POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS)

M.A. in ENGLISH

SEMESTER - 1

COR - 102

RENAISSANCE TO RESTORATION: POETRY AND PROSE (1485 - 1649)

Self-Learning Material

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI-741235, WEST BENGAL

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Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, University of Kalyani
Published by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning, University of Kalyani,
Kalyani-741235, West Bengal.

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Director's Message

Satisfying the varied needs of distance learners, overcoming the obstacle of distance and reaching the unreached students are the threefold functions catered by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems. The onus lies on writers, editors, production professionals and other personnel involved in the process to overcome the challenges inherent to curriculum design and production of relevant Self Learning Materials (SLMs). At the University of Kalyani, a dedicated team under the able guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor has invested its best efforts, professionally and in keeping with the demands of Post Graduate CBCS Programmes in Distance Mode to devise a self-sufficient curriculum for each course offered by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL), University of Kalyani.Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2021 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal. Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome. During the production process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Manas Kumar Sanyal, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We, gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance.Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PG-BOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt gratitude is also due to the faculty members of the DODL, subject-experts serving at the University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level at the DODL, University of Kalyani. Their persistent and coordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through the Distance Mode.

Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning

University of Kalyani

COR - 102

Renaissance to Restoration (1485 - 1659): Poetry and Prose

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Total Credits - 4
Study Hours - 16

BLOCK I

UNIT - 1

UNIT 1 (a): INTRODUCTION

TEN RENAISSANCE ENGLISH SONNETS

Content Structure

In this module we are going to discuss the sonnets that you have to read in your study of British Literature of the Renaissance, or early modern period. From the sonnets mentioned in your syllabus, we select ten — six by Shakespeare, two by Sidney and one each by Wyatt and Spenser. Chronologically Wyatt comes first, as we shall see in our account of the development of the sonnet in England in the sixteenth century. The brief history of the evolution of the sonnet will be followed by a short discussion of the uniqueness of the poetic genre, its formal characteristics, the contribution of the individual sonneteers, and critical estimates of the sonnets selected for study.

The sonnet—an Italian genre by origin—began in the hands of Giacomo da Lentino who introduced the form : fourteen lines, eleven syllables in each line, rhyme scheme — ABAB ABAB CDE CDE — in later Italian sonnets, the order of rhymes changed — sonnet form was selected by Dante Alighieri in his "La Vita nuova". In his hands, this form first acquired a quality Revealed in the lover's response to the beauty and virtue of his beloved Beatrice —Supreme example: Shakespearean sonnets.

UNIT 1 (b): THE ORIGIN OF THE SONNET: THE ITALIAN SONNETEERS

The sonnet was invented in Italy about the year 1235 and till about 1520 remained exclusively an Italian genre. By the time Francis Petrarch, whose name is permanently linked with a widely followed form of the sonnet, began to write poems of this kind in the middle of the fourteenth century, it had already become established as a sophisticated poetic form. The inventor of the form was Giacomo da Lentini, one of the educated courtiers of Frederick II. He wrote altogether 25 sonnets and his example inspired some of his courtier friends to employ the form for their own poetic exercises. Fifteen of da Lentini's sonnets have the number of lines, rhymes and syllables which soon became standard in Italian sonnets: they have fourteen lines, eleven syllables in each line and five

different rhymes in a scheme which can be represented as ABAB ABAB CDE CDE: In later Italian sonnets the number of lines remained the same, though their orders became changed. The sonnet

form was selected by Dante Alighieri for his autobiographical work *La Vita nuova* (' The New Life'). It was in Dante's hands that the new sonnet came to acquire a quality which would enhance its appeal to love poets, for each of Dante's sonnets is about the lover's response to the beauty and virtue of his beloved Beatrice. Since the 26 sonnets, along with five other poems, introduced into the narrative of La Vita nuova trace the psychological development of the lover along with a chronological account given by the prose narrative, Dante is also regarded as the first poet to have conceived a sonnet sequence, which may be defined as separate sonnets linked in a kind of half narrative, of which the supreme example in English is *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

Petrarchan idealization of lady love is found echoed in most of the Renaissance English sonneteers, except in lower-class poets like Shakespeare and Donne.

But it was Petrarch who almost single-handedly made the sonnet a vehicle for the themes and motifs of love poetry in a way which caught the imagination of the poets of Renaissance Europe. Indeed his influence was so pervasive that "no later sonnet-writer could fail to be influenced either by Petrarch himself (Petrarchan writing) or by his imitators (Petrarchist writing)". This is as much true of Shakespeare, whose sonnets have even been called anti-Petrarchan, as of any early modern European sonneteer. Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, or *Rime*, as it is more commonly called, is a collection of 317 sonnets and 40 poems in other genres (29 *canzoni*, 7 *ballate* and 4 madrigals). While it would be simplistic to identify Dante with sacred love and Petrarch with the profane kind, it is indisputably true that the latter was the greatest single inspiration for the European poetry of sexual love in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The *Rime* is one of the most influential sonnet-sequences in any language, and "though the sonnet was not Petrarch's creation, it was certainly his creature". The remarkable unity of the *Rime* derives from the fact that almost all the poems deal with the most important event of Petrarch's life, his love for Laura. Her identity is not definitely known, though it is generally accepted that behind the poet's Laura there was a real-life individual, Laura de Sade, wife of an Italian merchant. Petrarch himself tells us that he saw her on 6 April 1327 and loved her till his death. Laura herself, however, died much earlier, on 6 April 1348. Dante's love for Beatrice had also inspired him to write a number of sonnets, but the death of Beatrice turned him to a higher kind of writing; the death of Laura, however, only strengthened Petrarch's resolve to go on writing love-sonnets. Laura's death profoundly affected Petrarch, sort of 'self-fashioning', a term given wide currency by the New Historicists, is not, therefore, exclusive to the modern, post-Freudian consciousness; from his reading of St. Augustine's *Confessions* and the autobiographical writings of Cicero, Seneca and Pliny, Petrarch too formed a conception of self not very different from the modern notion of self. The very idea that people can write about themselves brings with it the notion of the divided self. It is obvious that the person who writes now is in important ways the same as and different from his past self : the present self can not only recall the experiences of the past self, but can judge those experiences with greater awareness, with the advantage of hindsight. The sonnet has

sometimes been called a poem in the confessional mode and historians of the genre have traced the growth of self-awareness and self-scrutiny, as it is found in Petrarch and then with increasing complexity in later sonneteers, to the emergence in the late Middle Ages of the mode of writing known as 'confession'. There was also the influence of the confessional practice of the Catholic Church which encouraged individuals not only to think of themselves as different from others, but also to evaluate their past behaviour and experiences either in an approving manner or as a warning to others. Since a single sonnet is never enough to tell a story, Dante discovered that a number of sonnets can be organized in a sequence to tell a coherent story of the self. Petrarch attached the confessional principle of self-organization more firmly to the sonnet sequence, and that is another reason why his *Rime* exerted such a powerful influence on Renaissance sonneteers. Finally, Petrarch was the first major poet to establish a correspondence between the sonnet and the conventions of courtly love. Courtly love idealizes the woman, putting her on a high pedestal, while her lover offers abject devotion to her, making her the mistress who deserves complete allegiance from the lover. Since the woman is usually married to someone else, the lover cannot hope for a consummation of his passion. In fact, the woman is the epitome of chastity, which appears as cruelty to the lover, since her chastity prevents her from giving herself over to the lover's desire. This desire is prompted by the woman's exquisite beauty: chastity and beauty are in fact the twin pillars of the Petrarchan love convention. It has recently been suggested that the idealizing process in the discourse of courtly love fulfilled an emotional need of the aristocracy, the need for power and domination over women. The idealization of the figure of the woman was a means of constructing a myth for the nobility. This may be one explanation for the fact that lower-class poets like Shakespeare and Donne did not idealize women in their love sonnets. So far as the Petrarchan lover is concerned, he is a pitiful figure sighing and shedding tears because the chastity of the woman makes her inaccessible. Petrarch's Laura has certain physical characteristics most of which were reproduced in the sonnet heroines of Renaissance English sonneteers. These physical features were so often presented as desirable and indeed as the exclusive criteria of feminine beauty that they hardened into a stereotype. This stereotypical figure of the lady-love has golden hair and complexion, ebony eyebrows, rosy lips and cheeks, teeth and fingers of pearl, foreheads or hands of ivory, neck of alabaster. Her eyes are stars or suns and have the power of life and death over the lover. The beautiful eyes of the lady-love are a significant motif Petrarch's love sonnets, as the following translated excerpt from Sonnet 71 of *Rime* illustrates: "Charming eyes where Love makes his nest, to you I apply my feeble style, inert in itself, but great delight spurs it …" (Trans. J.B. Leishman). Petrarch also provided an example for later poets in the name that she used, whether real or invented by the poet, for his mistress. 'Laura' derives from "laurus", the laurel tree sacred to

Stereotypical figure of the lady love in Petrarchan sonnets — golden hair and complexion, ebony brows, rosy lips and cheeks, teeth and fingers of pearl and so on — 'Laura' derives from 'laurus', the laurel tree sacred to Apollo. While the lady love's physical beauty prompts desire, her moral beauty gives rise to despair

Apollo, patron of poets. Thus the object of the speaker's love also represented the object of the writer's aspiration - the woman Laura and the laurel crown of poetry combined in a single figure. It has also been pointed out by Leishman, Spiller and others that 'Laura' can be heard and read in Italian as 'l'aura', 'the breeze' and also 'l'auro', 'gold', so that Laura is the breeze of poetic inspiration and a golden-haired woman. Morally the Petrarchan sonnet-heroine is chaste, angelic, and has absolute power over men. Her beauty and chastity lead to contrasting effects : physical beauty prompts desire, while moral beauty gives rise to despair. Countless sonnets addressed to the mistress's hands, eyes and hair were composed by different poets imitating Petrarch. Such hyperboles were soon so much overworked and the entire love convention became so much of a stereotype that you should not be surprised to find great original poets like Shakespeare and Donne mocking the whole Petrarchan tradition. Indeed, the term 'Petrarchistic' acquired a pejorative connotation because of the over-enthusiastic imitation of Petrarch by countless poets of western Europe.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What do you know about the origin of the form 'sonnet'?
2. What are the chief features of Petrarchan sonnet?
3. Write the names of some exponents of this form.

UNIT 1(c): THE UNIQUENESS OF THE SONNET AS A POETIC KIND

The sonnet has lived longer than any other short poetic form in European literature. So far as British literature is concerned, only the Augustan poets were not attracted by the sonnet. All other major poets, from the sixteenth century onwards, had written sonnets and the form is still very much alive. Although some poets have written poems containing more or less than fourteen lines— Donne wrote a sonnet with eighteen lines, Milton wrote one with twenty lines, and G.M. Hopkins wrote some 'curtal' sonnets, in which the octave and sestet are 'curtailed' into three-quarters of the normal length — the sonnet is a poem with a fixed number of lines. Compared with the drama, the novel and the epic, the fourteen-line sonnet is therefore, a very small literary form. It is also a prescribed form. The term 'prescribed form', or 'closed form' is applied to the sonnet because it is one of only a few kinds of poems which have their length and shape determined even before the poet begins to write; two other examples are the limerick and the triolet. Like these two kinds, the sonnet is identified by its form and not by its theme, which determines the identity of the tragedy or the ode. Far from being a stifling constraint, this prescribed length is actually helpful to the poet. In his wide ranging examination of 'kinds of literature', Alistair Fowler says that "far from inhibiting the author, genres are a positive support. They offer room…for him to write in…" The room offered by the genre of the sonnet is small and is therefore both a challenge and a security for the poet, as Michael Spiller has pointed out.

Except Augustans, almost all other major poets adopted this form. Its 'prescribed' form is its uniqueness. This form is both a challenge and a

Let us check our Progress:

1. What is the uniqueness of sonnet as poetic form?
2. Is the form sonnet a help or a hindrance to the poet? Explain.

UNIT 1(d): THE SONNET IN RENAISSANCE BRITAIN: THE BEGINNINGS

The sixteenth century not only saw the birth of the English Sonnet, but has been characterized as 'the century of the sonnet'. The statistics alone are enough to substantiate this observation.

Historians of the sonnet have shown that between 1530 and 1650, about 3000 poets produced some 200,000 sonnets; moreover, every poet who won some recognition tried his hand at this small literary form. So far as British poetry is concerned, the years mentioned above define the age of the sonnet; it was almost totally neglected after 1650 till it was revived in the nineteenth century, since when it has had a steady course. While on the continent sonnets could be and were written on various themes apart from the theme of love, in Britain love-sonnets were preponderant. Again, where other European poets, such as Tasso in Italy and Ronsard in France, wrote hundreds of sonnets (Tasso wrote 1,000 and Ronsard is credited with 700 or so), the output of no British sonneteer comes anywhere near these numbers. It can be said, however, that what they lacked in quantity, the British sonneteers made up for in quality, for the most distinctive and original poets of the time turned to the sonnet form : Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert and Milton.

The sixteenth century: "the century of the sonnet". Sonnets were neglected between 1650 and its revival in the 19th century. In Britain love sonnets were preponderant and of quality springing from the hands of Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare.....

The first British writer of the sonnet was Thomas Wyatt, a courtier, like the inventor of the sonnet, Giacomo da Lentino. The parallel between the two has been stretched further to include their sovereigns. Like Emperor Frederick II, Henry VIII of England was a cultured, enlightened and ruthless despot. Like da Lentino, Wyatt was a courtier trained for diplomatic service. Wyatt's diplomatic service took him abroad, in particular to France and Italy, and it is a reasonable assumption that he began writing sonnets after his visit to Italy in 1527. In fact the sonnet entered Spain and France at about the same time under the influence of Italian poetry. Wyatt, along with Surrey, was acclaimed by his contemporaries for polishing "our rude and vulgar manner of homely poesie, from that that it ahd been before", as George Puttenham commented in the 1580s in *The Arte of English Poesie*. Wyatt and Surrey could achieve this, according to Puttenham, because they tasted the "sweet and stately measures and style of the Italian poetry." For any one with literary

Thomas Wyatt, first British sonneteer started writing sonnets under French and Italian influence. In the hands of Wyatt and Surrey "our rude and homely manner of vulgar Poesie" became polished — Petrarchan poetic style was the best model for emulation.

and cultural accomplishments in Renaissance Europe, Italian literature, art and music were the ultimate standards of taste. For courtiers especially, Petrarchan poetic style was the best model for emulation. It is not surprising therefore that Wyatt should have been inspired by Petrarch's example to write sonnets in English. His own admiration for Petrarchan sonnets was reinforced by French and Spanish pioneers of the sonnet, Marot and Boscan, who wrote sonnets in imitation of Petrarch in their native tongues. However, though Petrarch wrote a prefatory sonnet to his sequence, expressing his own need to employ the sonnet form for conveying his experiences, Wyatt has left no such explanation either in his sonnets or outside them. Altogether thirty-three sonnets can be attributed to Wyatt and a number of them are translations from Petrarch.

Wyatt introduced the final couplet, but Surrey invented it as a whole. Their sonnets found a wider* readership, *because of their publication in 'Tottel's Miscellany'. Here, though, Wyatt, as an eal, outranked Surrey and others, yet Surrey contributed more in influencing the later course of the sonnet form in England. Surrey invented a sonnet form (rhyme scheme 4+4+4+2) better suited to the character of the English language

It is also clear from these sonnets that Wyatt took his inspiration not only from Petrarch but also from Italian followers of Petrarch. Some of Wyatt's sonnets, again, are adaptations of Petrarch's and others are completely original. What is most remarkable , however, is that Wyatt did not adopt the form of the Petrarchan sonnet, but invented a new form. In the Italian sonnet, as we have seen, the sestet consists of two tercets; but Wyatt created with the following rhyme scheme : CDDC EE. However, one of his sonnets, though ending with a couplet, rhymes CDC CDD. The final couplet introduced by Wyatt was rarely seen in Italian or French sonnets, but British sonneteers were immediately drawn to it. The final couplet plays an important role in subsequent British Sonnets too, and it may be said that a large part of the effect of a British sonnet derives from it, though Keats said that he faced problems in giving the couplet appropriate form and finality. Since the concluding couplet cannot be found in most Italian or French sonnets, Wyatt must have either invented it or derived it from some other source.

The English, were trying hard to fit a recalcitrant language to the demands of a difficult prescribed form tended to employ a new version (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG) as found in Surrey. Surrey was influenced by the Petrarchan themes of suffering and idealisation, of various purposes — religious, satirical and amatory and of private integrity.

Recent scholars have shown that Wyatt borrowed the rhyming couplet from another short verse form in Italian, the *Strambotto* (pl. *Strambotti*). The *Strambotto*, an eight-line verse form rhyming ABABABCC, was mainly associated with the Italian poet, Serafino dell'Aquila, who contributed another verse from to English court poetry of the 1520s and 1530s - the stanzaic *frottola*. Serafino used the *Strambotto* as a shortened form of the sonnet, developing wittily a single conceit or antithesis. Elizabeth Heale has shown that Wyatt's sonnet "My heart I gave thee, not to do it pain" combines two of Serafino's *Strambotti*. Serafino used the *Strambotto* as a witty exercise on Petrarchan conceits and as a text for singing; Wyatt, however, was drawn to its epigrammatic quality and used the form as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the concluding couplets of his sonnets. By

introducing the final couplet into the sonnet form Wyatt anticipated one important feature of the English form; but the form as a whole was invented by Henry Howard, East of Surrey, who saw himself as a poetic disciple of Wyatt. Their sonnets found a wider readership after the publication, by the bookseller Richard Tottel, of an anthology entitled *Songs and Sonnets written by the Right Honourable Lord Henry Howard late Earl of Surrey and other*. Published in 1557, this anthologyis better known as *Tottel's Miscellany* and contained 271 poems by Wyatt, Surrey, Nicholas Grimald and some other unnamed writers in a number of forms imported from continental literature and sought to be naturalized in English. Surrey was mentioned in the title of the anthology, not because he was a better poet, but because he was an earl and therefore outranked Wyatt and others.

Moreover, Surrey's contribution to the anthology was far less in volume than that of Wyatt. But in the matter of influencing the later course of the sonnet form in England, Surrey's contribution was much more important than that of Wyatt. Surrey invented the English form of the sonnet, later adopted by Shakespeare and hence better known as the Shakespearean sonnet. Surrey attempted the Italian form only once and then moved towards greater freedom of rhyme and stanzaic pattern. While the strict Petrarchan form employs two quatrains followed by two tercets (4+4+3+3), using only five rhymes, the English form uses three quatrains in which the single lines rhyme alternately followed by a rhyming couplet (4+4+4+2). It uses seven rhymes and it is possible to suggest that Surrey invented a sonnet form better suited to the character of the English language. It has been observed by F. T. Prince, in his essay titled "The Sonnet From Wyatt to Shakespeare", that rhyme in Italian is abundant, which made it possible for the intricate Petrarchan form to be employed almost endlessly since its invention. The English, on the other hand, were trying hard to fit a recalcitrant language to the demands of a difficult prescribed form. They therefore tended to employ versions of the form which would be more suited to the genius of their pattern. While the strict Petrarchan form employs two quatrains followed by two tercets (4+4+3+3), using only five rhymes, the English form uses three quatrains in which the single lines rhyme alternately followed by a rhyming couplet (4+4+4+2). It uses seven rhymes and it is possible to suggest that Surrey invented a sonnet form better suited to the character of the English language. It has been observed by F. T. Prince, in his essay titled "The Sonnet From Wyatt to Shakespeare", that rhyme in Italian is abundant, which made it possible for the intricate Petrarchan form to be employed almost endlessly since its invention. The English, on the other hand, were trying hard to fit a recalcitrant language to the demands of a difficult prescribed form. They therefore tended to employ versions of the form which would be more suited to the genius of their language. Surrey, by employing as many as seven rhymes in his

The English, were trying hard to fit a recalcitrant language to the demands of a difficult prescribed form tended to employ a new version (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG) as found in Surrey. Surrey was influenced by the Petrarchan themes of suffering and idealisation, of various purposes — religious, satirical and amatory and of private integrity.

version of the sonnet (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG) therefore, invented an enduring sonnet form which was destined to be the site of many a poetic triumph. Surrey seems to have moved to this sonnet from only after having written three sonnets in an awkward rhyme scheme : ABAB ABAB ABAB CC.

It is clear that he did not like this pattern, for he introduced a change of rhyme in the second quatrain, another change in the third, and a different rhyme in the couplet. This form is easier to write, since no rhyme sound is used more than twice. Its acceptability to British sonneteers was proved by the form's immediate success: a large number of sonnets in *Tottel's Miscellany*, written by Surrey's acquaintances, are in his rhyme scheme rather than Wyatt's. Although Surrey rejected the strict discipline of the Petrarchan form, he was attracted by the Petrarchan themes of suffering and idealization. He was also influenced by Petrarch's use of the sonnet for various purposes - religious, satirical and amatory. Following Petrarch, he also cultivated the theme of private integrity as opposed to a public world of corruption and change. In his elegiac sonnet on Wyatt, "Diverse thy death too diversely bemoan", the dead poet is feminized as Thisbe.

Like the dead Laura in the second part of Petrarch's *Rime*, Wyatt is transformed into a figure of spiritual greatness. No account of the beginnings of the English sonnet would be complete without a brief glance at the first female writer of sonnets in Britain. Earlier accounts of the evolution of the sonnet in Britain completely ignored her and the sonnet was thus presented as an exclusively male preserve. Just as in sixteenth and early seventeenth century love sonnets the woman was, to use Sidney's witty Oxymoron, an "absent presence", so her point of view was unrepresented in the sonnet. Indeed, it was not until Elizabeth Barrett Browning published her sequence of love sonnets, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, in 1850, those women poets were said to become active participants in the sonnet tradition.

Anne Lock, the first female English sonneteer (sonnets published in Tottel's Miscellany, 1560) — But Elizabeth Barret Browning ("Sonnets from the Portuguese", 1850) was the first active participant in the sonnet tradition — Lock was a follower of Surrey. But she characterized her sonnet sequence as "A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner."

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achievement of composing the first sonnet sequence in English. This sequence was published within three years of *Tottel's Miscellany*, in 1560. One reason for its obscurity was that the whole sequence was hidden away at the back of a small volume of Calvin's sermons. Lock used the sonnet form invented by Surrey to compose a sequence of twenty one sonnets. Each one of her sonnets was a paraphrase of one verse of Psalm 51, and therefore her sonnets are not erotic in interest; in fact, she characterised the sequence as 'A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner'. Her sonnet persona is unique in the history of the sonnet so far, since it is a development of the /I/ of the Psalms. A historian of the development of the sonnet, Michael Spiller, has commented that though Lock's verse is metaphorically simple, "her ear is fault-less - better than Surrey's - and her command of enjambment in the service of the flow of passion is astonishing at so early a date and unequalled until Sidney began to write". As we saw earlier, Calvin's sermons had the effect of taking all attention away from the sonnets which followed in the same volume, and the unfortunate consequence was that only Wyatt and Surrey were recognized, by Puttenham and others, as the English poets who sweetened their native tongue as "the first reformers of our English metre and style".

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Compare between Wyatt and Surrey as sonneteer.
2. Write a short note on the female sonneteers in English.

UNIT 1 (e): LATER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SONNET IN BRITAIN: SIDNEY, SPENSER, SHAKESPEARE

It is a curious fact in the history of the British sonnet that though Wyatt and Surrey (and of course, Ann Lock) introduced the sonnet and effected major innovations in the form, no British poet followed their example until Philip Sidney's sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, was published posthumously in 1591. Another poet, Thomas Watson, had earlier written a sequence of love-poems which he called sonnets, but no one else would accept this classification. Watson's sequence, given the Greek title *Hekatompathia* by the poet, consisted of poems each of which contain eighteen-line stanzas in the following rhyme scheme : ABABCC DE DEFF GHGH. The poems obviously do not conform to the prescribed limits of the sonnet form or to the arrangement of rhymes in any known sonnet. Nevertheless, Watson's sequence did exert some influence on later sonneteers. One important reason for its subsequent influence is to be found in the sub-title of *Hekatompathia: Passionate Century of Love*. The adjective 'passionate', along with the word 'Love', makes it clear that these poems are erotic in subject matter, not didactic or religious. The term 'century' gives a numerological coherence to the sonnets and in this Watson probably

Thomas Watson's "Hekatompathia : Passionate Century of Love" — erotic in subject matter — Watson followed Petrarch, e.g. his second group of poems represent some kind of moral revolt against Love.

followed Petrarch's example. In his *Rime* Petrarch included 366 poems to correspond with a year and a day. Moreover, Watson divides his so called sonnets into two groups, the second group consisting of poems which represent some kind of moral revolt against Love, just as Petrarch had divided his *Rime* into two parts, comprising sonnets before and after the death of Laura.

Michael Spiller has shown that the use of the term 'sonnet' to mean short poems which might contain more than fourteen lines was not confined to Watson. In early Italian usage too, *sonnet* or *sonetto* simply meant 'a short lyric poem', but the sonnets of Petrarch, along with numerous sonnets composed by other Italian poets, had the effect of making the term stable in its meaning, so that very early in the history of Italian poetry, the term was exclusively linked with poems of fourteen lines divided into octave and sestet. But in Britain, throughout the sixteenth century and even in the early seventeenth century, the word 'sonnet', especially when used in the phrase 'Songs and Sonnets', as it was used by Tottel in the title of his *Miscellany*, frequently meant 'a light poem'. No contemporary of Watson would have found it incongruous when one of the two true sonnets in *Hekatompathia* hailed Watson as the English Petrarch. Tottel's *Miscellany* did not make the true sonnet immediately popular, but when the sonnet eventually became current in Britain in the 1590s, it was the form invented by Surrey which became most popular since Surrey's poems were printed first in Tottel's anthology.

In Italian poetry, sonnet meant poems of 14 lines divided into octave and sestet — In Britain it meant "a light poem". After Wyatt and Surrey, next British sonneteer of any importance was Sidney. — No major poetic talent turned to the sonnet form during the long gap between 1557 and 1582.

The fact that most English sonneteers tended to use the final couplet may be traced to the influence of Wyatt as well. It is significant that neither the Italian sonnet, not the sonnets of French poets who had been using the form from the late 1540s onwards, showed any marked preference for the concluding couplet. But if the sonnet form introduced by Wyatt and Surrey exerted so much influence on later British sonnets, how can we explain the fact that the next British sonneteer of any importance was Sidney, who composed his sonnet sequence only in 1582 ? Earlier historians of the sonnet such as Sidney Lee and J. W. Lever, blamed a negative cast of mind among sixteenth century British poets for the non-appearance of the sonnet during the long gap between 1557 and 1582. However, a comparatively recent historian like Michael Spiller has shown that sonnets were being written in British during these twenty five years and that since no major poetic talent turned to the form and since sonnets were not always clearly distinguished from other short lyrics, these poetic exercises failed to draw much attention. But the prestige attached to the name of Sir Philip Sidney gave a tremendous boost to the process of popularizing the sonnet.

Sidney's sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, initiated the vogue for writing sonnets and between 1592, one year after the posthumous publication of Sidney's sonnet sequence, and 1609, the year in which Shakespeare's sonnet sequence was published, more than twenty sequences were composed in English. However, it is not simply the glamour associated Sidney's name which made

love sonnets popular in Britain.A more important factor was the way in which Petrarchan conventions of love and service fulfilled the needs of the British Queen Elizabeth's court. Sonnet sequences dominated literary fashion during the last decade or so of Elizabeth's reign, while the vogue effectively ended with her death. A more important factor was the way in which the Petrarchan conventions of love and service fulfilled the needs of the British Queen Elizabeth's court. Sonnet sequences dominated literary fashion during the last decade or so of Elizabeth's reign, while the vogue effectively ended with her death. A female monarch governing a society defined by patriarchy, and surrounded by powerful and potentially dangerous nobles, Elizabeth consciously adopted a policy of encouraging ideas which would legitimate her power. She helped create myths about her own divinity and patronized ceremonies and festivals which foregrounded a romanticized medievalism based on ideas of loyalty and service. Sidney's sonnet sequence, despite having its roots in his passion for a real woman, Penelope Devereux, has been seen partly as an act of political courtship on the part of a chivalrous knight who participated in tournaments under the name 'Sir Philisides'. It has been rightly said by Peter Hyland that "any work that attempted to win the favour of a woman who was powerful, distant and cruel, beautiful and virtuous and, above all, unattainable, clearly coded within its fictions an account of the courtier's relationship to his monarch". From a technical point of view, Sidney's development of the sonnet sequence (Watson too must be credited with initiating the idea of a sequence) was partly intended to compensate for the limitations of the individual sonnet, because a sequence, free from the restrictions of the individual sonnet's short space, enables the poet to play variations on his theme, to develop connections and contracts from sonnet to sonnet.

Sir Philip Sidney's "Astrophil and Stella" (1582) initiated the vogue for writing sonnets — twenty sequences composed between 1592 and 1609 — Petrarchan conventions of love and service fulfilled the needs of the British Queen Elizabeth's court — She helped create myths about her own divinity to legitimate her power —Sidney's sequence, revealing his passion for Penelope Devereux interpreted as an act of political courtship of a knight, "Sir Philisides". Sidney's development of sonnet sequence — sequence, not restricted like individual sonnet enables the poet toplay variations on the theme, to develop connection and contracts from sonnet tosonnet.

