Pope was very much successful in uniting the conventions and style of the epic form with 'trivial' elements and this characteristic feature is evident in his *The Rape of the Lock* and 'The Dunciad'. As Homer portrayed heroes and their societies in his epics, Pope did the same task on another level- blending elements from the past and the present, greatness and triviality, and sorting out resemblances in apparently unlike things.

Pope wrote his poems mostly in heroic couplets. For instance, in *The Rape of the Lock*, the entire poem is seen composed by one heroic couplet followed by another. Among other poetic devices used by Pope in his compositions is the extensive use of hyperbole, for the exaggeration of the commonplace and the ordinary and make them look magnificent and spectacular. Pope was man who always loved perfection and through his poetry he always tried to establish it. As a poet, his technique was the refinement of his constant thoughts and keeping his intense reputation intact as a man of letters. He used language with genuine inventiveness. His dealing with traditional forms, his satirical vision of the contemporary world, quality of imagination and handling of the classical models places Pope as the towering representative man of the Augustan period.

3.6 SUMMING UP

After reading the unit, you must have found out how Dryden and Pope have used the mock epic or mock heroic tradition in convenience to the subject of their satirical works, in special reference to the prescribed poems that you have just read. Their

writings are the intense reflections of the ages that they lived in. Their personal lives also have the effect on their literary career which is very much evident in their writings. Throughout the unit we have tried to familiarize you with their lives and literary careers. We have tried to introduce you to the form of mock epic and analyzed the poets in the light of their poems and present before you a picture of the late Restoration and Augustan period. You have learnt in the unit about the writers not only as poets but also as social critics and realized how it polishes their writings. Before proceeding to the next unit, please complete the SAQs provided for you and check your progress.

3.5 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What are the characteristics of a mock-heroic or mock epic? Discuss *The Rape of the Lock* as a mock epic or mock heroic poem.
2. In *The Rape of the Lock*, how does Pope attack on the hypocrisy of the aristocratic ladies of that time through the character of Belinda?
3. Discuss Alexander Pope as a satirist in the reference to the poem prescribed for you.
4. Comment critically on the salient features and poetic style of Pope from your reading of the poem *The Rape of the Lock*.
5. How the political and social conditions of contemporary London are reflected in Pope's poetry? Answer in context to the poem *The Rape of the Lock*.
6. Write an explanatory note on Pope as a representative poet of the Augustan period.

3.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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MODULE II: ROMANTICS I

UNIT 4: ROMANTIC POETRY AND ITS TRENDS

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 19th Century is marked by drastic changes in the whole of Europe in matters of art, literature and culture. The changing philosophy has also influenced the intellectual world of England. As opposed to the realism of the previous age, the spirit of idealism advocated by Rousseau in France and Schelling, Schlegel and Lessing in Germany influenced this development. The literary aims and ideals of the eighteenth century were replaced by a focus on the writer's subject position. As a result, an imaginative literature with a distinct individuality cropped up. The mystic and passionate, free-spirited strands once again became popular. The Lake School of poetry expressed new theories regarding the subject matter as well as language of poetry. It was an age in which not only the watchword of the French Revolution, but Democracy and Humanism too, became the central focus of the major English Romantics.

This unit will discuss the Romantic movement and its salient features and how it created a new theory in poetry as spontaneous and natural outcome, rather than a forced work of reason and intellect advocated by the neo-classicists.

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to---

- acquaint yourself with the Romantic movement and philosophy at large
- learn the salient features of this movement seen in poetry and other literature
- know the chief exponents of Romantic movement and their works

4.2 ROMANTICISM OR ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Historians of English Literature have designated the period from 1798 to 1832 as the Romantic period. This period in England was a period of transition and many changes when the English society moved from a primarily agricultural to a modem industrialized one. Industrial units employed large numbers of people. Thus the balance of power passed on from the land-owning aristocracy to the mill-owners.

In the political arena the Declaration of Independence (1776) by the thirteen colonies led by the American Revolution brought far-reaching consequences to England. The French Revolution affected the whole of Western Europe in several ways. It received enthusiastic support in the beginning from the liberals and radicals in England. The Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French National Assembly

was welcomed. Edmund Burke in *Reflection on the Revolution in France(1790),* Tom Paine in his *Rights of Man* (1791-92) openly advocated the new humanism. William Godwin's *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) made a great impact on Wordsworth, Shelley and others.

The French Revolution brought with it new slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity promising a free and egalitarian society. Its impact was felt on the literature of the period including English literature. The new generation of writers opted for the more personalised literary types like the lyric, the ode and the ballad instead of the more serious epic and tragedy.

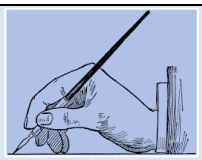
In language, the cultivated speech of the elite was sought to be replaced by the speech of the common people. In the choice of themes, commonplace incidents and people replaced the noble class. The characters were humbler folk like a leech gatherer, or a highland lass, or even an idiot boy. Thus the French Revolution caused a democratisation of literature in genre, in language, in themes and in characters. The spirit of the age demanded these changes and the creative writer responded enthusiastically to these trends.

Thus it can be said that Romanticism or the Romantic Movement in England started as a reaction to the style and philosophy of the Neo-classical poetry of 18th Century. The Neo-classical writers had chosen 'correctness,' in manner and technique instead of freedom of the creative imagination which was reflected in the writings, especially the poetry of the Romantic period which followed.

In the later half of 18 Century there was strong reaction against the formalism of the neo-classicists. Instead of set and formal rule of the previous writers, this new group of poets and writers turned to nature and simple life for inspiration in their writings. They turned away from the metropolis to rural life. The past, particularly the medieval tales and ballads, inspired their writing. Human nature and

universal brotherhood, rather than the life of the aristocratic, became subject of poetry. The sensuous element of love and adventure of the old Romans were amply revived by this new group of writers both in poetry and prose.

The Romantic Movement is said to have begun with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Written by William Wordsworth, the Preface to the second edition of the collection was a kind of poetic manifesto denouncing the poetic diction and upper-class subject of the preceding age. The "common life' and 'a language really used by men,' advocated by Wordsworth helped to ring in the change.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Which years specify the Romantic period in English literature?

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2. Name two important changes which occurred in the political and economic spheres in this period.

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3. What did Tom Paine advocate in *Rights of Man*?

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4. When did Wordsworth publish *Lyrical Ballads*?

4.3 CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTICISM

The Romantic writers lived through momentous changes in the political, economic, social and literary spheres. The idea of revolution informed the Romantic Movement from the beginning. Major writers of this period were aware that great changes were taking place around them and that these changes would inevitably find their way into literature also. The French Revolution seemed to be the great divide and the beginning of a new era in the history of mankind. William Hazlitt rightly observed in his book, *The Spirit of the Age*, "There was a mighty ferment in the heads of statesmen and poets, kings and people….It was a time of promise, a renewal of the world—and of letters".

Let us now understand the term, 'Romanticism', by examining its salient features---

- Romanticism was a strong reaction against bondage, rules and customs in society, religion and literature. The Neo-classical theory looked upon poetry as imitation and as something acquired by training. The function of poetry, according to this view, is to instruct and to please. Romanticism is opposed to the artificial conventions, the reigning literary tradition and the poetic establishment of eighteenth century. Wordsworth defines poetry as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". Blake thinks that poetry comes from inspiration, vision and prophecy. According to Keats poetry should come "as naturally as the leaves of a tree". True poetry is rooted in the poet's imagination. The possibility of any skill artificially acquired is discarded by the Romantics.
- Romanticism celebrates a natural way of life. With the slogan ‘Return to Nature’ the Romantics focus on common human life and their activities. It believes in free human spirit and liberty, resulting in individualism in their works. The Romantic poets,

unlike their predecessors do not restrict humanity within the drawing rooms of the aristocrats. Rural life is idealized in Romantic poetry. It celebrates external nature as poetic subject-matter, with description of landscape and its aspects, as well as its effect on the human mind. In fact, poets like Wordsworth see in nature the power to chasten and subdue.

- Another significant feature of the Romantics is the use of everyday speech of ordinary people as the language of poetry. Instead of lofty poetic diction, the Romantic poets look for new metres and stanzas to replace traditional forms. The heroic couplet is replaced by the ballad, the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza and other experimental verse forms.
- Imagination and fancy play an important role
- Romanticism celebrated the eternal ideas of childhood, innocence, youthfulness and human emotions.
- The Romantic writers expressed great interest in Medieval Romances and fantasies. The wild, irregular and the grotesque in Nature and art fascinated the Romantic poets. The mysterious and the mythical also are included in their writing.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Mention at least four dominant features of Romanticism

4.5 EXPONENTS OF ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

4.5.1 Early Romantics

The early writers of Romanticism were James Thomson (1700-1748), Thomas Gray (1716-1771), William Collins (1721-1759), Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), William Cowper (1731-1800), Robert Burns (1759- 1796) and William Blake (1757-1827).

James Thomson (1700-1748) took a deep interest in nature. His poem, *"The Seasons"* (1730), evokes interest in the processes of nature. He is fascinated by the fearful aspects of nature such as floods and storms. He is described as "a poet of pictorial landscape". One can witness the interactions between man and Nature in *"The Seasons"*. The great variety and beauty of Nature move him deeply.

Thomas Gray (1716-71) is always known for his poem, Elegy Written in a County Churchyard, where one can see the display of nature and humble life advocated by the Romantic poets. In his later writings Gray seemed to turn towards Medieval literature and Scandinavian folklore. His writings anticipate and reflect the Romantics' love of nature and her world. The speciality of his treatment of nature can be seen in his description of different moods of nature in charming detail. Wordsworth was much inspired by Gray in his depiction of various aspects of nature.

