

Block-3

Unit 1 : The Context of the Modern World: Literature, Painting, Architecture (Part I)

Unit 2 : The Contexts of the Modern World: Literature, Painting, Architecture (Part II)

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Unit 1 : The Context of the Modern World: Literature, Painting, Architecture (Part I)

Space for Learner

Unit Structure:

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Defining Modernism
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- 1.5 Cubism
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- 1.7 Expressionism
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1.1. Objectives

The attempt in this unit will be to

- *help* you define the various ideas of modernism,
- *acquaint* you briefly with the dea of modernism in the context of art
- *Introduce* you to various movements in the arts
- *Enable* you to have a comprehensive understanding of various movements in the arts.

1.2 Defining Modernism

The parameters of Modernism have been much debated, and as such the term eludes a clear definition. Roughly, it can be said to have taken its roots during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in France and during the 1890s in Britain and Germany, and extended till the start of the Second World War.

The term is frequently used to signify a deliberate and radical break in Western art, literature, and culture in general, with what came to be seen as more traditional, conventional, and **decadent** practices of the earlier era. With its social and historical background, it includes the resurgence of the Women's Movements, particularly the emergence of the concepts of the **New Woman** and **Women's Suffrage**, the peak and subsequent crisis of the British Empire, the beginning of the decolonizing process in Africa and Asia in particular, the events around and within the First World War, far-ranging technological changes, and so on.

Moving from one century to the next: women suffragettes, empire, etc

You must see here that several connections are being made : modernity is being connected to a particular historical moment which displayed its own peculiar characteristics and state of mind. Below we give you two descriptions of the same historical moment, one is chiefly economic while the other is cultural and artistic.

Between 1870 and the outbreak of the First World War, the Western world could be summed up in the words of Eric J. Hobsbawm :

“By the 1870s the progress of the bourgeois world had led to a point where more sceptical, even more pessimistic, voices began to be heard. And they were reinforced by the situation in which the world found itself in the 1870s, and which few had foreseen. The economic foundations of advancing civilization were shaken by tremors. After a generation of unparalleled expansion, the world economy was in crisis.”

While this constitutes the chronology of events, we can find its cultural manifestation in other terms.

As explained by M. Calinescu, we can see the intimate connection between modernity and crisis - “modernity itself can be seen as a “culture of crisis” “. Calinescu further explains this notion by showing that “As a culture of crisis, the avant-garde is consciously involved in furthering the “natural” decay of traditional forms in our world of change, and does its best to intensify and dramatize all existing symptoms of decadence and exhaustion.”

Take note also of another description given by Raymond Williams : “[The] late nineteenth century was the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production. Photography, cinema, radio, television, reproduction and recording all make their decisive advances during the period identified as Modernist, . . . The 1890s were the earliest moment of the movements, the moment at which the manifesto (in the new magazine) became the badge of self-conscious and self-advertising schools. Futurists, Imagists, Surrealists, Cubists, Vorticists, Formalists and Constructivists all variously announced their arrival “.

Modernism as an umbrella term brings within its scope all the movements taking place in the arts, necessarily experimental and complex in nature, registering the change and the crisis undergone by the entire Western, but chiefly, the European, world. There is a sense of a catastrophic divide from the past and a revolutionary turn towards the new and the unexplored, so much so that it prompted Virginia Woolf’s half-serious, half-jesting remark, “In or around 1910, human nature changed.”

Modern/modernism/modernist

“During the last one hundred and fifty years or so, such terms as “modern,” “modernity,” and more recently “modernism,” as well as a number of related notions, have been used in artistic or literary contexts to convey an increasingly sharp sense of historical relativism.”

This sentence is meant to awake you to the care and caution you need in using the term, the modern. From this statement, you also get a feel of the amount of work that this little word is made to do - to oppose periods of time.

No definition of ‘modern’ can be complete. Look at the poet Baudelaire’s description: “Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art, of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable”. You may not understand this at first glance but it is interesting to take up what Baudelaire suggests : modernity as a source of beauty is fleeting but it takes over finally, what is traditional. Modernity therefore opposes tradition and goes over to exploring that which is yet to be. It is rebellious in this sense and thus avant-garde.

The linking of modernity with Baudelaire is necessary because he was an important theorist of aesthetic modernity. In the English language, ‘modernity’ appears as early as 1627 to mean “present times”. Baudelaire’s conception of modernity is striking because it takes in the idea of the banality and triteness of ‘modern life’ as opposed to the “eternal sublimity of nature and the grandeur of a legendary medieval past.”

In some of its connotations, ‘modern’ recalls the opposition of the modern writer or artist to the ugliness of modern industrial civilization and its rise, along with bourgeois *philistinism*, in the nineteenth century. In the 1830s Art for Art’s Sake arose as rebellion against bourgeois values, the shape aesthetic modernity took against the modernity of the philistine.

1.3 Modernism in Art

The modernist tendency expressed itself initially more powerfully through various avant-garde movements in art, such as Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Expressionism and so on, and manifested powerful parallel tendencies in literature as well, as can be seen in Symbolist and Imagist poetry. These movements were, by and large, also reactions or responses to the dominant movements in mid and late nineteenth century Europe, particularly, Naturalism and Impressionism. Our aim here would, therefore, be to first analyse these modernist movements in the arts and then go on to their influences in the various genres or forms of modernist literature.

SAQ

Whom would you include in the Symbolist movement in literature?
(50 words)

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Which tradition or traditions does Symbolism choose to oppose?
(40 words)

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Avant-garde

The metaphor used here is that of the “advance guard” or “vanguard” which signifies both a profound criticism of what has gone before as well as a definite will to change and commitment to what is valuable for the future. The term itself has a military implication which helps to point up some of its attitudes and trends : militancy, non-conformism, exploration and finally, the overcoming or conquest of time.

One kind of modernity is closely allied with ideas of progress. If you look again at the beginnings of the ‘modern’ in the Renaissance (called the ‘early modern period’) and then in the Enlightenment in the late 17th and 18th centuries, modernity points to a stage in the history of Western civilization. So the modern becomes associated with scientific and technological progress, industrial revolution, economic and social changes brought about by capitalism. But aesthetic modernity is opposed to all these values because these are bourgeois ideas of modernity which continued some outstanding traditions of earlier periods of history - the confidence in the benefits of science and progress, the cult of reason, the cult of action and success and pragmatism.

Modernity as an aesthetic concept is radically antibourgeois being based on disgust with middle-class values and thus using diverse means (rebellion, anarchy, self-exile) to register this protest. This is the kind of radical militancy which gives us the avant-garde. In France, in the 1870s, came partly to mean the small group of writers and artists who transferred their radicalism to the domain of art. They believed that by revolutionizing art they would be revolutionizing life.