Sidney's 'Astrophil and Stella' conveys the distance between the pining lover and the lady love—Several criticisms concerning the autobiographical element in Sidney's sequence— Sidney's sonnets are full of humour, simple fun, sarcasm, wit and irony— He uses the apostrophe most liberally— Astrophil appears to be sometimes a frustrated lover, sometimes the butt of the poet's irony, and sometimes a restless lover — Sidney experimented with various sonnet forms — Surrey's model, Petrarchan form, British form.

Sidney made several other innovations. The relationship between an adoring lover and an unattainable lady-love had been a convention of sonnet sequences from Petrarch onwards, but the title of Sidney's sequence was chosen by the poet to set up multiple resonances. *Astrophil and Stella* translates as "star-lover and star", wittily and in an entirely original manner conveying the distance between the pining lover and the cold, beautiful woman. Since the name 'Astrophil' partly contains within itself the name of Philip Sidney, the title hints at an autobiographical situation Penelope Devereux was married to Lord Rich, and there are at least three sonnets in Sidney's sequence which contain puns on the word 'rich'. However, since the

references are cryptic, it has been suggested by J.G. Nicholls that *Astrophil and Stella* could have been read by Sidney's contemporaries in two distinct ways : "as biography by those in Sidney's circle and therefore in the know, or as a piece of fiction by those outside this circle". Nicholls also gives a salutary warning against the tendency to look for auto-biographical truth in early modern love sonnets, by pointing out that contemporary readers did not attach as much importance to the biographical interpretation of poetry as we are apt to do. The relationship between Stella and Penelope, like that between Petrarch's Laura and the real-life figure of Laura de Sade, was as complex as that between art and life. In fact, Sidney's sequence continually raises tantalizing questions like the following: Is Sidney wholly serious or just wittily playing variations upon a convention? How seriously should we take the protestations of love in *Astrophil and Stella*? Are these protestations Sidney's Astrophil's? Such questions arise because of another significant feature which distinguishes Sidney's sonnet sequence from any other sequence composed earlier or even afterwards. Sidney's sonnets are full of humour, simple fun, sarcasm, wit and irony; very often the irony and the sarcasm are directed against Astrophil himself, so that we tend to regard him not only as a frustrated lover but also as the butt of the poet's irony. This ironical presentation of the lover raises an interesting question regarding the poet's handling of the sonnet persona. Petrarch made his readers aware of the gap between the /I/ who writes and the /I/ who suffers as a lover. Sidney deconstructed this /I/ further by deliberately enhancing the artifice of the text, as Spiller has pointed out; the result is that both /I/s, the writing /I/ and the suffering /I/, are "the invention of a sign system - in this case the Petrarchan convention - which is itself the product of an implied Writer concealed behind the text." The reader thus is taken to a metafictional level, continually aware of the fictionality of the text. All Sidney's sonnets are not humorous, however; there are some like Sidney's second sonnet in your course, which express an intense sadness. Again, a large number of Sidney's sonnets are cast in the form of apostrophe beginning with or containing a passionate address to a person or an object (like the first Sidney sonnet in your course). In fact, Sidney uses the apostrophe far more liberally than any other British sonneteer. Many of these apostrophes create the illusion of the presence of a third party. Moreover, though the effect of this figure of speech is more often serious, solemn or sad, too many apostrophes as used by Sidney create an impression of excited movement, so that Astrophil appears to be a restless lover. That Sidney was very conscious of the sonnet tradition and of his own artistic role and resources is evident from the very opening sonnet of his sequence. This sonnet can be called "a sonnet on sonnet" and it sets out the poet's artistic aims in composing sonnets. That opening sonnet declares that originality, rather than derivativeness, is the poet's motto. This need not imply that Sidney invented a whole new sonnet form; it means only that the sonneteer must not cull flowers of rhetoric from other poets. Sidney had earlier experimented with different sonnet forms. There are nineteen sonnets in his pastoral romance, *Arcadia.* Nine of these sonnets follow Surrey's model, five are Petrarchan in form and five have entirely unprecedented rhyme schemes invented by

Sidney himself, including one sonnet using a single rhyme :AAAAAAAAAAAAAA. Sidney mostly used the Italian octave followed by an English sestet, but he also sometimes adopted the English form of three quatrains followed by a couplet. (An interesting exercise for you will be a comparison of the forms of the two Sidney sonnets in your course.) Sidney's sonnets also have a dramatic quality, using rhythms and phrases which give the impression of actual speech; appropriately enough, the playwright Thomas Nashe described *Astrophil and Stella* as "the tragicomedy of love".

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What are the salient features of Sidney's sonnet sequence?
2. What autobiographical element do you find in Sidney's sonnet sequence?

UNIT 1(f): SPENSER'S *AMORETTI*

Astrophil and Stella led to an explosion of sonnet sequences in Renaissance Britain, but very few of them could instill new life into the convention of the love sonnet. One of the few exceptions was Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*, "little love-offerings". (Among the other sonnet sequences, at least two have powerful individual sonnets: Samuel Daniel's *Delia and Michael Drayton's Ideas Mirrour.)* Spenser's sequence celebrates his love for Elizabeth Boyle, whom he eventually married, and though the 88 sonnets (one was printed twice, which explains why the number is often taken to be 89) follow the Petrarchan convention by ending in disappointment, the sequence was published along with *Epithalamion,* a joyous hymn celebrating the poet's marriage. Thus in one important respect Spenser's sonnets reversed the Petrarchan love convention: Petrarch (and Sidney, too) celebrated adulterous love for an unattainable mistress, but Spenser commemorates marriage, thereby domesticating desire into Christian marriage. In this respect Spenser is said to have effected an uneasy fusion between the erotic and the spiritual, the conventional and the autobiographical. This is not only a unique contribution to the Petrarchan sonnet tradition; it also solves what has been called the fundamental problem of the Petrarchan sonnet: "that its space is the space of disjunction", since its speaker is always responding to a mistress who is absent. It is true that *Amoretti* ends in disappointment, with a sonnet which expresses, perhaps more intensely than any other sonnet on absence, the lover's sad awareness that the beloved is not with him. But Spenser could afford to do this because he was going to follow it with the marriage song, *Epithalamion*, in which the separation of the lover and his desired Other is ended. Scholars have found great significance in the way the *Amoretti* sonnets were printed in the original, 1595, volume: apart from Sonnet I, all the rest faced each other in mirror fashion. Thus Sonnet 75 (in your course), which is about the erasure of the name of the beloved, confronts Sonnet 74, which is about the significance of the name. Since the links are closer in the later part of the sequence, one may suggest that "the pairings are designed to reflect the increasing closeness of the sequence's subject-pair, the lover and his beloved". (Brooks-Davies).

Spenser's handling of the sonnet persona is very different from that of either Petrarch or Sidney. The narrator of *Amoretti* appears to be a naive, artless figure, never subjected to irony, unlike Astrophil in Sidney's sequence. Though many dates in Spenser's own life are given in the sonnets, they do not form a coherent narrative of an important chapter in the poet's biography. In fact, too much emphasis on the autobiographical truth of the sonnets obscures a very important feature of *Amoretti.* Spenser had been composing his great epical poem meant as a homage to Queen Elizabeth, *Faerie Queene*, when he chose to write the sonnets He thus allowed private love to supersede his public love for Queen Elizabeth. Significantly, the poet's private beloved was also called Elizabeth. It may be said therefore that the themes of desire and distance in the love sonnets mirror the poet's feelings for his Queen - the poet seeking the Queen's favour, sometimes successfully receiving it, but sometimes feeling the threat of withdrawal of royal favour. Therefore the author of *Amoretti* compensates by indulging in fantasies about Elizabeth and also by creating, controlling, criticizing and textually mastering his beloved. A very good example of this textual mastering is provided by the sonnet in your course. In that sonnet waves wash away the name of Elizabeth inscribed by the lover on the shore, the lover can write the name again. The waves are of course, in the first place, an image of temporal process; but they are also "an assertion of authorial power to erase the mightiest name in the land - to achieve in script and on paper an act of unnaming that compensates for the months and years spent creating Queen Elizabeth through the fictions of the *Faerie Queene*" (Brooks-Davies). Thus, as Brooks-Davies goes on to say, the queen is one of the "baser things" which will inevitably "die in dust" in this sonnet, while Elizabeth Boyle is the woman assured of eternal life in her lover's poetry. This sonnet seriously questions the view that the narrator in *Amoretti* is naive and artless. As for the poet himself, the sonnet form chosen by him is a supreme triumph of poetic art.

The sonnet persona in 'Amoretti' appears to be a naive, artless figure, never subjected to irony — Spenser allowed his private love to supersede his public love for Queen Elizabeth in the sonnets. — Spenser fantasies indulges in about Elizabeth and creates, controls and criticizes and textually masters his beloved. Spenser's rhyme scheme — ABAB BCBC CDCD EE increases the sense of flow in each sonnet and firmly lies the octave to the sestet.

Spenser cannot be said to have invented this form, which uses five rhymes instead of the usual seven in the form invented by Surrey. The rhyme scheme of the Spenserian sonnet is ABAB BCBC CDCD EE; the quatrains are interlinked in a manner reminiscent of the "rhyme royal" stanza. But whether or not he invented this form, he is certainly its most accomplished and celebrated practitioner. This form is more complicated than any other sonnet form and no one used it after Spenser. The repetition of the rhymes not only links the quatrains, but increases the sense of flow in each sonnet and firmly ties the octave to the sestet. F. T. Prince maintains that only Spenser could have used this complex form for an entire sonnet sequence. The difficulty of finding so many rhymes and interlacing them so firmly was far less for him than for any other sonneteer, because of "his unusual facility in rhyme".

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What are the distinct features of Spenser's sonnets sequence?
2. Write a short note on the autobiographical element in Spenser's *Amoretti*.
3. Write a note on Spenser's handling of rhyme- scheme.

SUMMING UP

The sonnet, invented in Italy in the thirteenth century, was turned into a major and influential poetic genre by Francis Petrarch. Petrarch, in writing love sonnets for Laura, a woman he might have loved only in his imagination, created an entire set of conventions in the love sonnet, including their organization in a sequence, which were imitated by a host of later European poets. It has been rightly said that his *Rime* became "the Bible of European love poetry" (Spiller). Petrarch used the already established Italian form of the sonnet, and though this form was often adopted by later sonneteers, British sonnet writers like Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney and Spenser each introduced distinctive thematic and structural modifications. The sonnet came to Britain rather late, the first examples being those of Wyatt and Surrey published in *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557. After a gap of twenty five years, during which some individual sonnets might have been composed by minor poets, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* led to a flood of sonnet sequences addressed to mostly fictional mistresses. To Sidney thus belongs the credit of writing the first sonnet sequence in English, for Watson's *Hekatompathia*, which had come out earlier, was a sequence of poems which cannot be called sonnets. If these early British Sonneteers made important innovations in the sonnet tradition, Shakespeare was to make radical departures from the Petrarchan tradition.

UNIT 2 (a)

ANTI-PETRARCHANISM

Content Structure

UNIT 2(a): Anti-Petrarchanism

UNIT 2(b): Autobiographical truth

UNIT 2(c): "Two loves"

UNIT 2(d): The Formal Features of the Shakespearian Sonnet

Almost all the sonnet sequences written in Renaissance Britain had titles, but it was long believed that Shakespeare's sonnet sequence had none. Recent scholarship has however, firmly

established the fact that Shakespeare's sonnet sequence too has a title. Thus Katherine Duncan-Jones, the editor of the Sonnets in the Arden Shakespeare (1997) series, unhesitatingly declares, "The title of Shakespeare's sonnets is *Shakespeare's Sonnets."* A later editor, Colin Burrow *(The Oxford Shakespeare,* 2002*),* says, "The title Shakespeare's Sonnets sounds conclusive". This kind of "genitive title" is one of the many features which completely distinguish Shakespeare's Sonnets from any other sonnet collections of the time. Only one other sonnet sequence of the time, as Duncan-Jones points out, carries the author's name in the possessive as part of the title - Syr. P.S. his Astrophel and Stella, but since the sequence was published posthumously, the title must have been given by the publisher for the purpose of publicity. It one motive behind the mention of the poet's name in the title was to emulate the example set by the title of Astrophel and Stella, a sequence Shakespeare is known to have liked, another and more important aim was to draw attention to the unique qualities of the sequence by boldly claiming that the sonnets were the work of one individual genius. Far from following the Petrarchan convention in any way, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* possess features which are non-Petrarchan, even anti-Petrarchan. Instead of presenting an idealized lady love as the object of the lover's intense devotion and desire, the sonnets of Shakespeare (actually the first 126 sonnets) express an equally intense love for a young man, thereby rendering the traditional sonnet heroine completely redundant. Like Petrarch's Laura and Sidney's Stella, the sonnet heroines of Petrarch's English imitators, such as Lodge, Drayton, Daniel, Constable and others, are also female. No doubt in order to defend the moral integrity of Britain's greatest poet against the charge of homoeroticism, a late nineteenth century Shakespearean scholar, Sidney Lee, claimed that it was exceedingly common for Renaissance European sonneteers to celebrate the charms of young men.

The fact, however, is that only one British Sonneteer, Richard Barnfield, wrote about the charms of a young man in a group of twenty sonnets included in his *Cynthia* and addressed to a boy whom

the poet, following classical mythology, calls Ganymede. The young man in Shakespeare's sonnetsis not given any name, actual or invented, and scholars are still trying to identify him with a real-life individual. The sonnets of Shakespeare are not all about love of one man for another; there also is a woman who is the object of tempestuous passion. But this woman features in only 28 sonnets, which brutally defy Petrachanism. The Petrarchan sonnet heroine is a chaste and aristocratic lady who remains unattainable for the lover. But sonnets 127-154 in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* present an obviously non-aristocratic woman who does not have any of the characteristics of the Petrarchan heroine-youth, beauty, intelligence and chastity. While the sonnet heroine of tradition is fair, the woman who draws both fascination and repulsion from the lover in Shakespeare's sonnets is dark. Yet another pillar of the Petrarchan love convention is the mistress's chastity. But the "dark lady" in Shakespeare's sonnets is promiscuous, "as black as hell, as dark as night". (Sonnet 147). It is not only her complexion that is a complete contrast to that of the Petrarchan mistress; her breath is foul, her walk is ungainly, her wit is short. She seems to exist solely as an object of male lust. The Petrarchan lover is prompted by the beauty of his mistress to feel desire for her, but the lover in Shakespeare's sonnets puts biology before beauty. Moreover, since the lover thinks that the woman is unintelligent, he presents her as a butt of male disdain at the same time as she is a convenient outlet for male desire. That is why we find, in the sonnets dealing with the dark woman, a strong note of misogyny which is as far removed from Petrarchan mistress-worship as the "dark lady" is from Laura. Shakespeare's deliberate rejection of the hyperboles of Petrachanism is best seen in Sonnet 130.

Controversies over the title of Shakespeare's sonnet series — some say, it is "Shakespeare's Sonnets". Shakespearean sonnets possess features that are non-Petrarchan and sometimes anti-Petrarchan — they express intense love for a young man (in first 126 sonnets) — the last 28 sonnets deal with 'black lady' who is ugly and promiscuous — the lover in the sonnets puts biology before beauty — the lady is a butt of male disdain — we find deliberate rejection of hyperboles in these sonnets.

In Shakespearean Sonnets, the Petrarchan adoration for his lady love or apotheosis is directed towards the male lover — the man is presented as psychologically and morally far superior to the woman.

In the majority of the sonnets of Shakespeare, the adoration reserved for the Petrarchan sonnet heroine is directed towards the male lover. The effect is that of a total rejection of Petrarchanism. We have seen that in his later sonnets Petrarch presents Laura as the source of his spiritual enlightenment, by associating her with a heavenly being. This sort of apotheosis is by and large absent from the sonnets of Shakespeare. The terms of Christian worship employed by Petrarch to spiritualize Laura are in fact used to glorify the male lover in the *Sonnets*. Sonnet 105 appears to be a mockery of the Christian concept of Trinity as the speaker finds in his male lover "Three themes in one". The male is explicitly presented as superior to any woman in Sonnet 18 and Sonnet 20. In the former sonnet the friend is not only fairer than a summer's day, but also, more significantly, unaffected

by "nature's changing course". As Duncan-Smith explains, the phrase refers to menstruation, known in Shakespeare's time as "monthly courses". In Sonnet 20 the young man is praised for possessing female beauty without female fickleness and for being unacquainted with "shifting change as is false woman's fashion". As Duncan-Smith glosses the lines, the reference is to the misogynistic commonplace that all women are fickle. Also implicit in the lines is a derogatory comment on women's need to change clothes because of menstruation. Thus in the *Sonnets* as a whole not only are two forms of love sharply contrasted, but as an object of love the man is presented as psychologically and morally superior to the woman, so that when, in Sonnet 144, the speaker says, "Two loves I have, of comfort and despair," it is not at all difficult to determine which love gives him comfort and which other plunges him into despair. It is clear now why Shakespeare could not have chosen as his title those conventionalized ones containing allusions to idealized females with names borrowed from classical mythology — *Astrophil and Stella, Delia, Diana* and so on. The point of calling his sonnets *Shakespeare's Sonnets* must have been to draw attention to the poet's redefinition of the genre and conventions of the Petrarchan love sonnet. The sonnet form adopted by Shakespeare was also unPetrarchan, of course, but in this he was not unique, and in any case his handling of the sonnet form will be the subject of a separate discussion.

There are negation of self, self-criticism, self-abasement and a kind of deconstructive self-doubt in the Shakespearean sonnet sequence.

Finally, as we have done with other sonneteers, we must examine the role of the speaker or sonnet persona in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Since Shakespeare was a dramatist as well, we might expect to hear more than one voice in his sonnets. He does not even start a single sonnet as a reply to something said by someone, as Sidney not infrequently does. "There is something very lonely about Shakespeare's sonnets" (Spiller). The very nature of Petrarchan love requires the love sonnets to be preoccupied with absence; but Shakespeare's sonnets are more obsessed with absence than those of any other contemporary sonneteer. The speaker of the sonnets is constantly grappling with the problem that the absence of the beloved is somehow a negation of his own self. There is also an infinitely greater note of self-criticism and self-abasement in these sonnets than in any other sequence. In the opening seventeen sonnets of the sequence, in sonnet 18 and several others, the speaker is confident, and free from self-doubt as he promises immortality to the young friend. But more and more as the sequence proceeds, he is assailed by anguish and uncertainty in a way that may be called existential or deconstructive. Deconstruction is achieved through ambiguation of language, as in the following lines from Sonnet 55:

So till the judgement that yourself arise, You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes. The plain meaning of the lines is that "your (the beloved's) image will be reflected in the eyes of the lovers". But since lovers' eyes were proverbially fickle, the image introduces a note of deconstructive doubt.

Similar doubt is introduced about the speaker's own self, his capacity for loyalty, his attitude to others.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What are the distinct features of Shakespearean sonnet sequence ?
2. How far is the Shakespearean sonnet sequence anti-Petrarchan ? Is it a conventional literary practice ? Discuss.

UNIT 2(b): AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TRUTH

Despite more than two centuries of research, there are very few biographical facts that may be said to have been proved beyond reasonable doubt. Since the themes of the *Sonnets* are so unconventional and the speaker's sexual intimacy with a man and a woman so unusual, it has been thought by many that they must be rooted in the poet's life, though it is equally plausible that Shakespeare invented the complex relationships, as he invented many complicated relationships and encounters in his plays. Equally uncertain is the dating of the *Sonnets*, for though Francis Meres referred in 1598 in his *Palladis Tamia* to Shakespeare's "sugred [sugared] Sonnets among his private friends," the reference only proves that some of the sonnets were written in or before 1598. But the *Sonnets* as a sequence were published only in 1609. It is possible to argue that the individual sonnets had been written much earlier, for by 1609 the fashion for writing love sonnets had declined. However, some scholars still argue for this later date because many of the sonnets display the stylistic boldness and startling image patterns which we associate with Shakespeare's mature plays. Again, it is impossible to say whether Shakespeare intended the sonnets as a coherent sequence since there is neither external not internal evidence regarding this. Indeed, various attempts have been made to rearrange the sonnets in different orders, but by and large the tendency of scholars and critics is to keep intact the sequence in which the sonnets were originally published. The *Sonnets* were dedicated to one who is identified only by the initials W.H., and it is usually assumed that this figure is the young man who is the speaker's beloved. The names of two noblemen of the period are mainly suggested as the real-life originals of W.H. - William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and Henry Wriothesley (whose initials are thus the wrong way round), Earl of Southampton. The "dark lady" is a more intriguing figure, and though attempts have been made to identify her with real women like Mary Fitton and Emilia Lanier, conclusive evidence is still lacking. It can be said, in fact, that the concentration on the autobiographical nature of the sonnets has largely been a waste of scholarly energy. Moreover, it has only deflected attention from the real significance of the Sonnets as works of art, as poetry. Any attempt to understand the sonnets as art must involve regarding them as fiction, in the same way as the plays are treated as fiction. Biographical

Several controversies over the autobiographical element in Shakespearean sonnets for their unusual theme and uncertain dating—controversies over the identity of some 'W.H.' and of the 'Dark lady'.

speculations are also kept out of this discussion because we are reading only six of Shakespeare's sonnets and these issues are not our concern.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a short note on the autobiographical element in the Shakespearean sonnets.

UNIT 2(c): 'TWO LOVES'

As indicated earlier, most commentators on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* till the beginning of the 20th century anxious to purify the sonnets of the slightest taint of homoeroticism, which was regarded as immoral as well as illegal for a long time, presented the lover's relationship with his male friend as essentially spiritual. A furtherconsequence of this denial was the foregrounding of the sonnet lover's passion for the "dark lady". This enabled the critics to claim that love in the sonnets is predominantly heterosexual. The foregrounding of the "dark lady" also makes it possible to relate her to the *femme fatale* or fatal woman of the European Romantic tradition, to figures like Petrarch's Laura, Keats' Fanny Brawne and W.B. Yeats's Maud Gonne. Thus, as Duncan-Smith has pointed out, the sonnets were sought to be linked to the same courtly love tradition which Shakespeare was rejecting. I should now like to mention and explain four recent views on the love relationships in the *Sonnets* and leave it to you to judge which one makes more sense.

Shakespeare's sonnets were not gender – specific : Colin Burrow — "Shakespeare's homosexuality is a 'readerly' fiction generated by a desire to read narrative coherence into a loosely associated group of poems." — The poems encourage the readers to imagine circumstances which would fit the texts, but they also multiply the possible meanings and their

Let us start with the view that the sonnets are not mainly about same-sex love, that many of those traditionally regarded as expressions of homoerotic passion are not in fact gender-specific. The most persuasive exponent of this view is Colin Burrow (The Oxford Shakespeare edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*). Burrow says that many of the poems in the group 1-126 which are treated as poems to a "young man" carefully avoid giving a fixed gender to their addressee. These poems deal with general themes like the lure of homoerotic attraction, the power of love, the pull of ethical admiration, and the fears, tension and anxiety of the lover.

Sonnet No. 18 is not gender specific. It is a great love poem.

Moreover, the "young man" of biographical critics is never actually so called in this group of sonnets. One of the terms used for the young man is "friend", which could have a double meaning - a lover as well as a moral equal and confidant; however, "friend" was also a double-gendered word in Shakespeare's time, meaning either mistress or a male companion. What causes the sonnet persona both frustration and delight is that the object of his desire refuses to be confined to one thing. These aspects of the *Sonnets* problematize the nature of the love, expressed in the first 126 sonnets. Even if we take it to be homoerotic, we cannot be sure whether it is physically consummated, or whether Shakespeare was a homosexual.

Perhaps these are wrong questions to ask, because the sonnets refuse to be fixed in setting, tantalizingly coming close to love, sexual desire and admiration for the friend. "Shakespeare's homosexuality is a 'readerly' fiction generated by a desire to read narrative coherence into a loosely associated group of poems" (A "readerly" text, fulfills the reader's expectations regarding structure and meaning). On the other hand, addressing the friend as "sweet boy" or "lovely boy", does raise questions about the exact nature of the relationship between the speaker and his young friend. These questions have to be examined in the context of early modern notions of sexuality. No one in that period would have called himself "homosexual", a term which entered English only in the 1890s; indeed, no one of the period would have attempted to define his identity by his sexual activity. The language used to describe same-sex love was not precise and had many gaps. The actual physical relationship between men was called "sodomy", a crime punishable by death. But the young boys playing the roles of women in Shakespeare's comedies aroused some kind of desire in the minds of the predominantly male audiences. The boys' relationship with the adult male actors in a company often verged on, or even partook of, homoeroticism. Against this is to be placed the custom of the period which made it common and acceptable for men to kiss and embrace each other freely, though such behaviour could also be presented by hostile observers as the outward marks of sodomy. All these observations lead to the realization of the most important aspect of the same-sex relationship in the *Sonnets*, namely that the form of sexuality presented here encompasses all the prevailing notions about love between men, even deriving pleasure from their incompatibility. "So should readers of the Sonnets give up on the real pleasure and the real and liberating disturbance which comes from thinking that Shakespeare was homosexual ?" To this question Burrow's answer is Yes and No. The poems encourage the readers to imagine circumstances which would fit the texts, but they also multiply the possible meanings and their application.

Much the same point can be made about the male-female relationship in the group of sonnets 127-154. The "dark lady", like the "young man", is never called the name given to her by critics. Like the friend, she is a complex figure, becoming different things in different sonnets. She is the antithesis of the Petrarchan mistress in Sonnet 130; she is beautiful and desirable in Sonnet 127. Like the term "friend", "mistress" also was a semantically mobile word, meaning "the woman who commands a man's affection" and also "a woman with whom the man has an illicit relationship". The presence of the "dark woman" outside the exclusively male bonds of earlier sonnets makes the love depicted in the Sonnets triangular. Two points can be made about Sonnet 18. It can be taken independently as one of the greatest love poems in the *Sonnets*, which will corroborate Burrow's views. The sonnet belongs to the "young man" group, but does not give a

The sonnets about the young man are the narrative of a love affair, with a beginning (sonnet 1-19) describing how the speaker falls in love, a middle (sonnets 20-99) suggesting the consummation of the poet's passion and an end (sonnets 100-126) showing the decline of the affair.

definite gender to the addressee, and can therefore also be taken as addressed to a woman. The lover is addressed as "thou", which was an intimate mode of address equally applicable to a man and a woman. Richard Danson Brown *(Shakespeare 1609: "Cymbeline" and the "Sonnets")* gives two examples from twentieth century literature and culture which show how the poem can be used as a love poem addressed to a woman. In Evelyn Waugh's novel *The Loved One* (1948) an Englishman with poetic aspirations and living in Hollywood wants to seduce an American woman and in order to impress her, passes off famous English poems as his own composition. One such poem used by him is *Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's Day,* which is so well-known that even his culturally backward fancee vaguely recalls having read it somewhere. The second instance cited by Brown to prove the status of the sonnet as a love poem that can be addressed to a woman is from the film *Shakespeare in Love*, made in 1999. In this film the lovelorn Shakespeare himself is made to write the sonnet for a glamorous woman called Viola de Lesseps. It is an interesting fact that the makers of the film chose not to present Shakespeare as a homosexual, though presenting him as such in the much more liberal sexual climate of the end of the twentieth century would not have aroused moral outrage of the kind which eighteenth and nineteenth century critics generally expressed.

There is, nevertheless, a growing interest in the representation of homoeroticism in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* and many readers are convinced that the "young man" group of sonnets are essentially about same-sex love. As a representative of this view one may choose Bruce Smith. What follows is a brief summary of Smith's arguments in his book *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics*. In the first seventeen sonnets of Shakespeare the speaker's sexual feelings for the friend are carefully held in check, as the friend is urged to get married and perpetuate his virtue and beauty through his offspring. This plea to the friend may be characterized as homosocial desire which, however, changes by degrees into homosexual desire The friend, who is requested to enter matrimony for the sake of his love for the speaker, is soon being addressed as "dear my love" (sonnet 13) until the speaker confidently asserts that the friend's beauty will be eternized through his verse : "in eternal lines to time thou grow'st" (sonnet 18). "Love" in fact becomes the speaker's favourite epithet for the young man. The word, like the related "lover" and "lovely", was ambiguous in sixteenth and seventeenth-century usage. The "dark woman" is only once called a "friend", and she is more often characterized as a "mistress", a word which had an explicitly sexual reference. The word "friend", on the other hand, had a largely non-sexual reference. "We have, then, two people - and three terms for talking about them". But the young man and the dark woman are both referred to as the speaker's "loves" in sonnet 144, though one is called an "angel", while the other, "the woman coloured ill", is the "worser spirit". Sonnet 20 is generally considered crucial in determining the exact nature of the speaker's feelings for the young man. This sonnet ("A woman's face with nature's own hand painted/ Hast thou") can be read both as an affirmation of sexual desire for the

friend and as a negation of such desire. Obviously, those who settle for the view that the *Sonnets* express a homoerotic passion read the sonnet in the former sense. (Though the sonnet is not in your course, you should read it with the help of Duncan-Jones's annotations in the *Arden Shakespeare* edition to recognize its implied homoeroticism). It is difficult to escape the impression that the whole sonnet deliberately casts a male in the role which most sonnets would assign to a female. Moreover, Shakespeare does not stop at sonnet 20; in the poems that follow the poet writes about what happens when emotional desire becomes physical act. This sexual experience, according to Smith, resides largely in the puns, many of which do not simply occur in individual sonnets but are sustained through the whole sequence: "have" (sonnets 52, 87, 129), "will" (standing for male and female sexual organs as well as for sexual desire, in sonnets 57, 112, 134, 135, 136), "pride" (for male sexual organ, in sonnets 52, 64, 151). It is possible to maintain that in the sexual puns of the sonnets about the young man, as in the similar puns in the sonnets about the mistress (see commentary), Shakespeare lays bare the psychological and anatomical realities of sexual love. The sonnets about the young man are the narrative of a love affair, with beginning, middle and end. The beginning (sonnets 1-19) describes how the speaker falls in love; the middle (sonnets 20-99) suggests the consummation of the poet's passion; and the end (sonnets 100-126) shows the decline of the affair.