William Collins (1721-1759), though not very popular, exercised massive influence on almost all the later Romantic poets. He idea of landscape evoking ideas and emotions was unique in itself and sow the seeds of romanticism. His depiction of Nature at twilight is particularly in the line of the Romantic poets. His *"Ode to Evening"* is the forerunner of Keats's *"To Autumn"*. Romantic tendencies such as a return to the past and anti-intellectualism may be noticed in his "Ode

on Popular Superstitions". Collins' use of superstitions and classical legends greatly impressed Coleridge.

William Cowper (1731-1800) is always treated as one of the precursors of romanticism. For him, love of Nature was a kind of religious practice that one should not forget. 'He believes that contemplation in the midst of Nature will bestow wisdom more easily than reading of books' (IGNOU, 12). The beauty of the countryside attracted him in writing his poems and his portrayal of Nature.

The idea of Cowper's 'manly rough line' as against Pope's "smoothness" is later developed by romantics like Wordsworth. Cowper's political liberalism, idea of humanitarianism, and most of all in his sympathetic and faithful rendering of external nature is what makes him a true precursor of romanticism.

Robert Burns (1759-1796) is a Scottish poet and a symbol of their national spirit. His love for Scottish folklore and nature, his love for freedom and his respect for the common man made him an essentially romantic in temperament. Burns essentially believed that emotion was a better guide than reason.

Burns' poems *"To a Mouse", "The Cotter's Saturday Night", "The Jolly Beggars"* deals with humble life and people. His religious poems like *"Holy Willie's Prayer"* and *"The Holy Fair"* impressed later Romantic poets like Shelley who re-examined religious belief in a more serious way.

Bums' poetry has the element of universal and humanity with a strong flavour of local people and situations. He used the real language of man as he found it in the folk literature of his country and thus showed the path to Wordsworth. His use of lowly subjects and simple diction was a worthwhile example to Wordsworth and through him to other Romantic poets.

William Blake is considered as one of the most important pioneers of Romantic poetry. We are discussing his contribution separately in the succeeding unit.

The works that inspired the Romantic philosophy of the early nineteenth century are Richard Price's *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789) and *Observation on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776), Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution* (1791) William Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793)

It is important to mention here that the optimistic philosophy practiced by these philosophers inspired the writings of the early romantics like William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Richard Prices' liberal philosophy inspired Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) and Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1805). Edmund Burke's philosophy inspired the romantic essayists William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, and also the Waverly novelist Walter Scott.

LET US STOP AND THINK

The word 'Romantic' comes from old French word 'romanz' and then 'romantique'. The word means several things. It means an inclination towards love and romance. It also means somebody who is idealistic and fanciful or things that are remote and fantastic. Romanticism represents a reaction to Classicism and Neo-Classicism of the eighteenth century that swept Europe with the ideals of reason, balance and restraint. Neo Classicism was practiced by writers like Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, James Thompson etc. (See **Neo Classicism)**

4.5.2 Late Romantics

The poets who belonged to the later part of the Romantic period are Byron, Shelley and Keats as seen above.

Apart from them writers like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) could also be called a form of early science fiction. James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) addresses psychological issues. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* published in 1813, helped to establish her reputation as a novelist. Her *Sense and Sensibility* had appeared in 1811. Walter Scott's *Waverley* was published in 1814.

Some important works of Romanticism are:

- William Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)
- S.T Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817)
- Gothic Fictions. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786)
- Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1790)
- Jane Austen's Domestic novels such as *Emma* (1816) *Persuasion* (1818) *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
- William Scott's *Waverly* novels such as *Ivanhoe* (1820)
- Byron's *Child Harold* (1812) and *Don Juan* (1819-24)
- P.B. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem* (1813),*A Defence of Poetry* (1840)
- John Keats' *Lamia, The eve of St. Agnes, Hyperion*
- Romantic Essays by William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb's *Essays of Elia* and *Thomas De Quincey's essays*.

4.6 SUMMING UP

In this unit we had made an attempt to give you a comprehensive and concise view of the Romantic Movement in England along with the contribution of few important poets both of early and later Romanticism.

In the succeeding units we are going to discuss elaborately few select poems of some of the great Romantics. We hope you will keep the definition and features of Romanticism in mind while reading the poems of the Romantics.

You may also try to find that Romantic poets have something in common, but each of them is unique in his own way. What are those features that make each of them unique in their own way can be seen while reading the texts prescribed.

4.7ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Define Romanticism. What are the main features of Romanticism?

2. Define Neo-Classicism. Who were the chief practitioners of the Neo-Classical ideals?

3. Write a short note on early Romanticism of the eighteenth century.

4. Write a note on the early Romantic poets. How did they contribute to the Romantic movement?

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UNIT 5: WILLIAM BLAKE: *THE LAMB, THE TYGER, HOLY THURSDAY*

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.0 INTRODUCTION

William Blake is one of the precursors of Romanticism. The movement was initiated by writers such as Thompson whose *The Seasons* made its appearance in 1730 as the first noteworthy poem of that romantic revival. The movement came to a complete form during the early nineteenth century with writers like William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, P.B. Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats. The hard rationalistic ideas were set aside by the Romantics and those were replaced by some liberal ideas. Romanticism was not a new idea of course. The past masters who paved the way for this revival were Spencer, William Shakespeare and John Milton.

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The present unit is an attempt to make you familiar with the literature of English Romanticism. The unit will introduce one of the most significant poets of the early nineteenth century, William

Blake who is widely known for his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. After reading this unit you will be able to learn the:

- Life and works of William Blake
- Detail reading of his prescribed poems
- Critically analyse two pairs of poems by Blake namely "The Lamb" (*Songs of Innocence*) and "The Tyger" (*Songs of Experience*), and "Holy Thursday"(*Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*)

5.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLAIM BLAKE

William Blake was the son of a London tradesman. Even though he did not receive formal education, he began writing verses at the age of ten. He was a lover of nature and an imaginative child who loved to enjoy his time with brooks and flowers. His visionary faculty was very much a product of such inclinations towards nature. He was a great believer of God and implicitly trusted the angels and the divine. A strong flavour of spiritualism is evident in Blake's writings and the spirit of pantheism runs through his poems. Let us be familiar with some of his important and legendary compositions. During his boyhood Blake wrote poems which are considered as Blake's earliest poetry and they were published in a poetic collection called Poetical Sketches, published in 1783. Some of the poems show Blake's strong sense of originality. However, the works for which Blake is well remembered are *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* which were published in the years 1789 and 1794 respectively. The simplicity of structure, the lyrical quality and originality of his compositions made him one of the most powerful and adorned writers in the history of English literature. The poems in *Songs of Innocence* were inspired by Biblical images and symbols and they celebrate the state of

innocence, purity and perfection. A few of them are " The Echoing Green", "The Lamb", "Infant Joy", "Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweeper" etc. The poems in *Songs of Experience* are about suffering, anxiety, horror and oppression. Some of its famous poems are "Nurse's Song", "The Fly", "The Tyger", "The Clod and the Pebble" etc. Other works of Blake are *The Book of Thel* (1787), *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), The *First Book of Urizen* (1794), *Europe a Prophecy* (1794), "Milton" and "Jerusalem" (1808-1820) and "The Everlasting Gospel" (1818). The two poems "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" are taken from Blake's famous *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* respectively. The former is a celebration of God's creation. The Lamb is a wonderful creation of Christ, an embodiment of meekness and innocence. The goodness and purity of God's creation is praised by the poet. The poet asks a series of rhetorical questions to the little lamb. The poet asks the lamb if he was familiar to his creator. The image of the tiger is emblematic of the ferocity of Christ's innocence.

Blake's Poetical Features: Some of the characteristic features of Blake's poetry are:

- Blake's poetry has a prophetic and visionary significance.
- Blake's poetry is characterised by a swiftness of expression and exhibits lyrical qualities.
- Blake's poetry represents the conflicting and contradictory realities of human life. His poetry exhibits a strong tension between opposing ideas.
- Blake uses strong symbols to represent the various aspects of human life. Nature images are more prominent.
- The imagination is supreme in Blake's poetry

5.3 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF 'THE LAMB'

The Lamb is not only one of the most important poems of *Innocence* but also one of the simplest of Blake's creations. Though Blake often reveals complex states of human innocence and experiences, the symbolism in the poem is almost clearly stated. Here the primary symbol is seen in the assimilation of the child, the lamb and Christ in each other. The poem begins with a childlike directness and innocent inquisitiveness.

The Child is thrilled by the lamb being blessed with a life where it is given the fulfilment to drink from nature's stream and feed from the meadow. It has been clothed with bright, soft and warm wool at the time of creation. The Lamb is pure, innocent and thus the image of Christ on earth. That the lamb is described with all its attributes is suggestive of the fact that he wants to keep the image of God free from all impurities. He describes the lamb as he sees it. Being a visionary Blake invites the reader to a world free from complicated reasoning.

Its soft, tender voice is a happiness to the valley in which it roams carefree. Because of its innocence the child, identifies itself with the lamb and enjoys its company. The poem displays the innocence, the joy and affection of childhood. The lyric is a counterpart to "The Tyger." "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" represent the two contrary states of the human soul. The lamb represents innocence and humanity whereas the tiger represents a fierce force within man.

The child asks who made the little lamb in a typical child's tone, rhythm and diction. The lamb, he says, has been given the "clothing of delight", soft and 'wooly' clothing, and such a tender voice that it gives delight to everybody.

In the next stanza, the speaker himself tells the little lamb that his maker is known by the very name of the lamb. Christ was also a child when he first appeared on this earth as the son of God. He is also gentle and mild. “I a child and thou a lamb, we are called by His (Christ’s) name”. We have here a realistic and sympathetic portrait of a lamb. But, the symbolic meaning goes much deeper. The poem seems that it is based on the biblical hope that "meek shall inherit the world”.

In the second stanza there’s an identification of the lamb, Christ, and the child. Christ has another name, that is, lamb, because Christ is meek and mild like the lamb. Christ was also a child when he first appeared on this earth as the son of God. The child shows his deep joy in the company of the lamb who is just like him, meek and innocent. Even on its surface level the poem conveys the very spirit of childhood, the purity, the innocence, the tenderness, as well as the affection that a child feels for little creatures like the lamb. There are also overtones of Christian symbolism suggested by Christ as a child. The pastoral setting is also another symbol of innocence and joy.

