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**UNIT 12: MATTHEW ARNOLD: DOVER BEACH, THE SCHOLAR GYPSY**

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**12.0 INTRODUCTION**

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The Victorian Age was the age of Science and Industrialism which also brought with them scepticism and loss of traditional value. Matthew Arnold wrote at a time when the people of Victorian society suffered from loss of faith in everyday public values. Arnold’s poetry represented the age in its best temperament of deep strain of melancholy and pessimism and was reflective of the major concerns of his time. The ‘moral profundity’ that he valued so much for evaluation of poetry can be set as a major feature of his poetry. In this Unit we have made an attempt to represent Arnold’s best poetry which will help you to understand his temperament and style.

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**12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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After reading this unit you will

- acquaint you with the life and works of one of the major Victorian poets, Matthew Arnold
- enable you to read critically the select texts by Arnold
- enable you to analyse and grasp the major thematic concerns of the select texts and his stylistic features

## 12.2 MATTHEW ARNOLD: LIFE AND WORKS

Matthew Arnold was born in Laleham, in the valley of the Thames, in 1822. His father was Dr Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby. Arnold entered Balliol College, Oxford where he won prizes for poetry and for general excellence in the classics. More than any other poet Arnold reflects the spirit of the University. *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis* contains many references of Oxford and the surrounding country, but they were more noticeable for their spirit of aloofness -- as if Oxford men were too much occupied with classic dreams and ideals to concern themselves with the practical affairs of life.

After leaving the University, Arnold first taught the classics at Rugby. In 1837, he became the private secretary to Lord Landsdowne, who appointed the young poet to the position of Inspector of Schools under the government. In this position, Arnold worked patiently for the next thirty-five years, travelling about the country, examining teachers and correcting endless examination papers. For ten years (1857-1867) he was professor of poetry at Oxford, where his famous lectures *On Translating Homer* were given. He made numerous reports on English and foreign schools and was three times sent abroad to study educational methods in the continent. Arnold led a busy life which supported his claim that all his best literary work was done late at night.

Arnold's literary work divides itself into **three periods**, which we may call the poetical, the critical and the practical. His first volume, *The Strayed*

*Reveller and Other Poems*, appeared anonymously in 1849. Three years later he published *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*; but only a few copies of these volumes were sold. In 1853-1855 he published his signed *Poems*, and twelve years later appeared his last volume of poetry. Compared with the early work of Tennyson, these works met with little favour, and Arnold turned more towards critical writing. The chief works of his critical period are the lectures *On Translating Homer* (1861) and the two volumes of *Essays in Criticism* (1865-1888), which made Arnold one of the best known literary men in England. Then, like Ruskin, he turned to practical questions in *Friendship's Garland* (1871). Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* was published in 1869. Earlier the essays had been published in the *Cornhill Magazine*.

### 12.3 DOVER BEACH

The poem *Dover Beach* was written in the English ferry Port of Dover, the narrowest part of English Channel facing Calais, France. One of the best known poems of Arnold, *Dover Beach* was published in the anthology *New Poems* in 1867. The poem is melancholic in tone contemplating the sea and finds in it the confusion and uncertainties of the beliefs brought about by the modern age. In *Dover Beach* we find some of the common themes of Matthew Arnold.

#### 12.3.1 Analysing *Dover Beach*

The sea is calm to-night,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; -- on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

In the first stanza, the speaker looks over the English Channel near the town of Dover. The lights flash along the coast of northern France. In the moonlight the sea appears quiet as the cliffs stand guard over it all. Apart from the crashing waves as they meet the shore, there is little else happening on the beach. He calls his beloved closer to the window and shares the scenic beauty with her. The movement of the waves as they keep returning, reminds him of the relentless movement of time and life and makes him a little sad.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.  
The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

The speaker recalls that Sophocles in his time must have noted the motion of the waves and felt the same sense of misery amidst the flux. By referring to the ancient philosopher, the poet gives a wider dimension to his thoughts and emotions. The image of the sea bordering the land makes him think of the protection provided by faith in human lives. It acts as a protective girdle when the spirit or mind shows signs of weakening. At present, however, the speaker fails to make such a connection from the movement of the waves. Instead he is left with a sense of sadness in keeping with their “withdrawing roar.”

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Given the uncertainties threatening on the horizon, the speaker tells his beloved that they should remain faithful to each other. All the promise of beauty, joy and peace that the beautiful night tantalisingly suggests, is an empty dream. In a rather sombre mood, the poet/speaker observes that amidst all the dark and ominous things that the future purportedly holds, they can at least be each other’s support by remaining true to their relationship and to one another.

#### ***12.4 THE SCHOLAR GYPSY***

The poem *The Scholar Gipsy* was published in 1853. A beautiful rural setting is described with the town of Oxford visible in the distance. The

speaker enjoys the scenery till sunset, watching the towers of Oxford. He carried a book beside him all the while. The book consists of a famous story by Joseph Glanvill who describes about an Oxford student who joins a group of gypsies leaving his studies behind.

#### *12.4.1 Analysing The Scholar Gypsy*

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;  
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!  
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,  
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,  
Nor the cropp'd herbage shoot another head.  
But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green.  
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

The speaker addresses the shepherd and asks him to attend to the sheep at the end of day while he himself would continue to remain out on the pasture for some more time. The last line refers to the scholar turned gypsy in the book by Granvill, embarking on a quest to discover the real kind of knowledge from the gypsy community.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—  
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves  
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,  
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,  
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—  
Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away

The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,  
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—  
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

The speaker prepares to spend more time out on the fields observing the reapers and shepherds going about their business. He even imagines that he has caught a glimpse of the traditional Scholar gypsy wondering amongst the moors after people tell him that they have seen him from time to time. It does not matter that he belonged to a distant past. The speaker of the poem can still connect with him spiritually.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,  
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.  
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,  
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;  
And air-swept lindens yield  
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers  
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
And bower me from the August sun with shade;  
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

The speaker has a wonderful vantage point as he sits in a high sheltered place looking upon the colourful fields with flowers peeping through the greenery as well as enjoying a distant view of the spires of Oxford. The present scholar tries to follow in the footsteps of the Scholar-gypsy to learn directly from Nature through interaction with the gypsies. The world of Nature is glorious but the scholar does not lose sight of his academic goals either. The Oxford towers are a timely reminder of his commitment to studies.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—

Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!  
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,  
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,  
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,  
One summer-morn forsook  
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,  
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,  
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,  
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

The speaker is reminded of the tale about the original scholar gypsy in Granvil's book. That young man had gone looking for the gypsies to learn directly from experience in their company. Nothing much resulted from his quest for knowledge from life instead of the University, but he never returned again.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,  
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,  
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;  
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,  
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired  
The workings of men's brains,  
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.  
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,  
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;  
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

Years later, two of his friends met the scholar gypsy and asked him about his way of life amongst these people. He informed them that they had wondrous arts to rule the world if they wished, and that he was still learning from them. Once his learning is complete, he would return to society to impart it to the



rest of its members. His only fear was that it would require a lot of effort and 'heaven-sent moments' to imbibe that knowledge satisfactorily.

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—  
But rumours hung about the country-side,  
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,  
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,  
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,  
The same the gipsies wore.  
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;  
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,  
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors  
Had found him seated at their entering,

The scholar gypsy disappeared although there were rumours about him being seen in old fashioned dress and hat in remote areas by shepherds as well at some distant alehouse by the customers.

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.  
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,  
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;  
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks  
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;  
Or in my boat I lie  
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,  
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,  
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,  
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

He would, however, vanish suddenly and the speaker wonders if the scholar gypsy would frequent quiet places amongst the hills or the meadows beside the streams sought by young boys.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!  
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,  
Returning home on summer-nights, have met  
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
As the punt's rope chops round;  
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,  
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,  
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

The speaker addresses the absent scholar gypsy and says he knows how much the latter loved remote places. Some Oxford students have met on the ferry on the Thames sitting back, deep in thought with some flowers gathered from the fields on his lap. When they land, he is no longer there.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—  
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come  
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,  
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,  
Or cross a stile into the public way.  
Oft thou hast given them store  
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone,  
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,  
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—  
But none hath words she can report of thee.