During his moments of self- confession in the sonnets following sonnet no.-20, Shakespeare grapples with questions of authority which bypass law and morality — In sonnets 20-126, there is frustrated idealism which is in sharp contrast even to the cynical tone of the sonnets addressed to the dark lady. The reader should recognize how the speaker's shifting moods from jealousy through self-advertisement to self-disparagement run counter to Renaissance ideals of friendship.

After the sonnet persona's first admission of sexual passion in sonnet 20, we might legitimately expect an awareness on the part of the speaker of the moral and legal constraints imposed on homosexuality by the social, political and religious orthodoxy. But no moral and legal reservations are even implied in the *Sonnets*. During his moments of self-confession in the sonnets following sonnet 20, Shakespeare's speaker does grapple with questions o authority, but these questions bypass law and morality. The authority with which the speaker struggles is the authority in being another man's lover and the further authority in writing about homosexual love. Once the speaker declares homosexual desire in sonnet 20 and begins to act on it in subsequent sonnets there is a profound change. "Conventional structures of ideology and power explode". In the early sonnets, the persona has all the power. His age, his experience, and most of all, his poetic powers put him in command of the situation. But once the passion is admitted, the power equations change. The person who doubts his own abilities in sonnet 29 ("When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes/I all alone beweep my outcast state") is entirely different from the one who confidently declared the power of his verse to confer immortality on his beloved in sonnet 18. The love sonnets to the young man not only differ from the first seventeen sonnets in respect of the implied relationship between the

speaker and the beloved, but also differ from the sonnets about the mistress. In sonnets 20-126 there is frustrated idealism, which is in sharp contrast to the cynical tone of the sonnets addressed to the dark lady. "Shakespeare devotes 126 highly varied sonnets to the young man and only 28 alternately affable and sarcastic sonnets to the mistress for the same reason that the fourth and fifth century Greeks devoted so much more attention in their philosophical writings to the love between men and boys than to the love between men and women : in each case it was the bond between male and male that seemed the more complicated and problematic". Smith concludes therefore, that those who fail to recognize how the shifting moods of the speaker from jealousy through self-advertisement to self-disparagement run counter to Renaissance ideals of friendship and still interpret the *Sonnets* in terms of those ideals, have not read their Aristotle, Cicero and Plutarch.

Nevertheless there are many apologists for the *Sonnets* as testimonials to friendship untainted by physical intimacy. One such prominent apologist is C.L. Barber who, in *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*, refers to the large number of editors and commentators, beginning with John Benson (1640), who have been embarrassed by the fact that a man is the addressee in these love poems. It is clear from the *Sonnets* that the role of beloved young friend or "lover" corresponds to a need in the poet to live in and through another person. Love which embodies the powers and perfections of life is usually experienced through the beauty of some one of the opposite sex. But in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* the poems addressed to a woman, "the dark lady", are concerned more with her imperfections than with her beauty or virtue, frequently expressing the paradox that with all her faults, she nevertheless arouses sexual desire. In the poems addressed to the young man, on the other hand, there is wonder aroused by the addressee's ineffable beauty, but no hint of physical desire. What one would normally call the "higher" love is expressed towards a man, while the "lower" love is confined to the woman. Moreover, in the sonnets dealing with both the man and the woman, there is a strange development : the young man becomes involved with his friend's mistress. The speaker is pained, baffled, humiliated, but still wants to keep the young man's love rather than that of the woman. It is true that in the early modern period, there was a cult of friendship and that writers often regarded this friendship as higher than sexual love. The issue is comprehensively explored by Edward Hubler in his book *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Hubler points out in that book that Elizabethans used the term "lover" between men without any embarrassment. In Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus* a character called Menenius, trying to visit Coriolanus in the Volscian camp, tells the guard, "Thy general was my lover." A further point made by Hubler and referred to with approval by Barber is that homosexuality is never an issue in Shakespeare's plays. [This sweeping statement could only have been made in the 1950s when homosexuality in either life or literature still faced resistance. In some recent criticism however, homosexual relationships have been discovered in several Shakespearean plays, for example, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* - Author's note] So far as the crucial Sonnet 20 is concerned, Barber's position is the exact opposite of that of

Smith. The bawdy joke at the end of the sonnet acknowledges, according to Barber, that the friend's sexuality is masculine and directed to women; "such a pleasantry could only be pleasant where physical relations of the poet with the friend were out of the question". Barber admits that the love expressed for the friend is love, such love is central to other relations of life, notably that between parents and children. Barber's conclusion is that so far as Shakespeare's sonnets are concerned, specific sexual love is delinked from adoring and cherishing love.

Paul Innes : "The young man is constituted as a product of the poetry .... Certainly the sonnets themselves posit his existence as purely fictional, on at least one of these multiple levels of meaning". Innes sees the poems as fundamentally "homo-social" in accordance with the power relations emerging in Renaissance society and culture.

Come finally to a reading of the sonnets in the context of Renaissance social and cultural developments, particularly as regards the relationship between men and men, and between men and women. This is the reading of Paul Innes in his book.

Shakespeare and the English Renaissance Sonnet: Verses of Feigning Love. The subtitle of the book clearly points to one of its important concerns: the fictionality of the sonnets, for the subtitle refers to Touchstone's famous remark explaining the meaning of ,"poetical" in Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*. To Audrey's question whether "poetical" is a "true thing", Touchstone replies: "No, truly; for the truest poetry is the most feigning, and lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign" (Act III scene iii, ll. 17-20). Other critics have spoken of the fictionality of the *Sonnets*, but the idea is central to Innes's theory about the poems. As he says, "The young man is constituted as a product of the poetry - literally written into the verse. One way to look at it is to acknowledge that there may not have been any 'real' young man to whom Shakespeare actually wrote these poems.

Certainly the sonnets themselves posit his existence as purely fictional, on at least one of these multiple levels of meaning. It is possible that it is irrelevant whether he existed, since the whole thing becomes an exercise in working out the problems encountered in writing about (in sonnet form) an upper-class male figure who should be but is not — defined in accordance with aristocratic ideology. Even if Shakespeare was writing about some young nobleman, the issues these sonnets raise cannot simply be reduced to that specific occasion only". Class and aristocratic ideology, mentioned in this extract, are of crucial importance to Innes's reading of the *Sonnets*, which sees the poems as fundamentally "homosocial" in accordance with the power relations emerging in Renaissance society and culture.

Sonnet has no smooth history of development- the English sonnets reflect the disjunction between the ideal and the historical-the sonnets of Shakespeare can be seen as participating in a project of seeking patronage. The social changes in the Renaissance gave rise to a new kind of "male-male, but not sexual relation' — In the sonnets, the young man is the person's social superior. So the persona has to accept his own subjection and to celebrate it.

Before examining the meaning and significance of the term "homosocial", we should first acquaint ourselves with Innes's approach to the *Sonnets*. He begins by refusing to adopt a developmental model for the Renaissance English sonnet, because he does not believe that the sonnet has a smooth history of development. He is more interested in the rewriting of courtly love that takes place in the English Renaissance. A product of feudalism, the courtly love convention was for the Renaissance poet an idealization of the past in a society which was being transformed by the centralizing impulse of royal authority. One can therefore perceive a disjunction between the ideal and the historical, andit is this disjunction which the Renaissance English sonnets reflect, in particular the sonnets of Shakespeare. In the court of Queen Elizabeth, other cultural forms of the past were rewritten, such as the romance (Spenser's *Faerie Queene*) and the pastoral (Sidney's *Arcadia*), to suit the new aristocracy. But the sonnet was not a purely aristocratic form, since the pace of social change ensured the spread of education to other classes. For a non-aristocratic poet like Shakespeare, this meant a new social mobility requiring new forms of social advancement. The sonnets of Shakespeare can be seen as participating in a project of seeking patronage, and it is patronage relations that produce the addressee of the first 126 of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Such a view almost rules out any homosexual relationship between the sonnet persona and his male friend. But there is another reason why such a relationship seems doubtful : the social changes in the Renaissance gave rise to a new kind of class relations which were also in accord with the rational thinking encouraged by humanism. "The relationship this kind of thinking produced was a new kind of male-male, but not sexual, relation". In this new kind of relationship mutuality was usually absent. In *Shakespeare's Sonnets* the sonnet persona is often tormented by his social inferiority to his addressee, and this awareness ofa gulf between them leads to another kind of disjunction. Moreover, love in this period was not what love is today. It can be, and has been, shown that the language of love employed in sonnet 29 is laden with the contemporary ethos of patronage. The question inevitably raised by this line of argument is : Did Shakespeare address his sonnets to a real patron ? Part of the answer to this question is implicit in the earlier discussion, and one may now add the further point that by presenting a fictional situation in his sonnets, Shakespeare was focusing upon contemporary concerns regarding the poet-patron relationship. The sonnets make it clear that the relationship between the poetic persona and the friend is not equal and that the young man is the persona's social superior. The implication of this is that patriarchy situates some men as socially inferior to others. "In other words, it constructs various forms of masculinity as well as femininity." The resultant dilemma cannot be resolved by the persona, who recognizes and accepts his subjection but has to celebrate it. Besides, the friend is not strictly true and honest, and this raises further problems for the persona. Here we have, to use the language of deconstruction, an *aporia*. The *Sonnets* deal with a potentially revolutionary issue, but cannot pursue it to its revolutionary consequences. [*Aporia* literally means "an unpassable path". In Greek philosophy it is used to describe the perplexity caused by a group of statements which are

inconsistent or contradictory when taken together, though perfectly plausible individually. The idea of *aporia* has been taken up by deconstructionists like Derrida, who use it to describe the impossibility of reconciling terms which cannot be reduced to binary opposites.] We come across a bigger *aporia* in the sonnets about the dark woman, which irresistibly move to the conclusion that woman cannot be controlled. The dark woman even succeeds in entangling the young friend, bypassing the sonnet persona. We cannot help feeling that the persona is thereby relegated to a position lower than that of the woman Thus within a patriarchal structure we have the curious situation of a woman becoming, by virtue of her independent love affair with another man, superior to the sonnet persona. Shakespeare's sonnets belong to a tradition that is generally associated with courtly love given to idealisation of women. It is significant that the sonnets were written during a period of transition from feudal notions of patriarchy to a bourgeois social structure.

Innes concludes that the young man sonnets are homo- social, a term which refers to the structure of patriarchy, which requires the silent submission of women. The attribution of fairness belonging to a woman to a man means, the woman should be dark, so that the mascuiline opposition is retained.

Innes arrives at the conclusion that the young man sonnets are "homosocial", a term adopted and given critical currency by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her book *Between Men : English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Sedgwick herself defines the term as "a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex". Sedgwick observes further that the term is "obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual' and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexuel'. Innes adopts the term mainly because of the precise way it refers to the structure of patriarchy, which requires the silent submission of women. Both these aspects of the *Sonnets* are then illustrated by Innes by means of a systematic analysis of some of the "young man" and the "dark lady" sonnets. In the first group of sonnets, a beauty previously reserved for women is transferred to a male figure; the dislocation caused by this transfer leads, in the second group of sonnets, to the representation of a woman who does not conform to the female stereotype in sonnets belonging to the courtly love tradition. The attribution of fairness, the most sought after criterion of feminine beauty, to a man means that, logically, the woman should be dark, so that the masculine-feminine opposition is retained. An analysis of Sonnet 18 will show how the process works. In this sonnet the friend has the physical characteristics possessed by conventional sonnet heroines. The repetition of "fair" in lines 7 and 10 is significant, especially when the adjective is combined with another - "lovely" in line 2. These attributes, traditionally considered feminine, are then transferred to the sun in lines 5-6, reminding us of the close relationship between "son" and "sun" already indicated in an earlier sonnet (Sonnet 7). Line 3 has complex associations : May is the month of the Virgin Mary, but being mentioned in relation to a man, it has the effect of detaching the ideal of beauty from a woman; "buds" was Renaissance slang for the female breast, and taken with "darling", which was the name for a type of apple at the time, Mary's opposite, Eve,

is indicated with her dangerous sexuality epitomized by the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. This does not leave many of the traditionally beautiful feminine attributes

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. How far is the claim of homosexuality in Shakespearean sonnets feasible? Discuss with reference to the sonnets.

for the dark lady, who is therefore demonized as a whore in sharp opposition to the virgin. "The beauty that previously helped constitute femininity is now, precisely, owned by men, as demonstrated in line 10 with 'ow'st' ". It is not an accident that Sonnet 18 ends with a promise of immortality for the friend that is explicitly homosocial : "so long as men can breathe". Sonnet 20 may be taken as another clear statement of homosocial relationship : the young man can have physical relationships with as many women as he desires, but his love is to be reserved for the sonnet persona, another man. "This is entirely in keeping with the structure of homosocial patriarchy". So far as the "dark lady" sonnets are concerned, they clearly suggest a breakdown in the heterosexual conventions followed in other sonnet sequences. Here, involvement with a woman is presented as dangerous because it could be a threat to masculinity itself, to the homosocial order. The sonnet persona, therefore, condemns not only female sexuality, but the lust it arouses in men. It is this lust in action that is "The expense of spirit" in Sonnet 129.

Summing up the entire discussion, one comes across various ways of looking at the theme of love in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. If a number of commentators today are boldly characterizing the sonnet persona's interest in the young man as explicitly homosexual, thus increasingly shedding earlier prejudices against this type of relationship, there are also those who view the relationship between two men as pure friendship, without any touch of sexuality, while the dark lady of the sonnets is seen as an embodiment of carnal passion. It has also been said that many of the sonnets in the "young man" group could in fact have been addressed to a woman and that these sonnets are not gender-specific. Moreover, both the young man and the dark woman mean different things on different occasions, and it is only our desire to find a satisfactory narrative in the Sonnets that makes us discern two contrasted love affairs here. Finally, the sonnets in the first group can be seen in terms of the homosocial relationship in the patriarchal order that characterised the replacement of the courtly love tradition by a male-male relationship. The homosocial character of the young man sonnets also explains the demonisation of the dark woman by stripping her of all the traditional attributes of feminine beauty and chastity which are then relocated in the young man.

UNIT 2 (d): THE FORMAL FEATURES OF THE SONNET

Shakespeare chose the English form of the sonnet introduced by Surrey, and from the outside it appears that he uses the form without any significant variations. But once you read a few of the

sonnets in succession, you begin to be aware of the many experiments with form that Shakespeare was continually making. The English form, consisting of three quatrains and a couplet, is generally thought to be very different from the Italian form with an octave and a sestet. We have seen that in the Italian form the transition from the octave to the sestet is marked by a "turn". The sestet in the Italian form is often, as pointed out by Kenneth Muir, a particular application of a general statement made in the octave, and sometimes a reply to it. In the English or Shakespearian form, the three quatrains are sometimes parallel statements and sometimes a continuous argument, either contradicted or reinforced or given a completely new turn by the epigrammatic couplet. However, this generalization is soon found to be inadequate as we come to the individual sonnets. We gradually begin to realize that Shakespeare many different kinds of sonnets and that a neat definition of the form is not possible. In his introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of *The Sonnets*, Anthony Hecht shows how Sonnet 18 offers a direct contrast to Sonnet 73 in form and structure. In the Shakespearian form, the final six lines can often have the effect of a sestet, and this makes it possible to suggest that Shakespeare not infrequently thought of his sonnets in terms of the Italian division between octave and sestet. Sonnet 73 is a perfect example of the Shakespearian form. The three quatrains each use the image of decline and become parallel statements on the subject of decay. The couplet reinforces the idea hauntingly by bringing together ideas of love and loss. Sonnet 18, on the other hand, though it uses the Shakespearian rhyme scheme, has a Petrarchan structure. The sonnet is rhetorically divided into octave and sestet, the "turn" from the one to the other signified by the conjunction "But", which heralds a new movement of thought, a contradiction of the idea contained in the octave. Stephen Booth has detected "a perceptibly distinct octave" in as many as 96 of the *Sonnets*, despite their surface conformity to the English form.

The four-part division of Shakespearean form makes it flexible and it can be set in any number of logical relations to each other: successive, equal, hierarchical, contrastive, analogous-the couplet has been most subjected to adverse criticism- Scaliger divided the epigram into 'mel', 'fel', 'actum' and 'sal'. The distinction between 'mel' and 'sal' provide an insight into the essential unity of the

Shakespeare did not invent the Shakespearian sonnet form, but he manipulates it in ways unknown to his predecessors, as Helen Vendler has demonstrated in detail in her edition of the *Sonnets* Its four-part division makes it far more flexible than the two-part Italian sonnet. The four SECTIONs of the Shakespearian sonnet can be set in any number of logical relations to each other; successive and equal; hierarchical; contrastive; analogous; logically contradictory. The list does not exhaust the possibilities of the combination of the four parts. Of the four parts, it is the couplet which has been most subjected to adverse criticism. One remembers Keats, who wrote both Italian and English sonnets, complaining about the difficulty of handling the couplet. Since the couplet of the Shakespearian sonnet is often epigrammatic, some critics have found the sonnet form unsatisfactory : a lyric, according to them, should not end with an epigram. It is also felt by some that even Shakespeare sometimes fails to make the most of the couplet : there are sonnets in which the couplets strike us as

insincere or false in comparison to the genuine feelings expressed in the preceding quatrains. But the couplet has been ably defended by Rosalie Colie. In her book *Shakespeare's Living Art* Colie refers to the distinction drawn in Renaissance theories of rhetoric between sonnet and epigram, sugar and salt. The sixteenth century Italian neo-classical critic Scaliger divided the epigram into *mel* (honey), *fel* (gall), *acctum* (vinegar) and *sal* (salt). The distinction drawn by Colie between the *mel* (honey) of love poetry and the *sal* (salt) of epigram — a genre conventionally used for satiric purposes — provides an insight into the essential unity of the Shakespearian sonnet, by suggesting that the sonnet persona is a figure who wishes to analyze and summarize his experience besides describing it. "The distance from one's own experience necessitated by an analytic stance is symbolised most fully by the couplet, whereas the empathetic perception necessary to display one's state of mind is symbolised by the quatrains." Some readers have often found the couplet of the Shakespearean sonnet redundant. But the couplet is firmly related to the rest of the sonnet not only on the level of the paraphrasable meaning, but by the repetition in the couplet of significant words from the body of the poem. Vendler calls the aggregate of such words "Couplet Tie". "These words are usually thematically central and to see Shakespeare's careful reiteration of them is to be directed in one's interpretation by them". Shakespeare obviously depended on this device not only to point up the thematic concerns of the sonnet but also to show how the same words assume different emotional tones as the sonnet progresses. Thus in Sonnet 18 the Couplet Ties are "time", occurring in lines 1&13, and "life" [variant forms "alive", "live"] in lines 4, 13 and 14. In Sonnet 55, these are "live" in lines 2, 8, 9, 14 and "eyes" in lines 11 and 14. The key word "live" at first seems absent in the third quatrain, though visibly present in the first and second quatrains as well as in the couplet. After noticing these examples, those of us who might have missed the word in the third quatrain would detect with pleasurable surprise that "live" is concealed in "oblivious" by a stroke of poetic ingenuity. You may find such key words and Couplet Ties in the other sonnets in your course. Shakespeare's poetic ingenuity is also revealed in the various other functions which the couplet is made to serve. As Kenneth Muir has pointed out, "One structural device used by Shakespeare is to make the couplet act as a kind of QED to the argument used in the quatrains." [QED is the abbreviation for a Latin phrase that means "which was to be proved". It is written after an argument in mathematics to show that one has proved something that one wanted to prove.] In such cases the couplet begins with words like "Thus", "Therefore", "Then" and "So", as in Sonnet 55. Sometimes the couplet offers a reason to confirm what has gone before, as in Sonnet 18. But the couplet is used more commonly to contradict or modify the quatrains. In such cases the couplet begins with words like "But" and "Yet", or "And yet", as in Sonnets 60, 130. Other couplets may carry on and complete the ideas expressed in the quatrains, and such couplets may begin with "And". A similar variety of functions is performed by the quatrains. Sometimes the three quatrains appear to be variations on a single theme, using different metaphors in parallel statements. Thus in Sonnet 55 the theme of

immortalising the friend's beauty and virtue in the face of the ruthless onslaught of Time is repeated, with variations of imagery, in the three quatrains. More often the quatrains are used in order to develop an argument, and in such cases there is a continuity of idea through all three quatrains. The quatrains in Sonnet 60 develop by stages the argument about the inexorable march of time. In some sonnets one of the quatrains qualifies the idea expressed in the earlier quatrains. In sonnet 18 the third quatrain, beginning with "But", significantly qualifies the comparison between the young friend and "a summer's day", drawn in the first two quatrains.

Much earlier criticism of the *Sonnets* was preoccupied with the discovery of biographical clues. The unfortunate result of this overemphasis was the neglect of the poems as works of art. The emergence of formalist criticism in the twentieth century was a natural reaction to biographical criticism. The formalists insisted on seeing the sonnets of Shakespeare first and foremost as poems and some of them stressed their lyrical character. Such a one is Helen Vendler, who has no patience with a critical approach that focuses on a sonnet's "paraphrasable propositional content". As she says, "The true 'actors' in lyric are words, not 'dramatic persons'; and the drama of any lyric is constituted by the successive entrances of new sets of words, or new stylistic arrangements (grammatic, syntactical, phonetic) which are visibly in conflict with previous arrangements used with reference to the 'same' situation". A close study of Sonnet 116 makes us realize that it is not just a definition of love, as generally interpreted. The negatives of which the poem is so full - one *nor*, two *no*'*s*, two *never*'*s* and four *not*'*s* - suggest that it is a rebuttal rather than a definition, a dramatic refutation of a point of view that may be ascribed to the young man. Such criticism is in the tradition of L.C. Knights and William Empson who, in the 1930s, made sensitive studies of the language of the sonnets. Stephen Booth is another formalist critic whose edition of the *Sonnets* is "analytic", annotated elaborately on Empsonian principles. But it may be said against the formalists that they are so engrossed in the study of individual words and their effects that they ignore the larger contexts in which the sonnets must be set. There is another group of formalist critics who read the sonnets as dramatic texts. These critics start with the obvious point that Shakespeare's non-dramatic poetry is informed by his work as a dramatist. G.K. Hunter observed in 1953, in an essay titled "The Dramatic Technique of Shakespeare's Sonnets" [You will find the essay in the casebook, ed Jones] that the approach to the Sonnets as lyric, narrative or metaphysical exercises is misdirected; nor should the poems be seen in autobiographical terms; they must be regarded as essentially dramatic. In the Sonnets Shakespeare uses conventional poetic imagery to dramatize "felt human situations".

Hunter does not see the poems as speeches delivered by dramatic characters, but as voicing emotional dilemmas and conflicts in which the reader can participate. The Sonnets do not present psychological analyses of *dramatis personae*, such as Hamlet or Macbeth; they convey rather the "personal tensions" by giving a dramatic outline of the poet-speaker, whom Hunter calls the lover, and his dilemmas. But though there are many links in respect of theme and style between the Sonnets

and the plays, the conception of the poems as dramatic has been challenged by other critics. It has been pointed out that since Shakespeare was a dramatist, we expect his sonnets to be dramatic; but actually they are less dramatic than the sonnets of many of his contemporaries. They do not present miniature dramas, or narrate specific events, as the sonnets of Spenser or Drayton often do. The Sonnets of Shakespeare do not present different characters and their points of view; from beginning to end the sequence is concentrated on the fluctuating moods of one speaker alone. For us the central issue is not which point of view is right. We should rather recognize that every one of these points of view carries some measure of truth and together they point to different aspects of the sonnet form employed by Shakespeare. While summing up the different viewpoints on the formal features of the Sonnets, we see how Shakespeare introduced variations into the apparently uniform structure of 152 sonnets (Sonnet 126 contains 6 rhymed couplets or 12 lines, while Sonnet 145 is a unique sonnet in octosyllabic lines). Both the quatrains and the couplets in the Sonnets have varied structures and functions. The Sonnets have been seen as miniature dramas, as lyrics in which the only actors are the words, though such formalist approaches have been challenged by those who emphasize the importance of placing the sonnets in broader literary, historical and cultural contexts.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Discuss, in brief, the formal features of Shakespearean sonnet.

UNIT 3 (a):

BRIEF COMMENTARIES ON THE TEN SONNETS

Content Structure:

In this part of the Study Material, each of the ten individual sonnets in your course will be briefly examined. Since the texts of the sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney and Spenser are not readily available, they are printed here. The sonnets of Shakespeare are of course easily available.

UNIT 3(b): SONNET BY WYATT

The following Sonnet written by Thomas Wyatt is sometimes printed with the title "A Renouncing of Love", but no title was given to any of his sonnets by the poet himself. However, Tottel added titles to the poems he printed.

Farewell, love, and all thy laws for ever;	A
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more;	B
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore;	B
To perfect wealth, my wit for to endeavour;	A
In blind error when I did persever;	A
Thy sharp repulse that pricketh aye so sore	B
Hath taught me to set in trifles no store;	B
And scape forth, since liberty is lever.	A
Therefore, farewell ! Go trouble younger hearts,	C
And in me claim no more authority;	D
With idle youth go use thy property,	D
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts.	C
For hitherto though I have lost all my time,	E
Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb.	E

Notes

Senec- Senec "the Younger" or "the Philosopher" (c.4BCE – AD65). His prose works are an important source for the history of Stoicism.

Lever- Dearer

Lusteth-to want/ care someone

The theme of this sonnet is anti-Petrachan inasmuch as it is the utterance of a rebellious lover who wants to have nothing more to do with love. This theme, according to Elizabeth Heale, owes something to Serafino, while the final line of the closing couplet is a deflating proverb. Such a conclusion is very much in the spirit of Serafino's *strambotti*. The sonnet creates the impression of a troubled, emphatic speaking voice, characteristic of several other sonnets of Wyatt. Several of Wyatt's sonnets are translations of Petrarchan originals, but this is one of his own original sonnets. Even in the translations a sense of complexity and paradox is unmistakable; in the original sonnets this sense becomes more pronounced, accompanied as it is by other characteristics like brevity, antitheses and flexible syntax as well as punctuation. The combined effect of all these is to subvert and question the identity of the speaker. This sonnet illustrates all the characteristics mentioned so far. From the beginning the /I/ or the speaker seems determined to renounce love, but his motives for doing so change and turn as the sonnet progresses. Apparently the sonnet persona has grown wiser, but there is a deliberate ambiguity about the source of this wisdom. We wonder whether he has acquired wisdom from the philosophy of Plato or Seneca, or from the pricking of love. A further ambiguity creeps in when the speaker announces his renunciation of love in more emphatic terms. Again we are not sure whether he is too old for love now, or sullen because of his failure in love. But the height of ambiguity is reached in the last line of the sonnet. J. W. Lever finds no ambiguity in the line which he interprets as a figure for "getting to the top of the tree", characteristic of an ambitions courtier of the Tudor monarchy. Lever in fact reads the whole sonnet as an unequivocal rejection of romance for the sake of Plato and Seneca, the chief inspirers of Renaissance humanism. But the ambiguities and paradoxes running throughout the sonnet and culminating in the last line are not so easily ignored. We are intrigued by the phrase "rotten boughs". If the speaker refers to women, then are we to suppose he has become a misogynist and considers all women as rotten ? Another interpretation of the line could be that the speaker is renouncing, not all women, but only the rotten or unchaste ones.