The lamb itself is a symbol: it stands for the innocent state of the soul in the world of innocence and an emblem of purity, naturalness, and radiance. There is a suggestion of God uniting with nature and man in this state of innocence and purity.

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

The poem shows a wonderful combination of the child, the lamb and the Almighty, Christ. As we can see in the following lines

I, a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

The setting of the poem is the stream and the mead and its tone is a pleasant and delightful one. The tender voice of the lamb rejoices and his presence signifies the presence of the divine.

He is meek, and he is mild;
He became a little child

Christ has created the lamb with care and love. The lamb's tender voice that fills the vales with joy is a gift of the Almighty. The poem concludes with the poet's hope that the lamb will be blessed-

Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

After reading this poem you should be aware of the following points

• In Blake's poetry innocence means the state of purity and the natural as opposed to the artificial.
• The poem has a lyrical quality and is written in a colloquial style.
• The poem celebrates the relations between the child, the lamb and the creator Almighty God.
• An expression of thankfulness is evident in the poem, a sense of gratitude towards the Creator of all things.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Blake was called idiosyncratic by most of his contemporaries. However, his reputation mainly rests upon his originality of thoughts and expression. Blake was against the established forms of religion and was deeply influenced by the revolutionary ideas in France and America. He was also influenced by the Classical masters of the past such as Michelangelo and Raphael. Besides, he was inspired by the Mythological accounts of the classic past.

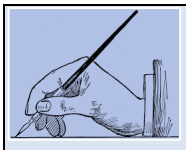
5.3.1 Themes

As it has been mentioned earlier, Blake uses various symbols to represent the opposing forces in the world. Each symbol is concerned with some specific themes. In the present poem, Blake reflects on the theme of Innocence and divine love. The poet draws a close connection among the child, the lamb and God. The poet perceives a divine order in nature and rejoices at the beauty of the world. The poet wishes to celebrate the beauty of Creation and outlines the divine design in it. The meekness, gentleness, purity, innocence, joyfulness, abundance are the qualities of the divine order.

5.3.2 Symbols, Style and Language

Blake's poetry uses strong symbols as mentioned. Blake wants to highlight the cyclic order that surrounds the world. Our world is balanced by opposing forces such as innocence and experience, peace and violence, good and evil. A moment of transition always works and controls the opposites. 'Lamb' and 'Tyger' are two opposing symbols in Blake.

A strong pictorial quality marks his poetry. In contrast to the lamb, the tiger image represents creativity and strong energy in nature. In the poem "A Poison tree", the tree represents wrath and water represents fear. The language balances the soft and gentle with the fierce and awesome.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Find out the symbols of innocence and experience in Blake's *'The Lamb'* and *"The Tyger'*

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2. What basic symbolism does *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* depict?

5.4 ***READING BLAKE'S 'THE TYGER'***

"*The Tyger"* is a famous poem in Blake's Songs of Experience. The term 'Experience' is a loaded term which means several connotations. 'Experience', in Blake's poetry, is just the opposite word of 'Innocence'. It is a state of distortion and destruction. When the state of innocence is deceived or disturbed, we call it 'experience' or loss of love, value and purity. It also suggests forms and extent of violence on nature. The poem *"The Tyger"* has a prophetic quality and it symbolically exhibits the nature of tragedy and sadness.

5.4.1 *Textual Analysis of the Poem*

The world is always balanced and is composed of things that are opposite in nature. Like the little lamb, a tiger is also a creation of God and it has its own characteristic features. The same question is asked to the tiger which was asked earlier to the lamb in the Songs of Innocence:

Tyger !Tyger burning bright
In the forests of night,
What immortal hand or eye

Could frame the fearful symmetry?

In the next eight lines its brightness and strength are valorised. It also suggests the power of God's creation.

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

Look at the words "Burning', 'fearful', 'fire', 'dread hand'. They mean something that is powerful, wild and energetic. In the next four lines God's powerful creation is celebrated and God, the Creator is imagined as a Blacksmith.

What the Hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp;

The next four lines also focus on the majestic creation of God who created both lamb-like and tiger-like things in the world.

When the Stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

5.4.2 Themes

The poem reflects on the opposing forces present in nature. Nature's uniqueness and variety are highlighted in the poem. The poet underlines a divine pattern in everything in nature. The same Creator created the tiger also and this completes the cycle of opposites in nature.

5.4.3 Symbols, Style and Language

Blake uses several nature symbols in this poem. As it has been mentioned, his symbols had philosophical significance. By inserting rhetorical questions Blake has left a strong hold over his readers. Language is simply lyrical and rhythmical.

5.5 READING BLAKE'S 'HOLY THURSDAY'

5.5.1 Textual Analysis

'*Holy Thursday*" is the title of two poems in the Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience respectively. In the Songs of Innocence, the poem *"Holy Thursday",* the poet celebrates the innocence, purity of God's creation. It was a Holy Thursday when children gathered in huge multitude. They walked hand in hand in red, blue and green coloured dresses. They were led to St. Paul's Cathedral by the old church official, the beadle. The beadle's wand stands for adult control over the innocent but once inside the cathedral, their voices rise to heaven leaving behind the old benefactors as well as the priests. The children's progress to the cathedral is compared to the flow of the Thames—they are carried there on a wave of innocence. Looking like flowers or lambs, the children raise their innocent hands in prayer and their song reaches out to heaven leaving aside the sinful adults. The poem implies that these little children can connect directly

with heaven while the so-called guardians of the poor, despite their charity, remain tied to the world.

In *Songs of Experience* the poem *"Holy Thursday"* shows the poet's concern over the miserable condition of children. In contrast to the poem in the *Songs of Innocence*, this poem presents the pathetic condition of London where children suffer on account of poverty. A note of pessimism and a strong sense of satire are also prominent in the poem. Innocent children find themselves at the receiving hand of corrupt adults. Even the charity they extend is motivated and "cold and stinks of the money grabbing and swindling that they engage in.

Read the following lines:

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babies reduc'd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty?

The lines mentioned above are indicative of the fact that the miserable condition of the children is a result of the hypocritical nature of the benevolent forces. This also recalls the miserable condition of the children and women in factories after the Industrial Revolution. Similar thoughts are found in Blake's "*The Chimney Sweepers*".

5.5.2 Themes

Blake's poetry is significant for its exhibition of conflicting human emotions and human situations. His *Songs of Innocence* and

Songs of Experience are remarkable for their variety of themes and intellectual vigour. In the present poem 'Holy Thursday', Blake has focussed on two different sides of childhood. The poem is present in both *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* in two different forms. In *Songs of Innocence* the poem focuses on innocence of childhood and at the same time questions the motives of adults who donate to charitable causes. In *Songs of Experience* the poem draws attention to the pitiable condition of poor children who have to face different kinds of hardship. Even in orphanages, they are controlled by adults who refuse to see them as innocent children. By 'innocence' Blake means Freedom, Happiness and Playfulness and 'Experience' means Adulthood and Maturity. The agony of orphaned childhood is also highlighted in the poem. In prosperous England thousands of orphaned and poor children were forced to work under unhealthy conditions and they lived a miserable life. Blake tries to draw attention to this serious problem in English society, through his poetry.

5.5.3 Poetic Style, Images and Language

Blake's poetry exhibits a powerful combination of opposite images and this is very much evident from his two remarkable collections *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience.* In the poem Blake uses several images such as 'flowers', 'lambs', 'tyger' , 'thunder', 'angel' to refer to various human situations. 'Flowers'means Beauty, Innocence and Fragility. 'Lambs' mean Innocence and Meek nature and also links to Christ. Several Biblical images are found in this poem and they bear evidences to the fact that Blake was inclined towards Christian mythology and history.Rhyming words are frequently used by Blake such as 'snow-flow', 'poor-door', 'lambs-hands' etc. A lyrical quality is also present in the poem. The poem is mostly hymn like and optimistic.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Biblical Images: The lamb , holy thursday

Multitude: worshipping children

Thunder: Vision of New Heaven and faith on Revelation mentioned in the New Testament

5.6 SUMMING UP

William Blake, thus can be introduced as a poet of high intellectual calibre whose poetry left lasting impression over the succeeding generations of poets. Besides, his writings exhibited his interests in Christianity and its morality. By going through this poem, you can be familiar with Blake's philosophical underpinnings and romantic sensibilities.

5.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Life and Poetical works of William Blake.
2. Discuss Blake's 'Holy Thursday' as a romantic poem.
3. What are the poetical devices used by Blake in the poem 'Holy Thursday' and 'The Tyger'?
4. Discuss the chief features of Blake's poetry.
5. Make a comparative analysis of Blake's 'The Lamb' and "The 6. Tyger'. How do they complete the cycle of opposites?
6. Underline the spiritual overtones in Blake's poetry.
7. Write a short note on Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience.*
8. Reference to Context:

a. The hum of multitude they seemed…..radiance all their own.

b. ‘Twas a Holy Thursday…..as whites a snow.