Peter Childs, in *Modernism*, identifies three major reasons for the drastic and dynamic changes in European art from the middle of the nineteenth century. The first reason is the invention of photography and the Kodak camera which appropriated the representational role that was one of the responsibilities of the painter. Consequently artists were now compelled to explore perspectives in and other than the strictly naturalistic and representational.

Secondly, painting paraphernalia had become much cheaper thanks to major breakthroughs in chemistry during the late nineteenth century, so that art & the artists could subsist without much income or patronage in the cities. Last, the cities, especially after the French Revolution, had become cultural **hubs** that were accessible to not only to the rich upper classes but to the common people as well, since now, the museums and art galleries which were situated in the cities were opened to the public. Art, at this point of time had ceased to be a mere pastime or individual profession but had become transformed into a formidable industry.

SAQ

Attempt a brief definition of ‘modernism’ - in terms of historical moment, its cultural manifestations, and its attitudes in the realm of art. (50 words)

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The French Revolution and the History of Art

If we choose to look at the effects of the French Revolution on literature and the arts, the following description tells us:

“To list some examples: the year 1790 saw the appearance of Goethe’s *Faust, a Fragment*, of Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, of Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. In these works are found the Romanticist view of human destiny, of the state, of moral energy, and of aesthetics. The remainder of the decade goes on to show that it belongs to a new age; it gave the world Goya’s “Caprichos” and the portrait of the Duchess de Alba, Beethoven’s *Piano Sonata in C Minor (Pathétique)*, Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, the beginning of August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck’s translation of Shakespeare into German, Schelling’s *Nature Philosophy*, Herder’s *Letters on the Progress of Mankind*, Wordsworth

and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, Schiller's *Wallenstein*, and Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. These are so many evidences of a new direction in thought and culture.

To say, then, that the cultural history of the later modern age--1789 to the present—begins with the French Revolution is to discuss that revolution's ideas rather than the details of its onward march during its first 10 years. These ideas are the recognition of individual rights, the sovereignty of the people, and the universal applicability of this pair of propositions.

France by 1789 had been for more than a century the cultural dictator of Europe, and it is clear that in England and Germany the search for native sources of art was stimulated by the desire to break the tyranny of the French language and literature. The rediscovery of Shakespeare, for example, was in part a move in the liberation from French classical tragedy and its rigid limitations of subject matter and form. “

The passages above are taken from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and are meant to show you some details of the period in terms of artistic and literary trends. It is from here that European culture moved forward towards modernism later on.

The various movements within art (as well as literature), referred to through such umbrella terms as ‘Art Nouveau’ and ‘Post-Impressionism’ were, to a great extent, reactions against the tyranny of precision in Naturalism, though the periods of their peak vary from nation to nation. These were also largely anti-Romantic, anti-realist, **anti-positivist** in nature, and were thus, a collective “shift away from the romantic nuances of Symbolism towards a harder, mechanized, more impersonal or classical form of the image; from an assertive aestheticism towards a more crisis-ridden view of the modern artistic situation; from an ambition of artistic wholeness to a fascination with decreation” (Bradbury and McFarlane; p.201).

In surveying these movements in modern art, we will first consider Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

1.4 Impressionism

While Impressionism was to a great extent representational, it was also, however, a move away from stark realism and blended better with Symbolism in that it tried to capture the immediateness of a particular object at a particular moment of time, to capture the individual and

fragmented effects of light and colour at a single instant, and then to build up a unified impression through that fragments.

The Impressionists, chief among them Renoir, Monet, Degas, Manet, Alfred Sisley and others were less concerned with social realism than with presenting visual impressions by means of light and colour. They usually painted landscapes but were also interested in more contemporary subjects like tennis-parties, horse-racing, seaside resorts, picnics and so on. What shocked their contemporary audiences was the lack of interest in academic standards of composition and drawing; their habitual blurring and fragmentation of outlines, and colour.

Impressionism peaked during the year 1870-80, covering the careers of Sisley and Pissarro who painted fresh and beautifully evocative landscapes; Renoir and Monet who painted the river Seine at Argenteuil. Monet, in particular, is particularly significant for his series of pictures in which the object is depicted at different times of day under different weather conditions. Monet and Degas on the other hand, had a wider range of subject (Ballet dancers, laundresses, cafés, brothers) and their paintings were characterized by such devices as unexpected viewpoints/vantage points, close-ups and figures abruptly cut off by the frame to capture the dynamism of modern urban life.

By the 1880s however, younger artists and even many of the senior Impressionists felt the limitations of the movement in that it was based purely on perception, and they, in particular Gauguin, Redon, Van Gogh, Cezanne and Seurat tried to incorporate individual perspectives on their art. For example, Gauguin was more inclined towards Symbolism in art and brought back into art the faculty of imagination and the element of dream, using his art to express not only visual perception but states of mind. **Toulouse-Lautrec** painted with an extravagance of colour and expression the melancholy inherent in the heady world of the brothel, cabaret and music-hall. Seurat on the other hand, developed a technique called 'Pointillism' or 'Divisionism' which was based on the assumption that painting like language, could be reduced to its smallest element the dot. His views were based on scientific studies of colour and visual perception, and he was thus more concerned with the working of vision rather than the broad impressions effected by light on objects. His paintings were composed of various minute dots or 'points' of colour which were combined by the eye to form a range of colours and shades when viewed from an appropriate distance.

SAQ

How far do you consider the art of painting to have been influenced by scientific developments? (50 words)

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What significance do you attach to the term ‘Impressionism’? (30 words)

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1.5 Cubism

One of the most powerful movements to emerge out of Post-Impressionism was Cubism. The term was first used derivatively by Henry Matisse in 1908 in his criticism of a picture by Georges Braque who, together with Pablo Picasso, is regarded as the founder of the technique a year earlier. Cubists incorporated the element of abstractness in art, and preferred painting humans or constructed objects rather than nature per se. They thus did not try to reproduce a photographic or even an Impressionistic picture of an object; in fact many of their paintings, at first sight, do not bear any resemblance to recognizable objects but merely give an impression of an object’s solidity and abstract qualities. Since Cubism was non-representational in nature, it was also free to experiment with perspective in painting, the assumption being, that it was impossible to depict reality faithfully since a two-dimensional medium could not represent three-dimensional space without any kind of distortion. Moreover, in reality, the individual can view an object from different directions and positions, and not necessarily in a one-to-one manner, so that the point of focus and the centre of vision could move flexibly between foreground and background depending on the individual’s perspective.

While Post-Impressionists as Seurat and Cézanne had relied on dots/ points, colours and lines in order to approach the problematic of visual representation, the founding Cubists, Picasso and Braque, attempted to depict the three-dimensionality of the object through the two-dimensional medium of painting. This necessitated a total liberation from a fixed perspective and faithfulness to actual size and shape of objects. This technique was much influenced by African art, as well as by Cézanne’s

advice to “deal with nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone”. Picasso also introduced the technique of collage in his paintings a technique which was to become an integral element of art and literature in time to come.