The young maidens who come to dance around the elm tree in May, claim to have seen him—usually in the distance. But there were occasions when he was reported to have stopped to give them wild flowers. Yet, none of the maidens could recall any word being uttered by the person.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here  
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,  
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass  
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,  
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
Have often pass'd thee near  
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;  
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,  
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—  
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

During hay making season, the men working hard in the fields have noticed him sitting on the river bank, his lean figure covered in strange clothes with an abstracted air, but the figure disappears when they get nearer.

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,  
Where at her open door the housewife darns,  
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate  
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.  
Children, who early range these slopes and late  
For cresses from the rills,  
Have known thee eyeing, all an April-day,  
The springing pasture and the feeding kine;  
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,  
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

Housewives in remote houses or children playing on the hills have noticed the scholar gypsy among the watching the activities about a farm or on the fields, taking in his fill of the beautiful spring pastures during the day as well as under the stars.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—  
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way  
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see  
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,  
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—  
The blackbird, picking food,  
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;  
So often has he known thee past him stray,  
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,  
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

He is also spotted around gipsy camps in autumn and the birds who are used to his ramblings, do not pay attention to him or even fear him as he awaits some kind of divine intervention.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,  
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,  
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,  
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?  
And thou has climb'd the hill,  
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;  
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,  
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—  
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

He is also spotted in winter struggling through the snow towards some distant hill.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown  
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,  
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe  
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls  
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;  
And thou from earth art gone  
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—  
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave  
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,  
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

The speaker in the present suddenly becomes conscious of the fact that he has been seeing in his mind's eye a man who lived more than two hundred years ago. His story had been popularised by Glanvil and people continued to look for his wandering spirit whereas he must be lying in some unmarked grave away from human notice.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!  
For what wears out the life of mortal men?  
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;  
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls  
And numb the elastic powers.  
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,  
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,  
To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

The speaker feels that the scholar gypsy has not had to weather through changes like an ordinary human being in the course of his life. He should not be exhausted in body or mind and should have endured over time.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?  
Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;  
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead!  
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!  
The generations of thy peers are fled,  
And we ourselves shall go;  
But thou possessest an immortal lot,  
And we imagine thee exempt from age  
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,  
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

The speaker carries on in the same vein that the scholar gypsy did not live the life of common individuals. He had been committed to only one thing and that should have kept the flame burning in his life. His contemporaries at Oxford are long gone but the scholar had risen from the ordinary level to an immortal cult figure. Thus, the speaker feels that the scholar gipsy should still be alive as a larger than life figure in life and in the pages of fiction.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers  
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,  
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;  
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,  
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.  
O life unlike to ours!  
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,  
And each half lives a hundred different lives;

Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

The scholar gypsy had given up the life of a university student to remain focused on his goal. In the course of one's daily life a person has to tackle numerous problems as well as responsibilities. But he had no such worries nor had he been overworked. Others live in hope too, but not like the scholar for a touch of divine powers. He had renounced everything, even mortality for his quest.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,  
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,  
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,  
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,  
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;  
For whom each year we see  
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;  
Who hesitate and falter life away,  
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—  
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

The speaker observes that like the scholar gypsy others wait and live in hope too. But common human beings have new hopes each year as they see their little goals either defeated or met only partially. They, too, drift through life in search of things and learn to live with disappointment and fresh hope.

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,  
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,  
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly  
His seat upon the intellectual throne;  
And all his store of sad experience he  
Lays bare of wretched days;

Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,  
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,  
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,  
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

Gradually one learns to live with disappointment till someone who suffers more than others explains to the rest how he/she managed to overcome pain and misery.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,  
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,  
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;  
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,  
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair—  
But none has hope like thine!  
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,  
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,  
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,  
And every doubt long blown by time away.

The rest of humanity live from day to day, pining for happiness and fulfilment. Nobody has the resilience of the scholar gypsy who continues with his quest for genuine knowledge and wisdom.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,  
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;  
Before this strange disease of modern life,  
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—  
Fly hence, our contact fear!  
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!



Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

The speaker/poet observes that life in the past had been less complicated and worrisome. The changes in modern life have brought in a “sick hurry” and “divided aims,” so that people cannot stay focused on anything. Moreover, the piling anxieties drive people to the edge of despair or to a Dido-like frenzy in the aftermath of betrayal.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,  
Still clutching the inviolable shade,  
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,  
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—  
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,  
On some mild pastoral slope  
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales  
Freshen thy flowers as in former years  
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,  
From the dark tingles, to the nightingales!

The speaker hopes that the scholar gypsy will be visible again in some remote place and he will gather fresh flowers in the moonlight or listen with enjoyment to the different sounds of the night. Despite the scholar gypsy belonging to a different age, the poet hopes that his spirit would continue to roam on earth and manifest itself to people.

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!  
For strong the infection of our mental strife,  
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;  
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,

Like us distracted, and like us unblest.  
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,  
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,  
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;  
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,  
Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

The speaker hopes to meet the scholar gypsy some day as he walks about and that the scholar would be affected by the strife which troubles the rest of the people. Then, he may grow old like them and die.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!  
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,  
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,  
The fringes of a southward-facing brow  
Among the Ægæan Isles;  
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,  
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine—  
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—  
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail;  
And day and night held on indignantly  
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,  
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,  
To where the Atlantic raves  
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails  
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,  
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;

And on the beach undid his corded bales.

The speaker feels that the scholar should take action like the trader from the port of Tyre who set sail determinedly when he saw that Greek trading vessels were taking over his city. Snatching his rudder, he set sail beyond the Mediterranean sea towards the Atlantic ocean. Here the poet appears to advise the scholar gypsy to give up all human contact in search of something better. Just as the speaker looks for the scholar in the earlier stanzas, he looks for something special in the later stanzas, and finally thinks that complete escape from worldly strife might be the right thing to do.

Arnold's poems reflect different styles. While "Dover Beach" is short and clear in its articulation of fear and doubt, "The Scholar Gipsy" is extremely long and rambling as the poet meanders through numerous pastoral images. The length is hard to justify as is the case with Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot." While Arnold presents poetry as a criticism of life, he chooses to do it in gentle doses. Drawing upon nature, man and society, he prefers to transcend the limitations of urban life in search of a life of the spirit.

### ***12.5 THEME AND POETIC STYLE***

As said before, Arnold's poetry well represented the temperament of his time with a melancholic and pessimistic tone underneath it. Thus, loss of faith can be considered to be one of the major themes of his poetry.

#### **Theme of loss of faith**

One important theme that runs through Arnold's poetry is the issue of faith and the sense of loss one can feel without faith. The conflict of Science and religion that the age so much revealed became recurrent theme in Arnold's poetry. In his essays also he tries to project the essential truth of Christianity. He also advocates for a renewed religious faith and an adoption

of classical aesthetics and morals that should represent Victorian intellectual concerns.

The psychological isolation that people of Victorian age experienced is dealt very beautifully in *Dover Beach* too. In spite of the sweetness of the night air, whiteness of the mountain and the sea shore in moonlight, the speaker is not absolutely happy. His thoughts are also like the sea water constantly dashing against the shore and the pebbles that are thrown and drawn back by the water again and again. These images heighten the sense of sadness and nothingness of the poem. The reference of Sophocles, the Greek tragedian, who was also moved by such sound ages before and found in them the misery of human life, is appropriate to mean the eternity of time, mingling of past in present. The sea in the poem thus, becomes an image of various conflicting ideas combined with religious, metaphysical and romantic anguish.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

The poem sincerely gives the utterance to the Victorian problem of loss of faith by comparing the world with a battle field where all are busy in meaningless fighting.