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UNIT 6: WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S 'TINTERN ABBEY' S.T. COLERIDGE'S 'KUBLA KHAN', 'ODE TO DEJECTION'

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century is often known as the Age of Revolution. Two most important movements that characterise the century are Romanticism and Democracy. Such revolutionary reactions were the result of many significant historical events such as the American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, the French Revolution and the rise of Methodism. The French Revolution ignited the spirit of nationalism, liberalism and individualism in England and accordingly in England, there was a subsequent growth of patriotic

clubs and societies. The cause of revolution was, however, economic. By that time England was the biggest trade centre and it had the monopoly over other parts of the world. But the problem was the unequal distribution of wealth and products. William J. Long describes the phenomenon in the following words:

> While England increased in wealth, and spent vast sums to support her army and subsidize her allies in Europe, and nobles, landowners, manufacturers, and merchants lived in increasing luxury, a multitude of skilled labourers were clamouring for work. Men sent their wives and little children into the daily mines and factories, where sixteen hours' labour would hardly pay for the daily bread; and in every city were riotous mobs made up chiefly of hungry men and women. ((English Literature, 371)

We can read Adam Smith's famous book *Wealth of Nations* and, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, to understand the changes in the economic scenario of that period. G.M Trevelyan records those facts in the following words:

> The democratic movement, inspired by the original French revolution and the writings of Tom Paine, was suppressed in the 'nineties, quite as much by public opinion as by government action: working-class mobs in Birmingham and in Manchester sacked the chapels and houses of the Dissenting reformers, and the Durham miners burnt Tom Paine in effigy (Trevelyan, 472).

England was expecting a reform after the destruction of the Bastille and the overthrow of Napoleon in 1815. But before that you need to know about the revolution that made Britain the richest of all nations in the world, i.e. the Industrial Revolution which covered the period from 1760 to 1840 in England.

At one level Romanticism was actually a strong reaction to the industrialization in England. At another level it was a reaction against neoclassical ideals and rationalistic philosophy. Its approach is at times nostalgic, at times pathetic and at times escapist. The writers of Romanticism showed concern over the loss of spirituality and innocence from the world and pleaded for conservation of nature and its essence. Their writings celebrated the purity, innocence and spirituality of nature and its association with human life. They wholeheartedly acknowledged the symbiotic relationship between human and nature and expressed their faith in human emotions and subjectivity.

Some of the prominent writers of that period that contributed to the revival of romantic literature were Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats and prose writers like Charles Lamb, Walter Scott, William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincy. All of them had specific literary styles and developed their own kind of individualism. Besides, a strong sense of subjectivism was celebrated by women writers like Jane Austen, Marry Shelley and Maria Edgeworth. Now let us directly come to our main subject, i.e. Romanticism and the writings of William Blake, William Wordsworth and S.T Coleridge. The things and information analysed above will give you an idea about the historical context of Romanticism and the events that preceded it. In the next section we will try to make you familiar with the Romantic writers prescribed in your syllabus.

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The Present unit is an attempt to throw light upon the poetry and poetics of the two very important Romantic Poets of the nineteenth century, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. They not only wrote differently, they also wrote critical works to justify their

kind of writing and to set down the protocols for the new kind of writing. After going through this unit you will be able to

- be familiar with the lives and works of Wordsworth and Coleridge
- explain the poetics and content of the prescribed poems
- explore the themes and philosophical underpinnings of the texts.
- identify the symbols and mechanism of their poetry.

LET US STOP AND THINK

The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain radically transformed the economic scenario of the nineteenth century bringing changes to the mode of productions. This was preceded by various factors like the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century, expansion of trade and commerce and Britain's increasing population. The new power machinery replaced wind and water of the previous centuries and it subsequently decreased the use of human and animal labour. As a result of the revolution, masses of people migrated from the countryside to the urban areas in search of work and for business. This also led to changes in the mode of transportation and communication in Britain as well as entire Europe. For import and export of products steamboats and railroads were constructed. Besides, these developments brought employment opportunities for the people. However, another result of this revolution was the rise of a wealthy industrial middle class and an industrial working class. By that time England had a vast empire across the world and as such there was no scarcity of markets.

6.2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: LIFE AND WORKS

William J. Long divides the life span of Wordsworth into four periods: (a) the period 1770-1787: childhood in the Cumberland Hills; (b) the period 1787-1797: a period of stress, storm and uncertainty. His days at Cambridge, his travelling abroad and revolutionary experiences; (c) the period 1797-1799: a short yet significant period of

Wordsworth, the period of finding himself and his work; (d) the period of retirement in the northern lake area where he stayed close to nature. Throughout these stages he covered a spiritual journey, from innocence to experience. His autobiographical poem *The Prelude* is a reflection on the growth of the poet's mind.

Wordsworth was affected by the violent turn of events during the French Revolution and the hard rationalism of the previous century troubled his deeply imaginative mind. Hence his philosophy of individualism and liberalism set a revolt against the eighteenth century faith in rationalism. The French Revolution and the social and political thought leading up to it and following it, made a deep impact on Wordsworth and his poetry.

Wordsworth did not follow any tradition; instead he tried to write poetry that would issue out of his experiences as well as his thoughts. Wordsworth tried to recapture the original perception about the world of Nature in his poetry in a manner intended to communicate that same vitality to the reader.

Together with S.T. Coleridge he published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802. It was a remarkable event in terms of a new poetic theory and a new kind of poetry emerging in England. The essential points of this new poetic theory can be summarised as follows –

- Poetry results from spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling.
- Poetry has its roots in emotion recollected in tranquillity. *This* suggests that only the poetic spark is spontaneous. The writing happens after much sifting, assessment and balancing of the data provided by experience before it is organised into poetry.
    - Although Wordsworth talks about the very language of ordinary men, he is never colloquial in his lines
- Poetry is the image of man and nature. Humble and rustic life must be the topic of poetry because in such conditions men's passions are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.

- Good sense is a property of all good poetry.
- A poet is a man speaking to men endowed with more lively sensibilities, tenderness, enthusiasm and knowledge of human nature.

Certain facts about William Wordsworth's life and poetry are noted below –

- Wordsworth's poetry was a reaction to eighteenth century neoclassical poetry and an assertion of the primacy of imagination.
- His poetry was radical and revolutionary in the sense that it voiced against oppression, suffering and injustice and celebrated the simplicity of life of the common people.
- Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, helped Wordsworth and Coleridge and remained an inspiration for both.
- Wordsworth was a lover of nature who draws inspiration from the serenity of nature.
- Some of his memorable compositions are 'The Prelude', 'Descriptive Sketches', 'Tintern Abbey', 'Ode to Duty', 'Ode to Intimations of Immortality', 'The Excursion', 'The Recluse' etc.

6.3 WORDSWORTH'S 'TINTERN ABBEY'

Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" was composed in 1798 and its complete title is *"Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798"*. In this poem the poet presents the external world not just s a source of external pleasure but as a moral guardian. A second visit after a gap of five years to the place makes the poet realise that the physical beauty of the landscape which he recalls, acquires a symbolic significance as well in the present as well as in his memories. Looking at his sister's face as she stands next to him, Wordsworth identifies in her the same feelings that he had experienced five years ago.

6.3.1 Reading Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'

Written in blank verse, the poem is autobiographical in nature. Memory plays an important role in the poem that plays with the present and the past. In the opening lines the poet expresses his feeling of satisfaction and happiness after revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour in July, 1798. While going through the poem you need to observe the following aspects in the poem:

• The landscape that mirrors the mind of the poet.

• The pleasure that the poet feels either on visiting the place or thinking about it is not just visual but also a spiritual sense of well being, force of memory and the comfort it offers to the poet in moments of weariness or stress

• The play and conflicts of past and the present: function of memory, youth versus maturity

• Nature as an eternal presence. Nature as inspiration.

• Nature as a healing presence

- Nature as the spiritual guardian

You may recall Wordsworth's theory of poetic creation expressed in the following lines in Lyrical Ballads:

• "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply."

• "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science."

Now read the following lines from "Tintern Abbey",

Textual Analysis:

Lines 1-22:

Five years have past; five summers, with the length

Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

The Wye valley to which Wordsworth returns after five years, lives up to the memories he had of it from the earlier visit. It is green with its unripe fruits and the greenery extend to the doors of human habitation. The smoke amidst the woods is a reminder of some human occupation, which the poet connects to a hermit or a vagrant.

Lines 23-36:

The beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me

As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart:
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love.

The lines quoted above clearly indicate the spiritual experience of the poet. The landscape becomes the inspiration for the poet's outpouring of thoughts. Here Wordsworth draws two pictures- one of progress and civilization, the other of barrenness of feelings and dearth of sensation in a modern world. The memories offer comfort to the poet's troubled soul. In fact the pleasure he feels while recalling the place in the city, makes him conscious of a deeper feeling, not experienced earlier. This consciousness helps him to reach out to others with more empathy. In the next few lines the poet tells us about the growth of his mind till the attainment of the 'blessed mood'.

Lines 36-50:

Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight

Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

The poet undergoes a mystical experience that transcends the sense perception. This also signifies the poet's growth of the mind-from innocence to experience. What is also important to notice in the poem is the poet's response to the present day reality. From the very beginning of the poem, it is obvious that he sets two pictures of the world- the happy, peaceful world of Nature and the mundane world of suffering and conflicts. The serenity of Nature has a deep impact on his mind in the sense that it helps him to rise from the physical to the spiritual level.

Lines 51-59:

In this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! How oft-
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart-
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O Sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

A vein of melancholy and sadness runs through these lines. The poet is perplexed, unhappy at the thought of the 'fretful' world. Here Nature is a source of consolation for the poet. During stressful times the thought of the river Wye meandering through the green woods keeps his spirit from lapsing into despair. The following lines express the poet's faith in nature.

Lines 60- 86:

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,

That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, not any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—

The present experience combined with past memories makes him feel upbeat about the future. He knows that like his past memories there will be more such instances to sustain him in the days to come. Even as he records the changes in his attitude to life and Nature, he realises that there will be something that will tie him to Natre forever. The poet recalls his youthful days when he did not stop to ponder over things. He was always in a hurry, impatient to experience different things without stopping to take stock of what he had learnt from Nature. His reactions were then more physical, as he enjoyed what Nature had to offer with his senses. Whether it was the sight and sound of the waterfalls or the tall rocks or the gloomy woods amidst the greenery, he was ready to absorb all that his senses allowed him.