UNIT 3(c): 2 SONNETS BY SIDNEY

Text 2

With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies	A
How silently, and with how wan a face !	B
What ! may it be that even in heavenly place	B
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries ?	A
Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes	A
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;	B

I read it in thy looks, — thy languished grace	B
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.	A
Then, even of fellowship, O moon, tell me,	C
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit ?	D
Are beauties there as proud as here they be ?	C
Do they above love to be loved, and yet	D
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess ?	E
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness ?	E

Perhaps the first thing you will notice about this sonnet is that it is cast in the form of an apostrophe, a figure of speech that recurs through the sonnets in *Astrophil and Stella*. Astrophil's address to the moon is a good example of Sidney's original use of a familiar commonplace. The moon is inconstant, frequently changing, and therefore traditionally seen as symbolic of the vicissitudes of fortune, or the mutability of human life, or the irresolution of the foolish. The sonnet starts with a simple analogy — the pale moon represents for Astrophil the symptoms of his own love-melancholy. But as the sonnet progresses, the analogy is developed in wholly unfamiliar ways. In the first place, the truth of the comparison between the pale moon and the pale lover is established through a series of questions. Although this procedure is typical of the argumentative quality of some sonnets in the sequence, Germaine Warkentin has pointed out in her essay, "Sidney and the Supple Muse" that the effect here comes from a familiar rhetorical embellishment, the figure of *erotema*, or *interrogatio*. But the interrogation leads to an unexpected conclusion, which comes from Sidney's original use of the theme of inconstancy suggested by the moon. The plight of the moon, like that of the lover, is caused by the fact that both are faithful in love, not wavering. By the time we come to the questions which close the sonnet, the process of interrogation undertaken by Astrophil has exploited the idea of inconstancy in such a way that the lover and the moon share a fellowship which has become, paradoxically, an emblem of constancy. The last line of the poem has given rise to different interpretations. The simplest interpretation is that "virtue" here means "constancy in love" and that Astrophil, therefore, is asking if constancy is found unpleasing in heaven as it is on earth. But if "virtue" here means "constancy", the effect of the sonnet is considerably weakened. Charles Lamb suggested a reading which seems to be more appropriate : "The last line of this poem is a little obscured by transposition. He means, Do they call ungratefulness there a virtue ?" This interpretation has been accepted by many and it has been strengthened by the discovery of several possible sources in Italian. But Sidney was not bound to follow his sources. Moreover, the reading depends on an awkward transposition. Sidney does occasionally invert the normal word-order of a sentence, but never to such an extent. The inversion assumed by Lamb would make the line read like this : "Do they call virtue there ungratefulness ?" Perhaps the best interpretation of the closing lines of the

sonnet is that offered by Kenneth Muir in his *Sir Philip Sidney*. Muir points out that in the sestet four questions are asked. The first is meant for those who consider Astrophil's constancy foolish. The next two are aimed at Stella who, it is implied, is the conventional disdainful beauty who scorns the lover whom she deliberately attracts. The last question of Astrophil is aimed at himself for questioning Stella's virtue, or chastity, as ingratitude. This interpretation seems to be the best because first of all,it is based upon the usual meaning of "virtue" in love sonnets — "chastity". Secondly, it avoids an awkward inversion which makes it almost impossible to read the line intelligently. Thirdly, the sudden reversal which makes Astrophil question his own attitude is characteristic of the sonnet sequence asa whole. We noticed earlier that Sidney's sonnets are often steeped in irony, as a result of which the speaker emerges as an unstable figure. This effect is achieved by what has been called the sonneteer's "deconstructive irony". As J.G. Nichols says, "There is nothing against this reading except the shock which it gives to an over-serious or romantic reader; and such a reader must either get used to shocks or give up Sidney for another poet".

I should also like to point out another feature of the sonnet which gives us a good idea about Sidney's artistry. While the structure of the sestet is built on the regular English pattern of 4+2 (the octave is Petrarchan), the syntax creates a counterpointing Petrarchan pattern of two triplets. Each of these triplets is subdivided into a question taking up two lines followed by one occupying a single line. The second of these triplets is further organized by head rhyme — "Do they ?" Thus the final line is integrated with the rest of the sonnet by tail rhyme with line 13, by head rhyme with line 12, and by syntactic parallelism with line 11.

Text 3

Leave me, O Love which reachest but to dust;	A
And thou my mind, aspire to higher things;	B
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust,	A
Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.	B
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might	C
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;	D
Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light,	C
That doth both shine and give us sight to see.	D
O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide	E
In this small course which birth draws out to death,	F
And think how evil becometh him to slide,	E
Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath.	F
Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see;	G
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me	G

While the earlier sonnet belongs to *Astrophil and Stella* (Sonnet 31), there is some controversyas to where this sonnet should belong. Along with another sonnet, "Thou blind man's mark, thoufool's self-chosen snare", this poem is sometimes added to *Astrophil and Stella*, though it was originally included in another collection, *Certain Sonnets*, also published posthumously, but assembled by Sidney himself. The reasons why the two sonnets are added to *Astrophil and Stella* are, first, because they provide a satisfying closure to the narrative of a love affair which thus begins with great passion and ends with disillusionment, and secondly, because they seem to provide support to biographical speculations about Sidney's sonnet sequence. In his edition of the *Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, A. B. Grosart included "Leave me, O Love" in his text of *Astrophil and Stella* as Sonnet 110 on both these grounds. He argued that the word "rich" in the third line of the sonnet is a pun on the name of the husband of Penelope Devereux, Lord Rich. It is a plausible suggestion, for Sidney does pun on the name "Rich" in Sonnets 24 and 35. But the argument loses its force once we remember that *Certain Sonnets*, to which the sonnet originally belonged, were probably written before *Astrophil and Stella*, and that there is no textual indication that Sidney wanted the sonnet to conclude his sequence of love sonnets. We must therefore abandon the idea that Sidney is telling in his *Astrophil and Stella* a story beginning with his realization that he loved Penelope too late and ending with his renunciation of sexual love.

As a renunciation of love, however, this sonnet written in the English form containing three quatrains and a couplet is profoundly appealing, no matter where it belongs. It is impressive not as an expression of a personal point of view, but as a distillation of the Christian view of life. Sidney has been called a Christian humanist and a poem like this, with its deliberate echoes of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, justifies that description.

For many Christian readers, the words of the poem gain great authority once they are recognized as rooted in the time-honoured Christian tradition. The imagery of the third line is resonant with the words describing the Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew : "Lay not up treasures for yourselves upon the earth, where the moth and canker corrupt... But lay up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither the moth nor canker corrupteth ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". (Matt. 6.19-21). The antithetical sixth line, using the image of the sweet yoke which alone promises eternal freedom, is an echo of a prayer, in the Book of Common Prayer, to God "in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom". Again, the light that both shines and gives us sight to see (ll.7-8) echoes a Psalm : "in thy light shall we see light". In lines 13-14 too a Biblical echo has been detected though it is a more distant echo : "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2.7).

The common echo also makes it possible for us to connect these lines with the first line of the sonnet : "Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust." Once we make the connection it becomes

clear that the theme of the poem is the contrast between earthly love and heavenly love. The contrast is reinforced by the use of the word "love" in the first and last lines : the same word picks up different meanings in the two lines by the way it is qualified. The Love in the first line is "that which reachest but to dust" but in the last line it is "Eternal Love". Such careful balancing is a sign of Sidney's conscious artistry. A further example of such artistry is the line "Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings" (line 7) where we find repetition with a difference in "fades" and "fading".

UNIT 3(d): TEXT 4

Edmund Spenser in Sonnet 75 ('One Day I wrote her name upon the strand') of the *Amoretti*

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,	A
But came the waves and washed it away;	B
Again I wrote it with a second hand,	A
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.	B
"Vain man", said she, 'that dost in vain assay	B
A mortal thing so to immortalise;	C
For I myself shall like to this decay,	B
And eke my name be wiped out likewise'	C
'Not so', quod I, 'let baser things devise	C
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame	D
My verse your virtues rare shall eternise,	C
And in the heavens write your glorious name	D
Where; whenas Death shall all the world subdue	E
Our love shall live, and later life renew.'	E

Line 1. *strand* — shore, with the implication that the sand is unstable.

Line 2. — punning on the other meaning of 'strand' — sea.

Line 3. *second* — a second time. The "second hand" of a watch came into being only in the eighteenth century.

hand — two meanings : (i) script; (ii) signature

Line 4.

tide — (i) of the sea; (ii) temporal period.

Line 5. *assay* — attempt something difficult

Line 8. *eke* — also

Line 9. *Devise*- arrange

Line 11. *Rare*— (i) distinguished; (ii) exceptional

As we shall see when we discuss Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, Sonnet 55 and Sonnet 60, the ravages wreaked by time on love, beauty and youth, and the way in which love can triumph over mutability are traditional themes of poetry. In fact, the poetic war with time is the theme which links this sonnet of Spenser with the three Shakespearian Sonnets mentioned earlier (and a host of other Shakespearian Sonnets not in your course). It will be an interesting literary exercise for you to makea comparative study of these sonnets. Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 promises immortality to its subject, not because the poet anticipated the posthumous fame of his poem but because he, along with many classical and modern poets, believes that poetry perpetuates. This assertion of poetry's ability to provide fame in fact became a stock ingredient of the persuasive rhetoric of Renaissance sonneteers. Many sonneteers of the Renaissance, in England as well as in other European countries, bribed their mistresses with the promise of conferring immortality on them. The sixteenth century French poet Ronsard in his sonnets addressed to the famous court beauty Héléne claimed that if he had not loved her, she would be forgotten. Spenser in this sonnet tells his Elizabeth that his poetry will immortalize her virtues.

While in Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 the promise of immortality to the beloved is made with an almost boastful confidence, the strident note of confidence gives way to a timid "hope" in Sonnet 60 that the verse praising the beloved may defy the destructive power of Time. We may say that in Sonnet 18 poetry itself is a powerful agent of immortalization, but in Sonnet 60 its powers are more doubtful. A Shakespearian Sonnet in which the doubt becomes more pronounced is Sonnet 65. But Spenser's Sonnet asserts the power of poetry to "eternise" the beloved without any qualifications or uncertainties. Thus the tone of Spenser's Sonnet is closer to that of Sonnet 18 than that of Sonnet 60 or 65. There is a note of doubt in Spenser's Sonnet, in fact, but the doubt is expressed by the woman who reminds the speaker that she is a "mortal thing". But the speaker confidently tells her that she will live "by fame", the fame conferred on her by his poetry and that their love will "later life renew" after their own deaths. This is of course hyperbolic, but such hyperboles are common to poems which assure immortality. The really important point is that the sonnet differs from Shakespeare's Sonnets on Time in asserting the capacity of poetry to give new life to the dead. Poetry thus becomes a regenerative force. The second unique feature of Spenser's sonnet is that it is a dialogue, or to put it more accurately, a miniature drama, an anecdote with a dialogue. I have remarked earlier that one shortcoming of Renaissance love sonnets is that the woman and her point of view are absent from them. But Spenser's sonnet is a remarkable exception to that generalization. By contrast, Shakespeare's Sonnets on love and time are meditative, brooding and sometimes even sad in contemplating the ravages of Time. In Spenser's sonnet we find a particular occasion marked by a witty verbal exchange between the speaker and his mistress. Shakespeare's Sonnet 60 gives voice to a melancholy contemplation of the fact of transience against which the immortalizing power of poetry seems to be the last hope. Thus, though Spenser's sonnet participates in the same poetic tradition to which Shakespeare's Sonnets (18 and 60) also belong, the poets' treatment of tradition is radically different.

UNIT 4 (a):

6 SONNETS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Content Structure:

(In this part of the Study Material neither the texts of the Sonnets nor annotations of difficult words or phrases or lines would be necessary for these are easily available. Some of the most helpful and reliable editions are mentioned at the end.)

UNIT 4 (b): "SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY"

Much has already been said in this module about Sonnet 18, perhaps the most generally familiar of the Sonnets. Since it can easily be read as a poem addressed by a male speaker to a woman and since nothing in the poem indicates the gender of either speaker or addressee, it is imperative to remember the context. In the first 17 Sonnets the speaker has been urging the young man to marry since begetting children would be one way of perpetuating his beauty and virtue. These sonnets are clearly addressed to a handsome youth. With the context in mind, we can read the sonnet as completely unconventional in having a man as a love object; detached from its context, it would appear as a conventional love poem. Hence the context is important for understanding the poem. While in the earlier seventeen sonnets marriage and procreation are seen as the means to overcome time's tyranny, in this Sonnet it is the power of poetry which will defeat time's enmity. The young man is compared to summertime nature and then found to be more beautiful and more even-tempered, following a middle course between two extremes. The blossoms of May spoiled by rough winds suggest premature death or thwarted love, while the legal image in the next line indicates the transitory nature of springtime beauty. ("Lease" means "temporary period of legal possession"). Even "the eye of heaven" or the sun is subject to change, sometimes shining too brightly and sometimes dimmed by clouds. The image of the sun suggests a beautiful male, apart from its punning association with "son".

In fact, every beautiful thing loses its beauty; since both the adjective and the noun "fair" were frequently associated with beautiful women, the image conveys the youth's superior beauty which is not trimmed or deprived of elegance by the "monthly curse" to which women are subject. The friends' beauty is eternal because it will defy the shade of death (The expression "the valley of the shadow of death" occurs in psalm 23:4). There is another legal metaphor in line 10, which has been ably glossed by Burrow : The youth will not lose control over the beauty which he owns absolutely and in perpetuity. This contrasts with the impermanent lease of line 4, and does so by emphatically linking possession with ownership. In law, in order to enjoy something fully, one must have both ownership and permanent possession of it. The friend will achieve immortality by being celebrated in verse which defies time. But the friend is visualized as growing in eternal lines and it may appear at first that he is imagined as growing through lines of descent, his growing children. However, to "grow" is to be an organic or integral part, so that there is a clear sense that the young man will become a living part of time. The friend therefore is given eternal life through "this", that is, this particular sonnet and also this work of art, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, as a whole.

Sonnet 18, read along with Sonnets 55 and 60, shows that one major issue preoccupying the sonnets of Shakespeare is time and stratagems to overcome it, of which *Shakespeare's Sonnets* itself is one. J.B. Leishman has shown that time's destructive power and the ability of poetry to defeat it are traditional themes since the time of the ancient classical poets. In the last ode of *Book III* Horace asserts : "A monument by me is brought to pass,/Outliving pyramids, or lasting brass,/ The sepulchre of kings; which eating rain,/Nor the fierce northern tempest can restrain,/Nor years though numberless, nor Time's swift start". (*Horace* : *The Odes* in Wordsworth's Classics). At the end of his *Metamorphoses*, one of the classical works which exerted the greatest influence on Renaissance literature, Ovid declares that his poetry will outlive the fires of war and other catastrophic events. It will be seen from these two examples that both poets are asserting the immortality of their own art, their powerful verse. Shakespeare, by contrast, claims immortality for his subject; he thinks of his poetry "as a thing wholly dedicated, wholly subordinated, to the person it professes to honour." Leishman points out two other significant differences between Shakespeare's treatment of the themes of time and love and that of classical poets like Horace Oviddn Catullus. The poetry of the ancient classical poets is often inspired by the moral *carpe diem*, which means "seize today", "enjoy the present", which alone is within our power. A related theme is *Carpe florem*, or "gather the flower". Both topics are characteristic of ancient love poetry which often reminds lovers, especially women, that those who are now unwilling to make the best use of youth and beauty will find themselves alone and forsaken. But in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* the topics do not occur at all. In fact, nowhere in the sonnets of Shakespeare is there anything approaching an invitation to pleasure. Leishman traces this absence to a fundamental difference in outlook between Shakespeare and the ancient poets. "In their poetry on the topics *carpe diem* and *carpe florem* the ancient poets and their imitators are,

one might almost say, recommending a cooperation with Time, submission to the conditions it imposes ...” What distinguishes Shakespeare’s love sonnets from almost all other love poetry, which is concerned with the theme of time and transience, is that Shakespeare “will have none of this collaboration with the enemy.” Shakespeare always speaks of time as an enemy to be defied, not as a power whose laws are to be accepted and submitted to.

UNIT 4 (c): “NOT MARBLE NOR THE GUILDED MONUMENTS”

The immortalizing power of poetry is the theme of this sonnet too; in fact, as we have seen, it is a theme to which Shakespeare returns again and again, sometimes with great confidence as in Sonnet 18 and this sonnet, sometimes doubtfully, as in Sonnet 60 to some extent, and Sonnet 65, where the confidence gives way to the timid hope of a “miracle”. The theme is first broached in Sonnet 15, though that sonnet is part of the group which urge the youth to marry and beget children. Frequently in the Sonnets time is visualized as a deadly enemy inflicting deep wounds on youth, beauty and love. The wounding physicality of Time’s “scythe” is referred to in Sonnet 60, and its “bending sickle,” mentioned in Sonnet 116. These may be called commonplace ideas, but in the Sonnets the concentration on Time’s corroding effects becomes almost an obsession. It has been calculated (by Kenneth Muir and others) that there are more references to Time in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* than in those of Sidney, Spenser, Daniel and Drayton taken together. Time’s almost physical power to wound fatally was no doubt suggested by the figure of Father Time, conceived as both human and inhuman, but in the Sonnets transcending the conventional associations. In Sonnet 55 the speaker’s claim that his poetry will confer a kind of immortality on the young man is made in the context of Time’s all conquering power. Indeed the speaker here repeatedly suggests the futility of most human endeavours to avoid disintegration. In speaking of Time’s ravages and of the power of his poetry to immortalize its subject, the sonnet repeatedly echoes Horace’s (the relevant lines have been quoted earlier) and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The lines from Ovid are quoted by Burrow from Golding’s translation : “Now have I brought a work to end which neither Jove’s fierce wrath,/Nor sword, nor fire, nor fretting age with all the force it hath/Are able to abolish quite. Let come that fatal hour/which (saving of this brittle flesh) hath over me no power, / And at his pleasure make an end of mine uncertain time. / Yet shall the better part of me assured be to climb / Aloft above the starry sky. And all the world shall never / Be able for to quench my name. For look how far so ever / The Roman empire by the right of conquest shall extend, / So far shall all folk read this work. And time without all end / (If poets as by prophecy about the truth may aim) / My life shall everlastingly be lengthened still by fame.” The word “room” in line 10 of this sonnet would certainly remind Shakespeare’s contemporaries of “Rome,” because the two words were pronounced alike and Shakespeare quibbles on the words elsewhere, for example, in *Julius Caesar*. After pointing out the double meaning of “room”, J. W. Lever comments : “As the sonnet sweeps to its conclusion, the

great name of Rome is coupled with the friend's eternalization. Wherever Roman power extends over the conquered lands, Ovid proclaimed, there he would live on throughout all the ages. Thus the conquest of time is also a conquest of space." However, as Burrow aptly remarks, Horace and Ovid both make the life of their verse coextensive with the spread of the Roman Empire in time and space, while Shakespeare promises endurance in all lands till Judgement Day. Another important difference between this sonnet and the verses of Horace and Ovid is, as we have noted earlier, that the poet immortalizes not himself, as Horace and Ovid do, but the friend, whose literary afterlife is assured. Although the strong and supposedly durable objects symbolizing immortality, such as marble structures and gilded memorials dedicated to mighty kings and princes crumble to dust in the course of time, the speaker is confident of the ability of his verse to defy the ravages of time. Indeed the handsome youth will shine more brightly in "these contents" than long-neglected structures of stone. Following Duncan-Jones and Burrow, we may interpret "contents" as "contents or matter of these poems," and also as "these poems which contain you" and "these poems which are a source of lasting happiness or contentment." In the next line (l.4) time is personified as a careless housewife who has allowed stone buildings to crumble and go black. The Youth will outshine these symbols of durability which have lost their lustre as a result of time's erosion. The verses carrying the living record of the friend's greatness will survive the fires of war and internal disturbances like rebellion and civil war ("broils" and "Mars his sword", Mars being the god of war). Wars also cause the decay of monuments and therefore bring about oblivion of the past : "all-oblivious enmity" means "hostilities which destroy records of antiquity." But even in the face of such widespread ruin, the friend, being eternized by the speaker's verse, will confidently stride out, like a warrior, till the very end of the world. Till then, when the friend will be resurrected in his own body on the Day of Judgement, "this" (meaning not only this poem but the whole sequence of sonnets) will perpetuate his image in the eyes of future lovers.

Though we have throughout treated this sonnet as another confident assertion (like Sonnet 18) of the immortalizing power of poetry Duncan-Jones thinks that the concluding image introduces a note of subversive doubt, since lovers' eyes were proverbially unreliable, as in the saying, "love is blind."

UNIT 4 (d): "LIKE AS THE WAVES MAKE TOWARD THE PEBBLED SHORE"

We now come to a sonnet which contemplates, with a note of pessimism, the struggle of nature and of human life. To be sure, there are optimistic interpretations which present the sonnet in terms of the cyclical patterns of nature. But the patterns of nature are seen in this sonnet in terms of the linear direction of human life. The theme of the sonnet is the inevitable process of maturity and decay in the natural world, though the poem also suggests the possibility of countering this process by verses written in praise of the young man. The passage of minutes is compared to the movement of

the waves of the ocean, and the number of the sonnet, sixtieth in the sequence, is appropriate in this respect. The sixtieth sonnet in Spenser's *Amoretti* is similarly concerned with the passing of time. For the comparison between the passing of minutes and the movement of waves Shakespeare was indebted to the following lines in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (trans. Arthur Golding) : "But look / As every wave drives other forth, and that that comes behind / Both thrusteth and is thrust itself : Even so the times by kind / Do fly and follow both at once, and evermore renew. / For that that was before is left, and straight there doth ensue / Another that was never erst. Each twinkling of an eye / Doth change." The idea of infinite cyclical repetition is present in the immediately preceding sonnet, but in this sonnet the cycle is one of constant movement and loss. The onward movement of the waves and the minutes suggests both haste and toil. The image caste its shadow over the chronicle of human life from birth ("Nativity") to youth, a journey which begins with the crawling movement of the baby towards a youth which is scarred by Time's scythe. Contemplation of this troubled journey affects the speaker to such an extent that he can no longer confidently assert the immortalising power of his poetry, as he did in Sonnets 18 and 55. At best his claim is tentative : he can only say that his verse will stand "in hope", "despite" the cruel hand of Time. It is true that "to times in hope" means "until future, or hoped for, times", but the expression "in hope" also surely modifies and givesa provisional character to the poet's claim that his verse will defy time. One of the most vivid personifications of time is to be found in the third quatrain, which visualises Time as armed with a sharp and pointed instrument to pierce ("transfix") the "flourish" of beautiful young people. ("Flourish" means both vital "livelines" and "beautiful ornament.") Time also digs parallel lines, like military trenches, in the foreheads of young people to hasten the process of growing old. Time takes a perverse and morbid delight in devouring the delicate perfection of youth. Only verse praising the beauty and worth of the friend can hope to survive Time's pervasive and wanton destruction.

These three sonnets, along with Sonnet 65, are often taken together in respect of their subject matter, which has been memorably labelled by Peter Hyland as "Time's tyranny and the Poet's Pen". The same critic discusses the whole topic from a perspective which is very illuminating and which I am going to summarize now. Sonnet 55 suggests that the very materiality of statues and monuments will make their eventual destruction inevitable. But that sonnet, like Sonnet 18, makes the self-referential statement that it (the poem) will outlive monuments. A logical gap occurs here, because this claim erases the material nature of the poem itself, since it is possible to suggest that the fact that a poem can be reproduced makes it more likely to survive than a statue or a monument. However, the continued existence of the poem still depends on the materiality of the paper on which it is printed. In this connection it is relevant to observe that poems by many of Shakespeare's contemporaries disappeared long ago; and this means that the generalization that all poetry is immortal is simply not valid. In fact, there is a problem which is usually overlooked whenever the claim is made that poetry can confer immortality on its subject. The problem is that it is essentially a literary

trick as, for example, Keats acknowledges at the end of his "Ode to a Nightingale". In that poem the speaker intoxicates himself though poetic imagination, so that he can believe in something that will defeat time. But in the end he is forced to admit that "the fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is famed to do, deceiving elf."

The hope of triumphing over time and death is only human and such a hope explains why powerful people build memorials with durable things like brass, marble and stone. It is important for them to know that something that they have had made for them will perpetuate their memory. But for most of us there is no such hope, for we can see that death, from the material perspective from which we have to look at it, is, sadly, final. The *Sonnets* seem to be aware of this deception and self-deception. In claiming that poetry can immortalize his friend the speaker is also claiming immortality for himself; not only the young man but the speaker himself also "lives" in his lines. The real subject of the sonnets conferring immortality on the friend can then be seen as the fear in the speaker's mind about what time can do to humanity which seems so vulnerable when set against marauding time. The defiance of time in the *Sonnets* might therefore appear historical. After all the "eternal lines" of Sonnet 18 are eternal only so long as men can breathe or eyes can see. Shakespeare therefore knew the truth of Keats's discovery of the deception played upon us by imagination.

UNIT 4 (e): "LET ME NOT TO THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS"

In the sonnets discussed so far poetry seems to guarantee immortality against the ravages of time. In Sonnet 116 the immortalizing agent is love itself, not poetry. In a world of change, only love promises constancy for true love is unaltered and unalterable. It would be tempting to summarize the theme of this sonnet (and of the less famous Sonnet 123) as "Love's Triumph over Time". But such a neat summary would, as L.C. Knights pointed out in his essay "Shakespeare's Sonnets" (1934) ignore the equally important theme of change, which the sonnet contemplates. Knights agrees that it is perfectly natural to seek in the *Sonnets* a coherently developing attitude culminating in an emotionally satisfying solution. But he warns that unless we are prepared to accept assertion as poetry, we shall not find that solution in the *Sonnets*. Sonnet 116 is "assertion", that is, as Knights explains, "bare statement deliberately willed instead of communication in all its depth, fullness and complexity, of an experience that has been lived". The truth, according to Knights, is that in all the sonnets dealing with time and its inevitable process of change it is the contemplation of change, not boasting and defiance, which produces the finest poetry. He also points out that in the Shakespearian plays in which the theme of Time occurs, there is no defiance; the conflict is resolved by an explicit or implicit acceptance of mutability. If Knights calls Sonnet 116 "assertion" rather than great poetry, Stephen Booth finds in the sonnet little that is not "bombast". In his edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Booth defines "bombast" as "high-sounding, energetic nonsense that addresses its topic but does not indicate what is being said about it." Booth concedes, however, that having called the poem "bombast", "one

would have only to reread the poem to be again moved by it and convinced of its greatness."

Sonnet 116 asserts the speaker's unchanging love, despite the changes in the friend's attitude to him. (These changes have been alluded to in some earlier sonnets.) Thus the position of the sonnet persona is the only constant in the midst of change. The change of the grammatical subject from "me" in line 1 to "love" in line 2 has the effect of identifying the persona with love. The final couplet states that the truth of the assertion can be tested on the persona; but the couplet also admits other possibilities, since it begins with the conditional "if", implying that other outcomes are possible. The second line of the couplet, however, is teasingly ambiguous. It may mean, "Since I have written and men have loved, this belief in love's constancy is no error." But it can also mean, "I ever writ, nor ever loved any man". Spiller thinks that the ambiguity is deliberate and masks a homoerotic construction under a conventional one. However, in their edition of the **Sonnets**, Ingram and Redpath read the sonnet as "a meditative attempt to define perfect love," with no direct reference to the young man. But this reading is unacceptable, since the context of the young man group of sonnets makes such direct reference unnecessary. It has been suggested that the person who has changed and become inconstant is the speaker. This is how the sonnet is interpreted by Hilton Landry, who maintains that if any one is to allow impediments to the marriage of true minds, it is the friend, while the remover is the speaker himself, the one who is guilty of alteration. Therefore, in this reading, it is the friend's love which must not alter in the face of alteration. But this reading also ignores the general context of the young man sonnets, which contain many examples of the friend's coldness and inconstancy. Moreover, if the image of "rosy lips and cheeks" refers to any individual, it must be to the "master-mistress" of the speaker's passion and not to the speaker himself. True love, this sonnet asserts, does not depend upon mutuality or constancy in the beloved; such love also survives the decay of physical beauty, symbolised by rosy lips and cheeks. The opening lines of the sonnet echo the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer. True love is then seen metaphorically as "an ever-fixed mark", that is, a permanent beacon or signal for ships. Just as the beacon is unshaken by tempests, so is love unaffected by the stormy passions and vicissitudes of life. In the succeeding metaphor, love is the North Star or the pole star, which was regarded by mariners as the most reliable guide when their ship strayed, but the value of which is beyond human measurement. Wandering lovers, like wandering ships, are brought back to the right path by the star-like love. Extending the metaphor, the poem identifies two other points of similarity between love and the pole star : both have a value and significance which can never be understood by imperfect human beings, though the altitude (of the star) and the peak (of love) can be measured, Time, personified again as an enemy with a "bending sickle" which cuts as well as gathers, preys on physical beauty, but cannot diminish true love in any way. Love is never altered by Time's hours and weeks (notice how Time is reductively measured in terms of weeks and hours), but perpetuates itself to the very end of the world on the Day of Judgement. Duncan Jones has pointed out that though the Christian marriage service calls

upon the couple to affirm the lawfulness of their union "as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgement", the bond is clearly dissolved with the death of one of the partners. But the love defined in this poem "appears not merely life-long but world-long."

This sonnet is often read as a definition of true love and thus treated as an example of the genre of definition. It can, however, be read differently — as an example not of definition but of refutation or rebuttal. This is how Helen Vendler reads it. She maintains that the motivation of the poem springs from the fiction of an earlier utterance by another person, which the sonnet is trying to repudiate. There are too many negatives in this poem — one *nor*, two *no*'s, two *never*'s, and four *not*'s — which suggest that it is not a definition, but a rebuttal.

UNIT 4 (f): "TH' EXPENSE OF SPIRIT IS A WASTE OF SHAME"

Just as Sonnet 116 is often seen as a definition of love, Sonnet 129 is also frequently treated as an example of the genre of definition. As Kenneth Muir explains, one is concerned with the marriage of true minds, while the other deals with the coupling of untrue bodies; one with constancy even when the partner is inconstant, the other with a momentary act; one eternal, the other ephemeral. Sonnet 116 is concerned with the marriage of true minds, with any sexual element excluded. The other sonnet appears to exclude everything except the sexual. Sonnet 129 also differs from the earlier sonnet in construction. It depends on rhetorical structure and rhythmic power rather than on imagery. The division among the quatrains is almost obliterated as the first twelve lines rush on like a single sentence. There is also an unusual accumulation of powerfully derogatory epithets, which sound like the hammering of nails in a coffin. The sonnet also makes liberal use of antitheses, as many as eight lines being antithetical, and the antitheses are made emphatic by alliteration. All in all, it can be said that the form of the sonnet is as remarkable as its content : it explores heterosexual passion with an explicitness which appears shocking even to our modern sensibilities. Scholars have shown that there was a thriving culture of erotica in the 1950s, and Shakespeare's own long poem *Venus and Adonis* is taken as an example of this fashion. But it was rate even then for a poem to be as brutally frank and as seriously concerned with sex as Sonnet 129. *The Norton Shakespeare* points out that the first line and a half of Sonnet 129 contain at least two viciously obscene puns to convey the idea that sexual intercourse is the expenditure ("expense") of semen ("spirit") "in a shameful waste" (waist). The tone of the poem, characterized by a commentator as one of "impersonal profundity", is also unusual : despite it sexual explicitness, the poem is remarkably abstract. The speaker is not offering a description of sexual union experienced by him : that would have made the poem the exploration of an individual's experience. But the poem is actually a condensed, compact and vehement exposition of the lethal attractions of sex. The couplet makes the general nature of the subject clearer by pointing out that the whole world knows the dangers of sex, but nobody knows how to avoid it.