### **Theme of Love**

In the middle of a melancholic and desolate atmosphere love seems to be the only respite in the poem. The poem, in this line sounds like Shakespeare's sonnets where the poet reasserts the power of love in the midst of all hopelessness. In *Dover Beach* too the speaker makes love alternative to the confusion and hopelessness of his time. At certain stage of his contemplation the speaker realises that the deep thinking has destroyed his personal peace which he could have otherwise enjoyed with his beloved. Interestingly, his

personal dilemma is compared to that of the dilemma of his time which has equally brought matters to utter complications. Arnold believes in the philosophy that too much contemplation of matters that have no bound brings only unhappiness while true feelings of happiness comes from within. The poem constantly reveals the clash between personal emotional dearth with that of the intellectual. According to Arnold the concept of eternal bliss never exists. That the speaker decides to go back to his personal bliss through love makes *Dover Beach* a strong advocate of the importance of love in life.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

### **Portrayal of Nature**

Arnold's poetry has a strong line of similarity with that of the Romantics in its philosophy and style. The portrayal of nature as an analogous to human pains is distinct in his poems. Though Arnold's description of Nature in *Dover Beach* is not conforming to the larger philosophy of the Romantics, the melancholic strain depicted in the poem and heightened by the sea, moonlight shore and the back and forth movement of the pebbles is very much Romantic in style. The eternal note of sadness that the poem's natural world carry with it is equally in the line of the Romantics.

The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blached land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

It is interesting to note that the sea that Arnold views at the present is also the same sea in his imagination that Sophocles saw hundreds of years ago. While the world of Nature has not changed, the human world brought many changes to itself creating vast sea of doubt, pessimism and melancholy in turn. The following lines of *Dover Beach* reminds us of Wordsworth's line in *The Solitary Reaper*. Both the poems bearing same melancholic strain

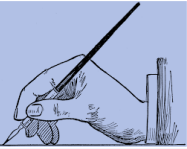
Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. (*Dover Beach*)

Compare these with the following-----

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

.....  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again? (*The Solitary Reaper*)

The ‘thought of humanity’ that captures the speaker’s mind after seeing and listening to the sea is the same thought of humanity that can be witnessed in Wordsworth’s poem too.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**  
  
1. In what context did Arnold refer Sophocles in the poem?  
  
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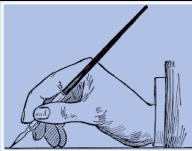
## 12.6 ARNOLD’S POETIC STYLE

*Dover Beach* is one of the best-known and best-loved of Victorian poems, and the most widely anthologised poem. Arnold’s belief that poetry should be the ‘criticism of life’ and verbalize a philosophy can be seen well expressed in this poem too. While doing so he is not at all sullen, rather the narratives and descriptions are pleasant and picturesque, loaded with outstanding similes to produce a lingering effect on the readers’ mind. The poem has great impact on the senses, like many of the Romantics where sound, along with picture create great visual effect on the readers. The image of slow and solemn rumbling sound made by the sea waves as they swing backward and forward on the pebbly shore and the monotonous sound one can hear all the time. The repetitive and monotonous act of the sea (Begin, and cease, and then again begin) is very much befitting with the emptiness the poem wants to convey.

Thematically the poem shifts from larger to smaller world, from public to private. But in doing so the poet transcends the boundaries of time and place,

moving back and forth in the past and the present, signifying the eternity of human problems.

The poem uses ample figure of speech. For example, while comparing the misery of human beings with ebbs and flow of the sea (the turbid ebb and flow /Of human misery). Repetition (Begin, and cease, and then again begin), Hyperbole (grating roar of pebbles) and Anaphora (So various, so beautiful, so new// neither joy, nor love, nor light, /Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain) are few relevant techniques used by the poet to achieve the sense of ennui and meaninglessness.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Find the similarity of the movement of the sea with that of human life.

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### 12.7 SUMMING UP

In this unit you have learnt about Matthew Arnold, a distinguished nineteenth century English poet and critic who brought about a revolution in the world of English literature with his critical essays, prose and poetry. His standing in the literary world rests as much as on his poetries as his narratives and essays. Although Arnold is deemed as the third great Victorian poet after Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning, it was in prose that he found his true expression. While his poetical works have been tagged as gnomic and elegiac,



his polished, didactic, and satirically witty prose works have earned him quite a big fan following.



### 12.8 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What kind of escape does Arnold talk about at the end of “The Scholar Gipsy”?
2. What does the scholar look for when he decides to give up the life of an ordinary student?
3. Why does the speaker in the poem feel that the scholar gipsy should still be around?
4. Would you accept the poem as the poet’s rejection of a conventional life? Or is it merely a rejection of the pressures of urban life?
5. Comment on the pastoral images in the poem.
6. Examine the poet’s mood in “Dover Beach.” Why does he suffer a loss of faith?
7. Critically analyse Arnold’s “Dover Beach.”



### 12.9 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

Bloom, Harold (ed). *Matthew Arnold (Bloom's Modern Critical Views)* Chelsea House Pub. 1987

Linda Ray Pratt, *Matthew Arnold Revisited*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 2000.

Sethi, Neetu. ‘Dover Beach: A faithful and spiritual belief by Matthew Arnold’, *International Journal of Advanced Research and Development*, Volume 3; Issue 1; January 2018

#### Internet resource:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43588/dover-beach>

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**UNIT 13: THOMAS HARDY: “CHANNEL FIRING”, ‘AFTERWARDS’, ‘THE OXEN’**

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**UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Learning Objectives
- 13.2 Thomas Hardy: Life and Works
- 13.3 *Channel Firing*
  - 13.3.1 Analysing *Channel Firing*
- 13.4 *Afterwards*
  - 13.4.1 Analysing *Afterwards*
- 13.5 *The Oxen*
  - 13.5.1 Analysing *The Oxen*
- 13.6 Summing Up
- 13.7 Assessment Questions
- 13.8 References and Recommended Readings

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**13.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was an English novelist and poet. Though he is placed in the Victorian age, he is a writer bridging the Victorian and Modern periods. Hardy was a devoted reader of philosophy, scientific texts, the Bible, and Greek literature, and he amply used these in his own works. Darwin's emphasis on chance and luck in evolution had profoundly influenced his thought and works. Hardy too, was torn between personal faith in God and a loss of faith of the Age suffered by many of his contemporaries. Consequently, he increasingly turned to science for answers about man's place in the universe.

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**13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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After reading this unit you will be able to learn

- the life and works of Thomas Hardy
- detail reading and critical analysis of the prescribed poems
- Hardy's theme and style as reflected in the poems

### **13.2 THOMAS HARDY: LIFE AND WORKS**

Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 in the English village of Higher Bockhampton in the county of Dorset. He died in 1928 at Max Gate, a house he built for himself and his first wife, Emma Lavinia Gifford, in Dorchester, a few miles from his birthplace.

In *Ten Victorian Poets* F. L. Lucas observes, "Hardy did not simply make poetry out of life; he made life into poetry," and there is much truth in the statement. The poetry of Hardy is intimately related to the realities of life and is a truthful and sincere expression of what he had actually felt, seen and experienced in his life. Hardy cared more for truth than beauty, and to him creation of mere beauty did not appear to be a poet's job. "There are poets like Tennyson who thinks of Beauty before Truth; they tend to produce poetry that is perfect rather than great," says F. L. Lucas, and there are poets like Hardy who have a feeling for Truth even before Beauty; these tend to produce poetry that is great rather than perfect".