Lines 86-114

That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

The youthful days and pleasures of the senses are gone. But the poet has no regrets as he believes, deeper and more lasting things have followed to support his mature years. He can feel the "still sad music of humanity" in Nature which acts as a guiding spirit without issuing any strictures. Rather, it infuses his mind and soul with such a light that he can connect with a higher power. In short, he achieves transcendence. After this kind of heightened vision, the poet is prepared to face all that life has to offer. He pledges the rest of his life to worshipping Nature. He affirms that Nature has taken care of his early sensuous perceptions and nurtured his writing as well as his thinking. More than anything else, Nature has been the very power behind his being.

Lines 115-138:

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:

For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.

Had that change in his appreciation of Nature not been true, the poet would have been disturbed by the order of things. Instead he sees in his sister the early stage of his appreciation of Nature when he was ready to exult at everything. Reflected on her face and in her voice, Wordsworth sees his youthful reactions in the midst of Nature and tries to enjoy that experience through her. He tells Dorothy, his sister, that she too would experience a change in her love of Nature where the visual and sensuous would be replaced by a more introspective association with it. He assures her that such a stage would come, for Nature would surely cater to her spiritual

development the way it did with him. That is what he means by the affirmation that "Nature never did betray/ The heart that loved her." Nature will continue to educate those who love her and teach them to wade through all the problems and distractions of human conflict. That will allow them to achieve a composed state of being fortified with faith in Nature's blessings.

Lines 138-157:

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

The poet assures his sister that at a later stage in her life she will recall all that he tells her about the care received by man from Nature. He informs her with the wisdom of his maturity, that her mind will have enough images drawn from Nature to meet her requirements at different times. If she should ever experience some fear or unhappiness, surely Nature would come to her aid by reviving those memories from their visit to the banks of the river Wye. These memories would act as a healing agent and help to restore her equilibrium. The poet just wishes his sister to remember him and his unending love of Nature if he is no longer around to keep her company in their explorations.

6.4 NATURE IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Wordsworth's poetry exhibits his strong inclination towards Nature. Nature is not only his object of observation but also his poetics. Wordsworth, unlike his contemporaries, provides an intellectual and philosophical account of Nature. For Wordsworth, Nature is a site of Universal love that is unified by a 'Holy Plan', where everything lives in harmony with everything else. In the poem "Lines Written in Early Spring", the poet identifies a Holy plan in nature where the creepers live in harmony with the trees. Wordsworth observes that Man is part of that Holy plan. But he regrets the fact that man has destroyed that Holy plan of Nature by doing injustice to nature.

In another poem "The Tables Turned", Wordsworth observes Nature as a spiritual resource.

One impulse from a vernal wood

May teach you more of man,

Of moral evil and of good,

Than all the sages can.

6.5 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE: LIFE AND WORKS

William J Long calls Coleridge 'a man of grief who makes the world glad'. The history of his personal life reveals that he lived a life of stress and strain most of the time. He was born in Devonshire, son of the Rev. John Coleridge, master of the local grammar school. He was the youngest of thirteen children and a child of extraordinary calibre. Strangely enough, he could read when he was just three and could read the Bible when he was not even five years old. Initially he was in his father's school, though he was later sent to the Charity School of Christ's Hospital, London where he spent a lonely life. As a child he used to roam around the fields with a stick in his hand, busy in his own dream world of adventure. He entered Cambridge as a charity student when he was nineteen years old, but he ran away because of a debt and began to serve in the Dragoons for several months. He could not even complete his degree. The tragic weakness of his life, poverty and his neuralgia made his life miserable and painful. However, even amidst this, Coleridge continued to give vent to his thoughts and expressions and devoted himself to a paper, The Friend. His association with William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth brought positive results as they together brought out the famous *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Some of his immortal poetical compositions are "Kubla Khan," "Christabel," "The Rime of Ancient Mariner," "Ode to France," "Ode to Dejection" etc. Coleridge's theory of Fancy and Imagination is explained in his famous prose work *Biographia Literaria* (1817)

6.6 COLERIDGE'S 'KUBLA KHAN'

The poem 'Kubla Khan,' as mentioned by Coleridge himself, is composed in a profound sleep. The subtitle of the poem was "A Vision in a dream". The poem demands a close analysis, because it is not a poem of dream even as its sub title suggests. It is also a difficult poem in the sense that it deals with Platonic thoughts and allusions. 'Kubla Khan' is about poetry. A key idea in Coleridge's poetry is the power of Imagination and this is reflected in the present poem 'Kubla Khan'.

6.6.1 Reading 'Kubla Khan'

It is important to mention here that landscape plays an important role in Coleridge's poetry. It has both a pictorial and a symbolic significance. Sometimes the supernatural is also exhibited through landscape imagery. In the first eleven lines, the poet portrays the picture of the gardens 'bright with sinuous rills' with 'incense-bearing trees'. The setting tells us that it is about the 'stately pleasure-dome' built in Xanadu where the sacred river, Alph ran through caverns. The walls and towers were 'girdled round' and there were ancient forests with sunny spots of greenery. In the next fourteen to fifteen lines the poet has explained the nature of enchantment, a 'ceaseless turmoil'.

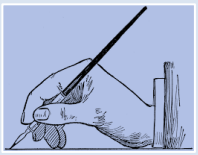
Read the following lines in the poem:

> But oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted
> Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
> A savage place! As holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

The sacred river ran and reached the caverns ‘measureless to man’ hit the ‘lifeless ocean’. Amidst all these, Kubla heard the ‘Ancestral voices prophesying war’. The shadow of the dome of pleasure floated on the waves. This is indeed, a miracle, as stated by the speaker.

The last two stanzas offer an optimistic insight. The speaker informs us that once he saw a damsel with a dulcimer in his vision and he later knew her as an Abyssinian maid. She played her dulcimer and sang of Mount Abora. That song of the Abyssinian maid was a source of inspiration for the speaker. With that inspiration he could rebuild the dome in the air and the ‘caves of ice’. People would circle him thrice and close their eyes with ‘holy dread’ for they would think that he had tasted some honeydew and ‘drunk the milk of Paradise’.

This reminds us of Plato’s famous observation that poetry is a result of Inspiration. The poem is about the power of the imagination and the problems and interruptions from worldly agencies faced by poets while writing. For artistic or poetic creation there must be a source of inspiration. Written in alternating rhyme schemes, the poem tells us the story of composition and role of imagination. In the preface to this poem, Coleridge wrote that he had fallen asleep after tasting ‘an anodyne’ and before that he was reading a story where Kubla Khan commanded to build a new palace. As stated by himself, Coleridge composed the poem while sleeping, after he had the fantastic vision. However, during his composition, he was interrupted by a visitor, a ‘person on business from Porlock’. As a result of that he could not recall the rest of his vision and the poem was left incomplete. A part of the ambiguity of the poem lies in this theme of dream and incompleteness.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How does the poem represent the limitation of imagination?

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2. How does the poem tell us the story of poetic composition?

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3. Discuss the symbolic significance of the poem.

6.7 COLERIDGE'S 'DEJECTION: AN ODE'

Coleridge's *Ode* addressed to Sara Hutchinson was originally written in the form of letter in 1802. The poem represents that phase of his life when he was undergoing great emotional and intellectual crisis. The state of dejection resulted from his inability to write and express. This situation is further paralysed by his feelings for Sara and problems associated with her marriage. The poem is also known to be a reply to William Wordsworth's poem "Resolution and Independence".

6.7.1 Reading Dejection: An Ode

Dejection:An Ode is a Pindaric ode. The first stanza of the poem sets the gloomy, pessimistic tone of the poem. The setting of the poem mirrors the pessimistic mind of the poet, his dejection, his sense of frustration and agony. The poet foresees the future disastrous events that are predicted by the emergence of the new moon in the sky. Read the following lines:

I see the old moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! That even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast! (13-16)

The poet laments that those sounds of the wind and storm which had elevated his mind in the past and made his imagination roam around, now might give their impetus to his dull pain and cure him. In the second stanza, the poet describes the nature of his grief:

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear-- (20-24)

He still has the desire to be with nature and so he has been gazing at the Western sky and its yellow green coloured attire. He can see the thin clouds, the stars in the sky, 'sparkling' and 'bedimmed', the moon fixed in the cloudless, starless lake. However, he is unable to feel their presence. This inability on his part is due to his deep sense of gloom and dejection. The following lines express this clearly.

I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (37-38)

The beautiful objects around him are not able to cure his ailing mind. His spirit fails because of his unhappy mind.

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast? (39-41)

The poet believes that the soul must be free from all anxiety and remorse. He says that it is not external factors but the igniting spark which is missing in him.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! From the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth--
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (47-58)

The above lines indicate an important change in Coleridge's attitude to Nature. Where earlier the poet tried to capture the essence of Nature in his poems, in this poem the poet feels that it is up to the agency of the poet to animate Nature; it is what we make of her.

As it has been stated earlier, nature is a prominent theme in the poetry of the Romantic writers. Nature is not simply a background, but an inspiration for them. The same thought is shared here by Coleridge in the following lines:

O pure of heart! Thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherin it doth exist,

This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,

This beautiful and beauty-making power. (59-63)

It is this poetic inspiration that makes artistic creation possible. Coleridge's theory of imagination can be related in this respect. The poet feels inspired and sees the vision of a new earth and a new heaven.

This is a spiritual experience that knows no physicality. The creative power of the imagination is called joy by the poet. It has the ability to connect and to illuminate.

A new Earth and new Heaven,

Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud-

Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud-

We in ourselves rejoice!

And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,

All melodies the echoes of that voice,

All colours a suffusion from that light.

In the sixth stanza, the poet recalls the power of imagination. In his youthful days, he was willing to be diverted by his flights of fancy, but the mature poet realises that such an approach will not do. He can no longer rest upon vicarious or borrowed pleasures. The poet expresses his willingness to go back to nature for inspiration and solace.

Here Coleridge echoes the lines of Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey.

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,

Reality's dark dream!

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,

Which long has raved unnoticed.