We saw earlier, in the case of Sonnet 116, that to detach a sonnet from its overall context might mislead us as to its precise meaning and significance. Let us follow the same procedure in the case of Sonnet 129. It belongs to the series dealing with the speaker's relationship with the dark woman, in other words, a heterosexual relationship. In the immediately preceding sonnet there is a teasing ambiguity as to whether the speaker's feeling for the woman is love or lust. The erotic ambiguities of sonnet 128 crystallize into an attitude of deep loathing in this poem. The poem obviously describes the consequence of sexual intercourse. From this starting point the speaker begins to generalize, so that his erotic appetites become generalized into a frightening sequence of desire, its realization and the disillusionment that follows. We have noted the sexual connotations of "expense", but the word's commercial associations are also important, yielding the further suggestion that sexual activity is a matter of spending rather than earning, dissipating physical energy and diminishing the soul. Lust is such a degrading experience that it turns a man into a brute who will use any means from deceit to the exercise of force in order to achieve his end, "lust in action". But fulfilment of lust, instead of giving satisfaction, gives rise to a sense of shame, but that does not prevent the lust-driven man from seeking the ephemeral pleasure again. According to a very ingenious reading, that of Peter Hyland, the structure of the sonnet enacts this sexual movement, building from the violent and deceitful pressures of "perjured" lust, to the "possession" of lust in action, to the woe of lust "proved". The peculiar reverse ordering of "had, having, and in quest to have" in line 10 suggests a compulsion in which the having leads to the desire to have again in a vicious circle. The irony is that the lust-driven man, who seemed to be "hunting" his prey, himself swallows the bait, in the manner of a fish. The transition from the last word in line 8, "mad" to the first word in line 9," Mad," is apt to create some difficulty. Some editors have suggested that "Mad" (l.9) should be replaced by "Made", which was the word in one original version (Quarto edition). But Burrow has pointed out that "so" at the end of line 9 requires an adjective to refer back to. Moreover, by following "mad" with "Mad" in the very next line, the poet has achieved *anadiplosis* or repetition at the end of one clause and the beginning of the next. This device bridges the gap between two quatrains. Line 12 may also cause a minor problem as to the meaning of "dream". The line as a whole probably means : "in anticipation a joy which is looked forward to; in retrospect an insubstantial dream". The couplet does not offer any solution to this universal problem; rather, it accepts as inevitable the sexual imprisonment of man. (Note that lust is presented in the sonnet as an exclusively male passion). The couplet is, moreover, misogynistic in implication. (Think of the characteristics of the "dark lady" sonnets discussed earlier.) The couplet extends the mingled fascination and revulsion of lust to all : "everyone knows this proverbial piece of wisdom; but no one really knows when it comes to practice". Since in the second line of the couplet there is an explicit reference to female genitalia, "everyone" should perhaps be read as "every male". The term "hell" was at the time a common term for the female sexual organ and "heaven" may be taken to refer to female beauty, which is presented as a trap. The man who is

lured by this heaven soon finds himself in hell. Such strongly misogynistic bias can be found in traditional Christian teachings. However, in Shakespeare's sonnet the horrific import of the coupletis due to a different reason. The speaker (to think in terms of the context) is first attracted by the unconventional appearance of the woman, then led to desire her and finally think of her as the root cause of his spiritual affliction, even of his damnation. Sonnet 129 also shows that the sonnet persona condemns not only female sexuality but also the lust which it arouses in men. If we interpret the sonnet in homosocial terms, we may paraphrase the theme in the terms used by Innes : a man can be infected by passion, an element which the *Sonnets* want to locate only in women, forgetting that "reason" is the true masculine quality ("Past reason hunted, and no sooner had, / Past reason hated.") This is extremely dangerous, and it is this "lust in action" that is "Th'expense of spirit". The body is here intruding too forcefully upon the separation between the male and the female.

UNIT 4 (g): "MY MISTRESS' EYES ARE NOTHING LIKE THE SUN"

This is perhaps the most obviously anti-Petrarchan of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. So far as the context is concerned, one may note that it follows immediately on the sonnet dealing with lust. Sonnet 130 then might suggest that though the woman desired by the speaker lacks all recognized attributes of female beauty, she can still provoke desire, for all that is needed to arouse male lust is that the object of desire is female and readily available. The sonnet also deflates Petrarchan hyperboles about a golden-haired goddess with rosy lips and cheeks, offering instead a "real" woman. The very first word, "My," is given great emphasis to distinguish the speaker's mistress from the majority of Elizabethan sonneteers' mistresses. Of course, one way of looking at the sonnet is to see how the speaker dismisses the conventional notions of female beauty because he wants to redefine that beauty. From that point of view, it has been wittily remarked by Hyland that "the joke rebounds against the speaker for he endures greater suffering at the hands of this hot, available woman than the Petrarchan lover ever did from his cold, distant mistress." The same critic characterizes the sonnet as an elaborate joke that depends on the reader's understanding of literary convention. The lady is described as the negative of all the Petrarchan similes : sun-like eyes, coral lips, snowy breasts, rosy cheeks, perfumed breath, musical voice and goddess-like gait. In thus offering a woman who is the complete antithesis of conventional sonnet heroines the speaker is making a statement that is as much about poetry as it is about the woman. Petrarchan poetic lovers are liars because they employ a language which has been deprived of all meaning by being reduced to cliches. The speaker offers this realistic account of his mistress and thereby presents both a critique of poetic fashion and a statement about the woman that can be understood as true. In other words, "one way of understanding the *Sonnets* is to see them as engaged with literature at least as much as with life". Hyland also makes another crucially important point : if we take the *Sonnets* as fiction, we must distinguish clearly between poet and speaker; in that case the poet's key relationship is with the reader, for whom he has created a voice that can express a varied and complex range of experiences.

Thus Sonnet 130 does not necessarily assume an awareness, on the part of the readers, of biographical details about Shakespeare; but it certainly does assume a knowledge of the conventions of the sonnet tradition on the part of the readers.

What follows is largely a summary of Helen Vendler's views about Sonnet 130's negation of Petrarchan conventions. The structure of the sonnet changes in each part. The first quatrain simply denies the usual hyperboles about the sonnet heroine, but each line is a clever variant on denial :

1. eyes — sun ("nothing like")

2. coral — lips ("far more red")

3. "If snow is your standard" for whiteness, her breasts are "dun."

4. If one can call hairs wires, hers are *black* wires.

The familiar resorts of contemporary love poets, satirized in this sonnet, are : (i) comparison by simile; (ii) hierarchizing; (iii) valuing by a standard; (iv) metaphorizing. The sonnet shows that allthese devices can be preposterous when judged by standards of accuracy. The second quatrain is divided between personal observation ("I have seen") and impersonal observation ("there is"). The latter records hierarchy against the mistress, saying that perfume is sweeter than her breath, while the former denies metaphor altogether, saying cheeks are nothing like roses. In the third quatrain andthe couplet, the hierarchizing reaches its humorous climax : the speaker has not seen goddesses go, but he can still say that his mistress does not walk like a goddess. The speaker's irritation, so long largely suppressed, at the excesses of sonneteers bursts out in his final oath — "And yet by heaven." He also dismisses other poets' grandiose similes as "false." (Any good edition of the *Sonnets* will give you more than one concrete example from Shakespeare's contemporaries for each simile ormetaphor negated by the speaker in this sonnet.)

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ASSIGNMENTS

1. When and where was the sonnet invented ? Briefly discuss the technical features of the earliest form of the sonnet.

2. Consider in detail the contributions made by Dante and Petrarch to the sonnet tradition.

3. In what ways did Petrarch's love sonnets and his sonnet heroine influence later European poets ?

4. Who introduced the sonnet into English poetry ? Discuss the thematic and formal features of his sonnets.

5. Who invented the English form of the sonnet ? What are the technical characteristics of the form ? 6. Name the first woman sonneteer in English. What kind of sonnets did she write ?

7. Explain the historical significance of Watson's sequence. What is its title ? How does the title point to the sequence's main theme ?

8. Why is Philip Sidney considered the first British author of a sonnet sequence ? Write a brief note on the thematic and formal characteristics of Sidney's sonnets.

9. Discuss Spenser's handling of the love sonnet and mention at least one example of his departure from Petrarchanism.

10. Analyze Wyatt's sonnet, bringing out the ambiguities in the poem's language.

11. Attempt a critical appreciation of any *one* of Sidney's sonnets and bring out his originality in the handling of the conventions of the love sonnet.

12. Analyze Spenser's sonnet "One day I wrote her name". How does the poet make use of his relationship with two Elizabeths ?

13. Do you agree with the view that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are anti-Petrarchan ? Substantiate your answer with appropriate references to the text.

14. Discuss, with suitable examples, Shakespeare's handling of the sonnet form.

15. What are the two loves depicted in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* ? How are they distinguished from each other ? Which of the two is more appealing to the lover, and why ?

16. How is Time's tyranny depicted in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* ? Which forces are pitted against Time's destructive power ? How can they overcome the tyranny ?

17. How does the lover in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* propose to immortalise his beloved ? Is the immortalization proposed with the same level of confidence throughout ?

18. Examine the different ways in which Spenser and Shakespeare seek to overcome the enmity of Time in their sonnets.

19. Comment on the interaction of tradition and individual talent in Shakespeare's sonnets on time.

20. How would you characterise the relationship between the speaker and the "Young man" in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* ?

21. What is a "homosocial" relationship ? Discuss whether this is the nature of the relationship depicted in the *Sonnets*.

22. Attempt a critical appreciation of any *one* of the sonnets of Shakespeare in your course.

BLOCK II:

UNIT-5

PARADISE LOST BOOK IV *by JOHN MILTON*

Content Structure:

UNIT 5 (a): MILTON'S LIFE & WORKS

John Milton (1608-1674) was born in London, the son of a scrivener and musician whose own father had in his youth disinherited him for becoming a Protestant. John Milton was educated at St.Paul's School in London and Christ's College, Cambridge, where the fastidiousness of his morals and perhaps a feminine quality in his personal appearance caused him to be nicknamed "the Lady of Christ's". He left Cambridge in 1632 and in 1638 set out on a course of foreign travel through Paris, Genoa, Florence, Rome to Naples, meeting a number of distinguished men of learning including Galileo. In Naples he heard of the approaching outbreak of the Civil War in England, and decided to return. His sympathies were already engaged on the side of Parliament on religious grounds; he had declined to enter the Church on leaving Cambridge owing to his disapproval of the religious policy of King Charles the First, and Archbishop Laud, which he regarded as too near Roman Catholic authoritarianism. From 1641 he abandoned poetry, reluctantly, for prose polemics on behalf of the Parliamentary and Puritan causes. Not all his writing performed this function, however. In 1643, he married the daughter of a Royalist family who almost immediately abandoned him, and this led to the first of his Pamphlets in favour of divorce. This in turn led to his quarrel with the Stationers Company, since he had published the work without their license. Parliament supported the stationers, whereupon Milton published his Areopagitica, one of the noblest appeals for freedom of expression ever written. In 1649, the year of the king's execution, he was appointed Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth for the purpose of corresponding with foreign governments, a post he continued to hold until the Restoration. In addition, he continued his prose propaganda on behalf of the Republican Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell. He was defending the Republican system in print only a month before the Restoration. Nonetheless, the restored monarch left him in freedom, perhaps owing to the influence in Parliament of his fellow-poet Andrew Marvell, and at court to that of the Earl of Anglesey. Milton, though he was now blind, as left in peace to produce his most ambitious poetic works. In the meantime, his domestic life had been varied. His first wife had returned to him after the defeat of the king's forces in 1646, but had died in 1653, leaving him three daughters. His

second wife died fifteen months after their marriage in 1656, but his third wife whom he married in 1662 looked after him devotedly to the end.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Milton's life was altogether varied and chequered — Discuss.

UNIT 5 (b): IMPORTANT LITERARY WORKS BY JOHN MILTON

Milton's literary career divides sharply into three periods. During the first, (1625-1640) he wrote a considerable quantity of verse in Latin and in English *Ode on the morning of Christs' Nativity* (1629), *L' Allegro* and *IL Penseroso* (1632), the masque *Comus* (1634) and the elegy *Lycidas* (1637). There were lesser works, including a short poem on Shakespeare (1630), to be found in the second folio edition of Shakespeare's works in 1632.

In the second period (1640-1660), Milton wrote little verse but produced a large quantity of prose treatises and pamphlets. Apart from *Areopagitica, a speech for the Liberty of Unlicenced Printing (1644)* there was the treatise *On Education* (1644). These are mostly of historical interest. The massacre of the Protestant Waldensians by the Duke of Savoy in 1655 caused his noble sonnet in protest *On the Late massacre in Piedmond.*

In the last period (1660-1674), Milton produced all his ambitious poems on which his fame chiefly rests. The epic *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667 and brought him great prestige. Its sequel *Paradise Regained* and the tragedy on the Greek model *Samson Agonistes* were published together in 1671. The most important influence upon him in English was Spenser, but the earlier poetry shows the influence of Elizabethan dramatists, particularly in *Comus* and of the Metaphysical Poets in the early Ode. Milton as a poet and literary figure has been the subject of more controversy among modern critics than any other of the great poets. The first full-length assessment of his literary compositions was made by Dr. Johnson in his well-known essay *Life of Milton*. The 20th century interest in Milton was initiated by T.S. Eliot in his two essays *Milton I* and *Milton II*. Eliot's re-assessment of Milton's poetry and poetic art was followed by a spate of critical writings, particularly on *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. E.M.W. Tillyard wrote two memorable works of criticism, entitled *Milton* and *The Miltonic Setting*. One may also recall C.S. Lewis' *Preface to Paradise Lost*, Helen Gardner's *A Reading of Paradise Lost* and William Empson's *Milton's God.* Reference may also be given to the book *The Living Milton*, (ed.) Prof. Frank Kermode. Another significant contribution to the 20th century Milton criticism is Prof. J.B. Broadbent's *The Graver subjects*.

Milton succeeded in arousing such warm critical responses simply because his literary and poetic genius was all embracing, and therefore touched upon the different areas of prose and poetry. As a prose writer he was never circuitious either in his style or in his arguments. The quality of

directness and straightforwardness distinguishes his prose writings. As a poet he was one of the leading sonneteers in the history of English poetry. As a lyric poet, he wrote some beautiful odes, but it is mainly as an epic poet that has occupied a permanent position of name and fame in the history of English literature. *Paradise Lost* in the true sense of the term is his *magnum opus*, although *Paradise Regained* does not have the touch of poetic excellence which one finds in *Paradise Lost.* As a playwright, he was not much successful because the play *Samson Agonistes* resembles generically and characteristically a closet drama rather than a play appropriate for the stage.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a note on Milton's important literary works.
2. How would you characterize Milton as a writer?

UNIT 6 (a):

PARADISE LOST

Content Structure:

UNIT 6(a): *Paradise Lost* (1667)

UNIT 6(b): A Brief Summary of Book-IV

Milton had long intended to write an epic to rival Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. From Dr. Johnson's *Life of Milton* and the account given by Milton's nephew Philips, we come to know that Milton had originally intended to write a five-act drama on the the Fall of Man. Accordingly in the manuscript of the proposed play he introduced the human characters and the divine figures together with the personified images of human virtues or vices. He had therefore the original intention to interfuse the features of a tragedy with those of a Mystery and Morality play. He went so far as to entitle the proposed play as *Adam Unparadised*, but subsequently he gave up the idea although he stuck to the decision that the theme of his proposed epic should be something new 'yet unattempted in Prose or rhyme'. In the 1st book of *Paradise Lost* in the first twenty six lines, by way of Proposition and Invocation, he refers to the theme of his epic poem which is 'Man's first disobedience' and the 'fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste' was responsible for bringing death and woe to humanity. In the following passage, a brief summary of *Paradise Lost* from Book I to Book XII is given.

Milton gave up the idea of writing an epic the theme of which would be the Fall of Man, "something yet unattempted in Prose or Rhyme"

Book I : Satan lies prostrate in Hell, having been cast down from Heaven after the failure of his great war against God; around him lie the fallen angels who have shared in his defeat.

Book II : In a council of war the strategy of continuing the war against the reign of God is debated; it is decided that a campaign is to be conducted against the new creation — the Earth; Satan sets out an a voyage of discovery of the Earth, first passing through the gates of Hell, guarded by Sin and Death, and then voyaging through chaos.

Book III : God foretells Satan's assault on the Earth and the consequent fall of man. The Son offers himself as man's ransom; Satan alights on the Earth.

Book IV : The Garden of Eden is described; Satan spies an Adam and Eve, and learns about the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Book V : The archangel Raphael is sent to the Earth, and relates to Adam how Satan, through pride, was incited to rebel against God

Book VI : Raphael continues his account of the War in Heaven, and describes how the Son of God drove the rebellions angels out of Heaven.

Book VII : The creation of Earth is described by Raphael.

Book VIII : Further conversation between Adam and Raphael, about the creation of the Universe, and about Adam's relationship with Eve.

Book IX : Satan, entering into the Serpent, persuades Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; Adam in despair at losing her, follows her example.

Book X : The Son comes to judge Adam and Eve for their sin, and Sin and Death make their way upward to the Earth; Satan returns in triumph to Hell.

Book XI : The Archangel Michael is sent to expel Adam and Eve from the Garden; an Angel shows them the future of man until the Flood.

Book XII : Michael foretells the Messiah, the history of the Church and its corruption, and the Second Coming.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Narrate in brief, the theme of Milton's 'Paradise Lost', from Book I to Book XII.

UNIT 6 (b): BOOK IV OF MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

Paradise Lost is the singular specimen of English epic poetry, moulded by the fashion and practice of Virgilian epic. It is, no doubt, an epic of art, as contrasted with the Homeric epic of growth — an epic poem where Milton shows his excellence as a poet. In this poem Milton is erudite and he makes good use of his erudition to write a poem which is capable of enkindling our imagination, enlightening our intellect and vitalising our spirit. About the merit and characteristic quality of *Paradise lost* Verity wrote in his editorial introduction, "We must indeed recognize in *Paradise Lost*, the meeting-point of Renaissance and Reformation. The impress of four great influences : The Bible, the classics the Italian poets and English literature."

My immediate concern is, however, to introduce to you The Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost*, which occupies an important position in the total thematic design of the epic. Indeed, the Fourth Book for multiple reasons is as meaningful to the readers of this epic as for example, the First Book and the Ninth Book. The significance of the Fourth Book is as much thematic as also stylistic. In this Book, for the first time the readers are introduced to Adam and Eve, the first parents of mankind, the place of their habitation, the Garden of Eden. The human and the cosmic elements mingle together in the epic narrative; and in addition to all these, there are the usual features of Milton's grand style, the successful use of epic similes and the dramatisation of the poetic narrative in the closing section of the poem. A brief summary of the Fourth Book is given below.

Milton begins the poem with a sincere feeling of regret for mankind. ". that now,/while time was, our first parents had been warned/the coming of their secret foe, and 'scaped,/Haply so' scaped, his mortal snare!" The lines are immediately followed by the poet's reference to and description of Satan, "The tempter ere the accuser of mankind", who now swims upward through the vast chaos in order to reach the newly-created Eden where in a splendid garden, the new favourites of God are happily placed in the midst of their blissful ignorance of evil. The Fourth Book virtually opens with one long soliloquy by Satan — the soliloquy (32 – 112) that brings to light the complex working of his mind and his crooked intention to corrupt Adam and Eve, and thereby to avenge himself on God.

John Milton, a Protestant, even from His childhood disapproved the religious policy of King Charles. He married the daughter of a Royalist family who almost immediately abondoned him. His quarrel with the stationers Company led to his publication of Areopagitica. After the king's execution he was appointed Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth. But even after Restoration, the monarch left him in freedom. Altogether his life was varied and chequered.

The long soliloquy that intends to present Satan exclusively from the psychological point of view is succeeded by an excellent and grand description of the Garden of Eden and its surroundings (131-287). Milton's descriptive power reaches the pinnacle of perfection when in a short but poetically suggestive passage he introduces Adam and Eve (288 - 318). In this connection Milton also describes the 'togetherness' of Adam and Eve in the midst of the pleasant pastoral atmosphere of the Garden. Satan's feeling of envy at the sight of the happy pair in recorded is his second soliloquy (358 – 392).

Satan's feeling of envy is caused by his realisation that amity, friendship and mutual understanding exist between Adam and Eve. From the exchange of their dialogue it appears that Adam is the repository of wisdom; while Eve is intellectually much inferior to him. Through the lips of Eve, we are intimated about the occasion when Adam and Eve for the first time meet together. Eve's vanity and Adam's infatuated feeling for Eve are clearly suggested. From their exchange of thoughts and ideas Satan learns about the Tree of Knowledge and the danger it poses for them. In the meantime the Archangels who guard the Garden of Eden have the feeling that one of the evil spirits of Inferno has perhaps entered the Garden to disturb the peaceful atmosphere.

The Garden of Eden is also referred to as the bower of bliss. Adam and Eve enter the bower to celebrate the joys of the conjugal life which enrages Satan more. Milton in this connection idealises wedded love. In the closing section the encounter between Satan and the angelic guards takes place. The fierce cosmic war is on the verge of breaking out, but it is avoided. Satan escapes and with him "fled the shades of night."

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write, in brief, the summary of Book- IV of *Paradise Lost* and explain its significance.

UNIT 7 (a):

SATAN'S SOLILOQUIES

Content Structure:

Thematically the Fourth Book may be divided into several sections. These are (a) Satan's soliloquies; (b) the description of the Garden of Eden; (c) the portrayal of Adam and Eve. Besides, critical attention may also be focused on Milton's style and his use of epic similes.

I may begin my critical discussion on the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* by briefly analyzing Satan's soliloquies. The dictionary meaning of the word 'soliloquy' refers to "a speech in a play which the character speaks to himself or herself or to the people watching rather than to the other characters." (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*). According to M.H. Abrams, "Soliloquy is the act of talking to oneself, whether silently or aloud. In drama it denotes the convention by which a character, alone on the stage, utters his thoughts aloud; playwrights use this device as a convenient way to convey information about a character's motives and state of mind, or for purposes of general exposition, and sometimes in order to guide the judgement and responses of the audience." (*A Glossary of Literary Terms*). Abrams's definition of soliloquy proves its appropriateness when one goes through the famous soliloquies, delivered by Doctor Faustus in Marlowe's play, and by several Shakespearean characters like Hamlet, Macbeth, Iago in *Othello*, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* and Edmund in *King Lear*.

Soliloquy is the act of talking to one self — Satan's soliloquies, devised in the true tradition of Marlowe and Shakespeare, are made use of to 'humarine' the skeleton figure of evil and to foreground the theatre of the mind. Satan's opening soliloquy brings out his psychic framework, crowded with heterogeneous passions and feelings. It is a fusion of a feeling of derision for God's Universe, his self-awareness and self-castigation, knowledge of his own self and his final agonising thought.

Satan's soliloquies in the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* are devised in the true tradition of Marlowe and Shakespeare. Milton makes use of these soliloquies in order to (a) 'humanise' the otherwise skeleton figure of evil, as one finds it in the pages of the Bible; (b) to foreground the theatre of the mind/the inner psychological drama of the rebel Archangel. Satan's opening soliloquy (32 – 113) is addressed to "the full-blazing sun" (129) because the sun represents the glory and greatness of God. It stands at the centre of the cosmos, created by God. The sun, therefore, is a reminder of Godly glory, which is unbearable to Satan. The opening soliloquy brings out his psychic framework, crowded with heterogeneous passions and feelings. It is a fusion of a feeling of derision for God's universe ("..... to thee I call/ But with no friendly voice." ll.35-36), his self-awareness

and self-castigation ("yet all his good proved ill in me/And wraught but malice", ll.48-49) his knowledge about his own self ("Till pride and worse ambition threw me down - l.40) and his final agonizing thought ("which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell", l.75) . Side by side, there are the words of self-disparagement ("... outcast, exiled"). The soliloquy ends with his farewell words to hope and remorse. Instead, there is the negative tendency to idolize Evil and confusing it with Good ("Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least/Divided empire with Heaven's king I hold,/By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;/As Man ere long and this new world shall know." (Lines 110-113)

Milton comments that, as Satan continues to speak out the soliloquy, different passions dim his face and "marred his borrowed visage." The passions referred to are "ire, envy and despair." The second soliloquy of Satan has interesting situational contexts. He has already trespassed into the Garden of Eden and he has also watched secretively Adam and Eve with their "far nobler shape", naked majesty. Even Satan who is evil incarnate cannot but discover in these the replica of their Maker. It is this sight of Adam and Eve and the congenial pastoral atmosphere of the Garden in which they are placed that generate in his mind the feelings of envy and jealousy. In the second soliloquy (Lines 358-392) Satan expresses this sense of envy. In this soliloquy he introduces himself as the veritable enemy of mankind and consequently his initial feeling of appreciation for the gentle and beautiful pair is supplemented by the feeling of sadness for their incoming change and prospective banishment from the state of innocence and unadulterated purity. He therefore says "Ah! gentle pair, ye little think how nigh/your change approaches, when all these delights/Will vanish, and deliver ye to woe"

Satan in his second soliloquy, replete with every and jealousy, introduces himself as the veritable enemy of mankind. Consequently his initial feeling of appreciation for the gentle and beautiful pair is supplemented by the feelings of sadness for their incoming change and prospective banishment from the state of innocence and unadulterated purity. This soliloquy is full of sarcasm, irony and grim humour.

In this particular soliloquy Satan addresses Adam and Eve with sarcasm, irony and grim humour. He suggests that very shortly "mutual amity" will be established between the gentle pair and his own self. He sounds sarcastic and ironic when he says that his dwelling, thereby referring to Hell, may not please their sense as the fair Paradise. There is a touch of dark humour when he further comments that after their downfall they will be greeted and entertained by all the inhabitants of Hell including their numerous offspring. The periphery of their existence will be widened and they will be able to share the expansive limits of Hell with Satan's own self. The second soliloquy undoubtedly gives a new dimension to the character of Satan. He proves without any ambiguity that he intends to be the sworn enemy of mankind and his motive is to avenge himself on God by reducing and corrupting the new favourites of the Omnipotent.

Satan, in his third soliloquy, is a voyeurist. The intimate and confidential moments of Adam and Eve awakens in his mind the feeling of malignity, corroding envy. He comprehends the situation of antithesis between his own self and Adam and Eve and gets tormented. Like any Renaissance encyclopaedist, Satan feels that the horizon of knowledge is boundless.

Satan's third soliloquy (Lines 505-535) appears to be psychologically much more interesting than the second. According to C.S. Lewis (*Preface to Paradise Lost*) Satan in the third soliloquy in Book IV of *Paradise Lost* is a voyeurist who gains a close look of Adam and Eve at one of their intimate and confidential moments which however awakens in his mind the feeling of malignity, corroding envy. The soliloquy begins with two exclamatory explanations "sight hateful, sight tormenting!" The reason behind the exclamation is not difficult to find. He comprehends the situation of antithesis between his own self and Adam and Eve while they are enjoying the Paradisiacal pleasures of love. He himself is getting tormented with his agonizing life in Hell where there are neither joy nor love but compelling and fierce desires. From the lips of Adam and Eve he has however gathered one important information about the restriction imposed on them by God, in respect of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Satan feels suspicious and therefore in a self-questioning mood, he says "Knowledge forbidden ? / Suspicious, reasonless ! Why should their Lord / Envy them that ? Can it be sin to know ?" (Lines 515-517). The interrogations quoted above add a fresh dimension to his attitude and personality. Like any Renaissance encyclopaedist, Satan feels that the three soliloquies of Satan bring up to the surface Satan's characteristic peculiarities, his attitude and temperamental peculiarity. A fallen archangel, he suffers from the incurable feeling of jealousy. He is almost always instigated by a sense of pride, vanity and conceit. There is also intolerance for his personal servitude and for the happiness of the newly created favourites of God. Side by side there is a dark ambition in his mind to widen and extend his power and authority, but in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, Satan exhibits some definite symptoms of his characteristic degeneration.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a critical note on Satan's Soliloquies in Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book IV.

UNIT 7(b): THE PORTRAYAL OF ADAM AND EVE

Milton's recreation of Adam and Eve out of the scanty biblical material is significant, for, firstly, it introduced in the poetic narrative the human interest, secondly, in the poem the earthly and the heavenly get coalesced with each other, and lastly, with a superb touch of irony the beauty and grace of Adam and Eve are foregrounded through the eyes of Satan. They represent the uncorrupted state of existence for they embody godliness. Their description "is a poetic texture of conceptual images".