Hardy always emphasized the truth. His poetry is sad in its truthful representation of life. The poet saw misery and grief as essential ingredients of man's life, and he presented a realistic picture of human life. His "The Man he Killed" offers a serious critique of war. Two men shoot at each other just because they happen to represent opposite sides in battle. That is the wonder of war says Hardy. If one met a stranger during peace time normally one would get to know him and offer him a drink at some bar or inn. But war prevents any kind of human bonding between opposite factions. The soldier wonders that the man he shot and killed must have enlisted because he had nothing better to do just as he had. But having done so, it becomes a case of kill or be killed.

Hence the poet concludes that war is a strange and curious thing which unleashes unnecessary violence. He was haunted by a sense of the transience of life and presented gloomy pictures of humanity controlled by fate. He could not hold out any hope in a world where God was not in His heaven and everything depended on chance.

Hardy's poetry has a hard unresolved quality that cements his place amongst the moderns. "Channel Firing" shows rare glimpses of humour in Hardy, while "Afterwards" and "The Oxen" present a typical reflective mood, so much a part of Hardy's writing.

Hardy's poems on nature are a significant part of his poetry. For Hardy all her beauty could not hide her cruelty. His greatest work is *Dynasts*. His *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898), *Poems of The Past and The Present* (1902) pale into insignificance before the majesty of *Dynasts*. This monumental epic-drama was produced between 1904 to 1908. It deals with the war of Napoleon from 1805 to 1815 and consists of nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes.

### 13.3 'CHANNEL FIRING'

The poem 'Channel Firing' was published in early 1914. In the collection named *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries*. The time was when the English army was practising during the World War I. This included practice firing by British battleships in the English Channel, the noise of which would have carried far inland and been especially noticeable by residents of coastal counties such as Dorset, where Portland Harbour, a major naval base at the time, is situated.

The narrative is in first person; a "dead person" who was perhaps a soldier talking while the windows of the coffin are being destroyed by the firing which is done for "practice" along the English Channel. The noise was so severe that all the "dead men" thought that the "Judgement Day" has drawn

nearer. Possibly Hardy could hear the firing practice by the Royal Navy as part of their routine drill but also in preparation of future battle.

### *13.3.1 Textual Analysis of Channel Firing*

That night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearishome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumbs,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;  
It's gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below;  
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christ's sake  
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

The dead soldiers in their coffins are struck by the noise of gunfire and sit up in fear that it is Judgement day for them! The noise was so shattering that even the dogs and insects were disturbed till God intervened to explain that it is the roar of guns at sea instead of some heavenly disturbance. Moreover, the world is the same as ever, with men intent on fighting each other and shedding blood. It is still a crazy world where nobody seems to think of God and Christ.

“That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them’s a blessed thing,  
For if it were they’d have to scour  
Hell’s floor for so much threatening....

“Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need).”

So down we lay again. “I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,”  
Said one, “than when He sent us under  
In our indifferent century!”

And many a skeleton shook his head.  
“Instead of preaching forty year,”  
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,  
“I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer.”

Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

God observes that it is just as well it is not the time of judgement, for He would have made them pay heavily (through hard physical labour) for creating that racket and threatening others. He relents by saying that as men they need rest more than anything else. At that, they lay down again, with one of them pondering over the nature of the present world—if it would ever be saner than before. The ‘indifferent’ century is a comment on an age given to warfare and

needless violence. Seeing the propensity for violence, Parson Thirdly wishes that he had not spent forty years trying to convert men to a better way of life, and allowed himself some of the idle pleasures. The final say was that of the guns as they roared across historical places to suggest that men down the ages have been the same. War and destruction would continue as long as man did.

### *Style*

This poem is a stinging indictment of war. Human civilisations have been destroyed by war and yet the strife continues. Despite the advances in technology, man is intent on using them for destructive ends. The regular firing of the guns suggests the readiness for war if there is reason. If not, the practice will continue in anticipation of war. Underlying the satire at man's combative tendencies is the tragedy of war: needless violence and loss of lives and property.

## **13.4 AFTERWARDS**

*Afterwards* was the final poem in the collection entitled *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). This was in the summer of 1917 when Hardy was 77 years old, the world was at war, and Hardy was doubtful whether he would live to publish any more. The very title alludes to his demise, although Hardy chooses never to use the word 'Death', instead, replacing it with terms like 'stilled at last.' This poem reflects his belief that he was reaching the end of his life and there is a mellowness of tone and a wry acceptance of fate.

### **13.4.1 Textual Analysis of *Afterwards***

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,

And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,

Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,

"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

The poet imagines how his death will be received by his neighbours if he should die in spring or early summer. His departure would be unobtrusive, through the back door, and only those who were close to him might mark his passing. Looking at the fresh green leaves around them, they might remark that he was a person who enjoyed nature in all her springtime beauty.

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,  
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight  
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,  
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If he should die around sundown, they might note the hawk swooping down to rest on a branch and recall that he, who was a part of such a landscape, must have seen it at times.

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,  
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,  
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should  
come to no harm,  
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If he should pass away in the darkness of the night, they might note the creatures of the night and think that he was a man who was considerate towards those little creatures.

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at  
the door,  
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,  
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,  
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?



If he should die in winter, he wonders if the people close to him would look at the starlit sky and note that he used to appreciate the beauty of the night-time sky even as he pondered over some unresolvable mystery.

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,  
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,  
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,  
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?"

The poet wonders if on his death, the news is communicated by a ringing bell—which is intercepted by the breeze but resumes ringing again—and those listening might spare a thought that he used to notice such things.

Thus in each of his five stanzas Hardy visualises his death at different times of the year, and the reactions of his close friends. He relates the possible time of his with some facet of nature: even the funeral bell of the last stanza is affected by the breeze. As the ringing begins afresh, there is a hint of a new beginning somewhere in nature. He sees death as a quiet departure through the back door. He chooses not to address the moment of death or even to dramatise it. Having prepared himself mentally for death, there is no misgiving on his part about his imminent journey beyond life. He only hopes to be remembered by his friends and neighbours, not for his material or earthly achievements or for any extravagant personality trait, but as a man who noticed the changing aspects of nature with the changing seasons and took pleasure in them.

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### ***13.5 THE OXEN***

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The Oxen was written by Hardy in a turbulent time of England's history, published during the First World War near Christmastime. At first glance, the poem seems to reaffirm faith in the noble and spiritual, and most readers and

publishers interpret the poem as the tale of a speaker's journey back into the ideals and joys of Christmas that he encountered as a child. The structure of the poem emphasizes the emotion and inner struggle of the speaker who wants to believe.

### *13.5.1 Reading the poem The Oxen*

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.

“Now they are all on their knees,”

An elder said as we sat in a flock

By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where

They dwelt in their strawy pen,

Nor did it occur to one of us there

To doubt they were kneeling then.

The poet recalls Christmas Eve when they all sat round the fire and visualised the Nativity scene where the animals in the barn where Jesus was born knelt around in awe and wonder at that miracle. That animals would kneel around the infant Jesus, was a matter of faith hard to accept in the present. But the spirit of the holy season convinces the poet that such things could happen, that the oxen and other animals were kneeling in the straw in respect.

So fair a fancy few would weave

In these years! Yet, I feel,

If someone said on Christmas Eve,

“Come; see the oxen kneel,

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb

Our childhood used to know,”

I should go with him in the gloom,

Hoping it might be so.

The poet resorts to alliteration to convey his feelings: “So fair a fancy few would weave.” Yet that is what legend suggests and he is willing to go along with that. He does not merely affirm his faith in religion, but also the fact that amidst the disturbed and uncertain circumstances of a raging war, one needs to believe in something beyond the plausible.

There is a yearning for childhood beliefs in the last stanza as the poet recalls his early years on a farm in the valley, where they celebrated Christmas. He hopes to recapture that sense of faith, that unquestioning acceptance of miracles which reason could not support. The poet wants to recapture those precious moments from his childhood in the decay of his old age to taste once more the life of innocence. More than that however, Hardy tries to make a stay against confusion by positing something to believe in. Since the war was shattering everything including buildings and institutions, social structures as well as personal attachments, and all the social, cultural and religious values that were dear to men in society, The poet thinks that the inviolable memories of childhood related to holy rituals and complete faith in a higher order would sustain mankind in that hour of need.