Further, Coleridge admits that he is troubled by worldly problems including his physical health, which drive him to the edge of despair. In such circumstances, each bout of dejection makes him aware of the loss of his great gift of Nature—the Imagination. The elements too, seem to be without sympathy. Wordsworth's 'correspondent breeze'

has become a 'Mad lutanist' in Coleridge. The wind is personified and addressed directly by the poet as in the following lines,

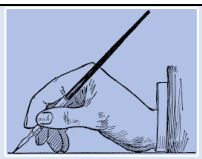
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! Who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers
Mak'st Devil's Yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou about?

In the seventh stanza, the storm in the outside world, resembling his disturbed spirit, breaks out. The poet feels that the crashing elements in Nature would help to clear the slough from his mind and soul.

The poet writes

But hush! There is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shuddering-all is over
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud
A tale of less affright.

Finally, Coleridge hopes that his friend does not suffer such a dilemma and that she is not exposed to Nature's fury. He would like Nature to bring her clarity and happiness so that she never feels weighed down by life. He thus wishes her joy in life, and in her heart.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. Who was that lady in the poem? How did the poet try to rejoice her feelings?

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4. Identify the nature symbols in the poem.

6.7.2 Coleridge's Theory of Fancy and Imagination

Coleridge has expressed his indebtedness to German Philosophers in formulating his concepts of Fancy and Imagination.In chapter XIII of Coleridge's *BiographiaLiteraria*, Coleridge defines Imagination as an *esemplastic* power. Coleridge defines primary imagination as

- The living power and prime Agent of all human perception
- A spontaneous, involuntary and unconscious human activity that involves the power of perceiving the objects of senses.

Secondary Imagination

- Differs from primary imagination only in degree and in the mode of operation. It coexists with the conscious will.
- Dissolves, diffuses and dissipates, in order to re-create. It selects and orders the raw materials collected through primary imagination.
- Is an important artistic trait and a conscious activity that makes artistic creation possible
- It is a complex intellectual activity that makes uses of human will, emotion and intellect.
- It is the shaping and modifying, harmonizing power of human known as the 'esemplastic power'.

WHAT IS FANCY? DOES IT DIFFER FROM IMAGINATION?

According to Coleridge,

- Fancy plays with fixities and definites. Fancy is momentary.
- Fancy differs from imagination because, imagination creates an artistic whole. Fancy is the 'drapery of poetic genius' while imagination is the very soul of an artistic endeavour.

LET US STOP AND THINK

Coleridge has juxtaposed various opposing nature images to describe his dejected states of mind such as the 'storm' and 'moon'. The internal conflict in the mind of Coleridge is evident from his sense of frustration and inability to enjoy the beautiful things around him. The poet wishes to take the help of fancy and imagination to overcome his 'dull pain'. The poet realises that imagination brings joy to a writer. It has the potential to create New Heaven and New Earth. But the dominating nature of his pain robbed him of his power of imagination. The poet makes every attempt to suspend his state of dejection to rejoice his beloved by wishing her eternal joy.

6.8 SUMMING UP

In this unit an attempt was made to make you familiar with the idea of Romanticism with special reference to S.T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth. By now you must have been able to contextualise the poems prescribed for you in your syllabus. The impact of Romanticism or Romantic philosophy can be seen in the writings of the Pre-Raphaelites of the Victorian era which was famous

for realistic fiction. The cardinal principles of Romanticism such as liberty and individualism have always remained relevant ever since.

6.9 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Examine the changes in Wordsworth's relationship with Nature.

2. Examine the role of memory in Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey."

3. What is an Ode? Examine Coleridge's attitude to Nature in his "Dejection: An Ode."

4. What is Romanticism? How does it challenge the poetry of the preceding period?

5. What is the difference between Wordsworth's and Coleridge's vision of Nature?

6. Examine the role of the imagination in Wordsworth and Coleridge's poetry.

7. Discuss Ode to Dejection as a poem of conflicting emotions.

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ANNEXURE:

Full Text of ***MAC FLECKNOE***

All humane things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:
This Fleckno found, who, like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd long:
In Prose and Verse, was own'd, without dispute [5]
Through all the Realms of Non-sense, absolute.
This aged Prince now flourishing in Peace,
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the State: [10]
And pond'ring which of all his Sons was fit
To Reign, and wage immortal War with Wit;
Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for Nature pleads that He
Should onely rule, who most resembles me:
Sh—— alone my perfect image bears, [15]
Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Sh—— alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Sh—— never deviates into sense. [20]
Some Beams of Wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Sh——'s genuine night admits no ray,
His rising Fogs prevail upon the Day:
Besides his goodly Fabrick fills the eye, [25]
And seems design'd for thoughtless Majesty:
Thoughtless as Monarch Oakes, that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

Heywood and Shirley were but Types of thee,
Thou last great Prophet of Tautology:
Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way;
And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came
To teach the nations in thy greater name.
My warbling Lute, the Lute I whilom strung
When to King John of Portugal I sung,
Was but the prelude to that glorious day,
When thou on silver Thames did'st cut thy way,
With well tim'd Oars before the Royal Barge,
Swell'd with the Pride of thy Celestial charge;
And big with Hymn, Commander of an Host,
The like was ne'er in Epsom blankets toss'd.
Methinks I see the new Arion Sail,
The Lute still trembling underneath thy nail.
At thy well sharpned thumb from Shore to Shore
The Treble squeaks for fear, the Bases roar:
Echoes from Pissing-Ally, Sh—— call,
And Sh—— they resound from A—— Hall.
About thy boat the little Fishes throng,
As at the Morning Toast, that Floats along.
Sometimes as Prince of thy Harmonious band
Thou wield'st thy Papers in thy threshing hand.
St. André's feet ne'er kept more equal time,
Not ev'n the feet of thy own Psyche's rhime:
Though they in number as in sense excell;
So just, so like tautology they fell,
That, pale with envy, Singleton forswore
The Lute and Sword which he in Triumph bore
And vow'd he ne'er would act Villerius more.

Here stopt the good old Syre; and wept for joy
In silent raptures of the hopefull boy.
All arguments, but most his Plays, perswade,
That for anointed dullness he was made.
Close to the Walls which fair Augusta bind,
(The fair Augusta much to fears inclin'd)
An ancient fabrick, rais'd t' inform the sight,
There stood of yore, and Barbican it hight:
A watch Tower once; but now, so Fate ordains,
Of all the Pile an empty name remains.
From its old Ruins Brothel-houses rise,
Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted joys.
Where their vast Courts, the Mother-Strumpets keep,
And, undisturb'd by Watch, in silence sleep.
Near these a Nursery erects its head,
Where Queens are form'd, and future Hero's bred;
Where unfledg'd Actors learn to laugh and cry,
Where infant Punks their tender Voices try,
And little Maximins the Gods defy.
Great Fletcher never treads in Buskins here,
Nor greater Johnson dares in Socks appear;
But gentle Simkin just reception finds
Amidst this Monument of vanisht minds:
Pure Clinches, the suburbian Muse affords;
And Panton waging harmless war with words.
Here Fleckno, as a place to Fame well known,
Ambitiously design'd his Sh——'s Throne.
For ancient Decker propheci'd long since,
That in this Pile should reign a mighty Prince,
Born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense:
To whom true dullness should some Psyches owe,

But worlds of Misers from his pen should flow;
Humorists and hypocrites it should produce,
Whole Raymond families, and Tribes of Bruce.
Now Empress Fame had publisht the renown,
Of Sh——'s coronation through the town.
Rous'd by report of fame, the nations meet,
From near Bun-Hill, and distant Watling-street.
No Persian Carpets spread th'imperial way,
But scatter'd limbs of mangled poets lay:
From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of Pies, and Reliques of the Bum.
Much Heywood, Shirly, Ogleby there lay,
But loads of Sh—— almost choakt the way.
Bilk't Stationers for Yeomen stood prepar'd,
And H—— was Captain of the Guard.
The hoary Prince in Majesty appear'd,
High on a Throne of his own Labours rear'd.
At his right hand our young Ascanius sat
Rome's other hope, and pillar of the State.
His Brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
And lambent dullness plaid arround his face.
As Hannibal did to the Altars come,
Sworn by his Syre a mortal Foe to Rome;
So Sh—— swore, nor should his Vow bee vain,
That he till Death true dullness would maintain;
And in his father's Right, and Realms defence,
Ne'er to have peace with Wit, nor truce with Sense.
The King himself the sacred Unction made,
As King by Office, and as Priest by Trade:
In his sinister hand, instead of Ball,
He plac'd a mighty Mug of potent Ale;

Love's Kingdom to his right he did convey,
At once his Sceptre and his rule of Sway;
Whose righteous Lore the Prince had practis'd young,
And from whose Loyns recorded Psyche sprung,
His Temples last with Poppies were o'er spread,
That nodding seem'd to consecrate his head:
Just at that point of time, if Fame not lye,
On his left hand twelve reverend Owls did fly.
So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tyber's Brook,
Presage of Sway from twice six Vultures took.
Th' admiring throng loud acclamations make,
And Omens of his future Empire take.
The Syre then shook the honours of his head,
And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,
Repelling from his Breast the raging God;
At length burst out in this prophetick mood:
Heavens bless my Son, from Ireland let him reign
To farr Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his Dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his Father's be his Throne.
Beyond loves Kingdom let him stretch his Pen;
He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.
Then thus, continu'd he, my Son advance
Still in new Impudence, new Ignorance.
Success let other teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.
Let Virtuoso's in five years be Writ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toyl of wit.
Let gentle George in triumph tread the Stage,
Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage;

Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the Pit,
And in their folly show the Writers wit.
Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence,
And justifie their Author's want of sense.
Let 'em be all by thy own model made
Of dullness, and desire no foreign aid:
That they to future ages may be known,
Not Copies drawn, but issue of thy own.
Nay let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee, and differing but in name;
But let no alien S—dl—y interpose
To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.
And when false flowers of Rhetorick thou would'st cull,
Trust Nature, do not labour to be dull;
But write thy best, and top; and in each line,
Sir Formal's oratory will be thine.
Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill,
And does thy Northern Dedications fill.
Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame,
By arrogating Johnson's Hostile name.
Let Father Fleckno fire thy mind with praise,
And Uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.
Thou art my blood, where Johnson has no part;
What share have we in Nature or in Art?
Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,
And rail at Arts he did not understand?
Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein,
Or swept the dust in Psyche's humble strain?
Where sold he Bargains, Whip-stitch, kiss my Arse,
Promis'd a Play and dwindled to a Farce?