The figure of Satan occupies a position of central importance in Book IV of *Paradise Lost* but no less important is Milton's portrayal of Adam and Eve. The original and primary reference to Adam and Eve is found in *The Book of Genesis*: "And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the Ground and to blow into his nostril the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul" and further, "And Jehovah God proceeded to take the man and settle him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to take care of it." This is followed by the story of Eve's creation. "Hence Jehovah God had a deep sleep fall upon the man and while he was sleeping, he took one

of his ribs and then closed up the flesh over its place. And Jehovah God proceeded to build the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman and to bring her to the man." Milton in *Paradise Lost* re-creates the figures of Adam and Eve out of these scanty biblical materials. The portrayal of Adam and Eve in the Fourth Book has a significance of its own for more than one reason. First, it introduces in the poetic narrative human interest; secondly, for the first time in the poem the earthly and the heavenly get coalesced with each other and lastly, with a superb touch of irony the beauty and grace of Adam and Eve are foregrounded through the eyes of Satan. Indeed, one of the important sections of the Fourth Book is Milton's presentation of the first parents of humanity in the lines 288-318. Milton begins this famous description by referring to their "nobler shape, erect and tall." They look on the one hand 'God-like' and on the other majestic and lordly, as though they are the first emperor and empress of the earth. They represent the uncorrupted state of existence and they embody godliness in themselves, and, consequently, the image of God seems to be shining in them with essential glory. According to Prof. Tillyard, the passage, describing Adam and Eve, "is a poetic texture of conceptual images." Prof. Helen Gardner concludes that Adam and Eve are not simply royal but they are also idealised moral beings. The same view is upheld by Prof. J.B. Broadbent when he draws the attention of the readers of the poem to the following statements of the poet. "For contemplation he and valour formed, / For softness she and sweet attractive grace." (lines 297-298). The lines are succeeded by that famous and debatable poetic observation on the mutual relationship between Adam and Eve : "He for God only, she for God in him." The statement undoubtedly brings into focus the bourgeois, Puritanic concept of the man-woman relationship — the idea that man is intellectually much superior to woman and because of her inferiority, a woman should be worshipping the God in man. Since Milton looks upon Eve as an archetypal woman, he is in the task of typifying her characteristic attributes and look. For example, Milton describes, "She, as a veil down to the slender waist, / Her unadorned Golden tresses wore / Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved, / As the vine curls her tendrils..." (lines304-307), and further "yielded with coy submission, modest pride, / And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay, ..." (lines 310-311). Milton the poet expresses himself in the Petrarchan poetic idiom. Side by side, he also typifies the male beauty of Adam and presents him in such a manner as he appears to be the graceful kinghtly protagonist of a medieval romance. "His fair large front and eye sublime declared / Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks / Round from his parted forlock manly hung / Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad." (Lines 300-303). The idealisation of Adam and Eve is complete when Milton moralises on their nakedness (Lines 313-318) and seems to link them with the Golden

The statement that "He for God only, she for God in him." bring into focus the bourgeois, Puritanic concept of the man-woman relationship — the idea that man is intellectually much superior to woman. Milton looks upon Eve as an archetypal woman. Adam appears to be the graceful knightly protagonist of a medieval romance. Milton moralises on their nakedness and seems to link them with the Golden age. But he, too suggestively describes that these two idealized beings have their own characteristic limitations.

Age. In this context we may note down the remarks of Prof. Frank Kermode : "For one needs to understand the general primitivistic position which held that custom and honour were shabby modern expedients unnecessary in a Golden Age society, with all its corollaries in Renaissance 'naturalism'." Milton, however, adds something more to the character-portrayal of Adam and Eve. The formal, ceremonial manner in which they address each other further reinforces the royalty of their nature, their dignity and sublimity as the protagonists of an epic.

The question which, however, disturbs our mind is whether Adam and Eve really stand for "Simplicity and spotless innocence". Milton suggestively describes that even these two idealised beings have their characteristic limitations. In a magnificently written passage Eve recounts the day of her first meeting with Adam (Lines 456-490). The passage draws our attention to Eve's narcissistic self-love and Adam's partially infatuated feeling for her. The scene also demonstrates that the love between Adam and Eve is not spontaneous, but an induced and a superimposed one. It may also have the mythical association of Apollo beckoning and calling back the escaping Daphne.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. How does Milton depict Adam and Eve ?
2. What is the significance of the portrayal of Adam and Eve in Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book IV.

UNIT 7 (c): THE GARDEN OF EDEN

From the inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, let us now move forward to the Garden itself. The initial reference to the Garden is found in *The Book of Genesis* : "Further, Jehovah God planted a Garden in Eden, towards the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Thus Jehovah God made to grow out of the ground every tree desirable to one's sight and good for food, and also The Tree of Life in the middle of the Garden and the Tree of Knowledge of good and bad." Milton has elaborated on these scanty Scriptural material and has ultimately transformed it into, what Prof. Kermode has called, "the Garden of Love."

The Garden of Eden is considered as the Garden of Love, by Prof. Kermode, I may conclude, for one specific reason. Its atmosphere and its beneficial impact may be realised in the light of the flawlessly harmonious relationship that exists between Adam and Eve. As the Garden of Love, it functions as a complementary image to Adam and Eve. That is why, the beauty and significance of the Garden of Eden can never be realised without any reference to Adam and Eve. In another respect the description of the Garden of Eden has in itself an inherent sense of irony because, as in the case of Adam and Eve, the pristine freshness and beauty of the Garden can be explored only through the eyes of Satan. As a trespasser into that idyllic place of natural beauty, Satan primarily overcomes all the barriers to the entrance of the Garden. Milton offers the suggestion that the

Garden appears to be fenced with adequate protection. But to the archenemy of God and mankind no obstacles are insuperable. That is why he jumps over all the barriers and finds himself stationed in the middle of the Garden. There to his utter surprise he finds "undelighted all delight, all kind / Of living creatures, new to sight and strange."

Milton has transformed the Garden of Eden, found in The Book of Genesis into "the Garden of Love". It functions as a complementary image to Adam and Eve. But it has in itself, an inherent sense of irony too, because its pristine freshness and beauty can be explored only through the eyes of Satan. The Garden is fenced with adequate protection. But to the archenemy of God and mankind no obstacles are insuperable. The Garden is both sublime and sensuous, paradisal and earthly.

Satan discovers the Garden as a place unique and peculiar because it is at the same time sublime and sensuous, paradisal and earthly. The question which has been frequently raised is where the Garden of Eden was actually situated — whether it had really any earthly geographical identity. According to Masson "Eden the whole tract or the district of Western Asia wherein the creator has designed that men should first dwell; Paradise is the Happy Garden situated in one particular spot of this Eden — on its eastern side."

"Eden stretched her line / From Auran eastward to the royal towers / of great Seleucia, built by Grecian kings, / Or where the sons of Eden long before / Dwelt in Telassar." The physical and geographical reality of the Garden of Eden is, however, superseded by the sublime touch of Milton's poetic imagination. He designates it as "A Heaven on Earth" and thereby celestializes what might have transpired as closely real and mundane. It is a pleasant garden with the fertile super abundance of nature. Milton writes "...In this pleasant soil / His far more pleasant garden God ordained / Out of the fertile ground he caused to grow / All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste." (lines 214-217). Milton seems to be recalling the primary source materials to be found in the *Genesis*; and side by side he looks upon it as sensuously rich and gratifying. It is a garden that has in itself the prospect of the life eternal and deathless, symbolised by the Tree of Life and "eminent, blooming, ambrosial fruit/of vegetable gold", but in addition to this, there is the contrary existence of the Tree of Knowledge that ominously anticipates man's permanent banishment from the Garden of Eden. It is also a richly watery place which signifies that the fountains of life flow free in the Garden of Eden. Nature's boon in every shape and form is showered spontaneously on the Garden. Milton throws the suggestion that, sensuality should be one of the essential paradigms of the Garden because it is the Garden of Love; and anything which is mundane and sensuous is rooted in the 'amor'. Adam and Eve, integrated with the picture of Eden, are the archetypal lovers, the perennial symbols of youth and beauty. In fact, Milton's description of the Garden reminds one of the Forest of Arden in Shakespeare's *As you Like It* because it accommodates the flora and fauna of all types and hue. Here are to be found "cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm" and fig tree; and "all beasts of the earth" — "bears, tigers, ounces, pards and lions." Milton's Renaissance sensibility considers the Garden as Nature

systematised (reference in this connection may be given to Bacon's 'Of Garden') and also an ideally conceived pastoral existence — "a happy rural seat of various view" (Line 247) Milton's Renaissance mind also adopts the meticulous, mosaic details of the baroque art and painting when he describes topography and other colourful aspects of the Garden of Eden — "Sapphire fount", "Orient pearl", "sands of gold", "mantling vine", "purple grape" "palmy hillock", "flowery lap / of some irriguous valley". Then again, the floral beauty of the Garden looks matchless. There are in the Garden "flowers of all hues", including roses and Jessamine, crocus and hyacinth. The flowers create a rich inlay of embroidery "more coloured than with stone / of costliest emblem" (lines 700-703). The Garden on the whole impresses the readers of the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* as an idealised state of existence which we can dream of, but which we cannot translate into reality. Notwithstanding its probable geographical location, this "Assyrian garden" looks much more beautiful than all other noted man-made gardens, celebrated in myth and literature (Line 268-265).

In Milton's poetic imagination, the Garden is designated as"A Heaven on Earth." It is a garden that has in itself the prospect of life eternal and deathless, symbolised by the Tree The Tree of knowledge ominously anticipates man's permanent banishment from the Garden of Eden sensuosity should be one of the essential paradigms of the Garden because it is the Garden of love Adam and Eve, the archetypal lovers, are the symbols of youth and beauty. Milton's

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What is the significance of Milton's delineation of the Garden of Eden in his *Paradise Lost*, Book-IV ?

UNIT 7(d): MILTON'S HANDLING OF EPIC SIMILES

One of the important areas of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is Milton's use of epic similes. The use of such similes is rooted in the Homeric tradition of epic mode and style. For their effectiveness and artistic appeal and beauty the epic similes are sustained by elaboration and extraneous details which may not have anything to do with the immediate point of comparison. The descriptive details in such similes simultaneously divert and distract the readers, giving them the ideas of digression, amplitude and magnificence which qualify an epic poem. Dr. Johnson in his 'Life of Milton' appreciated the inclusion of epic similes in *Paradise Lost*. He referred to abundance and variety as two important attributes of Milton's handling of epic similes. But notwithstanding their variety and copiousness, the similes are rarely connected with the main epic narrative or story element. They seem to be existing in their own rights for their beauty; for the exquisiteness of details and for their fine imaginative appeal. Milton seems to be

Dr. Johnson referred to the abundance and variety of Milton's handling of epic similes. But they seem to be existing in their own rights for their beauty, exquisiteness of details and fine imaginative appeal. Milton seems to borrow them from different sources.

borrowing these similes from different sources — myth, history, geography, travel account and, at times, from his personal experiences.

In the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* the epic similes are however, used with certain a difference. For the first time the similes appear to be organically related to the epic narrative sometimes exploring their contextual relevance and sometimes commenting on the concerned characters and situations. Take, for example, two consecutive epic similes (lines 183-192) where Satan in the first case is compared to a 'Prowling wolf', and thereafter to a "thief, bent to unhoard the cash / Of some rich burgher ..."

In the Fourth Book of 'Paradise Lost', for the first time, the similes appear to be organically related to the epic narrative sometime exploring their contextual relevance and sometimes commenting on the concerned characters and situations.

In the first epic simile (lines 183-187) the points of comparison, in spite of its extension and elaboration, are more than one and quite relevant too. Satan is identified with a 'prowling wolf' because of his shyness, craftiness, and envy the 'flocks' refer to Adam and Eve, while Shepherd's pen — a close and confined enclosure — has its parallel to the Garden of Eden and the shepherd is the customary Christian image for God. In the second epic simile, Satan is like a thief, intent upon taking away the rich treasure of "some rich burgher", just as Satan is willing to take away the simplicity and spotless innocence of Adam and Eve, the rich treasures of God. In the Fourth Book Milton appears to be luxuriating with the similes he has employed. In lines 268-283, we come across four successive epic similes which emphasize the superiority of the Garden of Eden vis-a-vis the other gardens, celebrated either in myth or popular history. The first of the four epic similes recalls the mythic story of Proserpine, her abduction by the god of the underword and the search made by Ceres "through the world" to find her out. The second is concerned with the temple of Daphne, near the city of Antioche on the Orontes ; the third refers to young Bacchus, and her mother Amathea, hid in Nyseian isle, to escape the jealous eyes of the stepmother Rhea. The fourth and last tells the story of the Abyssinian kings who kept their sons in the palace on Mt. Amara, so that they might not be affected by the spirit of sedition. The immediate sources of these similes are different.

At one point, the similes are interrelated because three out of four similes reinforce the basic thematic contexts of the reinforce the basic thematic contexts of the seduction, jealousy and sedition, and thereby they bring within their purview the entire cosmic and human drama of 'Paradise Lost'.

Yet, at one specific point they are mutually interrelated because three out of four similes reinforce the basic thematic contexts of the poem — the themes of seduction, jealousy and sedition, and thereby they bring within their purview the entire cosmic and human drama of *Paradise Lost*. The specimens of typical epic simile with all its grand and magnificent superfluity may also be cited in this connection.

1. "As when to them who sail

Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow Sabacan odours from the spicy shore

Of Araby the Blest : with such delay

Owell pleased they slack their course, and many league Cheered with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles.

2. "....swift as a shooting star

In autumn thwarts the night, when vapours fired Impress the air, and shows the mariner From what point of his compass to beware Impetuous winds."

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a note on Milton's use of epic simile in *Paradise Lost* Book IV. What purpose do they serve ?

UNIT 8 (a):

EPICAL, LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC QUALITIES IN *PARADISE LOST* (BOOK - IV)

Content Structure:

Adam Unparadised was the title of the play which Milton had planned to write on the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden which resulted in the fall of humanity and which according to Milton himself was the most tragic incident in the entire course of the history of humanity. But subsequently he gave up the idea of writing any play on this theme particularly because a theme of such a cosmic dimension could not be accommodated within the specific and definitive structure of a play. He, therefore, realized that the epic, poetic mode should be the most appropriate to deal with such a theme of cosmic dimension. Accordingly the different books of *Paradise Lost* have distinctive dramatic design and structure of their own. The Structure of the Fourth Book is definitely dramatic, since it can be stratified into a conventional pattern of a play with exposition, rising action, climax, denouement and resolution or catastrophe. The exposition sets the action apace with the opening speech of Satan which clarifies the cause of his rebellion against God and his defiance of the ultimate authority of the universe. In Book IV the dramatic qualities are foregrounded in the soliloquizing speeches of Satan which in sudden flashes throw some light on Satan's state of mind. In fact, Milton at the end of Book IV constructs the dialogues of Satan and Gabriel in such a manner as to produce the effect of stichomythia. The style of Milton, now and then, borders on the verge of the dramatic. In this connection, to a number of epic similes which are instrumental in building up dramatic suspense and tension (Explain the lines 183-191 ; lines 268-285). *Paradise Lost* (Book IV) in its narrative is also graced with epic qualities. First there is the large, spacious canvas which is crowded not only with the angelic beings but also

Milton realised that the epic, Poetic mode should be the most appropriate to deal with such a cosmic theme like the fall of humanity. The structure of 'Paradise Lost' Book-IV is definitely dramatic Since it contains exposition, Rising action, climax, denouement and resolution or catastrophe. The epic similes are instrumental in building up dramatic suspense and tension

The epic qualities of Book-IV are also discernible in its narrative (e.g. there is the large, spacious canvas crowded both with angelic and human beings) and in its style (e.g. the variable use of the run-on lines of blank verse). Book IV is also unique in lyrical quality (e.g. there is the description of the evening accompanied by excellent figurative devices.

with human beings. Heaven and earth combine together in Book IV. Adam and Eve the first parents of mankind, are protected by Gabriel, Uriel and Ithuriel and as a result, the overlapping of the terrestrial and the extra-terrestrial takes place. The epic suggests not simply the terrestrial but the terrestrial in this poem is sublimated, as it is evident in Milton's glorified and heightened description of the Garden, and the depiction of Adam and Eve.

The epic qualities are most discernible in its style. One may note down the variable use of the run-on lines of blank verse. The pompous marching of the blank verse lines is unquestionably remarkable ; equally so, is his employment of the blank verse lines to suit the conversational and colloquial mode. He is informal when he allows Satan to be conversational — sarcastic, ironic, caustic not only at his own cost but also at the cost of Adam and Eve. *Paradise Lost* (Book IV) is unique among the other books because the lyrical tenderness is sporadically introduced throughout the book. First, there is the description of evening accompanied by excellent figurative devices (lines 598-609). The mellowed tone of the passage acts as a pleasant anti thesis to the splendour and gravity of the epic mode. The lyrical and epical modes are mixed with the dynamism of the dramatic mode, which gives the poem a distinctive flavour of its own.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a note on the epical, lyrical and dramatic qualities in *Paradise Lost* (Book IV).

UNIT 8 (b): IMPORTANT CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON MILTON

About Milton's achievement as a poet and his relevance Dr. Johnson in his essay 'Life of Milton' and Christopher Hill in *Milton and the English Revolution* respectively have made the following observations :

"The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance : he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support ; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained ; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch ; he was born for whatever is arduous ; and his work is not the greatest of heroic poems, only because it is not the first."

— Dr Samuel Johnson in 'Life of Milton'

THE RELEVANCE OF MILTON CHRISTOPHER HILL-MILTON AND THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

Counter-culture radicalism *is* in some respects more personal and introspective than past radicalisms normally have been ... This ... reflects the perception that the revolutionary theory and practice of the past have placed too much faith in economic and institutional changes, and have neglected the need to change people's way of thought and modes of personal behaviour.

Anthony Arblaster, *Times Literary Supplement, 6 June 1975*

UNIT 8 (c): MILTON AGONISTES

Mr. Arblaster might have excepted Milton from the charge against 'past radicalisms'. Milton's political experience led him to attach more importance to changes in people's modes of thought and conduct, less to political manipulation and institutional change. This would seem to give him a certain modern relevance.

But we have to work a little to grasp Milton's relevance, We cannot just 'let the poetry speak for itself'. Some of it will, most of the ideas will not ; and Milton is nothing if not a poet of ideas. To understand his relevance we must see him as a man of total political commitment. Like Wordsworth, he started out with extravagantly high hopes : unlike Wordsworth, he strove to cling on to them. Like Yeats, Milton wrote his greatest poetry when he was over the age of fifty. Like Blake, unlike Wordsworth and Auden, Milton did not renege on the political convictions which had inspired him in his younger days. When Milton's revolution had turned sour, he did not seek the facile way out of saying that his God had failed. He knew that any human beings who thought God had failed them must have idolatrously set up as an object of worship their own desires and fancies. Believers were included in the failure : self-respect prevented Milton from looking for a divine scapegoat, Defeat of his cause left him not bewailing and lamenting but probing deeper into his own nature and that of others, in order to find out what was needed for the good cause to succeed. Milton wrestled with God for the blessing which had so signally been withheld, convinced that it was not unattainable. His most mature writings were aimed at the politically dedically minority, fit though few, who could with him face defeat without whining, without self-exculpation.

Milton attached more importance to changes in people's modes of thought and conduct and less to political manipulation and institutional change which gave him a certain modern relevance. He is basically a poet of ideas — a man of total political commitment. Self-respect prevented Milton from looking for a divine scape-goat, defeat of his cause left him probing deeper into his own nature and that of others, in order to find out what was needed for the good cause to succeed.

But Milton's relevance can hardly be grasped without some understanding of his theology, thought which his initial radicalism and his final synthesis were expressed. If we regard the theology as merely out-of-date lumber — which on the surface it is — or, worse still, if we regard it as

something we have to believe if we are to appreciate the poetry, then Milton is mostly dead for us. We must see, for instance, the Fall of Man as a myth or metaphor through which Milton (and not only Milton) expresses determination to change *this* world : only so can we grasp the relevance of his poetry to men women living in a world which still needs transforming but which is not going to be transformed except by human effort. Above all Milton fought, this resolution not to surrender what he believes to be right, however complete the apparent defeat of his cause, makes Milton every age's contemporary. Properly understood, he will be outdated only when the millennium arrives. And that, he would have grimly agreed, is long enough. I have spoken of Milton as an individualist. But the this-worldliness of his thought makes him far less concerned with his own soul or with the afterlife than many of his contemporaries. There is no evidence that Milton ever underwent the conversion that was almost *de rigueur* among certain Puritan groups. There is in him none of the fevered search for personal salvation that we find in Vaughan on the one hand, in Bunyan on the other. Milton is concerned with Christ's kingdom the good society, rather than with personal consolations or rewards. Even in Lycidas, reference to personal immortality is perfunctory : the real consolation is the two-handed engine, ready like Samson to smite the enemies of the church, of Christ's kingdom. Milton's virtual abandonment of the idea of sacrificial atonement, his failure to emphasize the miracles of the New Testament, including the incarnation, the resurrection, the ascension and Pentecost, all make his approach verge on the secular.

We must see the Fall of Man as a myth or metaphor through which Milton expresses determination to change this world, which is impossible without human effort. There is in him none of the fevered search for personal salvation that we find in Vaughan or Bunyan. His approach verges on secularism.

The dominant characters in Milton's last three great poems are not merely individuals : they are public persons, representatives. This role is traditional for Adam and Jesus Christ in the Christian scheme of salvation.('Adam, the parent and head of all men, either stood or fell as a representative of the whole human race.') The Son of God is the second Adam throughout *Paradise Regained*, though at the very end 'he unobserved and head of all men, either stood or fell as a representative of the whole human race.') The Son of God is the second Adam throughout *Paradise Regained*, though at the very end 'he unobserved Milton was not an original thinker, about politics or theology. He synthesized other people's ideas, and he spoke out fearlessly. His attack on Constantine in 1641, his defence of Familism in 1642, his advocacy of divorce, of the accountability of kings to their peoples, his defence of republicanism in 1660, were all acts of great courage. He was a profoundly political character, dedicated to the cause which he believed to be right. But he tried also to be a realist. *Areopagitica* in 1644, *The Ready and Easy Way* in 1660, *Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration* in 1673, all show considerable political shrewdness. The Leveller and Digger appeal to a wider democracy is attractive to modern eyes, but Milton was more realistic in his refusal to attach any revolutionary regime that he hoped could be radicalized.

Even Milton's silences were often politically significant. Between 1645 and 1649, as the conflict between Presbyterian City, Independent Grandees and Leveller rank and file shook the unity of the Parliamentarian cause, Milton published nothing. He never attacked Oliver Cromwell so long as the latter lived to unite the Good Old Cause. In 1659-60 Milton tried desperately to popularize his schemes for reunion, and he returned to this activity just as soon as the political climate permitted it in the sixteen-seventies. His enemies remained constant-tyranny and superstition, always allied to one another. The defects to which his own side were liable were avarice and ambition, also always twinned.

His heresies were the common currency of radical circles, with their powerful emphasis on this world. Where Milton was unique was in his vast attempt to combine these heresies into a coherent system, and to put it forward in Latin with a view to reSECTIONing the Protestant world. His ambition, his dedication, where what he believed to be God's cause was at stake, knew no bounds. In the *De Doctrina Christiana* and in the last pamphlets we find him still repaying in the international obligations which he had incurred in Italy in the thirties. The optimism of the forties, focused on England as the chosen nation, had been succeeded by the beleaguered defensive nationalism of the fifties, the near-despair of the sixties when he felt he had no country. In the seventies hope stirred again.

Together with the re-imposition of the censorship, the failure of Milton's audiance enabled and forced him to return to poetry Poetry had its own logic and rhetoric, and into Poetry he could pour all the conflicts, doubts, uncertainties that had racked him as he played the propagandist.

The failure of Milton's audience was not, as it turned out, unmitigated disaster. Together with the reimposition of the censorship, it enabled and forced him to abandon left-handed prose propaganda and return to poetry. Now he could write for a select audience, no longer worrying about problems of communication, no longer trying ever new styles, none of them totally to his satisfaction. Now he could listen to the Muse and write as she dictated, confident that those would hear who were fit to hear. In poetry he no longer had to pretend that grey was white because it was whiter than black. He could give the devil his due, be as ambiguous and ambivalent as he knew the real world was, without feeling that he was betraying the good cause. Poetry had its own logic and its own rhetoric, and into poetry he could pour all the conflicts, the doubts, the uncertainties that had racked him as he played the propagandist. But in it too he could express the moral certainty, far beyond rational prose argument, of what he knew to be right: Adam's love for Eve, the assurance that worldly strong will be subverted by things deemed weak, that the perfect man will miraculously stand in face of all temptations, that even a failed leader can

Some of Milton's ideas are much advanced. But unfortunately, the areas in which he was striking blows for freedom are areas in which he now seems old-fashioned — e.g. his advocacy of religious liberty, of divorce in the sphere of domestic liberty, of political liberty and so on.

make good by standing and waiting for the moment in which the Lord delivers the Philistines into his hands, made strong again, as he had delivered the Scots into those of Oliver Cromwell at Dunbar.

Into the last poems Milton could pour, too, his astonishingly surviving sensuous delight in the plenitude of God's creation, in the overgrown thickets of the earthly Paradise and in the burning brightness of the tigress Dalila, as well as in words, their sonority, their overtones, their ambiguities, their use to conceal as well as to communicate. F. T. Prince illustrates Milton's 'armoury of puns and jingles' in *Paradise Lost.* The sheer vitality of the blind man in his late fifties and sixties is astonishing, the man who had worked so hard and suffered so much, who should have been cynical or self-defensive, and who instead summons God to judgment and finally pronounces him not guilty. I cannot think of Milton as a tragic figure in those last years when, in defeat, he wrote *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. He was not only affirming the survival of a remnant; he was proclaiming that from these would grow an hundredfold, that victory would still come in the end, however tragic the present, provided we do not lose our heads or our hearts.

Milton's radicalism, I have suggested, had its limits. On occasion it was cut short by social considerations of which he was only partly aware. This relates to the paradox of his passionate and simultaneous belief in both liberty and discipline. Counterposing liberty to license assumes certain social stabilities as a check on the intellectual iconoclasm which also attracted him. Milton's rejections of conservative views are rational : his rejections to the left are emotional, social. 'For who loves that must first be wise and good' raises questions of definition, which Milton consistently begged. His contemporary Thomas Hobbes had a short way with those who used words like 'justice', 'reason', 'liberty', 'goodness' in Milton's manner. 'Their moral philosophy is but a description of theirown passions', Hobbes wrote. 'Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth good.' Milton's Whiggish use of such words covers a Whiggish double-think about equality.

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Milton never resolved his tensions between liberty and dicipline, passion and reason, human love and God's providence, the necessity of individualism and of society, radicalism and elitism In the great poems he tried to face up to the brute facts which he called God. It seemed that only divine intervention could solve the problems of the English Revolution.

Part of the difficulty in assessing Milton is that some of his ideas are so advanced that we tend to treat him as though he were our contemporary. Unfortunately, the three areas in which he rightly felt that he was striking blows for freedom are areas in which he now seems old-fashioned. His superb advocacy of religious liberty seems deficient in that it is restricted to Protestants. But this is because international Catholicism no longer poses the threat which it did in the seventeenth century. Catholic emancipation now seems to us the acid test of sincerity and consistency in this respect. But Catholic emancipation is a nineteenth-century phrase. 'The emancipation of Antichrist'would not have seemed a good slogan to the English revolutionaries, nor indeed to many Englishmen so long as Louis XIV's France appeared to threaten national independence. In the sphere of domestic liberty, Milton's advocacy of divorce for incompatibility now seems excessively male-orientated. Again we have to put Milton back into the seventeenth century (and to remember *Jane Eyre* and *Jude the Obscure*) to see how advanced he was in his day. In the sphere of political liberty Milton suffers in twentieth-century eyes because he was no democrat. I have tried to explain the Recognizing Milton's contradictions, and placing them in their social context, is essential to understanding the poet. 'When a man tells us unprovoked lies about himself', Tillyard mildly observed, 'you may reasonably infer that his emotions are seriously involved.' By saying in *Paradise Lost* that he was unskilled in and unstudious of the literary artifices of the romances, Milton 'betrays the deep feelings which made him turn against them.' We should look out for all the points at which Milton is fiercest — in attacking his former allies among the Presbyterian clergy or the Long Parliament, in denouncing mere humanist culture in *Paradise Regained,* in his contemptuous references to the common people or in his discussion of the relation of the sexes. Here Milton is arguing with himself, or feels that his ideals or standards have let him down. His anger springs from disappointment ; it may be anger with himself rather than with those it was ostensibly directed against.

Milton never resolved his tensions — between liberty and discipline, passion and reason, human love and God's providence, the necessity of individualism and the necessity of society, radicalism and élitism. They ultimately perhaps seemed insoluble on earth : the pressures of the everyday world worked against the intensity of Milton's inner vision. But he tried again and again — in *Areopagitica,*

in defending and warning Cromwell, in his appeal to the virtuous few in *The Ready and Easy Way*. At the end he was forced into withdrawal from all churches, despite his continuing belief in the godly remnant. In the great poems he tried to face up to the brute facts which he called God. It seemed that only divine intervention could solve the problems of the English Revolution : near hopelessness about effective political action underlies both *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. Yet if no one but God can produce the solutions, what becomes of human freedom ? And had God shown himself worthy of this trust ? Milton's is a tension between decorum and right reason on the one hand, and on the other the radical revolutionaries of individual consciences through which right reason was expressed. The mediating term was 'the middling sort', among whom he had seen the greatest hope of finding good men who would love freedom. Milton's ideological contradictions must all be related to his social position, and to the nature of the revolution in which he took part. When even the middling sort let him down in 1660, he still wanted to fight on : but be could see no solution beyond concentrating on small things in the hope that great may come of them when God gives the sign. Reformism was forced on him by the failure of the Revolution ; he no longer hoped that the masses of the population might bring about the sort of revolution he wanted to see. Moses Wall proved right : centuries of economic development were necessary before solutions were possible on earth without divine intervention.