### *Style*

The average reader’s interpretation of the poem is turned on its head as one faces the question of whether the speaker’s depression and loss of faith is truly justifiable, and whether it is innocence and blind belief that is evil that should not be returned to. With the advent of a war that was increasingly more impersonal, horrific and ultimately a waste of lives, people began to lose faith in the old traditions and institutions, and the speaker is a reflection of society as a whole. After all, such qualities in Western society led to the First World War: a blind belief in one’s rulers and religion to always be right no matter the action taken; innocence in the perception of war as glorious.

With the use of structure and changing diction Hardy captures a third layer to his poem—the emotional state of the individual forever torn by the question of whether humanity is really a force for good in the universe, or just a bestial species in an uncaring world.

Overall, the message of the poem centers on the journey of the speaker, an individual who has been affected by war, lies, and a rapidly changing world to see the truth underneath the veneer of politeness and virtue of society. He has lost the ideals and beliefs that masked his vision, but at the same time, the individual is left to wonder who is truly right in the end: the optimistic view of his childhood in the universe, or the more pessimistic view of a rational universe without guiding principles or moral consequences to evil. This speaker's journey underlines the dilemma of all individuals in modern day society faced all around by evil deeds and ignorance—what is humanity in this universe? A force to pursue good, or a species that rationalizes its selfish actions? And what is the correct reaction? Is it to keep hope in humanity, as the speaker is tempted to do by believing once again in the legend of the kneeling oxen? Or is it to accept that man is not the improving, orderly, and moral force of the Victorian's ideal (The “meek mild” oxen) but an animal driven by selfish desires and ignorance? (The bestial animal that innocently takes itself to the slaughterhouse) Ultimately, as is the fate of all individuals, the speaker may ask the question, but does not know the answer—“I should go with him in the gloom, hoping it might be so.”

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### ***13.7 SUMMING UP***

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In this unit we have examined three poems by Thomas Hardy. The poems prescribed for your study are discussed in details to give you a reasonably good impression of poetic themes and style.

Hardy received a lot of critical reception during his time. As Irving Howe noted in Thomas Hardy, any “critic can, and often does, see all that is wrong with Hardy's poetry but whatever it was that makes for his strange greatness is hard to describe.” Hardy's poetry, perhaps even more so than his

novels, has found new audiences and appreciation as contemporary scholars and critics attempt to understand his work in the context of Modernism. But Hardy has always presented scholars and critics with a contradictory body of work; as Jean Brooks suggests in *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure*, “because Hardy’s place in literature has always been controversial, constant reassessment is essential to keep the balance between modern and historical perspective.” Virginia Woolf, commenting on Hardy’s enduring power as a writer said, “Thus it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man’s lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul.”



### **13.8 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Examine Hardy’s “Channel Firing” as an anti-war poem.
2. At whom is the satire in the poem “Channel Firing” directed? How does the poem end?
3. Examine the poet’s mood in “Afterwards.” How does he wish to be remembered by his friends and neighbours?
4. Examine the images in the three Hardy poems in your course.
5. Examine the message in “The Oxen” against the background of its publication.
6. Comment on the poet’s attitude to religious and secular faith in “The Oxen.”
7. Examine Hardy as a poet on the basis of the poems in your course.



### **13.9 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Bailey, J.O. *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970

#### **WEB SOURCES**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/thomas-hardy>

## **UNIT 14: GERALD MANLEY HOPKINS: 'PIED BEAUTY', 'THE WINDHOVER', 'INVERRNAID'**

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Learning Objectives
- 14.2 Gerald Manley Hopkins: Life and Works
- 14.3 *Pied Beauty*
  - 14.3.1 Analysing *Pied Beauty*
- 14.4 *The Windhover*
  - 14.4.1 Analysing *The Windhover*
- 14.5 *Inversnaid*
  - 14.5.1 Analysing *Inversnaid*
- 14.6 Summing Up
- 14.7 Assessment Questions
- 14.8 References and Recommended Readings

### **14.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit will particularly deal with Gerald Manley Hopkins, one of the uniquely placed poets of the Victorian Age. His rugged style and unresolved content places Hopkins on the threshold of modernity. Though traces of the anxiety and pessimism of the period can be seen in his poems, as a priest his feelings rest on devotion to God. One of the most original writers of nineteenth century, Hopkins is always known for his varied experiments on the sonnet form, his 'sprung rhythm' and 'instress' and 'inscape' in poetry. Hopkins is modern in the sense that his poetry anticipated what a modernist poet calls his/her search for meaning in a difficult world.

Hopkins looks for pattern in nature and in his poems. The term inscape refers to that pattern. Instress on the other hand, refers to the internal energy that sustains an inscape. The coining of words or of joining them lends

Hopkins' diction a singular quality. For example in a poem like "The Candle Indoors," the poet looking at the light of the candle suggests that "to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye." He means that between the eyes focusing on the candle and the flame, there are lines of communication, creating a lasting impression.

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#### ***14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

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After reading this unit you will understand:

- the tensions that underlie the poetry of Hopkins
- the arrangement of images in tandem with the internal stress pattern
- that Hopkins has a feel for the sensuous as evident in his imagery
- that Hopkins also relies on alliteration and assonance to build up the rhythm
- that Hopkins' poetry captures the rhythms of nature
- that Devotional poetry can still have an eye for the sensuous

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#### ***14.2 GERALD MANLEY HOPKINS: LIFE AND WORKS***

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Hopkins stands out as a religious poet with religious predisposition. He was bred an Anglican, but became a Roman Catholic in 1866, and two years later entered the society of Jesuits. Hopkins in 1854 started boarding at Highgate School, where he learnt the classics, ancient history, and divinity in preference to modern studies. It was here that Hopkins acquired a good grounding in the elements of language and poetry. At Oxford University he made deep and lasting friendships, with Robert Bridges and Mowbray Baillie, his two major correspondents in adulthood. The letters and diaries he wrote soon after his arrival in Oxford reflect his energy and breadth of interests. His writings reflect a blend of the religious and the sensuous.

Hopkins uses the “sprung rhythm” which is handy in capturing the raw vitality of nature as seen in his poem “Inversnaid.” The basic principle of this attempt, which breaks away from strictly conventional patterns, is that each foot contains one stress, possibly, but not necessarily, followed by any number of unstressed syllables. The sprung rhythm adopts “a meter in which the number of accents in a line are counted but the number of syllables does not matter.”

While nature features significantly in Hopkins’ poetry, there are occasions when faith in God rules supreme over all else. This is seen in poems like “The Candle Indoors” and “Felix Randal” for example. In the former poem the light of the candle at the window makes the poet speculate about the unknown person inside the house who could be doing some work by that light. He goes on to suggest that whatever the unknown person is doing would surely help to glorify God. It is not just through prayers that show our devotion to God but also through our service on this earth. The poem ends with the poet rebuking himself for examining what might lie in the hearts and minds of others when he should be putting his own house (soul) in order.

“Felix Randal,” on the other hand is about the passing away of a healthy man who was suddenly affected by disease and faded away. The once strong man cursed at his growing weakness but soon realised that it was God’s will. The priest attending to the sick man and trying to comfort him, becomes conscious of the ties that bound them together. He accepts, as does the sick man, that everything is divinely ordained. All man can do is tamely accept God’s Will with a little patience.

Thus these poems show that Hopkins is quite capable of writing poems about pain and suffering as well as about devotion and commitment to the Lord, without drawing too much upon outward things or from nature.