The first phase of Cubism, referred to as Facet Cubism (1907-9), reduced natural forms to basic geometrical shapes and were to a great extent a combination of old representational and new abstract styles, while in the second phase, Analytical Cubism (1910-12), there was further fragmentation of objects which were depicted from all angles and were open from inside. There was a minimal emphasis of colour while interest shifted to form. Colour, however became important from 1912 onwards, in the hands of the Spanish painter Juan Gris who used colour and shape to a greater and decorative effect in his painting. There was, at this point, also the interest in collages, and there was a total rejection of imitation with the re-creation of new objects. This phase is usually referred to as synthetic Cubism. This attempt at re-creation from reality reduced to its fragments is a preoccupation that is again frequently encountered in Modernist fiction, as in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* or even to some extent in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

SAQ

What is the distinction between ‘representational’ art and ‘non-representational’ art ? (50 words)

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Do you find any connection between what was happening politically at the time and the experiments in the arts ? (50 words)

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1.6. Futurism

Another experimental movement during this period is, also radically different from the Post-Impressionist techniques and has more to do with the technical advances that were brought about during the early years of the twentieth century. This was Futurism, which began early as an Italian movement. It was founded by the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

(1876-1944), who published the Futurist **Manifesto** in the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1909 in Paris. This Manifesto was to serve as a preface to the volume of poems he had composed.

Earlier, as editor of the journal *Poesia* in Milan since 1905, he had been greatly responsible for publicizing the French Symbolists in Italy. This Manifesto, however, was depicted as a statement of declaration from Italy to the entire European world and presented itself as a challenge to the various other contemporary movements in its radical distance from their points of departure. For this movement extolled the beauty of speed, and flight, in the form of the motor car, the airplane and the ocean liner. Moreover, they differed particularly from the Cubists in that the former fragmented their forms with penetrating shafts of light which, together with their use of colour, imparted a feeling of dynamic motion into their work. In the Futurist Manifesto Marinetti declared:-

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned by great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath - a roaring car that seems to run on shrapnel - is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace [a famous Hellenistic sculpture in the Louvre]. We will glorify war - the world's only hygiene.... We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by pain; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capital. We will sing of the clangor and the heat of nights in the shipyards and docks blazing with electric moons; of gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking snakes; of factories hanging from the clouds by the twisted threads of their smoke trails....

How does the language look like to you? Isn't it very visual in nature? In fact, some key terms of Futurism - dynamism and simultaneity - expressing the beauty of speed (in fact, 'Dynamism' had been considered as a name for the movement but eventually gave way to 'Futurism'), were major experiments in film and painting during the time, while the literature of the movements was also pervaded by that visual element. Paintings such as Russolo's *Sleeping City* and *The Revolt* and Boccioni's *Fight in the Galleria* and films such as Balla's *Girl Running on a Balcony* and *Lead in Motion*, the *Papier collé* of Carrà as well as Marinetti's **Free Word broadsheet** *Mountains + Valleys + Roads X Joffre* were typical specimens of this movement.

SAQ

What were the forms in which Futurism manifested itself ? (40 words)

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As Judy Rawson, in her essay on “Italian Futurism,” [in *Modernism*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane] says, “The call [was] for a new poetry of intuition to hate libraries and museums, to repudiate reason to reassert that divine intuition which is the gift of the Latin races. Their poetry [was] to depend on analogy instead of logic; the old Latin grammar [was] to go, and nouns [were] to be placed as they [came]; verbs [were] to be used only in the infinitive adjectives, adverbs and punctuation to be abolished (though mathematical and musical signs [were] allowed; and human psychology [was] to be replaced by a lyrical obsession with matter”.

The movement had an overt anti-clerical and anti-socialist ideological basis and many of its ideals later came to be associated (whether rightly or wrongly) with Fascism, as a result of which this movement encountered widespread outrage and extremist reaction. While the Futurist context was chiefly Italian, there was a parallel and somewhat similar strand of Futurism in Russia, chiefly in the works of the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, who declared the non-relevance of all previous art in the present world and therefore all examples should be destroyed, since the present reality could be explored only through newer forms of art. This was again a reaction against the nuanced allusive work of the preceding symbolists, while Futurism itself attempted to deliberately embrace in a **Nietzschean fashion** the new technological world and derecognise what seemed to it the decadent past. The idea of revolution was thus a motivational force in Futurism in general and in the Russian in particular. Thus, in order to demonstrate and reinforce the defunctness of earlier forms of arts in the face of new techniques, the Futurist Francis Picabia exhibited a stuffed monkey labelled *Portrait of Cezanne, Portrait of Rembrandt, Portrait of Renoir*.

Stop To Consider

When we survey modernism and the avant-garde we have to note the attraction towards forms of anarchism and nihilism, even to forms of revolutionary socialism. This was undoubtedly contradictory but there was an underlying linkage between the violent opposition to prevailing

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conventions and the avant-garde declarations of anarchism, nihilism and revolutionary socialism. While the predisposition to be anarchist stemmed from the emphasis on the liberation of the creative individual, after 1917 the concept of heroic revolution helped to cast as a model such liberation for all individuals. It was this tendency which was fed by hostility to the war and militarism as we see from the Dadaists, the Surrealists, the Russian Symbolists and the Russian Futurists.

Check Your Progress

1. Show how ‘modernism’ reflected the dominant concerns of the period. (100 words)

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2. To what extent is the modernist movement, in its various forms, a creation of a new form of metropolitan culture?(100 words)

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3. Explain the methods adopted by modernist writers and artists to articulate their departure from older traditions.(100 words)

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1.7 Expressionism

Expressionism is another movement during the modern period whose roots go back to the Post-Impressionists, especially to the work of Vincent Van Gogh. It is, however, a movement which tends to encompass a variety of forms - poetry, drama, painting, cinema and architecture, and is therefore hard to define. It was originally used in French in 1901 to categorise eight paintings by the painter Julien Auguste Hervé in the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, but in the German context it was taken to characterize a group of French painters who included the Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. By 1911, it had come to include the earlier Cezanne and Van Gogh as well and in general, seemed to imply any form of reaction against Impressionism on the grounds that it sought to eradicate the sordidness and

decadence of the society behind a facade of beauty and colour. Simultaneously there was also the rejection of the prosaic and banal aspect of society which was increasingly succumbing to industrialism and technological advancement. Expressionism, thus, applied itself to the inner world of feeling rather than the outer world of fact, and this necessarily resulted in a distortion of the natural appearance of objects in order to survey what the artist felt about actual subject. Alternatively it could also consist purely of colour and forms entirely unrelated to nature or reality, but still express the mood of the artist. It was thus an attempt to move away from representation, while the self tried to break the constraints of conventionality and search for new ways of expression.