When did his Muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
As thou whole Eth'ridg dost transfuse to thine?
But so transfus'd as Oyl on Waters flow,
His always floats above, thine sinks below.
This is thy Province, this thy wondrous way,
New Humours to invent for each new Play:
This is that boasted Byas of thy mind,
By which one way, to dullness, 'tis inclin'd,
Which makes thy writings lean on one side still,
And in all changes that way bends thy will.
Nor let thy mountain belly make pretence
Of likeness; thine's a tympany of sense.
A Tun of Man in thy Large bulk is writ,
But sure thou'rt but a Kilderkin of wit.
Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep,
Thy Tragick Muse gives smiles, thy Comick sleep.
With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write,
Thy inoffensive Satyrs never bite.
In thy felonious heart, though Venom lies,
It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dyes.
Thy Genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen Iambicks, but mild Anagram:
Leave writing Plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful Province in Acrostick Land.
There thou maist wings display and Altars raise,
And torture one poor word Ten thousand ways.
Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents suit,
Set thy own Songs, and sing them to thy lute.
He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
For Bruce and Longvil had a Trap prepar'd,
And down they sent the yet declaiming Bard.

Sinking he left his Drugget robe behind,
Born upwards by a subterranean wind. [215]
The Mantle fell to the young Prophet's part,
With double portion of his Father's Art.

FULL TEXT OF ***RAPE OF THE LOCK***

CANTO I:

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing — This verse to **Caryl**, Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If She inspire, and He approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,
Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?

Sol thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day:
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,
And the press'd watch return'd a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow prest,
Her guardian **Sylph** prolong'd the balmy rest:
'Twas He had summon'd to her silent bed
The morning-dream that hover'd o'er her head;
A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau,
(That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)

Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay,
And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say.
Fairest of mortals, thou distinguish'd care
Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!
If e'er one vision touch.'d thy infant thought,
Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught;
Of airy Elves by moonlight shadows seen,
The silver token, and the circled green,
Or virgins visited by Angel-pow'rs,
With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs;
Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
Some secret truths, from learned pride conceal'd,
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:
What tho' no credit doubting Wits may give?
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.
Know, then, unnumber'd Spirits round thee fly,
The light Militia of the lower sky:
These, tho' unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o'er the Box, and hover round the Ring.
Think what an equipage thou hast in Air,
And view with scorn two Pages and a Chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous mould;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly Vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when Woman's transient breath is fled
That all her vanities at once are dead;
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,
And love of Ombre, after death survive.
For when the Fair in all their pride expire,
To their first Elements their Souls retire:
The Sprites of fiery Termagants in Flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.

Soft yielding minds to Water glide away,
And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental Tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of mischief still on Earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of Air.

"Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
For Spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
What guards the purity of melting Maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the word with Men below.

Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
For life predestin'd to the Gnomes' embrace.
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdain'd, and love deny'd:
Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While Peers, and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,
And in soft sounds, Your Grace salutes their ear.
'T is these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young Coquettes to roll,
Teach Infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a Beau.

Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The Sylphs thro' mystic mazes guide their way,
Thro' all the giddy circle they pursue,

And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from ev'ry part,
They shift the moving Toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortals Levity may call;
Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.

Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I rang'd the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn'd by the Sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!"

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leap'd up, and wak'd his mistress with his tongue.
'T was then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first open'd on a Billet-doux;
Wounds, Charms, and Ardors were no sooner read,
But all the Vision vanish'd from thy head.

And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,
Each silver Vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the Nymph intent adores,
With head uncover'd, the Cosmetic pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;

Th' inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown:
And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

CANTO II

Not with more glories, in th' etherial plain,
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone.
But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;

Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if Belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

This Nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two Locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

Th' advent'rous Baron the bright locks admir'd;
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd.
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a Lover's toil attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.

For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implor'd
Propitious heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love — to Love an Altar built,
Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
And all the trophies of his former loves;
With tender Billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:

The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r,
The rest, the winds dispers'd in empty air.

But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And soften'd sounds along the waters die;
Smooth flow the waves, the Zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay.
All but the Sylph — with careful thoughts opprest,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
He summons strait his Denizens of air;
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
Soft o'er the shrouds aërial whispers breathe,
That seem'd but Zephyrs to the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light,
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes,
While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
Superior by the head, was Ariel plac'd;
His purple pinions op'ning to the sun,
He rais'd his azure wand, and thus begun.

Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your chief give ear!
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Dæmons, hear!
Ye know the spheres and various tasks assign'd
By laws eternal to th' aërial kind.
Some in the fields of purest Æther play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.

Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets thro' the boundless sky.
Some less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.
Others on earth o'er human race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
Of these the chief the care of Nations own,
And guard with Arms divine the British Throne.

Our humbler province is to tend the Fair,
Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd-essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs;
To steal from rainbows e'er they drop in show'rs
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelow.

This day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair,
That e'er deserv'd a watchful spirit's care;
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight;
But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night.
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail China jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade;
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall.
Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care;

The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.

To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the Petticoat:
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.

Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;
Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye:
Gums and Pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain;
Or Alum styptics with contracting pow'r
Shrink his thin essence like a rivel'd flow'r:
Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling Mill,
In fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below!

He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;
Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;
Some thrid the mazy ringlets of her hair;
Some hang upon the pendants of her ear:
With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.

CANTO III

Close by those meads, for ever crown'd with flow'rs,
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising tow'rs,
There stands a structure of majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
Of foreign Tyrants and of Nymphs at home;
Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey.
Dost sometimes counsel take — and sometimes Tea.

Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a Court;
In various talk th' instructive hours they past,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.

Mean while, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the Toilet cease.
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,
Burns to encounter two advent'rous Knights,
At Ombre singly to decide their doom;
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.
Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
Each band the number of the sacred nine.

Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card:
First Ariel perch'd upon a Matadore,
Then each, according to the rank they bore;
For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.
Behold, four Kings in majesty rever'd,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;

Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And particolour'd troops, a shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

The skilful Nymph reviews her force with care:
Let Spades be trumps! she said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable Matadores,
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable Lord!
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.
As many more Manillio forc'd to yield,
And march'd a victor from the verdant field.
Him Basto follow'd, but his fate more hard
Gain'd but one trump and one Plebeian card.
With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight reveal'd,
The rest, his many-colour'd robe conceal'd.
The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage,
Proves the just victim of his royal rage.
Ev'n mighty Pam, that Kings and Queens o'erthrew
And mow'd down armies in the fights of Lu,
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the victor spade!

Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;
Now to the Baron fate inclines the field.
His warlike Amazon her host invades,
Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.
The Club's black Tyrant first her victim dy'd,
Spite of his haughty mien, and barb'rous pride:
What boots the regal circle on his head,
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
And, of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?

The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;
Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his face,
And his refulgent Queen, with pow'rs combin'd
Of broken troops an easy conquest find.
Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous strow the level green.
Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,

With like confusion different nations fly,
Of various habit, and of various dye,
The pierc'd battalions dis-united fall,
In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.

The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,
And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.
At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look;
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and Codille.
And now (as oft in some distemper'd State)
On one nice Trick depends the gen'ral fate.
An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen
Lurk'd in her hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen:
He springs to Vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.
The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.

Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.
Sudden, these honours shall be snatch'd away,
And curs'd for ever this victorious day.

For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;
On shining Altars of Japan they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide:
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the Fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.
Coffee, (which makes the politician wise,
And see thro' all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain
New Stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere't is too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's Fate!
Chang'd to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd hair!

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edg'd weapon from her shining case:
So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.
Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitch'd the diamond in her ear;
Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the Virgin's thought;
As on the nosegay in her breast reclin'd,
He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her art,
An earthly Lover lurking at her heart.
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retir'd.

The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring Forfex wide,
T' inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.
Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,
A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd;
Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again)
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!

Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heav'n are cast,
When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich China vessels fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie!

Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine
(The victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British Fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a Lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,

When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!
What Time would spare, from Steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!
Steel could the labour of the Gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' imperial tow'rs of Troy;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel,
The conqu'ring force of unresisted steel?

CANTO IV

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppress'd,
And secret passions labour'd in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robb'd of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refus'd a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinn'd awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad Virgin! for thy ravish'd Hair.

For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sully'd the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
Repair'd to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty pinions flits the Gnome,
And in a vapour reach'd the dismal dome.
No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,
The dreaded East is all the wind that blows.
Here in a grotto, shelter'd close from air,
And screen'd in shades from day's detested glare,
She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,

Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head.

Two handmaids wait the throne: alike in place,
But diff'ring far in figure and in face.
Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black and white array'd;
With store of pray'rs, for mornings, nights, and noons,
Her hand is fill'd; her bosom with lampoons.
There Affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
Practis'd to lisp, and hang the head aside.
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.

A constant Vapour o'er the palace flies;
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;
Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,
Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,
Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires:
Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes, and angels in machines.

Unnumber'd throngs on every side are seen,
Of bodies chang'd to various forms by Spleen.
Here living Tea-pots stand, one arm held out,
One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:
A Pipkin there, like Homer's Tripod walks;
Here sighs a Jar, and there a Goose-pie talks;
Men prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works,
And maids turn'd bottles, call aloud for corks.

Safe past the Gnome thro' this fantastic band,
A branch of healing Spleenwort in his hand.