### 14.3 *PIED BEAUTY*

“Pied Beauty” was written in 1877 but published posthumously in 1918. It celebrates the pied or varied or spotted nature of this world created by God. Almost everything in this world is different. The universe contains variety in beauty. Multiplicity and pied beauty can be seen in the landscape and the things of this universe. The source of this piedness is God. God’s creation is of such kind that not a single thing resembles the other. The poem advocates unquestioned faith and glorification of God as opposed to the faithlessness of his time.

#### 14.3.1 *Analysing Pied Beauty*

Glory be to God for dappled things –

For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

The poem begins with praise for God who has created all this beauty in its rich variety. Dappled, like pied, means spotted, and uneven. This principle of unevenness or piedness is in operation all over this world—in the animals, flowers, fruits, plants, fish and fowl. God is responsible for this coloured variety of the world made for all the creature on Earth. This principle of undulation is reproduced in man’s daily activities as he tills the land for cultivation and allows some stretches of it to lie in fallow for future use. Whatever man does on this earth is in a way a tribute to God’s greatness. By working hard, man serves God and this world.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

The poet points out that variety is the hallmark of divine creation which is why the world is dappled and everything individual in its specifications. There are contrasts as well as shades of difference as well as similarity. In this subtle difference in each individual thing in this world the poet identifies God's marvelous pattern or inscape. While God is responsible for this rich variety in everything around us, He himself is beyond change. He is the still point in the wheel which turns the world. Human beings can only sing hymns of praise for Him and His Glory.

"Pied Beauty" is described as a 'curtal sonnet'. A curtal sonnet differs from a conventional sonnet in structure and composition. The poem consists of ten and half lines and falls under the sprung rhythm. The first syllable is stressed and followed by a variety of unstressed syllables. The sprung rhythm is a sophisticated mode of poetic expression. In a letter to Robert Bridges, Hopkins elaborates his use of sprung rhythm thus: "Why do I employ sprung rhythm? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, i.e. the nature and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms, combining as it seems to, markedness of rhythm (i.e. rhythm's self) and naturalness of expression."

"Pied Beauty" is a religious poem in which Hopkins tried to usher modernity in. The style and rhythm is at once modern and innovative. The blending of religion and modernity makes the poem a modern hymn.

The theological implication of the poem comes through in this emphasis on the need to appreciate God's design in his creation. Without adequate orientation, the beauty of God's world may remain removed from the observer. Hopkins suggests that if we properly submit to God, we can facilitate the understanding of the magnificent creation. Few illustrations are given in the

poem. God's creation can be celebrated by the beauty of the divine by which the beauty of the natural world can be appreciated.

#### 14.4 THE WINDHOVER

“The Windhover” which is dedicated to Christ and in praise of Christ was written in 1877. In this poem the majesty of the falcon as it hangs in perfect balance in the sky, is compared to the majesty of Christ.

Written in the sonnet form “The Windhover” in its octave describes the flight of a windhover (kestrel or Falcon) that the poet saw that morning. The sestet is divided in two parts, the first three lines are about the bird and the comparison of the bird with Christ who is ‘a billion times lovelier’, and the last three lines express his memories and appreciation of Christ.

Let us now go to the detail analysis of the poem.

##### 14.4.1 *Analysing The Windhover*

*To Christ our Lord*

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn  
Falcon, in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

The poet calls the falcon the morning's servant as well as the prince of daylight. The sunlight on the bird gives it a golden dappled hue as it soars high in the skies. With its powerful wings the bird could navigate the wind and brace itself sufficiently to be in control of the elements. Watching the

movement of the bird's wings the poet gets fanciful enough to suggest that it appeared to be riding a horse, fully in control because of the movement of those wings. The falcon or Windhover as the poet calls it, achieves perfect balance amidst the wind and for a moment, appears to hold still in ecstatic celebration of its prowess. But that is momentary, as it soon swings away and glides through the turbulent wind as if to challenge it. Down below, the poet can only watch in admiration as the bird continued to display its supremacy and control amongst the elements. The poet's heart leaps at the display of such mastery by the falcon.

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here  
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plod makes plough down sillion  
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,  
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

The majesty of the falcon reminds the poet of Christ in whom all the good qualities combine. In the bird the poet sees a combination of physical strength, courage and pride animating a brute beauty that was awesome. The word 'buckle' suggests not only the combination of all these qualities but also a gripping down to produce perfect energy in accordance with Divine will.

Comparing the bird to Christ, the poet affirms that if the bird is majestic, Christ is celestial—"a billion times...lovelier"! Christ's fire will be more effective and so more powerful.

The poet adds that the bird has achieved such perfection and control through regular practice. Similarly, if human beings keep working hard, they will achieve success. Just as relentless plodding makes the ground ready for cultivation and gives the plough a sheen, similarly beauty can be found in ordinary things if one kept toiling hard. According to the poet even coal turns

golden in colour when it is lit up. Thus, the perfection of the falcon or the greatness of Christ can remain as goalposts for ordinary humanity. Beauty and majesty can be attained through earnest hard work.

The structure of the sonnet is interesting as Hopkins used 'sprung rhythm'. The poem falls under the Petrarchan sonnet; the rhyme scheme is *abbaabbacdcddc*, the most traditional rhyme scheme. The sprung rhythm tried to recreate the bird's flight; the sweeps, stops and dives of the bird's movement. Through the beautiful description of the physical beauty of the bird, Hopkins gives us an account of his own mind which can be clearly seen in the octave. The sestet in a way is puzzling because it seems to distract the readers from the material formerly introduced in the octave. In "The Windhover", Hopkins focussed on the rhythm and style of poetry unfolding his thoughts on poetry.

Many readers find the poem is rather difficult because of the use of old, archaic English words, meanings in implications. Symbols related to Christ to suggest the pain (gall), wound (gash), blood (vermillion), sacrifice are also unfamiliar to many.

## 14.5 INVERRNAID

Hopkins wrote "Inversnaid" in September 1881, having just completed his duties as a parish priest in Liverpool. He had been sent to Loch Lomond for a month on temporary assignment before moving back to, Roehampton to complete his novitiate. This is his only recorded visit to Scotland. The poem captures the vitality of the rushing waters of the stream over the rocks.

### 14.5.1 *Analysing Inversnaid*

This darksome burn, horseback brown,  
His rollrock highroad roaring down,  
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam  
Flutes and low to the lake falls home

The dark mountain stream appears brown in colour as it roars down the rocks through mountains and valleys as it falls to the lake below. The course of the stream indicates that even rocks could roll down it. As the water rushes over the rocks it gathers froth and foam as it falls into the lake below. The poet uses both alliteration (words beginning with the same consonant, like *coop* and *comb*, for example) as well as assonance (repetition of the same vowels, like *rollrock* roaring down, for example), to capture the raw vitality of nature.

A windpuff-bonnet of fáwn-fróth  
Turns and twindles over the broth  
Of a pool so pitchblack, féll-frówning,  
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

The fawn coloured froth from the rushing water appears to cover the edge of the lake like a bonnet. It turns and meanders before spilling over the dark waters which look menacing as nobody can tell what lies underneath. In the poet's words, it is "fell frowning," that is, it hints at a dark intent which human beings can only guard against.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew  
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,  
Wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern,  
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

The darkness apart, the waters of the stream shower the banks to make it all look spotted with dew. The spray from the meandering stream sprinkles drops of water on the rough hilly terrain—"the groins of the braes"—and the bushes on the side as well as the red berries of the ash tree standing tall over the stream.

What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,

O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

The moisture-laden stream side makes the poet wonder what the world would have been without the gift of water and the wilderness. Despite the rough terrain and the wild shrubs, the poet feels that the whole scene is lovely and blessed! In sharp contrast to the clutter of urban scenes, the unmanned wilderness with the gushing water presents a vision of escape as well as pleasure to man.