The Expressionist painter, such as the Norwegian Edvard Munch (pron. moonk) and the Russian Vasily Kandinsky, sought to depict the conflicts within the individual from a totally subjective viewpoint and thus to achieve a kind of liberation of the spirit, to the “inner resonance” (in the words of Kandinsky) which was being kept repressed due to the objectification and mechanization of the human spirit in the age of machines and technology. The emphasis was on shades rather than the dynamism of light, and how shade and darkness could work insidiously on the mind, while nightmare and alienation were major preoccupations of the Expressionists. Expressionism was also particularly influential in Germany, where it was seen as a revolutionary attempt to create a visionary, idealistic world, to free art and culture as a whole from constraints of class, especially middle-class society, to express the numerous dimensions of the self, and to go to the deepest recesses of the human psyche, and to adopt and transform the language, rhythm and images drawn from the modern industries’, into relevant, regenerative symbols. While Franz Kafka was a major Expressionist novelist in Germany, in Britain people like Wyndham Lewis and Christopher Isherwood exploited its technologies to the full in their works though even some passages of the works of Joyce and Woolf are expressionistic in nature.

SAQ

How does Expressionism represent objects of external reality? (50 words)

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1.8 Dadaism

The First World War exercised a traumatizing effect on the modern consciousness, so much so that art began to question whether any meaning or relevance was left of it at all. Such an extremity of nihilism is seen in the two movements, Dadaism and Surrealism, both of which emerged after, and were to a great extent a consequence of, the War. While these movements exploited many of the techniques of the pre-War movements at the same time they emphatically rejected the possibility of arriving at a cohesive experience of the modern and all it signified. Besides the war, they were further radically influenced by the remarkable breakthroughs in such fields as psychology. Both these movements, like the other movements, were not however restricted to the arts but extended to literature as well.

Dadaism (“dada” in French means “hobby-horse”) developed between 1915 and 1922, and was the result of a growing disillusionment during the First World War. It appeared almost simultaneously in New York, with Marcel Duchamp’s exhibition of ‘ready-made’ sculptures; and in Zurich in 1916 with the founding of the (Café) Cabaret Voltaire by the Romanian poet Sami Rosenstock who wrote under the name Tristan Tzara. [By another widely accepted account, “the name was adopted at Hugo Ball’s **Cabaret (Café) Voltaire**, in Zürich, during one of the meetings held in 1916 by a group of young artists and war resisters that included Jean Arp, Richard Hülsenbeck, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco, and Emmy Hennings; when a paper knife inserted into a French-German dictionary pointed to the word *dada*, this word was seized upon by the group as appropriate for their anti-aesthetic creations and protest activities, which were engendered by disgust for bourgeois values and despair over World War I.”]

It was in the Cabaret Voltaire where works by the representative Dadaists Hans Arp (with his challenges of random assortments of scraps of paper), Max Ernst (with his photo montages) were exhibited. Tzara’s own poetry had the semblance of arbitrariness which was typical of the Dadaists’ attempt to capture the spontaneity of human experience and creativity.

The Dadaists were brought together by a mutual revulsion at World War I and by a rejection of conventions in art and thought and a self-conscious attempt at experimenting with unorthodox techniques in order to jolt society into self-awareness. The movement spread into both Europe

and North America from the start of the World War till the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

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SAQ

World War I had a profoundly disturbing effect on Western society. Can you name some writers who expressed this despair in their works ?

(40 words)

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The first group to be formed within this movement was in Zurich from 1914-18, around the poets Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Tristan Tzara, and Richard Huelsenbeck, and the painters Hans Arp, Marcel Janco and Hans Richter. In their work they were influenced by the pre-war avant-garde movements of Cubism and Expressionism. Subsequently, the term was adopted in New York by the group comprising Marchel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Marius de Zayas and Man Ray during the period from 1915 to 1921. In Berlin, (1917-22) one of the largest Dada groups was formed by Richard Huelsenbeck with John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch and George Grosz while Paris also witnessed for a period an interest in Dada promoted by Tzara, Picabia and André Breton (1919-24) as the final phase of Dada which was well on the way to disintegration with many of its members opting for Surrealism.

The Cabaret Voltaire became a central agency in establishing performance as a central medium of Dada, while the cross-culture allegiances of its members and invitees (including the Austrian Max Oppenheimer, the Romanian Arthur Segal and the Ukrainian Marcel Slodki, as well as French and Russian participants) and the attraction for African performances (inspired by the Futurists) contributed to its international character. The emphasis was once again on pastiche, and on artistic spontaneity centred round the governing principle of chance as well as a high degree of reverence for forces outside rationalism, paving the way for the later emergence of Surrealism. Some of the significant works in the Zurich Dada were the sound poems (*Phantastische Gebete*, 1916), which were illustrated with abstract woodcuts by Hans Arp; Hugo Ball's recital and performance of *Gadji beri bimba*, while dressed in cardboard cylinders designed by Marcel Janco; painted wood reliefs by Arp such as *Entombment of the Birds and Butterflies (Head of Tzara)*. (1916-17);

plaster reliefs such as *The Loch* by Janco; and collaboration on geometric tapestries by Sophia Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp, such as *Pathetic Symmetry* (1916-17), which were unusual because of the media used as well as diversity and collaborative techniques.

Many of the exhibitions of Dada creations were accompanied with music by Hans Heusser, Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. Another innovative art work was the result of collaboration of Walter Serner and Christian Schad (who later moved away from the group upon his removal to Geneva) and was also preoccupied with the working of chance - these were called 'schadographs' (since they were developed by Schad in particular), and were deliberately arbitrary compositions created by laying objects on photographic paper and exposing the plates to light.

While the Zurich Dada was heavily informed by World War I, New York Dada, including creations by Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp, was more distanced from the war, and directed more aggressively against the art establishment. Alfred Stieglitz's periodical *Camera Work* became one of the centres around which the New York Dadaists conveyed and many members including Picabia, Edward J. Steichen, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove and Charles Sheeler exhibited their works at Stieglitz's Photo-Secession gallery. Another periodical *291* was launched in March 1915 which brought in another member Marius de Zayas, which Duchamp was introduced in June 1915 to a literary and artistic group centred round the Modern Gallery opened by de Zayas, including writers and poets William Carlos Williams, Margaret Anderson, Wallace Stevens, Alfred Kreymborg and Elsa Freytag-Loringhoven, and the painters Joseph Stella, Morton Livingston Schamberg and Man Ray.

Some of the significant creations of the New York Dadaists were Picabia's mechanomorphic works, such as *Very Rare Picture on the Earth* (1915); Duchamp's studies on glass which were in many cases adaptations of technical diagrams, and installation of ready-mades as art, such as *Bicycle Wheel* (a replica, 1963); Man Ray's painting such as *Rope Dancer Accompanies Her Shadows* (1916) and his photograph of a mechanical egg-beater titled *Man* (1918). Such a concern with the ready-made was a challenge thrown by the Dadaists at conventional notions of originality and was a deliberately anti-art gesture also implicating the process of industrial mass-production. Of course this preoccupation with industrial ready-mades also made for the major controversy relating to the New York Dada.