Then thus address'd the pow'r: "Hail, wayward Queen!
Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:
Parent of vapours and of female wit,
Who give th' hysteric, or poetic fit,
On various tempers act by various ways,
Make some take physic, others scribble plays;
Who cause the proud their visits to delay,
And send the godly in a pet to pray.
A nymph there is, that all thy pow'r disdains,
And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a grace,
Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
Like Citron-waters matrons cheeks inflame,
Or change complexions at a losing game;
If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
Or caus'd suspicion when no soul was rude,
Or discompos'd the head-dress of a Prude,
Or e'er to costive lap-dog gave disease,
Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen."

The Goddess with a discontented air
Seems to reject him, tho' she grants his pray'r.
A wond'rous Bag with both her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the winds;
There she collects the force of female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.
A Vial next she fills with fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.
The Gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.

Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.
Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,

And all the Furies issu'd at the vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.
"O wretched maid!" she spread her hands, and cry'd,
(While Hampton's echoes, "Wretched maid!" reply'd)
"Was it for this you took such constant care
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?
For this your locks in paper durance bound,
For this with tort'ring irons wreath'd around?
For this with fillets strain'd your tender head,
And bravely bore the double loads of lead?
Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,
While the Fops envy, and the Ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrivall'd shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.
Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?
'T will then be infamy to seem your friend!
And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,
Expos'd thro' crystal to the gazing eyes,
And heighten'd by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?
Sooner shall grass in Hyde-park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to Chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all!"

She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her Beau demand the precious hairs;
(Sir Plume of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane)
With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
He first the snuff-box open'd, then the case,
And thus broke out — "My Lord, why, what the devil?

"Z — ds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
Plague on't!'t is past a jest — nay prithee, pox!
Give her the hair" — he spoke, and rapp'd his box.

"It grieves me much" (reply'd the Peer again)
"Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.
But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear,
(Which never more shall join its parted hair;
Which never more its honours shall renew,
Clipp'd from the lovely head where late it grew)
That while my nostrils draw the vital air,
This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."
He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours of her head.

But Umbriel, hateful Gnome! forbears not so;
He breaks the Vial whence the sorrows flow.
Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,
Her eyes half-languishing, half-drown'd in tears;
On her heav'd bosom hung her drooping head,
Which, with a sigh, she rais'd; and thus she said.
"For ever curs'd be this detested day,
Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,
If Hampton-Court these eyes had never seen!
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By love of Courts to num'rous ills betray'd.
Oh had I rather un-admir'd remain'd
In some lone isle, or distant Northern land;
Where the gilt Chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea!
There kept my charms conceal'd from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.
What mov'd my mind with youthful Lords to roam?
Oh had I stay'd, and said my pray'rs at home!
'T was this, the morning omens seem'd to tell,
Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;

The tott'ring China shook without a wind.
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!
A Sylph too warn'd me of the threats of fate,
In mystic visions, now believ'd too late!
See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!
My hands shall rend what ev'n thy rapine spares:
These in two sable ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck;
The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;
Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.
Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!"

CANTO V

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears.
But Fate and Jove had stopp'd the Baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half so fix'd the Trojan could remain,
While Anna begg'd and Dido rag'd in vain.
Then grave Clarissa graceful wav'd her fan;
Silence ensu'd, and thus the nymph began.

"Say why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,
The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast?
Why deck'd with all that land and sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?
Why round our coaches crowd the white-glov'd Beaux,
Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows;
How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains:
That men may say, when we the front-box grace:
'Behold the first in virtue as in face!'

Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
Charm'd the small-pox, or chas'd old-age away;
Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?
To patch, nay ogle, might become a Saint,
Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.
But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey;
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;
What then remains but well our pow'r to use,
And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear! good-humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul."

So spoke the Dame, but no applause ensu'd;
Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her Prude.
"To arms, to arms!" the fierce Virago cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
Heroes' and Heroines' shouts confus'dly rise,
And bass, and treble voices strike the skies.
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like Gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the Gods engage,
And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms:
Jove's thunder roars, heav'n trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound:
Earth shakes her nodding tow'rs, the ground gives way.
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!

Triumphant Umbriel on a sconce's height
Clapp'd his glad wings, and sate to view the fight:
Propp'd on the bodkin spears, the Sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist the fray.

While thro' the press enrag'd Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around from both her eyes,
A Beau and Witling perish'd in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.
"O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,"
Cry'd Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.
A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
"Those eyes are made so killing" — was his last.
Thus on Mæander's flow'ry margin lies
Th' expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepp'd in, and kill'd him with a frown;
She smil'd to see the doughty hero slain,
But, at her smile, the Beau reviv'd again.

Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
Weighs the Men's wits against the Lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.

See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes:
Nor fear'd the Chief th' unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.
But this bold Lord with manly strength endu'd,
She with one finger and a thumb subdu'd:
Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of Snuff the wily virgin threw;
The Gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust.
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.

Now meet thy fate, incens'd Belinda cry'd,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
(The same, his ancient personage to deck,
Her great great grandsire wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
Form'd a vast buckle for his widow's gown:
Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;

Then in a bodkin grac'd her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)

"Boast not my fall" (he cry'd) "insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low,
Nor think, to die dejects my lofty mind:
All that I dread is leaving you behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's flames — but burn alive."

"Restore the Lock!" she cries; and all around
"Restore the Lock!" the vaulted roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
Roar'd for the handkerchief that caus'd his pain.
But see how oft ambitious aims are cross'd,
And chiefs contend 'till all the prize is lost!
The Lock, obtain'd with guilt, and kept with pain,
In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain:
With such a prize no mortal must be blest,
So heav'n decrees! with heav'n who can contest?

Some thought it mounted to the Lunar sphere,
Since all things lost on earth are treasur'd there.
There Hero's wits are kept in pond'rous vases,
And beau's in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases.
There broken vows and death-bed alms are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends of riband bound,
The courtier's promises, and sick man's pray'rs,
The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
Dry'd butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.

But trust the Muse — she saw it upward rise,
Tho' mark'd by none but quick, poetic eyes:
(So Rome's great founder to the heav'ns withdrew,
To Proculus alone confess'd in view)
A sudden Star, it shot thro' liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
Not Berenice's Locks first rose so bright,
The heav'ns bespangling with dishevell'd light.
The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleas'd pursue its progress thro' the skies.

This the Beau monde shall from the Mall survey,
And hail with music its propitious ray.
This the blest Lover shall for Venus take,
And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake.
This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks thro' Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.
Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn thy ravish'd hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the Lock you lost.
For, after all the murders of your eye,
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

FULL TEXT OF ***THE LAMB***

Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.

I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!

FULL TEXT OF ***'HOLY THURSDAY' (****INNOCENCE****)***

Twas on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking two & two in red & blue & green
Grey-headed beadles walkd before with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow

O what a multitude they seemd these flowers of London town
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own
The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of lambs
Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among
Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door

Holy Thursday: Is this a holy thing to see (*Experience*)

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reducd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine.
And their fields are bleak & bare.
And their ways are fill'd with thorns.
It is eternal winter there.

For where-e'er the sun does shine,
And where-e'er the rain does fall:
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.

FULL TEXT OF ***THE TYGER***

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

FULL TEXT OF ***LINES WRITTEN A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY***

(on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798, From Lyrical Ballads)

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Among the woods and copses lose themselves,
Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms
Green to the very door; and wreathes of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.
Though absent long,

These forms of beauty have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As may have had no trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life;
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened:— that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft–

In darkness, and amid the many shapes

Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir

Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

Have hung upon the beatings of my heart–

How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee

O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,

How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,

With many recognitions dim and faint,

And somewhat of a sad perplexity,

The picture of the mind revives again:

While here I stand, not only with the sense

Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts

That in this moment there is life and food

For future years. And so I dare to hope

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first

I came among these hills; when like a roe

I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides

Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,

Wherever nature led; more like a man

Flying from something that he dreads, than one

Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,

And their glad animal movements all gone by,)

To me was all in all.— I cannot paint

What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite: a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still

A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half-create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor, perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! And this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,

Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee: and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; Oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance–
If I should be, where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence–wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came,
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love–oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,

That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake.

FULL TEXT OF ***KUBLA KHAN OR, A VISION IN A DREAM. A FRAGMENT*.**

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
  Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
  The shadow of the dome of pleasure
  Floated midway on the waves;
  Where was heard the mingled measure
  From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

  A damsel with a dulcimer
  In a vision once I saw:
  It was an Abyssinian maid
  And on her dulcimer she played,
  Singing of Mount Abora.
  Could I revive within me
  Her symphony and song,
  To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,

That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

And all who heard should see them there,

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,

And close your eyes with holy dread

For he on honey-dew hath fed,

And drunk the milk of Paradise.

FULL TEXT OF ***DEJECTION: AN ODE***

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,

With the old Moon in her arms;

And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!

We shall have a deadly storm.

(Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence)

I

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made

The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,

This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence

Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade

Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,

Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes

Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,

Which better far were mute.

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!

And overspread with phantom light,

(With swimming phantom light o'erspread

But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)

I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling

The coming-on of rain and squally blast.

And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,

And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!

Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,

And sent my soul abroad,

Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,

Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,

A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,

Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,

In word, or sigh, or tear—

O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,

To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,

All this long eve, so balmy and serene,

Have I been gazing on the western sky,

And its peculiar tint of yellow green:

And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,

That give away their motion to the stars;

Those stars, that glide behind them or between,

Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:

Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew

In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;

I see them all so excellently fair,

I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III

My genial spirits fail;

And what can these avail

To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?

It were a vain endeavour,

Though I should gaze for ever

On that green light that lingers in the west:

I may not hope from outward forms to win

The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV

O Lady! we receive but what we give,

And in our life alone does Nature live:

Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

And would we aught behold, of higher worth,

Than that inanimate cold world allowed

To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,

Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud

Enveloping the Earth—

And from the soul itself must there be sent

A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,

Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

V

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me

What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

VI

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,

My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,

With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay,—
'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Nor far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,

Their life the eddying of her living soul!

O simple spirit, guided from above,

Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,

Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

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(Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/)

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