I tried to suggest, I hope not too schematically, that after the eclipse of the traditional culture of court and bishops, Milton found his allegiance divided between the culture of the Protestant ethic and the lower-class third culture ; and that this may underlie many of the tensions revealed in his writings. Newton and Locke, who shared many of Milton's secret heresies and tensions, were of a younger generation, and lived on into the world of triumphant Whiggery. But they still, like Milton, censored themselves before publication. Milton concealed his views so successfully that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries he came to be regarded as the orthodox Puritan poet. Newton— secret anti-Trinitarian and millenarian — was seen by Blake as the personification of rational science; Locke — anti-Trinitarian and millenarian, Arminian and Mortalist — as the personification of rational philosophy. Against them Blake looked upon Milton as a potential ally. But in fact all three were furtively attracted by many of the ideas of the radical underground which were not to survive the triumph of 'Newtonian' science and 'Lockean' philosophy and politics. There are many ironies here to be incorporated in the history of English popular culture when itcomes to be written.

Agonistes is a fittingly ambiguous word to describe Milton's relation to his public in the first century and a half after the publication of 'Paradise Lost', as he was deceiving his audience whilst entertaining them.

In 1642 Milton used prophetic words which he must have recalled in 1659-60 : 'Timorous and ungrateful, the church of God is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies : and thou bewailest. What matters it for thee or thy bewailing ? When time was thou couldst not find a syllable of all that

thou hadst read or studied to utter in her behalf. Yet ease and leisure was given thee for thy retired thoughts out of the sweat of other men.' 'Of other men' : the reference is not just to his father, but social. Milton was as aware of his responsibilities to society as any guilt-ridden intellectual of to-day.

Milton had passed his own test, had not spared himself. 'If I be not heard nor believed, the event will bear me witness to have spoken truth ; and I in the meanwhile have borne witness, not out of season, to the church and to my country.' He early came to see his role as that of the dedicated national poet. In *Of Reformation* he shows himself in the wings, ready to come on stage and celebrate successful revolutionary action. In *Areopagitica* he anticipated a more positive leading role for learned men, and felt a greater confidence in popular creativity. He certainly did not think of himself then as an aloof and austere scholar. Disappointment at the reception of his divorce pamphlets made him want to cut himself off from his too radical admirers ; he was more isolated in his self-portraits than in reality. In *Eikonoklastes* and the *Defences of the People of England* he seemed to have attained the position of leader, smashing the idols, defending 'the most heroic and exemplary achievements since the foundation of the world', those of the English republican nation. Even in the *De Doctrina Christiana* he still aspired to teach European Protestants in the traditional English manner. *Paradise Regained* renounces some of this. Where is this great deliverer now ? But we must not exaggerate the renunciation : the brief epic ends with the Son of God entering on his active mission of preaching. In *Samson Agonistes* the emphasis is again on action after preparatory waiting ; perhaps Milton looked forward to publication of the *De Doctrina* as his destruction of the Temple, a secret time-bomb which would ultimately explode in the face of the orthodox. He was not to know how long it would be before it saw the light of day, or how near it came to never being published at all. But he must have smiled with grim irony as men praised *Paradise Lost* who would have recoiled in horror at the heresies of the *De Doctrina*.

The Word Agonistes, we are told, means not only wrestler, struggler, but also one who deceives whilst entertaining. Saurat saw Milton Agonistes, 'wrecked in hope, blind and poor, ... meditating and perfecting the glorious revenge of *Paradise Lost'.* Milton, like Samson, was deceiving his audience whilst entertaining them ; he was God's fool at the same time as he was God's Wrestler and champion. Job, so influential for the structure and tone of *Samson Agonistes*, was also depicted as a wrestler. Agonistes is a fittingly ambiguous word to describe Milton's relation to his public in the first century and a half after publication of *Paradise Lost.* Now that nearly as long again has elapsed since the appearance of the *De Doctrina*, we might begin to see Milton's point.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Is the term 'Agonistes', appropriate to describe Milton ? Justify your answer.
2. Write a critical note on the relevance of Milton.

UNIT 8 (d): MILTON AND POSTERITY

I have called Milton a Whig, a revolutionary but no democrat. But though this places him in one respect, it does scant justice to his heretical radicalism. Milton was used by the Whigs in 1688 and after, but not all Whigs applauded regicide. It all depended in whose pocket the King was. Milton's revolutionary principles may have inspired the Calves' Head Club ; they had no serious appeal for men of reason and compromise. But if, for instance, the *De Doctrina Christiana* had achieved publication in 1676, what would have been its effect on intellectual history ? *Paradise Lost* could never have been built up as the classic of orthodoxy, and the image of Milton would have looked very different. It was exceptionally bad luck for the poet that the accident of historical development made *Paradise Lost* as a bad model for later poets as T. S. Eliot himself has been ; and that Milton's dearest and best possession was published too late, when religious heresy was no longer revolutionary. That it should have been translated and edited by a bishop was only the last twist of the knife. The dynamite of the sixteen-sixties became the damp squib of the eighteen-twenties — an embarrassment to Milton's respectable admirers, but one that could be ignored. By this time Milton seemed out of the main stream of republican radicalism. He was no less opposed to clericalism than Voltaire, but since Voltaire those who wished to crush *l'infâme* had different alternatives. Milton's alternatives. Milton's Milton's radicalism was still rooted in the Bible, in Christian heresy, in the dialectical thinking of the pre-Newtonian age. Only through Blake was this element communicated to the nineteenth century.

So we must not see Milton only as a precursor of eighteenth-century unitarians and deists, of Priestley and Paine ; not only of the radical Whig republicans, the Commonwealthsmen, a man to whom Francis Place and the Chartists looked back with affection and admiration ; not only a figure in the international history of revolution, influencing Jefferson and the American revolutionaries, Mirabeau and the French revolutionaries. He also influenced Herzen and the Russian romantic revolutionaries, and this reminds us that Voltaire said that no one before Milton had spoken in favour of romantic love. Even if not strictly true, it was a striking thing for Voltaire to say : and it links *Paradise Lost* with the English romantic poets, with Blake again, with Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley. As against the selfishness, hypocrisy and fear of death taught by priests and churches, Blake saw Milton's role as being.

to teach men to despise death
and to go on
In fearless majesty annihilating self,
laughing to scorn
Thy laws and terrors,
shaking down thy synagogues as webs.

Just because Milton participated in the dialogue between two cultures in seventeenth-century England, he looks forward to Blake as well as to Paine, to romanticism as well as to deistic rationalism. Shelley reunited something of the two revolutionary traditions. Milton was Freud's favourite poet.

The curve of Milton's posthumous reputation is not entirely haphazard. 'Works of inspiration are always being annexed by orthodoxy, which hardness itself against every new incursion of thespirit' : Joseph Wicksteed's words are applied to Milton by J. A. Wittreich, who speaks of commentators 'surreptitiously snaring the poet in their own net of orthodoxy'. During the century and more after more after the defeat and suppression of the third culture Milton became the great Puritan poet. Every decade of the eighteenth century saw on average ten editions of *Paradise Lost* and seven of Milton's complete poems. A change came only with the revival of political activity among the lower and middle classes. Dr. Johnson smelt danger and roundly denounced Milton's ideas. But the radicals picked them up and emphasized unorthodoxies which had been ignored since the revolutionary decades. Blake, who certainly knew about the Ranter past, picked Milton out as the historical figure with whom the radicals' argument must be continued. He gave them the last word against Milton by claiming that he was of the devil's party without knowing it ; Shelley called Satan the hero of *Paradise Lost,* though in a sense different from Dryden and Dennis. The reforming Major Cartwright associated enthusiasm with love of liverty and hatred of corruption.

"Works of inspiration are always being annexed by orthodoxy, which harness itself against every new incursion of the spirit" But during the century and more after the defeat and suppression of the third culture Milton became the great Puritan poet"

The revival of Milton's radical reputation was accompanied by similar revivals of trends which had been suppressed for over a century. Sociological history was picked up by the Scottish school where Harrington had left it, political economy by Adam Smith where Petty had left it. The advance of chemistry, checked since Boyle, was resumed by Priestley and Lavoisier. Political radicals, from Wilkes to the Chartists, looked back to their seventeenth-century precursors, to the Levellers and Milton. After a long struggle, the Reform Bill of 1832 re-enacted something very like the Parliamentary franchise of 1654. Robert Owen and some Chartists rediscovered ideas of communal production, though there is no evidence that they read Winstanley : men did not need to read Milton to reject tithes. English society in the age of the French Revolution had caught up with the teeming freedom of the English Revolution. The publication in 1825 of the *De Doctrina Christiana* ought to have been a match to gunpowder ; but by that date political radicalism had left religious heresy behind.

Chartism failed no less than Levellers, Diggers and Fifth Monarchists. Samson's hair was trimmed again. From Macaulay onwards Milton was re-annexed to orthodoxy, this time to English liberalism. In our own day the heirs of the third culture are waving their locks again. The attempt to dislodge Milton having failed, the neo-Christians tried to annex him. In the nineteen-fifties, the decade of the

coldest war, which proclaimed the end of ideology, which saw Shakespeare as a Christian humanist and not much else, an effort was made to deny that Milton had really been a heretic at all. History has shown up the superficiality of pretending that ideology can cease to exist in a class-divided society (though, to do them justice, some of the end-of-ideologists imagined that the welfare state had abolished class divisions too-alas !). Shakespeare and Milton have escaped from the little nets which were cast around them. Saurat, Caudwell, Wolfe, Kelley, Empson, Ricks, have all helped to restore Milton to his proper place in the English tradition.

Milton was *sui generis*, wedded and glued to no forms, the great eclectic. But he was open to the left and closed to the right — intolerant of papists though embracing all varieties of Protestantism, merciless to the Philistine aristocracy and priests but merciful to the excluded vulgar, linking himself with the radicals just as far as his strong sense of the necessity of bourgeois society would permit.

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Doctor Samuel Johnson — 'The Life of Milton'
2. T. S. Eliot — *Selected Essays*, 'Milton I', 'Milton II'.
3. E. M. W. Tillyard — Milton.
4. C. S. Lewis — *Preface to Paradise Lost.*
5. Helen Gardner — *A Reading of Paradise Lost.*

BLOCK III
UNIT 9 (a):
Thomas More's *UTOPIA*

Content Structure

UNIT 9 (a):
INTRODUCTION TO THOMAS MORE: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Thomas More (1478-1535) was born in London on 7 February, 1477. He belongs to an affluent family. His father, Mr. John More, was a barrister and in his later life he became a judge. More went to St. Anthony's school at the age of thirteen. In his later life More became a page boy for Reverend John Morton, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England. It was a prestigious event in the life of young Thomas More. Morton highly appreciated the intellectual potentials of young Thomas . More got the opportunity to study at Oxford University; it was partially an arrangement made by Reverend John Morton. Thomas More studied at Oxford University from 1492-1494. He studied Classical languages like Latin, Greek , Mathematics, French, and History. More developed interest in law and he after returning London in 1494 started studying law at New Inn. He studied there for two years. He was quickly gaining skill in legal matters and he started working as an appointed lecturer. The year 1497 was a remarkable year for More. In the year he met the famous humanist thinker Erasmus of Rotterdam. From this year onwards he started giving lectures on both legal and philosophical subjects.

In his adulthood More was contemplating on the idea of joining the church. More stayed at a monastery for more than four year. The monastery was located very close to Lincoln's Inn. More's friends and acquaintances told that to More the life of a priest was a noble way of living life. And he aspired to attain that prestigious way of living his life. More's deep respect for the life of a priest gets reflected in his magnum opus titled *Utopia* where More has designed the lives of Utopians modelled on the lives of monastic communities. Though More was ambitious in his early adulthood to live the life of a priest, but due to circumstantial differences he left the thought of joining a monastery and started to concentrate on Law. In the year 1501 More was elected as a parliament member and he got the opportunity to serve the House of Commons. In the year 1505 More tied the knot with Jane Colte of Newhall. Jane died in the year 1511 after giving birth to four children: Margaret, Elizabeth, Cecilia, and John. Later More married Alice Middleton who was seven years older than More

More gained his reputation as a famous lawyer in the year 1510 and he became Under-Sheriff of London. The next ten years More's life finds its smooth pace and approbation. He served theking and received the pension of hundred pounds for life. During this period More travels extensively as an ambassador of the king. He travelled to Flanders and Calais and France in order to protect theBritish commercial interest. In the year 1516 *Utopia* was published and it gave More wide fame and reconginition. It is being considered by critics till date More's most successful literary creation. More accompanied King Henry VIII to a meeting with Francis I of France. More represented the king so well that after his return to London King Henry VIII made him king's sub-treasurer and conferred on him the title of knight in the year 1521. In later life More was elected as the High Steward of Cambridge University and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

In the following years More Wrote a number of works answering Martin Luther's indictment against Catholicism in 1523. In order to defend King Henry VIII More wrote *Responsio ad Lutherum*. In 1529 More succeeded Cardinal Wolsey as Chancellor of England – a post that had never been occupied by a layman. More suffered from religious persecution. In 1532 he resigned from his position because he disagreed to accept king Henry VIII as the head of the church of England. H e was imprisoned at the Tower of London, and accused of treason. More was beheaded in the year 1535. The title of saint had been conferred on More after his death.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Briefly describe the political life and student life of Thomas More.

WORKS

Thomas More tried his hands in the historical writings before writing his magnum opus *Utopia*. He started writing *History of King Richard III* between the years 1512-1519. It remained as an unfinished writing. It was published after More's death. The *history of King Richard III* dealt with the Renaissance history. Scholarly opinions on the book appreciate the literary skill and More's wonderful skill of handling the classical motifs. Though More aimed at writing a historical study but the book never achieved that level of perfection to represent historical facts with accuracy . Some consider the book as a medium to expose royal tyranny. *The History of Richard III* was composed and published both in Latin and English. Each version of the book was written separately by More. The importance of *The History of King Richard III* lies in the fact that the book was considered as a major influence for Shakespearean play *Richard III*.

More's remarkable literary creation is *Utopia*. It was written in Latin. More finished the novel in 1516 and Erasmus published it. The book was translated into English and published in England in

1551, which is really a long time after More's execution. In the year 1684 the book's translation gains its fame. More himself appears as a character. More and a traveller cum narrator Raphael Hythloday constitute the conversations in the book. The name Raphael Hythloday appears as an allusion. It alludes to the name of angel Raphael. In their conversation they were discussing the social customs and political beliefs in the imaginary land, called Utopia. In More's imagination the concept of the imaginary land appears as a foil to the corruption and turmoils of the Europe in the-then time. Quite interestingly, in the imaginary land there is no lawyer, because the legal issues are so simple. In Utopia, men and women both have education. The utopians believe in the communal ownership of property rather than individual ownership of property. In the imaginary land there is religious tolerance, though a sect of atheists exists but they are despised by the religious utopians. The riches are despised by the utopians and a person without any belief on God and afterlife is also being condemned. Interestingly, More's concept of a land where equality should be the basic principle paves the path in later time to the formation of Marxist thought.

Utopia gives More fame and recognition. At the same time it gives birth to controversy. More's outstanding work finally gives birth to a new genre. It is known as utopian Fiction. The opposite to Utopian fiction is dystopian fiction. In English lexicon a new word has been added "utopia" which means nowhere or no place. Finally, the term utopia signifies an imaginary land where all difficulties cease to exist and life moves smoothly. More's work has left its deep impact on a number of literary works which have been shaped by More's idea of an imaginary land where equality is the guiding principle. Examples of such Works are: *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon, *Erewhon* by Samuel Butler, and *Candida* by Voltaire. The concept of an equal and perfect society was conceived earlier by Aristotle and Plato. It is evident that More's knowledge on the classical literature made him acquainted with the belief of an ideal society which was imagined by both the classical masters Aristotle and Plato.

Apart from *Utopia* More composed a number of Latin Poems, *Responsio ad Lutherum*, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529,1530), *Supplication of Souls* (1529), *Letter Against Frith* (1532), *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532, 1533), *Apology* (1533), *Debellation of Salem and Bizance* (1533), and *The Answer to A Poisoned Book* (1533).

Let Us Check Our Progress:

1. Write down names of few important works by Thomas More.

UNIT 9 (B): BRIEF SUMMARY OF *UTOPIA*

Utopia is divided into two books: Book I and Book II. In book I at More's house Hythloday, More along with More's friend Peter Giles were discussing the stories of adventures of Hythloday.

As an explorer he has visited numerous lands and had witnessed different customs of the people. In this regard, Hythloday mentions about his visit to the land Utopia. The interesting political affairs of the land attracted More's attention and the second book is entirely devoted to the discussions about customs of the land Utopia.

Book II has been divided into several sections. This part is largely written based on Hythloday's experiences in the land Utopia. Hythloday describes in this book the history of the land called Utopia, its religion, politics system, philosophy, and people. Hythoday goes on saying that Utopia is an old land. It was conquered by general Utopus 1760 years before Hythloday's arrival on the land. He civilized the land and according to his name the place has been named as Utopia. The utopians are very disciplined people. They are not Christians but they have their own God. The Atheists exist in utopia but they are despised. In Utopia the rulers are selected by the order of scholars. The language, social customs, dress, religion, architecture, and education are same in the fifty four cities of Utopia. Laws and social customs heavily shape Individual's life. A child is shifted to another household if he is keen on learning another trade. The utopians believe in afterlife, and they believe after death the spirits of their ancestors take care of them. The marriage custom is also different in utopia from other lands. Before marriage, a would be bride is presented as naked in front of the would be groom, and in this entire event the wise old women remain present. For such innovativemarriage custom utopians posit the logic that before buying a livestock people use to judge very meticulously whether it is worthy enough of the money they are going to spend on it or not. Therefore,in this marriage custom, why do not people check whether the bride is suitable or not. The logic of the utopians reinforces the notion of objectification. It means that a woman is being viewed as a commodity or object. Her intrinsic worth as a human being is overlooked. This is absolutely a chauvinist thought.

At the beginning of the book II More writes a letter to his friend Peter Giles. In the letter he writes about the interesting experiences of Raphael Hythloday which he has composed in a book form. Interestingly, More ends book II with a letter. This letter is Peter Giles's reply to More's previous letter. Quite interestingly, More throughout the narrative mentions the fictional quality of the imaginary land Utopia. In fact, this fictional representation of the land Utopia with all its principles of equality, and justice turn out to be a plea on More's part to rejuvenate the corruption and evils of the sixteenth century Europe.

Let Us Check Our Progress:

1. Who are the three characters in Utopia? And mention briefly their roles in the narrative.
2. Write a summary of *Utopia.*
3. Critically evaluate the relevance of Book I of *Utopia*.

UNIT 10 (a):

UTOPIA THEMES

Content Structure:

UNIT 10 (a): Utopia Theme

(b): Origin of the Term "Utopia"

(c): Source of the text

The concept of the imaginary land utopia basically serves as a model for an ideal commonwealth. More in his magnum opus *utopia* has raised important critical issues that arrest attention of the scholars since its publication. One of the important issues in the text is the letters which have been exchanged between Thomas More and his friend Peter Giles. The letters in a way, give birth to the fact that the imaginary land is not solely the concept of More, rather he is trying to breach the gap between the fact and fiction of the concept of "utopia". The imagination of the ideal land is coloured by the fantasy of the traveller Raphael Hythloday. More's intention is to represent the imaginative fantasy of Raphael Hythloday with a mooring of reality. Therefore the narrative design of *Utopia* serves three purposes simultaneously:

(a) : More continuously keeps his readers aware of the fact that he is merely combining the experiences of Raphael Hythloday into the readable form through his narrative.

(b) : The text *Utopia* generically belongs to the category of fiction ; at the same time it has elements of non-fiction. The examples of non-fictional elements in *Utopia* are the letters which are being exchanged between More and his friend Peter Giles. Therefore, it becomes very difficult on part of scholars and readers to attribute any particular generic identity on *Utopia*. It seems like a fiction as it deals with the imaginative fantasy of Raphael Hythloday, but curiously it has non-fictional elements as well and the coexistence of both the fictional and non-fictional elements in *Utopia* makes the task problematic to attribute any fixed generic identity on the text.

(c) : The narrative design of *Utopia* serves satirical purpose on part of Thomas More. The fictional representation of the ideal state utopia appears as a foil to the existing nations. The flawless socio-political features in the imaginary land, in a roundabout way point to the innumerable loopholes and corruptions that do exist in the real nations.

The aspect of religious tolerance in *Utopia* is a broad commentary on the religious intolerance and the highly publicized feuds between Protestantism and Catholicism. The aspect of communal ownership of property and the dismissal of individual interest in order to safeguard the interest of the nation –are considered as a stepping stone towards the concept and acceptance of Marxist ideology in the 1990s. The notion of equality and justice that the utopians believe also in a way gears critical

thoughts towards the emergence of Marxist ideology of a nation which will be functioning on the principles of equality and justice.

Let Us Check Our Progress:

1. Comment on the narrative technique of Thomas More in *Utopia*.

10 (b): ORIGIN OF THE TERM "UTOPIA"

Thomas More was introducing the new word "utopia" in English lexicon. The word comes from Greek origin. The word "utopia" is a combined form of the two Greek words "ou" and "topos". "ou" means in English "no" or "not" and "topos" means "place". Therefore, the meaning of the term "utopia" means "no place". The term utopia signifies an imaginary ideal place where government and socio-political structures are corruption free.

10 (c): SOURCE OF *UTOPIA*

Critical views on *Utopia* claim that it is a work on the tradition of Renaissance Humanism. Renaissance Humanism is a further development of the concept of Humanism during the period of Renaissance in England. Humanism talks about the value and significance of humans in the created world of God. Humanist philosophy attributes on man the dignity and honour of being the supreme creation of God. Man is being viewed in Humanist cult as "animale rationale" which means man is the rational animal, and therefore, he is the best creation of God. In medieval time human life was condemned. Renaissance Humanism is a new form of humanist thought which posits the view that human life is something which should be celebrated. Man is capable of performing outstanding feats. Critics have placed *Utopia* in this tradition of Renaissance Humanism and in this endeavour they find parallels and even contrasts with Utopia and other texts which have been written in this tradition. Even they find literary echoes of *Utopia* in Greek and Latin texts. Critical views on *Utopia* has established that no place is actually a place and to establish the view they present examples of such ideal commonwealth from other literary works. Thomas More's *Utopia* deliberately parodies "Las Casas's first plan for the reform of the encomienda system of the Spanish colonists in North America to the Marxist- Freudian reading included in Richard Halpern's *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation* and finally to Jeffrey Knapp'*s An Empire Nowhere." Utopia* can be read as a blueprint for English Imperialism. Eminent critic *Colin Starnes's* reading of *Utopia* finds similarities between Thomas More's *Utopia* and Plato's *The Republic.* Knapp finds apart from general similarities between the two books phrases, and ideas which he thinks that More has borrowed from Plato's work. Apart from Plato, Aristotle's *Poetics* also serves as an important source for More's *Utopia*. More in the two books of *Utopia* tries to find an answer to the problems of constructing an ideal land.

UNIT 11 (a):

ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT *UTOPIA*

Content Structure:

UNIT 11 (a): Analysis

Thomas More in *Utopia* wonderfully uses names of the characters to convey a thought and at the same time it reinforces Plato's influence on More's thought pattern to write such a book like *Utopia*. It has been accepted unanimously that lot of similarities exist between Plato's the *Republic* and More's *Utopia.* The name Raphael Hythloday is being used my More to convey a thought and also it bears testimony to More's being influenced by Plato. The name Raphael is an allusion of the archangel Raphael and it means "the healing of God". The surname Hythlodaeus was made up by More. It is a combination of two Greek roots – most probably meaning "knowing nonsense". Therefore the meaning of the name Raphael Hythloday can be translated into English like "the healing (one) of God, knowing nonsense". The character of Raphael Hythloday has many similarities of the character called Socrates who appears in Plato's the *Republic.* Plato represents Socrates in his work as the philosopher and the one who devotes his entire life for the quest of truth. More begins his narrative in *Utopia* by describing the character of Raphael Hythloday. The character sketch of Hythloday by More at the beginning of *Utopia* justifies More's intention to emulate the character of Socrates as described by Plato in his the *Republic*. Many scholarly observations on the character of Raphael Hythloday has established the fact that "More characterizes Hythloday largely in terms of traditional attributes of the philosopher". More intended his readers to see Raphael's position as similar to that of Socrates in the *Republic.* There is remarkable likeness between the two characters Raphael and Socrates. Like Plato, More describes Raphael in Book I of *Utopia* as a *"vir eximius"* which means "an extraordinary man". He is just like Socrates because he has devoted his entire life to philosophy. He is "desirous neither of riches nor of power" and he has freed himself from family concerns. He refuses to enter political life. Peter Giles in his formal manner of introducing Raphael Hythloday to More mentions that just like Ulysses, Raphael Hythloday has travelled all over the world. More painstakingly creates the character of Raphael Hythloday in order to represent him as the wisest man in sixteenth century Europe. Therefore More describes Hythloday as the traveller who travels extensively throughout the world and out of his adventures he gains wisdom. Here is a difference between Socrates and Raphael Hythloday. Socrates never travels outside Athens. More deliberately creates this difference in his character sketch of Raphael in order to make the character convincing to the sixteenth century European readers. The sixteenth century itself is being considered as the era of expansion and exploration. When a character lives in such a

time without his exposure to the outer world he would not be accepted by the European learned readers as the most wise man of the time.

Besides More's *Utopia* and Plato's the *Republic* both have common similarities. First of all in both the books the narrators are using dialogue form. Both the narrators of these two texts have raised a problem and the rest part of the narrative has been used as an attempt to find an answer or remedy to the problem. In case of Thomas More and Plato the nature of the problem and its solutions are obviously different. In Book I of *Utopia* More finds a problem and at the same time he acknowledges that the immediate solution to the problem is difficult to find out. Just like Plato who in his opening section of the *Republic* raises the question what is Justice? And in the subsequent chapters of the text he tries to find a solution to the question what is justice? And how does it work? The two authors, Plato and More both have raised two problems: in Plato's case in his examination of the origin of a state as the place to discover what justice is; in More's case, to the island of Utopia he tries to discover what the ideal commonwealth should be. Eminent critic Surtz observes that, "the interlocutors in both the *Republic* and the *Utopia* retire to a private residence after a religious ceremony in a seaport."

UNIT 12 (a):

CRITICAL RECEPTIONS

Content Structure:

UNIT 12 (a): Critical Receptions

References

Assignments

More's satirical intentions and his use of irony are evident in *Utopia*. More himself wants his learned readers to derive meanings from his work which are associated with the position of man in the sixteenth century Europe. Besides, More wants his work to be treated as a kind of political theory. The personal and intellectual contexts in *Utopia* are highly connotative. They mean various things. More uses anachronism in his work where he praises men like Bude for establishing the context of the past more authoritatively. He castigates man like Tyndale. Jackson Boswell's study of citations of More in *Short Title Catalogue* has established the fact that the sixteenth century European readers derive from the text a wide variety of meanings. The book has achieved a sense of ambiguity. More's playful handling of the subject matter, his use of irony, satire, and anachronism – all of them enhance the aspect of ambiguity in *Utopia.* The book is an imaginative and satiric treatment of the human condition. There are significant similarities between the themes of *Utopia* and of More's career. His decision to become the king's servant in the year 1517 is followed by the publication ofhis book *Utopia*. The subject matter of *Utopia,* its allusiveness, and very clear relationship to classic texts associate the text with political philosophy. It is indeed a Renaissance text. Here the humanist cult of Renaissance, its growing emphasis on human dignity, and value of an anthropocentricworld are prioritized.

The theme of community is an important aspect of *Utopia.* The system of community in *Utopia* with its attendant features like communal living, common dining, plain dress, and familial confession are not appeals to the responsible self but correctives against misconduct and noncompliance. There are punishments for infractions. There are rewards for demonstrable virtue. A woman will nurse other mothers' children. The utopians set up statues of "distinguished men" in the marketplace "to preserve the memory of their good deeds and to spur on citizens to emulate the glory of their ancestors". There are conditioning pressures to virtue. There are similar social pressures against vice and even against such minor signs of individualism as eating at home rather than in the dining hall. Dominie Baker Smith observes that there is no room for the will there and no privacy on which to exercise it. From Raphael's account we do not learn the names of the utopians. What the readers get to know is the name of the founder king Utopus. Time is also absent in Utopia. The insistence on

the communal ownership of property in *Utopia* is a stepping stone to the move towards Marxist thought.