Lastly, Berlin Dada was, more than any other Dada group, considerably influenced by political events. Richard Huelsenbeck, who had been one of the founders of the Zürich group and had transmitted it to Berlin, was joined by Franz Jung, Gerhard Preiss, John Heartfield (formerly Helmut Herzfelde) and his Brother Wieland Hertzfelde, George Grosz, Walter Mehring, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, Otto Schmaulhausen and Johannes Baader. The Club Dada was formed in April 1918 at the Galerie I. B. Neumann, and most of the members, chiefly Huelsenbeck, rejected the trend of abstractionism in art such as Expressionist art, and again the alternative experimentations concerned themselves with phonetic poems (by Hausmann), photomontage (used for extensive satires against the *status quo*, and developed by Heartfield and Grosz), collages and assemblages of discrete objects, and posters. ‘Photomontge’ consisted of pasting fragmented photographs with printed messages as in the (later) anti-Nazi works like “Kaiser Adolph” by Heartfield. Similar with the groups of New York and Zurich, Berlin Dada shocked and enraged audiences at public meetings. Dada publications were brought out by them—”Everyman His Own Football” (*Jedermann sein eigener Fussball*), *Club Dada*, *Der Dada*, and *Dada Almanach*.

Berlin Dada was, in particular, a user of the technique of Photomontage, that is, collages made by assembling photographs from the mass media not aimed at conventional realism but by using unexpected combinations with other images or with words, in order to analyse contemporary reality and the post-World War I state of affairs. Much of the work done by the Berlin Dada was confiscated by the authorities since they were seen, because of their highly critical and satirical overtones, as volatile threats to the establishment.

By the early 1920s, Dada was disintegrating with its members increasingly drawn to Surrealism or disavowing its ideals altogether. In fact Dada was continually undergoing conflicts within its various groups and many artists went against what was increasingly seen as a measure of orthodoxy in the older order itself. Such conflicts made the ultimate destruction of Dada inevitable. Such conflicts made the ultimate disintegration of Dada inevitable.

SAQ

What constituted the targets of Dadaist radicalism ? Was there a consistent pattern ? (50 words)

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Was Dadaism a nihilistic movement ? (40 words)

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1.9 Surrealism

Surrealism developed as an extended response to the First World War and its consequences and took its roots as an offshoot of Dada. The movement developed primarily in France, and the Surrealists were led by the former Dadaist André Breton who had broken from the preceding movement during the early 1960s.

The initial members, as identified in Breton’s *Manifeste du surréalisme*, known also as the First Manifesto of Surrealism, (1924), the essay “Une Vague de rêves” (October 1924) by Louis Aragon, and the periodical *La Revolution surréaliste*, (December 1924), were poets including Philippe Soupault, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Jacques Baron, Max Morise, Marcel Noll, Pierre Naville, Roger Vitrac, Simone Breton and Gala Eluard ; artists like Max Ernst, Man Ray, Hans Arp, Georges Malkine, and later, Yves Tanguy, André Masson and Joan Miró ; and writers including Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Antonin Artaud, Raymond Queneau, Marcel Duhamel and Jacques Prévert.

Although they shared sympathies with Dada regarding an opposition to bourgeois values and authoritarianism, the Surrealists developed a more positive outlook, that was derived from the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and the political ideology of Marxism, to go beyond the Dadaist movement of “anti-art”. The Surrealists resorted to a considerable revision of values in every field in an attempt to respond to the deep crisis they sensed in Western culture, which was undertaken with the help of unconventional techniques in each of the forms it espoused, and most

particularly present in the technique of **Automatism** that had much to do with **Freud’s theory of the unconscious**. Surrealism as a movement remained active even after the end of World War II, under the guidance of Breton, who died in 1966. Most of the members of Surrealism had previously had been members of the Paris Dada, subsequently breaking associations with it. Surrealism differed from Dada significantly in that while the latter concentrated on attacking prevalent and conventional values, the former tried to improvise alternative to the status quo.

SAQ

Both Dadaism and Surrealism being subsumed under the label “Modernism” suggests their shared, overlapping concerns. Make a list of these. (40 words)

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The term “Surrealism” was coined in 1917 by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire initially to describe one of his own plays (*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*) and the ballet *Parade* (by Erik Satie, Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso), and the term was appropriated by Breton to identify the counter-trend in the Arts developing in reaction to the principles of Dada. The aim behind the adoption of such a term was to describe a process and a form of expression which would transcend or go beyond traditional realism (*sur-réel*), and at the same time also involve an element of surprise. Thus, it was increasingly believed that since reality was subjective and not imposed extremely, it could also be artistically created by attempting to delve deep into one’s unconscious. Breton, who had worked with **shell-shock** victims at a psychiatric centre and therefore had access to the visions or images projected by the patients into their external surroundings as to produce individual versions of reality, considered the possibility of deliberately effecting this performance in art, through unexpected juxtapositions, the most effective of which would be the result not of conscious attempts but rather the results of subconscious thoughts and notions manifesting themselves through the medium adopted. This was the essence of Automatism and Breton’s version of ‘automatic writing’ which eschewed any preconceived subject or style or syntax, so that the flow of images from the subconscious could come uninterrupted.

1.10 Summing Up

Thus we see that each of the various forms in the Modernist movement involved a deliberate break from current tradition in order to search for a new world of meanings and values which would serve as objective correlatives for the contemporary circumstances and realities of life. Let us briefly go over what we have done in this unit so as to sensitize you to the central concerns of various movements in the arts in the modern period. I gave you a brief description of the concept modernism and what is seen as constituting the term. I discussed in detail the numerous experimentations carried on in the field of painting and the other fine arts as well as their influence on the literature of the period. The chief movements I took into account were Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism.

1.11 References and Suggested Readings

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Unit 2 : The Contexts of the Modern World: Literature, Painting, Architecture (Part II)

Space for Learner

Unit Structure:

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Symbolism and Anti-positivism in Art and Literature
- 2.3 Modernism and Language
- 2.4 The 'Modern' in Poetry
- 2.5 Modern Drama
- 2.6 Modern Novel
- 2.7 Summing Up
- 2.8 References and Suggested Readings

2.1 Objectives

This unit helps you understand modern literature and its various contexts as well as its connections with the modernist movements. In this unit you will be able to

- Understand the contexts of modern literature
- Learn about the connections between modernism and language
- Assess the distinctive qualities of modern literature in various branches such as poetry, drama and novel

2.2 Symbolism and Anti-positivism in Art and Literature

Certain features about the period under discussion are striking : the decades leading up to the First World War made up a time when an entire way of understanding and interpreting the universe was transformed. Some intellectual fields were revolutionized - physics, for instance. Some old sciences were revolutionized and brought in innovations, as in genetics; some scientific theories led to new fields, as with psychoanalysis. Along with names like Picasso and Schönberg, there were the names of Max Planck, Einstein and Freud in the intellectual realm. In a very short period of time the universe had come to be radically transformed. It was no longer possible to comprehend the universe through 'facts' laboriously compiled or through the 'commonsense' of intuition or 'sense experience'. As Hobsbawm remarks, "In a sense 'nature' became less 'natural' and more incomprehensible."