The Scottish Highlands had been associated with beauty and grandeur even before William Wordsworth and the Romantic poets. “Inversnaid” is not the only poem of Hopkins that deals with ecological concerns, but other poems are usually in terms of urbanization encroaching on the surrounding countryside, as in Ribblesdale, which was written the next year, or Duns Scotus' Oxford or Binsey Poplars, both about the spread of Oxford. God's Grandeur and The Sea and the Skylark are similar in theme. But, in Inversnaid, there is no immediate danger of encroachment, just a general fear. Nor does it contain any theological statement, as the other poems do. It is more a spontaneous cry from the heart.

Hopkins describes the different parts of a highland stream, using word-painting to bring out its wildness, hoping that that wildness might never be destroyed. Mountain burn, photo by Adam Ward, available through Creative Commons Although Inversnaid itself is a small village on Loch Lomond, the focus of the poem is on a mountain stream rushing down the hillside and emptying itself into the lake.

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#### ***14.6 SUMMING UP***

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While the three poems discussed above celebrate the glory of God as well as the wonders of nature, the creation of God, there are poems which are more reflective and devoted wholly to prayer and worship of God. That Hopkins was

a priest who wrote poetry, cannot be forgotten. Rather, what stands out is his appreciation of things in the world in the course of his singing God's praises. Throughout, there is the celebration of God as the Ultimate Principle—the Maker as well as Keeper of this world.

On the technical front, Hopkins' poetry displays a ruggedness which carries its own rhythm. There is also the tendency to coin words which are somewhat onomatopoeic, or derivatives from other languages or portmanteau (joining two words) words in order to communicate the maximum significance. We hope that after reading this unit you would be inspired enough to read other texts by and related to the poet.



#### **14.7 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Examine Hopkins as a modern poet.
2. Why do you think the method of “sprung rhythm” appealed to Hopkins? How does it contribute to his poems?
3. Critically analyse Hopkins' poem “The Windhover.”
4. Based on a reading of the three poems in your course, examine the significance of God and nature in Hopkins' poetry.
5. Does Hopkins's poetry more closely resemble Romantic or Modernist poetry? Explain your answer.
6. Hopkins often said that he wanted his poetic language to be true to living speech. In what ways do his unusual diction and his “sprung rhythm” succeed or fail in this capacity?



#### **14.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Bottrall, Margaret, ed. *G.M. Hopkins, Poems, A Casebook*. Macmillan, London, 1975.



Hartman, Geoffrey. *Hopkins: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966.

Mackenzie, Norman H. *A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1981.

Thornton, R.K.R. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Poems*. Edward Arnold, London, 1973.

### **WEBSOURCES**

<http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/inversnaid/>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44399/pied-beauty>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44402/the-windhover>

#### **Full text of the poems**

**GERALD MANLEY HOPKINS**

#### **PIED BEAUTY**

Glory be to God for dappled things –

For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.

## **THE WINDHOVER**

*To Christ our Lord*

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here  
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plod makes plough down sillion  
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,  
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

## **INVERSNAID**

This darksome burn, horseback brown,  
His rollrock highroad roaring down,  
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam  
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fáwn-fróth  
Turns and twindles over the broth  
Of a pool so pitchblack, féll-frówning,  
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew  
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,  
Wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern,  
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,  
O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet

### THOMAS HARDY

That night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearishome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumbs,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called,  
“No;  
It’s gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below;  
The world is as it used to be:

“All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christ’s sake  
Than you who are helpless in such  
matters.

“That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them’s a blessed thing,  
For if it were they’d have to scour  
Hell’s floor for so much threatening....

“Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need).”

So down we lay again. “I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,”  
Said one, “than when He sent us  
under  
In our indifferent century!”

And many a skeleton shook his head.  
“Instead of preaching forty year,”  
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,  
“I wish I had stuck to pipes and  
beer.”

Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge

## CHANNEL FIRING

### AFTERWARDS

When the Present has latched its  
postern behind my tremulous stay,  
    And the May month flaps its glad  
green leaves like wings,  
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will  
the neighbours say,  
    “He was a man who used to notice  
such things”?

If it be in the dusk when, like an  
eyelid’s soundless blink,  
    The dewfall-hawk comes crossing  
the  
come to no harm,  
    But he could do little for them; and  
now he is gone.”

If, when hearing that I have been stilled  
at last, they stand  
at the door,  
Watching the full-starred heavens that  
winter sees,  
Will this thought rise on those who will  
meet my face no more,  
    “He was one who had an eye for such  
mysteries”?

shades to alight  
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn,  
a gazer may think,  
    “To him this must have been a  
familiar sight.”

If I pass during some nocturnal  
blackness, mothy and warm,  
    When the hedgehog travels  
furtively over the lawn,  
One may say, “He strove that such  
innocent creatures should  
And will any say when my bell of  
quittance is heard in the gloom,  
    And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in  
its outrollings,  
Till they rise again, as they were a new  
bell’s boom,  
    “He hears it not now, but used to  
notice such things?”

### THE OXEN

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
“Now they are all on their knees,”  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,

Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
“Come; see the oxen kneel,

“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb  
Our childhood used to know,”  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.

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## **ROBERT BROWNING**

### **TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA**

#### **I**

I wonder do you feel to-day  
As I have felt since, hand in hand,  
We sat down on the grass, to stray  
In spirit better through the land,  
This morn of Rome and May?

#### **II**

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
Has tantalized me many times,  
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
To catch at and let go.

#### **III**

Help me to hold it! First it left  
The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,  
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed  
Took up the floating weft,

#### **IV**

Where one small orange cup amassed  
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope

Among the honey-meal: and last,  
Everywhere on the grassy slope  
I traced it. Hold it fast!

**V**  
The champaign with its endless fleece  
Of feathery grasses everywhere!  
Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
An everlasting wash of air—  
Rome's ghost since her decease.

**VI**  
Such life here, through such lengths of hours,  
Such miracles performed in play,  
Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
Such letting nature have her way  
While heaven looks from its towers!

**VII**  
How say you? Let us, O my dove,  
Let us be unashamed of soul,  
As earth lies bare to heaven above!  
How is it under our control  
To love or not to love?

**VIII**  
I would that you were all to me,  
You that are just so much, no more.  
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!  
Where does the fault lie? What the core  
O' the wound, since wound must be?

**IX**  
I would I could adopt your will,  
See with your eyes, and set my heart  
Beating by yours, and drink my fill  
At your soul's springs,—your part my part  
In life, for good and ill.

**X**  
No. I yearn upward, touch you close,  
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,  
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose  
And love it more than tongue can speak—  
Then the good minute goes.

## **XI**

Already how am I so far  
Out of that minute? Must I go  
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,  
Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
Fixed by no friendly star?

## **XII**

Just when I seemed about to learn!  
Where is the thread now? Off again!  
The old trick! Only I discern—  
Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn.

## **ALFRED TENNYSON**

### **ULYSSES**

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.  
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades  
For ever and forever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,



When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:  
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,  
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—  
That ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;  
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.  
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:  
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep  
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,  
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.  
Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

### **THE LADY OF SHALOTT**

#### **Part I**

On either side the river lie  
Long fields of barley and of rye,  
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;  
And thro' the field the road runs by  
    To many-tower'd Camelot;  
The yellow-leaved waterlily  
The green-sheathed daffodilly  
Tremble in the water chilly  
    Round about Shalott.  
Willows whiten, aspens shiver.  
The sunbeam showers break and quiver  
In the stream that runneth ever  
By the island in the river  
    Flowing down to Camelot.  
Four gray walls, and four gray towers  
Overlook a space of flowers,  
And the silent isle imbowers  
    The Lady of Shalott.  
Underneath the bearded barley,  
The reaper, reaping late and early,  
Hears her ever chanting cheerly,  
Like an angel, singing clearly,

O'er the stream of Camelot.  
Piling the sheaves in furrows airy,  
Beneath the moon, the reaper weary  
Listening whispers, ' 'Tis the fairy,  
Lady of Shalott.'