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ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a note on the significance of the letters which have been exchanged between Thomas More and his friend Peter Giles
2. Write a note on Raphael Hythloday.
3. Write a note on the problematic generic identity of *Utopia*.
4. Briefly summarize the theme of *Utopia.*
5. Write a note on the marriage custom of *Utopia*.
6. What are the religious beliefs of the utopians?
7. Write a note on the statement that "Book I and Book II in *Utopia* are basically complementary to each other".
8. Describe the houses in *Utopia*.
9. What is Renaissance Humanism? Do you consider *Utopia* adheres to the thoughts of Renaissance Humanism? Elucidate.
10. How does Thomas More co-mingle the elements of fact and fiction in *Utopia*?
11. Mention briefly about the other literary texts which can be considered as sources for *Utopia.*
12. What are the similarities between Raphael Hythloday and Socrates?

BLOCK IV

UNIT 13

BACON'S 'ESSAYS'

Content Structure :

UNIT 13 (a): OBJECTIVES

The present study material on Bacon's 'Essays' intends to acquaint the students with Bacon, his life, his works and more particularly, with the 'Essays' he wrote. There are, however, only three essays, prescribed in ODL syllabus in English. But the essays 'Of Truth', 'Of Death', 'Of Love' are representative in the sense that they give the readers a fair idea about the different aspects of Bacon's literary art — his style of writing and his pragmatic outlook on life. The study materials will provide specific guidelines to the students as to how to read and appreciate Bacon's 'Essays'.

UNIT 13(b): BACON'S LIFE AND WORKS

The full name of Bacon was Francis Bacon (1561-1626). Bacon was at the same time a statesman, a philosopher and an essayist. As a thinker who contemplates on life morally and philosophically, Bacon remains one of the most formative minds in European thought for more than four hundred years; as a statesman he reached the highest political and judicial office (The Lord Chancellorship) from which, however, he was dismissed for accepting bribes in 1621. The combination of greatness of thought with mediocrity of conduct provoked Alexander Pope's description of him, a century later, as 'the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.'

This book is Distinctive for its modernity of approach to the pursuit of knowledge and to the obstacles to it arising from mistaken uses of mind.

His strictly philosophical works comprised notably three books : *An Advancement of Learning* (1605); an expansion of the Advancement, *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623); *Novam Organum* (1620). Apart from the *Advancement,* Bacon wrote his philosophy in Latin because of his belief that it would remain indefinitely the language of international learning. Bacon's famous works in English are his *History of Henry VII* (1622); *New Atlantis* (1626), a work that Bacon could not complete. Before I write anything on his 'Essays' in a generalized way, I would like to draw your attention to Bacon's other works.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a brief note on Bacon's life and work ?
2. How did Alexander Pope describe Bacon ?

UNIT 13 (c): BACON'S WORKS OTHER THAN THE 'ESSAYS'

The Advancement of Learning : It is a philosophical treatise, published in 1605 in English; Bacon later expanded it in his Latin work *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623). The book, addressedto King James I, suggests ways in which the prestige of the pursuit of knowledge can be enhanced and its methods improved. It is divided into two parts : Book I treats first those characteristics that contribute to the dignity of the life of learning. Book II is a survey of the branches of learning, and ofthe mental faculties. *The Advancement* is distinctive for the modernity of its approach to the pursuitof knowledge and to the obstacles to it arising from mistaken uses of the mind. As a work of literature, it is distinguished for the terseness and lucidity of Bacon's prose. Novum Organum (1620) : The title bears the meaning of 'The New Instrument'.

"The New Instrument": Describes a method of gaining power over nature through a complete and correctly founded system of knowledge. The obstacles to knowledge are the idols of tribe, of cave, of Market and of theatre.

The work is written in Latin. Bacon's aim is to describe a method of gaining power over nature through a complete and correctly founded system of knowledge. Knowledge must be acquired by experience and experiment, that is, inductively. The obstacles to true knowledge are false assumption which Bacon calls 'idols'. These are of four kinds. The Idols of the Tribe are common human weaknesses such as allowing the emotion to interfere with the reason; the Idols of the Cave are individual weaknesses arising from individual upbringing; Idols of the Market - place arise from erroneous uses of language, such as using names for non-existent things, or for concepts which have been inadequately defined; Idols of the theatre are caused by false philosophical principles and by incorrect reasoning.

The object of speculative science must be to discover the true forms of things, beginning with the forms of 'simple natures', i.e. the true manifestations of the most elemental phenomena such as heat and light. New Atlantis (1626) : In the tradition of Sir Thomas More's Utopia, it is a philosophicaltale. The book had its posthumous publication, since it was left unfinished at Bacon's death The title alludes to the mythical island, described by Plato in his dialogue Timeaus. Bacon calls his island Bensalem, coined after the name of Holy City of Jerusalem, and the chief glory of this place is its university, called 'Solomon's House'. Unlike the Universities of Bacon's time, this is devoted to scientific research. Some important lines may be quoted from the text to substantiate Bacon's intention : ". The knowledge of causes, and secret motion of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible."

A philosophical tale of a fancied island, Bensalem, where there is a University, called "Solomon's House," Devoted to scientific research.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write, in brief, the themes of the three essays.

UNIT 14:
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE THREE 'ESSAYS'

Content Structure :

UNIT 14 (a): 'OF TRUTH' with Notes and References

UNIT 14(b): 'OF DEATH' with Notes and References

UNIT 14(c): 'OF LOVE' with Notes and References

The Essays by Bacon may be thematically categorized into several groups. There are discourses on human relationship ('Of Parents and Children', 'Of Marriage and Single Life', 'Of Friendship', 'Of Followers and Friends') on philosophical and ethical matters ('Of Truth', 'Of Death', 'Of Envy', 'Of Ambition', 'Of Beauty'); on the matters and principles of diplomacy and politics ('Of Nobility', 'Of Empire', 'Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates; Of Faction'); on the practical matters of everyday life ('Of Building', 'Of Gardens'). The variety of subjects of Bacon's 'Essays'indisputably proves that Bacon retained encyclopedic interests in life. A pragmatic philosopher,he felt fascinated to multiple aspects of human life and experience, resembling perhaps Wordsworth'svision of a wise man who stands "true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home". As a philosopher and thinker, he succeeds in the interfusion of the abstract with the concrete, the esoteric with the mundane. The three 'Essays' in our syllabus—'Of Truth', of Death 'Of Love'— adequately substantiate and illustrate the above written arguments. A summary of the Essays are given below.

UNIT 14 (a): A SUMMARY OF 'OF TRUTH'

Bacon begins the essay by referring to jesting Pilate's confusing interrogation 'What is Truth ?' The similar question is posed by the essayist to his readers. But unlike Pilate, Bacon does not stay backs to offer answer to this philosophic query. He speaks about men who delight in the constant change of opinions and consider it a bondage of mind to fix a belief and call it truth. Bacon argues that in ancient Greece there were different schools of skeptical philosophers, and now-a-days they are replaced by 'discoursing wits', that is, argumentative intellectuals. As opposed to truth, there are lies, loved and liked by ordinary men for the sake of lies themselves. By echoing Plato, Bacon says that the free indulgence in his on part of the poet is meant for pleasure giving, but in case of the trading class, it is intended for earning profit. With the help of two metaphoric statements ("Truth may perhaps come to the prince of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle that sheweth best in varied lights") Bacon wants to suggest that truth, which is unchanging,

Truth, which is unchanging, wants the charm of variety and a touch of falsehood adds variety to truth. Bacon relates Truth to the creativity of God. First he deals with "theological and philosophical truth", then he concentrates on the "truth of civil business".

wants the charm of variety. That is why Bacon further comments : "A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure." According to Bacon, Truth by itself is dull, flat and genuine. That is why a touch of falsehood adds variety to Truth. In order to substantiate his arguments on Truth Bacon speaks about "inquiry of truth", "the knowledge of truth" and "the belief of truth". In his attempt to discover the true source and origin of Truth, Bacon relates it to the creativity of God. By referring to Lucretius's philosophical writing *De Rarum Natura* Bacon says that the greatest blessing of human life is to love the truth and dwell in it. Man's preoccupation with Truth removes from his mind all confusions, misunderstandings and false convictions.

The discourse on Truth is divided into two broad sections. In the opening paragraph he dwells an "theological and philosophical truth", while in the concluding paragraph, he concentrates on "the truth of civil business". Bacon admonishes the resort to falsehood and perfidious practices in the civil life of man. Bacon expresses the idea in a sentence where the metaphor in drawn from metallurgy;" .... and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it." Bacon relates the violation of truth to satanic practices. But these ideas according to Bacon, are conventional. The opposite view about the relation between falsehood and truth is stated by Montaigne in the second chapter of his essays; "For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man."

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. How would you characterize Bacon's idea of truth ?

Notes and References

1. Pilate : The Roman Governor of Judaea before whom Christ was tried and condemned to death. He is introduced simply as a type of the skeptical.

2. Sects : Reference to the various skeptical schools of philosophers in ancient Greece.

3. The wine of devils : The phrase is possibly a fusion of Augustine's reference to *poetry as the wine of error* and the saying of Hieronymus that it is *the food of demons.*

4. His Sabbath work : his occupation during the leisure (Sabbath) which he has enjoyed since the work of creation was finished. The reference in his connection may also be given to the essay 'Of Great Place' where similar such idea recurs.

5. The poet : Alludes to Lucretius, the Roman philosopher - poet-who in his book "De Rarum Natura" ("On the nature of things") explained and defended the atomistic philosophy. He was born about B.C. 95.

6. Clear and round : honest and straight forward.

7. Embaseth : deteriorates.

8. The Serpent : Satan, it is described in the Bible, tempted Eve to taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge under the disguise of a serpent. Therefore the derivative meaning is associated with craftiness, deceit and falsehood.

9. Montaigne : The sixteenth-century French essayist. He is generally looked upon as the pioneer of personal familiar type of essay.

10. When Christ cometh : The reference is to the final judgment of mankind. The Biblical allusion is to the Gospel of St. Luke, xviii, 8 : "I tell you, He will cause justice to be done to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth ?"

UNIT 14 (b): A SUMMARY OF 'OF DEATH'

The essay begins with an aphoristic statement which has nearly assumed a proverbial importance : "Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark." The fear of death is ingrained in the mind of man for several reasons: There are, first of all, various associations of pains and agonies, clinging to our idea of death. Bacon describes in this context; "Groans and convulsions, and a discoloured face, and friends weeping and blacks and obsequies, and the like, shew death terrible." But, although death appears to be terrifying, the fear of death can easily be overcome by different moods and feelings. Bacon states his idea in a sentence which is characteristic of him —a long, elaborate sentence, consisting of several short units, having the self-contained (?) or independent meanings of their own : "Revenge triumphs over death; Love slights it; However aspireth to it; Grief flieth to it; Fear pre-occupaleth it." "Bacon thus wants to suggest that man is hardly afraid of death. After Otho. the Roman Emperor killed himself, pity and compassion for their leader induced many of his subjects to embrace death. In this connection Bacon also remembers how some of the eminent personalities of the classical past responded to death. The response were various and variable, stoical and good, humoured. I may quote from Bacon's essay to draw your attention to these variable responses to death : (a) "Augustus Caesar died in a compliment"; (b) "Tiberins in dissimulation"; (c) "Vespasian in a jest; sitting upon the stool"; (d) "Galba with a sentence, holding forth his neck"; (e) "Septimius Severns in dispatch." Bacon also cites one line from Juvenul's Satire, that denotes that "The end of life" is nothing but "one of the boons of nature." Bacon concludes his essay with the following observations : (a) Death is part and parcel of human life, and therefore unavoidable (b) An individual who is good and honest is never afraid of death. (c) Death removes all ill feelings for / towards an individual when he is dead and makes others feel better about him. The essay significantly ends wit

The fear of death is ingrained in the mind of man for several reasons e.g. various associations of pains and agonies. But it can be overcome by different moods and feelings.

another nearly aphoristic / proverbial statement, "Death has this also; that it openth the gate to good fame, and extinguisheth envy.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What according to Bacon, are the ways of overcoming the fear of death ?
2. Enlist the various responses to death that we find in Bacon's essays.

UNIT 14 (c): SUMMARY OF BACON'S 'OF LOVE'

It is an essay on human nature. Like the previous essay, the present one also begins with an aphoristic statement, precise, simple, but loaded with meaning : "The stage is more beholding to Love, than the life of man." After having made this statement Bacon goes on elaborating the idea with some illustrations, mainly historical. He continues to examine the qualitative aspects / features of love. He considers it as one of the important and meaningful feelings of human heart. Bacon states that love as a 'motif' is much more befitting for a comedy then for a tragedy. Love is simultaneously mischief making, dangerous and destructive. He writes that love is "sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a furry". Love conquers everybody's heart, including the spirited and the honest. Love imprisons not only Marcus Antonius, a characteristically voluptuous man but also Appins Claudius, "an austere and wise man." Love can find an easy entry into an open and frank mind; but it can also steal into "a well fortified heart".

"The stage is more beholding to Love, than the life of man." Bacon examines the qualitative aspects of love — love as a motif is much more befitting for a comedy than a tragedy; it is simultaneously dangerous and destructive, and all conquering .....

According to Bacon, love which is moderated may be a happy and congenial feeling; but the excess of this passion is dangerous because it completely destroys "the nature and value". of all living things. Love and wisdom are generally alien to each other. By echoing Shakespeare Bacon claims that loves and lunatics belong to the same category. Bacon idealizes love as a noble feeling and, for this reason, he writes : "That he that preferred Helena, quitted the gifts of Juno and Pallas", and further, "for whosoever esteemeth too much of amorous, affection Guitteth both riches and wisdom." By the word 'love' Bacon not only means the reciprocal attraction between two opposite genders but something else also. For example, there may be universal love, directed towards one's neighbours and common humanity. It is this that transforms men into "human and charitable". This is particularly true about the friars and clergymen. Love, different and various, performs different functions. Bacon therefore concludes the essay with three memorable and quotable sentences :

“Nuptial love maketh mankind friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. How does Bacon characterizes 'Love' ?

Notes and References

1. Beholding : indebted

2. Like a siren etc. sometimes responsible for self-indulgence, sometimes leading to passion. The sirens were women who by the sweetness of their melodic voices enticed the sailors who passed by their island to destruction.

3. The decemvir : the designation of a member of the Council of Ten to whom the government of Rome was entrusted.

4. It hath been well said : the quotation is from Plutarch.

5. He that preferred Helena : The story of Paris to whom three goddesses — Juno, Minerva, and Venus. Paris offers the apple of discord to Venus. Consequently Paris was rewarded with Helena; the most beautiful women under the sun.

UNIT 15

BACON AS A PRAGMATIC THINKER AND PHILOSOPHER

Content Structure:

UNIT 15: Bacon as a Pragmatic Thinker and Philosopher

The fame of Bacon as a creative writer, philosophic and pragmatic thinker rests mainly on his 'Essays', written on diverse and different matters. Before I say somethings on the 'Essays' written by Bacon, it may be perhaps desirable to write something on 'Essay' as a literary form. The term is derived from the French word 'essai', meaning 'experiment', 'attempt'. As a literary term it enjoys comprehensibility in its application, since it covers an enormous range of composition from schoolboy exercises to thorough scientific and philosophical works, the only quality in common being the implied desire of the writer to reserve to himself some freedom of treatment. But the essay is also a recognized literary form in a more defined sense : it is understood to be a fairly short prose composition, in style often familiarly conversational and in subject either self revelatory or illustrative of social manners and types. The originator of the form was the great French writer Montaigue, whose essays were published in a completed form in 1595, and translated by John Florio into English in 1603. Montaingue's essays were personal because they are characterized by a spirit of self-enquiry, and his self-oriented response to facts, ideas and experiences in relation to his own personal life and environs of the society to which he belonged.

'Essay' is derived from the French 'essai', meaning 'experiment', 'attempt'. It is defined as a fairly short composition, in style often familiarly conversational and in subject either self-revelatory or illustrative of social manners and types. It enjoys comprehensibility in its application. It is originated by French writer Montaigue.

Unlike Montaigue, there is no self-exploration or self-analysis in Bacon's essays since he focused on external matters e.g. which are related to the norms and values of politics. Diplomacy, common human feelings and experiences, ethics and aesthetics. Firstly, a student of mathematics and science, and secondly, a product of the age of the Reformation and the Revival of Learning, Bacon was naturally inclined to rationalism and logic.

In 1597, Francis Bacon, the first great English essayist, published his first collection of essays. The questions that continue to disturb the readers whether these essays bear any similarity with those of Montaigue. The answer to this question is not much difficult to give because the essays, written by Bacon, are distinctively different from those of Montaigue. When the sixteenth century French essayist candidly declares, "I speak into my papers as unto the first man I meet on the earth", Bacon may possibly claim that his 'discourses' have nothing to do with his own self. There is nothing like self-exploration or self-analysis in these essays because Bacon's professed aim as an essayist is to focus his attention on

matters which are external, and which are directly related to the norms and values of politics, diplomacy, common human feelings and experiences, ethics and aesthetics. In 'The Epistle Dedicatory' to the Duke of Buckingham his Grace, LordHigh Admiral of England, Bacon declares/announces : " I do now publish my Essays; which, of all my other works, have been most current; for that, as it seems, they come home to men's business and bosoms. The statement "they (essays) come home to men's business and bosomys" adequately explain the qualitative nature and thematic contexts of these discourses. Bacon intends to deal with the matters which are concerned with the day-to-day life of man— the proceedings of his everyday life. Therefore, his essays are to be differentiated either from Montaigue's writings, or from the romance oriented fictional, pastoral prose writings of Lyly and Sidney. On the contrary, The Essays bear the distinctive mark of Bacon's individuality— The specific manner of Bacon's attitude to life and his habit of analysing various problems and issues of human life and experience on the basis of rational, logical and scientific principles. The question why Bacon insisted on the rationalisation of problems and why he situated the problems and issues within the framework of logic may easily be asked by the readers and students of Bacon's essays. The first important reason has something to do with Bacon's characteristic temper and attitude. Fundamentally a student of mathematics and science, he had been naturally inclined to rationalisation and scientification of ideas. The second reason is, however, more important and more deeply rooted in the spirit of the age. In this connection, I may quote some relevant statements of F.G. Selby in his famous 'Introduction' to *Bacon's Essays* (Macmillan, London, 1965) : "There are certain periods in the world's history which have a special attraction for any student of the intellectual and moral development of mankind. Such a period in the age of Socrates and the Sophists in Greece, an age when the belief in an old mythology was being shattered, and tradition, authority, and custom were no longer accepted as adequate sanctions for moral rules and political institutions. In a word, a spirit of rational inquiry and criticism was supervening upon an age of childlike faith. Such a period again in the sixteenth century, the age of the Reformation and the Revival of Learning, marked by a similar revolt of reason against authority, in this case the authority of the Church." Bacon who was unmistakably the product of the age of the Reformation and the Revival of Learning believed in the policy of asserting reasons against authority, the independence of mind and thought against orthodoxy and conservative belief. Indeed, the free and liberal thinking that inspired and characterised the Renaissance mind may be perceived in all the writings of Bacon, including his 'Essays'.

Bacon may be described as a Renaissance humanist in the light of Raymond Williams's definition of 'humanist'. His interest in man and in human Renaissance humanist in the light of Raymond Williams's definition of 'humanist'. His interest in man and in human his essays. In his essays, Bacon gives the impression that his personality is multi- dimensional. They reflect Bacon's experience of men and the world.

Bacon's name is, however, frequently associated with 'Humanism'— a term which had different connotations during the Renaissance and the Age of Reformation. Raymond Williams defines the term 'Humanist' a derivative of 'Humanism' in the following manner : "Humanist was probably taken directly from *umanista* which from early sixteenth century had been a significant Renaissance word.It had late sixteenth century senses equivalent both to classicist and to the student of human as distinct from divine matters. This is a real complexity, related on the one hand to surviving distinctions between 'Pagan' and 'Christian' learning, and on the other hand to distinctions between the 'learned' (defined as in classical languages) and others. There is also an ultimate relation to the double quality of the Renaissance; the 'rebirth' of classical learning; the new kinds of interest in *man* and in human activities. It is not surprising, given this complex, to find an early seventeenth century use of *humanist* to describe someone interested in state affairs and history. The use of *Humanist* to describe one of the group of scholars prominent in the Renaissance and the Revival of Learning seems to come later in seventeenth century, but has since been common." (*Keywords*, p. 150). Bacon may be described as a Renaissance humanist in the light of Raymond Williams's description and definition of the term 'humanist'. His interest in man and in human activities" is illustrated in the essays like 'Of Parents and Children', 'Of Marriage and Single Life', 'Of Envy', 'Of Love', 'Of Travel', 'Of Nature in Men', just as his interest in state affairs and history is manifest in the essays like 'Of Nobility', 'Of Seditions and Troubles', 'Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates', 'Of Judicature'. In fact, in the 'Essays' Bacon gives the impression that his personality is multi-dimensional, as he is simultaneouslya moralist, a statesman and a man of the world. The range and intensity of his scholarly pursuit is really amazing. He delighted in the writings of moralist like Seneca, Lucian and Montaigue; of critics of character, like Tacitus, Plutarch and Suetonius and of critics of affairs, like Cicero and Machiavelli. All these readings, show Bacon's adequacy as a classical scholar — a typical representative of the Age of the Revival of Learning.

Bacon's 'Essays', Selby declares are the fruits of his observation of life. They reflect his experience of men and of the world. The most curious are those which treat of cunning of suitors, of wisdom for a man's self, of simulation and dissimulation, and other subjects of the kind. They reveal a habit of thought and action which is naturally generated under despotic rule." The tone that Bacon assumes in the 'Essays' is that of an instructor of humanity. The 'Essays' are undoubtedly the products of that wisdom which originates from the universal insight into the affairs of the world.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What is an essay?
2. What are the distinct features of Bacon's essays?
3. Consider Bacon as a pragmatic thinker and philosopher.

UNIT 16

BACON'S ESSAYS

Content Structure :

UNIT 16: Bacon's Prose Style

Suggested Readings

Assignments

Prof. Selby has pointed out that one of the reasons why we still read Bacon's 'Essays' is as much for the variety of their themes as also for their style. Although Bacon had no great respect for the English language, holding that "these modern languages will at one time play the bankrupt with books", yet no man individually did more to give strength and simplicity to the English language than he. Before I concentrate specifically on different aspects of Bacon's prose style, it is perhaps desirable to note down briefly the peculiarities in the style of writing of the prose writers and essayists who were the near contemporaries of Bacon. The English prose style in the time of Bacon generally moved between two extremes. On the one hand, there was the rhetorical, ornamental prose style which was embedded in diffuseness; and, on the other there was the circuitous prose style, saturated with extreme sentimentality. Thus on the one hand there was the needless elaboration of Euphemism, as in the following excerpt from Lyly's *Eupheus.*

"I have read that the bull being tied to big-tree loseth his strength, that the whole herd of deer stand at the gaze if they smell a sweet apple, that the dolphin by the sound of music is brought to the shore. And that no marvel it is that if the fierce bull be tamed with the fig-tree, that women, being as weak as sleep, be overcome with a fig; if the wild deer be caught with an apple, that the tame domosel is won with a blossum"; and on the other, there is a touch of artificiality in the circuitous, long-drawn sentences, as in the following few lines from Sidney's."

Arcadia :

"Kneeling down, even where she stood, she thus said, 'O, All seeing Light, and eternal life of all things to whom nothing is either so great that it may resist or so small that it is condemned; look upon my misery with thine own eye of mercy, and let thy infinite power vauschafe to limit out some proportion of deliverance into me, as to thee shall seem most convenient.

We read Bacon's essays as much for the variety of their themes as also for their style. Bacon gave much strength and simplicity to the English language. His prose style signifies a remarkable departure from both the two contemporary models – (i) the rhetorical, ornamental prose style (e.g. Lyly's Eupheus), and (ii) the circuitous prose style embedded in diffuseness (as in Arcadia).

Bacon's prose style signifies a remarkable departure from two models. He would never like to lose himself in the poetic diffuseness/diffusiveness of Lyly, or the over elaborated, sententious expressions of the Arcandian model. His sentences are generally clear and intelligible on account of two basic factors. First, Bacon's prose is the talker's

prose; and secondly Bacon himself being a student of science introduced in the English prose of his time the spirit of rationality, common sense and lucidity. Indeed, as a prose writer Bacon gives the impression that he is addressing a select group of audience who are listening to him with rapt attention. A few excerpts from the *Essays* may qualify the statement.

(a) "You shall read in some of the friars' books of mortification that a man should think with himself what the pain is if he have but his finger's end pressed or tortured, and thereby imagine what the pains of death are, when the whole body is corrupted and dissolved." ('Of Death').

(b) "After these two noble fruits of friendship. followeth the last fruit; which is like the pomegranate, full of many Kernels; I mean aid and bearing a part in all action and occasions." ('Of Friendship').

(c) "Some books are to be tasted, other to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." ('Of studies').

The scientific precision of modern-day prose was anticipated by Bacon in his *Essays.* He would hardly pass into unnecessary digression, or discursive, loose deliberations on any given topic. His statements and discussions are always too precise, and pointed. Anything superfluous, irrelevant has been carefully avoided by him. Whenever he takes up a topic, he continues to offer his observations on it in a systematic manner, as though his entire task is to argue well convincingly with his readers/ audiences he is addressing. Thus in an essay like 'Of Love', he initiates his deliberation with an aphoristic statement : 'The stage is more beholding to Love, than the life of man". Thereafter he focuses his attention on the qualitative features/aspects of love. This is followed by several allusions, drawn from history and myth, to suggest the influence love exerts upon different individuals. The essay ends with broad references to different kinds of love— nuptial love, friendly love and wanton love. [**Please see the summary of the 'Essay'.] There is a system in the discussion — a suggestion of graded arguments and there is very little loose and incoherent in the article. It in this quality of compactness which has distinguished Bacon's prose from that of Montaigue, or Lyly or Sidney. One does not find in his essays either anything subjective or anything delicate and tender. It is, as Selby has suggested, "masculine" prose because it is strong and vigorous tenseness happens to be one of the basic qualities of Bacon's prose style, and the effect of tenseness is achieved with the help of aphoristic, statements. For example, (a) "Revenge in a kind, of wild justice". ('Of Revenge') (b) Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark." ('Of Death'), (c) "Men create oppositions which are not" ('Of Unity in Religion').

The interesting thing about Bacon's style is that the sentences in his essays combine in themselves the quality of picturesqueness with weight. His imagination, flamboyant and luxuriant, enlivens every page of his writing. It is Bacon who can state any abstract idea in term of the concrete, as in the following:

(a) "Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights." ('Of Truth').

(b) "Groans and convulsions, and a discoloured face, and friends weeping, and blacks, and obsequies and the like, shew death terrible." ('Of Death').

(c) "Virtue is a like a rich stone, best plain set; and surely virtue is best in a body that is comely, though not of delicate features." ('Of Beauty').

The charm of Bacon's style lies also in his long sentences which are made of short, self-dependent units, leading themselves upto a final climatic effect, as in the following :

(a) "Revenge triumphs over death; Love slights it; Honour aspireth to it; Grief flieth to it; Fear pre-occupateth it." ('Of Death').

(b) "Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it." ('Of Love').

(c) "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man." ('Of Studies').

A comparison of Bacon with some of his contemporaries proves his well - defined superiority to others. A close analysis of his prose style shows how widely he departs from the prolix method of Hooker, Sidney, Lyly and Asclam. In rhetorical power, musical cadence, he is equalled by many of his contemporaries but, a clear, terge and easy writing he has no rival, and even today his essays are models of succinct, lucid prose. He blends dignity with familiarity in that pleased and attractive manner which in the secret of power of all great English essayist.

I may end my discussion on Bacon and on his achievement as an essayist by quoting from Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri's 'Introduction' to *Bacon's Essays : A Selection* (OUP, India, 1977); "The essays are slight in form, and apparently occasional in spirit; but Bacon took them seriously.

.... Properly analysed, the text of these 58 short pieces, and the evolution of their style and structure, may be found to reflect in miniature the most serious concerns of one of the noblest intellects of the Renaissance."

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a critical note on Bacon's prose style with ref. to the essays, prescribed in your syllabus.

'OF TRUTH'

The following lines from the essays prescribed in the syllabus may be important for short questions :

(a) "A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure" ('Of Truth)

(b) "..... The knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature". (DO)

(c) "Certainly, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth." (DO)

(d) "... and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it." (DO)

'OF DEATH'

(a) "Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark."

(b) "Revenge triumphs over death; Love slights it; Honour aspireth to it; grief flieth to it; Fear pre-occupaleth it'.

(c) "Death has this also; that it openth the gate to good fame, and extinguisheth envy."

(d) "It is worthy the observing that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it mates and masters fear of death.

'OF LOVE'

(a) "The stage is more beholding to Love, than the life of man."

(b) "....but in life it doth much mischief; sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a fury. (c) "......and therefore it is well said, *That it is impossible and to be wise."*

(d) "That he that preferred Helena, quitted the gifts of Juno and Pallas."

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. F.G.Selby (ed.) : *Bacon's Essays* (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London).
2. Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed.) — *Bacon's Essays* : *A Selection* (OUP, India).
3. F.H. Anderson : *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon*.
4. Basil Willey : *The Seventeenth Century Background*.
5. L.C.Knights : *Explorations,* 'Bacon and the Seventeenth Century Dissociation of Sensibility'.

ASSIGNMENTS

6. Write an essay on the distinctive features of Bacon's prose style.
7. What does Bacon write on love? Is love, according to him, a 'universal human feeling' ?
8. Howdoes Bacon philosophise on Truth ?
9. Break up the allusions in the essays 'Of Death', 'Of Love'.
10. Locate and annotate : "Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark".
11. Locate and annotate : "That he that preferred Helena, quitted the gifts of Junot Pallas.