One development which was notable was in the field of mathematics whose links with the real world had collapsed through the new requirement

of only scrupulously excluding any contradiction among its postulates and disallowing any appeal to intuition. Another crisis in the intellectual realm was - "A much larger body of scientists as well as eventually most educated human beings found themselves involved in the crisis of the Galilean or Newtonian universe of physics, whose beginning can be fairly precisely dated in 1895, and which was to be replaced by the Einsteinian universe of relativity."

The arts were thus imbued with a deep sense of uncertainty regarding reality. Nature was still the reference-point for the creative arts but a new idiom had to be created which would allow the expression of a radically new understanding of life and the universe. Reality and subjectivity had to come together in such an idiom because the new knowledge revealed that reality itself is often the result of a priori assumptions. This was the crisis of 'positivism' which the avant-garde had to confront and resolve.

It is from this point that we can go on to grasp one statement about symbols (and therefore relate to symbolism) by Charles Baudelaire : "From the world of the senses the poet takes the material in which to forge a symbolic vision of himself or of his dream; what he asks of the world of the senses is that it give him the means of expressing his soul."

We can see here a poetic statement about the relation of reality and subjectivity.

2.3 Modernism and Language

A significant feature of the diverse movements was the tendency to dispense with language altogether based on the idea that it was too compromised and corrupted by existing conditions. Antonin Artaud spoke of "substituting for the spoken language a different language of nature, whose expressive possibilities will be equated to verbal language." G. Apollinaire conceived of "man in search of a new language to which the grammarian of any tongue will have nothing to say".

The modernist aspiration was to develop language into the condition of music, or to the conditions of visual imagery, or performance. In this aspect the Symbolists delivered a different idea of a spiritual universe obtained through a synaesthetic world of the senses. For the Symbolists, therefore, the poem enables such a revelation through a mode of realized 'correspondence' (as with Baudelaire), in which the poetic word is equal to a verbal symbol. Thus the 'poetic word' is at once a material embodiment yet metaphysical in revealing a spiritual yet sensual beauty.

Surrealism thus had an affinity with the modernist technique of the stream-of-consciousness as practised, for example, by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* or by James Joyce in *Ulysses* or *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. One of the first Surrealist experiments that took place was collaborative effort by Breton and Philippe Soupault titled ‘Les Champs magnétiques’.

In 1919 with Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault, he cofounded the review *Littérature*; in its pages, **Breton** and Soupault published “Les Champs magnétiques” (1920; “Magnetic Fields”), the first example of the Surrealist technique of automatic writing. In 1924 **Breton**’s *Manifeste du surréalisme* defined Surrealism as “pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express . . . the real process of thought. It is the dictation of thought, free from any control by the reason and of any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.” Surrealism aimed to eliminate the distinction between dream and reality, reason and madness, objectivity and subjectivity.

Another kind of automatic writing carried on was through spiritualist mediums who would go to a self-induced ‘hypnotic’ trance in which they could speak, draw and answer questions, revealing knowledge that lay outside the purview of human reason and logic. Thus language in this case lost its pragmatic function, giving way to possibilities of deeper layers meaning within it. For the surrealists ‘automatic writing’ was possible not because of external mystic presences but from one’s inner psychic being. Thus, Breton defined Surrealism as “psychic automatism in its pure state, which it is intended to express, either verbally, or in writing, or in any other way, the true functioning of thought. Thought expressed in the absence of any control exerted by reason, and outside all moral and aesthetic considerations” (Turner: p.375).

As mentioned earlier, Surrealism relied heavily on Freud’s theories of the unconscious and the tremendous power it exerted on conscious human actions and behaviour, though for that matter Freud himself considered the work of the Surrealists to be of little value since they did not have any therapeutic purpose in view. The common tropes in surrealism were dreams, childhood and madness.

In the surrealist writing of poetry, as with Breton, Paul Éluard, Pierre Reverdy, and others, we note a startling juxtaposition of words. This effect is created by following not logical connections but by the guidance of psychological reasoning. This helped to bring forth unconscious processes at work in the mind.

In painting, where we find the major achievements, Surrealism is to be seen in highly unfamiliar images, grotesque and fantastic. Here is to be seen the combined influences not only of Dadaism but also of such earlier painters as Hieronymus Bosch and Francisco Goya. Contemporary influences of such artists as Odilon Redon, Giorgio de Chirico, and Marc Chagall also helped in surrealist conceptions.

If we search for a 'method' in Surrealist art, we see an emphasis on "methodological research and experimentation" which was based on the conception that the work of art was a means to explore the personal psyche.

Like the other art movements, Surrealism also expressed itself through a variety of forms. Some of the significant Surrealistic creations were books such as Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926), Breton's *Nadja* (1928), the Surrealist periodical *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-9) ; the visual Surrealist works of Max Ernst, Man Ray, Masson, Hans Arp, Miró and Tanguy (such as Ernst's *Pieta or Revolution by Night* (1923) ; Man Ray's *Furious Sons* (1925), and so on) which drew on a number of techniques some of which had also been part of Dada, such as collages, photomontages, combinations of popular art and film stills, **the automated technique of frottage** (developed by Ernst) and **solarization** (developed by Man Ray and Lee Miller).

Surrealism had, apart from France, a strong presence in Belgium as well, where an autonomous group comprising the editors of Dada periodicals *æsofage* (1925) and *Marie* (1926), the musician, poet and artist E. L. T. Mesen, and the painter René Magritte respectively; and the contributors of another periodical *Correspondance*, Paul Nougé, Marcel Lecomte, Camille Goemans, the musician André Souris and the writer Louis Scutenaire, formed in Brussels in 1925, becoming official in 1926. Many other groups were also formed at various intervals especially by those artists and writers breaking away from core groups due to differences in ideologies and converging towards particular periodicals featuring rival Surrealist ideas. For example, there was the periodical *Le Grand Jeu* which drew Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, Maurice Henry, and the Czech painter Josef Šíma and which represented rebellion within the Surrealist Community and was ostracized in 1925. Similarly, another group, adversely criticized by Breton in his "*Second manifeste du surréalisme*", and including the photographer Jacques-Andre Boiffard, and writers and artists such as Leiris, Limbour, and Baron, converged around the periodical *Documents*, edited by Georges Bataille. Their creations in various media

were directed towards the negative aspects of human existence on a purely instinctual level.