The little isle is all inrail'd  
With a rose-fence, and overtrail'd  
With roses: by the marge unhail'd  
The shallop flitteth silken sail'd,  
Skimming down to Camelot.

A pearl garland winds her head:  
She leaneth on a velvet bed,  
Full royally apparelled,  
The Lady of Shalott.

## **Part II**

No time hath she to sport and play:  
A charmed web she weaves alway.  
A curse is on her, if she stay  
Her weaving, either night or day,  
To look down to Camelot.  
She knows not what the curse may be;  
Therefore she weaveth steadily,  
Therefore no other care hath she,  
The Lady of Shalott.

She lives with little joy or fear.  
Over the water, running near,  
The sheepbell tinkles in her ear.

Before her hangs a mirror clear,  
    Reflecting tower'd Camelot.  
And as the mazy web she whirls,  
She sees the surly village churls,  
And the red cloaks of market girls  
    Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,  
An abbot on an ambling pad,  
Sometimes a curly shepherd lad,  
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,  
    Goes by to tower'd Camelot:  
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue  
The knights come riding two and two:  
She hath no loyal knight and true,  
    The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
To weave the mirror's magic sights,  
For often thro' the silent nights  
A funeral, with plumes and lights  
    And music, came from Camelot:  
Or when the moon was overhead  
Came two young lovers lately wed;  
'I am half sick of shadows,' said  
    The Lady of Shalott.

### **Part III**

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
He rode between the barley-sheaves,

The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,  
And flam'd upon the brazen greaves  
    Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd  
To a lady in his shield,  
That sparkled on the yellow field,  
    Beside remote Shalott.  
The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,  
Like to some branch of stars we see  
Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
The bridle bells rang merrily  
    As he rode down from Camelot:  
And from his blazon'd baldric slung  
A mighty silver bugle hung,  
And as he rode his armour rung,  
    Beside remote Shalott.  
All in the blue unclouded weather  
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,  
The helmet and the helmet-feather  
Burn'd like one burning flame together,  
    As he rode down from Camelot.  
As often thro' the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
    Moves over green Shalott.  
His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;  
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;

From underneath his helmet flow'd  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down from Camelot.

From the bank and from the river  
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,  
'Tirra lirra, tirra lirra:'  
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom  
She made three paces thro' the room  
She saw the water-flower bloom,  
She saw the helmet and the plume,  
She look'd down to Camelot.

Out flew the web and floated wide;  
The mirror crack'd from side to side;  
'The curse is come upon me,' cried  
The Lady of Shalott.

#### **Part IV**

In the stormy east-wind straining,  
The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining,  
Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot;  
Outside the isle a shallow boat  
Beneath a willow lay afloat,  
Below the carven stern she wrote,  
The Lady of Shalott.

A cloud white crown of pearl she dight,

All raimented in snowy white  
That loosely flew (her zone in sight  
Clasp'd with one blinding diamond bright)

Her wide eyes fix'd on Camelot,  
Though the squally east-wind keenly  
Blew, with folded arms serenely  
By the water stood the queenly

Lady of Shalott.

With a steady stony glance—  
Like some bold seer in a trance,  
Beholding all his own mischance,  
Mute, with a glassy countenance—

She look'd down to Camelot.

It was the closing of the day:  
She loos'd the chain, and down she lay;  
The broad stream bore her far away,

The Lady of Shalott.

As when to sailors while they roam,  
By creeks and outfalls far from home,  
Rising and dropping with the foam,  
From dying swans wild warblings come,

Blown shoreward; so to Camelot

Still as the boathead wound along  
The willowy hills and fields among,  
They heard her chanting her deathsong,

The Lady of Shalott.

A longdrawn carol, mournful, holy,

She chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
Till her eyes were darken'd wholly,  
And her smooth face sharpen'd slowly,

Turn'd to tower'd Camelot:  
For ere she reach'd upon the tide  
The first house by the water-side,  
Singing in her song she died,

The Lady of Shalott.  
Under tower and balcony,  
By garden wall and gallery,  
A pale, pale corpse she floated by,  
Deadcold, between the houses high,

Dead into tower'd Camelot.  
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,  
To the planked wharfage came:  
Below the stern they read her name,

The Lady of Shalott.  
They cross'd themselves, their stars they blest,  
Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire, and guest.  
There lay a parchment on her breast,  
That puzzled more than all the rest,

The wellfed wits at Camelot.  
'The web was woven curiously,  
The charm is broken utterly,  
Draw near and fear not,—this is I,

The Lady of Shalott.'



## MATTHEW ARNOLD

### DOVER BEACH

The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

### **THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY**

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;  
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!  
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,  
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,  
Nor the cropp'd herbage shoot another head.  
But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green.  
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—

In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves  
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,  
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,  
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—  
Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away  
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,  
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—  
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,  
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.  
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,  
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;  
And air-swept lindens yield  
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers  
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
And bower me from the August sun with shade;  
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—  
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!  
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,  
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,  
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,  
One summer-morn forsook  
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,  
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,  
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,  
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,

Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,  
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;  
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,  
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired  
The workings of men's brains,  
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.  
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,  
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;  
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—  
But rumours hung about the country-side,  
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,  
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,  
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,  
The same the gipsies wore.  
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;  
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,  
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors  
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.  
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,  
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;  
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks  
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;  
Or in my boat I lie  
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,  
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,  
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,  
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!

Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,  
Returning home on summer-nights, have met  
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
As the punt's rope chops round;  
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,  
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,  
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—  
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come  
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,  
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,  
Or cross a stile into the public way.  
Oft thou hast given them store  
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemony,  
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,  
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—  
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here  
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,  
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass  
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,  
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
Have often pass'd thee near  
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;  
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,  
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—  
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,

Where at her open door the housewife darns,  
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate  
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.  
Children, who early range these slopes and late  
For cresses from the rills,  
Have known thee eyeing, all an April-day,  
The springing pasture and the feeding kine;  
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,  
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—  
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way  
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see  
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,  
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—  
The blackbird, picking food,  
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;  
So often has he known thee past him stray,  
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,  
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,  
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,  
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,  
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?  
And thou has climb'd the hill,  
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;  
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,  
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—  
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown

Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,  
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe  
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls  
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;  
And thou from earth art gone  
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—  
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave  
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,  
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!  
For what wears out the life of mortal men?  
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;  
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls  
And numb the elastic powers.  
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,  
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,  
To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?  
Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;  
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead!  
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!  
The generations of thy peers are fled,  
And we ourselves shall go;  
But thou possessest an immortal lot,  
And we imagine thee exempt from age  
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,  
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers

Fresh, undiverted to the world without,  
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;  
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,  
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.  
O life unlike to ours!  
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,  
And each half lives a hundred different lives;  
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,  
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,  
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,  
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,  
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;  
For whom each year we see  
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;  
Who hesitate and falter life away,  
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—  
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,  
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,  
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly  
His seat upon the intellectual throne;  
And all his store of sad experience he  
Lays bare of wretched days;  
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,  
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,  
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,  
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,



And wish the long unhappy dream would end,  
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;  
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,  
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair—  
But none has hope like thine!  
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,  
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,  
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,  
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,  
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;  
Before this strange disease of modern life,  
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—  
Fly hence, our contact fear!  
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!  
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,  
Still clutching the inviolable shade,  
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,  
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—  
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,  
On some mild pastoral slope  
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales  
Freshen thy flowers as in former years  
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,  
From the dark tingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!

For strong the infection of our mental strife,  
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;  
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,  
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.  
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,  
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,  
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;  
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,  
Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!  
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,  
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,  
The fringes of a southward-facing brow  
Among the Ægæan Isles;  
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,  
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine—  
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—  
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail;  
And day and night held on indignantly  
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,  
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,  
To where the Atlantic raves  
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails  
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,  
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;  
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

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