Space for Learner

2.4 The ‘Modern’ in Poetry

The two most significant and powerful influences on Modernist poetry was Symbolism (developed initially in France) and Imagism (developed in America), accompanied by the flexible vers libre (free verse) and a self-consciously experimental, intellectual and allusive poetic stance, such as in the poetry of T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) and Ezra Pound (1885-1972). Thus when we refer to Modernism in English poetry, the emphasis naturally is on these external influences, since poetry in English, especially before World War I (with, perhaps, the exception of W.B. Yeats’s poetry), had largely been insular, non-experimental and conventional, and conservative in nature.

Symbolism and Imagism:

The symbolist movement showed an endeavour to bring poetry close to music; words begin to resemble musical notes, emptied of their sensible content. We see this acknowledgement in the French poets Mallarmé, Verlaine and Valéry. Paul Valéry described Symbolism as an “intention of several groups of poets (not always friendly to ano another) to recover from music the heritage due to them.” Stéphane Mallarmé , who presided over the symbolist movement in the 1870’s and the 1880’s, turned the art of poetry into a craft and a philosophy. He described the symbolist method in these terms:

“To name an object is to do away with three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem which is derived from the satisfaction of guessing little by little; to suggest it, that is the illusion. It is the perfect handling of the mystery that constitutes the symbol: to evoke an object little by little in order to show a state of mind or inversely to choose an object and to disengage from it a state of mind, by a series of unriddlings.”

One description of the symbolist movement says : “Each poet developed and represented a single aspect of an aesthetic doctrine that was perhaps too vast for one historical group to incorporate. . . .But more than on any other article of belief, the symbolists united with Mallarmé in his statements about poetic language. The theory of the suggestiveness of words comes from a belief that a primitive language, half-forgotten, half-living, exists in each man. It is language possessing extraordinary affinities with music and dreams.”

English poets like T.E.Hulme, Ezra Pound, W.B.Yeats and T.S.Eliot shared a similar set of concerns under the influence of the French symbolists. Arthur Symons dedicated his *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) to Yeats. In 1900, Yeats wrote in his essay on “The Symbolism of Poetry” that literature had tended to lose itself, through the influence of the scientific movement, in “opinion, in declamation, in picturesque writing, in word-painting”.

Hulme, in his essay “Romanticism and Classicism”, described poetry as “a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters . . . Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language.”

The major poets to write during this period were Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), William Watson, W.E. Henley, Laurence Binyon, and Alfred Austin (who was Poet Laureate from 1896 to 1913). Apart from these poets, there were also those avant-garde poets, who came to be known as the Georgian poets, partly due to their inclusion in five anthologies of Edward Marsh’s *Georgian Poetry* (from 1912 - 1922): Rupert Brooke, Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Wilfred Gibson, Walter de la Mare, W. H. Davies, John Masefield, among others.

However, it was during and after World War I that English poetry underwent significant changes in diction, style and subject matter, initially explored by the war poets such as Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Rupert Brooke (all of whom were actively involved in and most even killed during the War). In these poets, conventional poetic structures were taken up only in order to mock at the paradoxes of contemporary life, especially in the background of the War, thus contributing to the deflation of any semblance of idealism in the poetic tradition, and deliberately taking up an anti-heroic stance towards this end. These poets demonstrated a willingness to take up the grim and contending realities as well as the inherent corruption of their society and culture, which could also be seen in their linguistic appropriation of colloquial language and slang in much of their poetry, seen for example, in the second part of

Brooke's double sonnet "Menelaus and Helen", describing the sequel to the recovery of Helen by her husband Menelaus after the Trojan war:

So far the poet. How should he behold
That journey home, the long connubial years?
He does not tell you how white Helen bears
Child on legitimate child, becomes a scold,
Haggard with virtue. Menelaus bold
Waxed garrulous, and socked a hundred Troys
'Twixt noon and supper. And her golden voice
Got shrill as he grew deafer. And both were old.
Often he wonders why on earth he went
Troyward, or why poor Paris ever came.
Oft she weeps, gummy-eyed and important;
Her dry shanks twitch at Paris' mumbled name.
So Menelaus nagged; and Helen cried;
And Paris slept on by Scamander side.

The War Poets: The literature of World War I and the interwar period.

The impact of the first World War on the Anglo-American modernists was understandably considerable. The poets who wrote about it and its social meanings had been traditionalists and all saw action. The poetry itself came to be known only later, in the 1930's. Rupert Brooke, who died in active service in 1915, wrote about the early idealism of the war at its beginnings. Sassoon's poetry was written against the war and expressed bitter anger about it. Isaac Rosenberg's verse was consistently critical of the war.

The person who was largely instrumental in familiarizing the British writers and intellectuals with Symbolism was the Decadent poet Arthur Symons (1865- 1945) Through his study of *The Symbolism Movement in Literature* (1899) which was an extensive survey of the French Symbolist movement and its members covering two generations, including Charles Baudelaire (who wrote the immensely influential poem "Correspondences", and his more daring and experimental successors Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91) , Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98), Paul Valéry (1871-1945) and Jules Laforgue (1860-87). Of course, the movement itself (called in France *Symbolisme*, and its practitioners *les symbolistes*) did not limit itself to poetry but extended to drama and the novel, bringing in its purview, the dramatists Villiers de l'Isle Adam, who wrote the seminal Symbolist play

Axel (1890), and Maurice Maeterlinck, whose play *Péleas et Mélisande* (1892) was to inspire modern opera such as Debussy's opera of the same name; and the novelists Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), with his novels such as *A rebours* (1884), and Edouard Dujardin, whose *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (1888) influenced Joyce. The Symbolist movement also made strong inroads into painting as well, apart from influencing a generation of writers and artists connected with the Modern Movement.

The symbolists favoured indirect expression, reverie, inspiration, suggestion and evocation over direct expression and developed as a reaction against the earlier tendency for the descriptive precision for realism and naturalism. The effect of the Symbolists can be seen in the representative poets of Anglo-American modernism - Eliot, Yeats, Pound (and to some extent, on such poet-novelists as D.H. Lawrence). The Symbolist trend had affinities with the earlier Aestheticism and its view of art as an escape from reality, and emphasis was laid on the autonomy of the poem as well as the capacity of language to evoke mysticism and spirituality as well as sensuality through symbols and images. The function of the symbol was to "distil a private mood or to evoke the subtle affinities which were held to exist between the material and spiritual worlds. Symbolist writers were particularly concerned to explore the musical properties of language, through the interplay of commutative sound relationships ..." (Drabble, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 6th edition; page 989).

W.B. Yeats

A key poet in the context of Symbolism in English poetry is William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), who had also proclaimed himself to be the "last of the Romantics". His poetry was a combination of Irish and a wider Celtic mythology as well as a deep mysticism, and initially, was more preoccupied with effecting an escape from the perceived modern melodies of urbanization and materialism; through the route of folktales and connection carried over from pre-industrial rural Ireland, a tendency, as will be seen later, similar to Synge, Lady Gregory and the Irish Literary Theatre in general.

The later influences, including the political energy and sheer strength of personality of Maud Gonne, whom Yeats considered to be his muse, his marriage in 1917, the patronage of Lady Augusta Gregory, whose residence at Coole Park was to exercise such a creative influence on him, as well as the various political and militant activities in Ireland's struggle for

independence, especially, the rebellions or revolutions in 1913 and 1916, become strongly present in Yeats later poetry which veers away from a mere clutching at idealism and instead confronts actual circumstances and, by confronting them, tries to arrive mystically, and through an extensive use of symbolism, at some kind of a resolution. The multiplicity of Yeats's preoccupations has been loosely summarized as "those of permanence and impermanence ("Sailing to Byzantium", "Among School Children", "Byzantium"), of the cyclical patterns of world history ("The Second Coming", "Leda and the Swan", "Two Songs from a Play"), of contemplation and action ("An Irish Airman Foresees His Death", "A Dialogue of Self and Soul", "Long-Legged Fly"), of body and soul ("Michael Robartes and the Dancer", "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop"), art and the artist ("Ego Dominus Tuus", "The Circus Animals' Desertion") ..." (Baldick : 84).

From his initial Romantic moorings, Yeats poetry gradually became more confrontational towards modernity, adopting a new, barer, more casual style which would give scope to the dialectics and division of meaning within the poem and within language itself, and the device of using masks or personae, à la T. S. Eliot, suggesting a disillusionment with the modern condition, and acknowledging the fragmented world-view of the individual, and the spiritual, moral and cultural bankruptcy accompanying this condition, such as his poems "Among School Children" and "The Second Coming" suggest.

Parallel to Symbolism in modern poetry was another development - Imagism - which popularized free verse and tried to establish a newer poetics derived from classicism, but at the same time shared sympathies with Symbolism in its relative antipathy towards Romanticism and attraction towards the aesthetic philosophy of T.E. Hulme, one of its founders. It began as a group led by T. E. Hulme in 1909, and lasted till 1917, when its last anthology was published. Its initial members included Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), F. S. Flint, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, F. M. Hueffer (Ford), Allen Upward, and John Cournos. On the other hand, while they were not conscious members and contributors, many of T. S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence's poems also reflected Imagist techniques and preoccupations.

Imagism and the later development of Vorticism (associated with the writing and paintings of Wyndham Lewis) was based on the idea of the compact image found in Japanese haiku and tanka, as well as in much of

French symbolist poetry. The major Imagist anthologies during this period were Pound's *Des Imagistes* (1914) and Amy Lowell's three volumes of *Some Imagist Poets* (1915, 1916, 1917), while Flint's "Imagisme" (1913) and Pound's "A Few Don'ts for Imagistes" (1913) were considered its manifestoes. The emphasis of Imagist poetry was on the avoidance of abstraction, use of a musical rather than a metrical rhythm, economy and precision in language as well as a direct, hard, clear and precise treatment of an image. Such a technique can be perceived in such poems of Pound as cited below:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

("In a Station of the Métro"; the spaces between the phrases functioned to separate the groups of words as if to suggest separate images)

As cool as the pale wet leaves
of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn.

("Alba")

The rustling of the sill is discontinued,
Dust drifts over the court-yard,
There is no sound of footfall, and the leaves
Scurry into heaps and lie still,
And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them.
A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.

("Liu Ch'e")

The petals fall in the fountain,
the orange-coloured rose leaves,
Their ochre clings to the stone.

("Ts'ai Chi'h")

Stop to Consider

Symbol and Image

In Modernism, the emphasis on metaphor can be demonstrated from its use of symbols for allegorical or representational effect. This tendency developed from the symbolistes' belief that the purpose is to connote not simply denote, to convey the transcendent reality behind appearances in terms of the symbols employed. Symbolism in literature originated in the work of Baudelaire and evolved partly as a reaction against Zola's naturalism. Drama and art also witnessed the flourishing

of symbolism but poetry remains the major area of symbolism. Noted symbolists Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé abandoned the constraints of rhyme, form and metre and favoured a free verse stressing rhythm and musicality in poems replete with the themes namely, death, the erotic and intense mystical and religious feelings. Conventionally speaking a symbol takes recourse to a concrete, real signifier (e.g. the snow at the end of Joyce's "The Dead" in *Dubliners*) on the one hand and also relies on an elusive, suggestive, complex of signifieds. Symbolism can also be used as a method of uniting the internal and the external or projecting the internal onto the external (e.g. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Kafka's 'Metamorphosis').

Space for Learner

SAQ

1. How does the insistence on 'symbol' and 'image' recapture some of the basic features of modernism? (50 words)

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2. Do you find any influences of the visual arts on the modernist experimentation with language? (40 words)

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T. S. Eliot is another major representative of the experimentation of modernist poetry, and his *The Waste Land* (1922) becomes a significant member of the modern condition. Eliot's poetry was a synthesis of various traditions, not only the contemporary but embracing the earlier traditions as well, seen in the blending of sources as varied as the Symbolist Baudelaire, Shakespeare, mythology, Oriental religion and philosophy, Imagism, non-Christian cultures and traditions (as seen in the presence of the Sanskrit Upanishads at the end of the poem), popular entertainment, as well as a number of other writers both classical and modern. Again, since modern poetry is predominantly poetry of the city, his poetry quintessentially reflects urban disillusion as well as resonances from such cataclysmic events as the World War I and the Russian Revolution, and puts it in stark contrast to the complacency of the earlier ages.

For instance, his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917) recreates this modern scene in an adequately modern technique. Eliot, like his other contemporaries belonging to this first movement of modern poetry, also imbibes an internationalism fully demonstrated in his poetry. Again, the polyphony and fragmentation inherent in his most ambitious and famous work, *The Waste Land*, is also symptomatic of the intellectual’s troubled response to his modernist moorings. Tracing itself to Eliot’s own nervous breakdown during 1921, the poem, however, transcends individual subjective preoccupation with its vision of a country devastated by a curse and consequently barren and bereft of any kind of spiritual revival or even consolation. It is a surrealistic landscape where temporal and spatial *locus standi* are obliterated and a tapestry of characters from Tiresias, the blind prophet of ancient Thebes, to the modern (but probably false) fortune teller Madame Sosostriis, through random voices from Dante, Spenser, Kyd, Shakespeare, Marvell, Baudelaire and Verlaine converge in a blend of post-World War I London and Dante’s Limbo (in *The Divine Comedy*).

Similarly, Prufrock in “The Love Song” also typifies an internal journey of the self taken in Modernist terms in which there is a high degree of self-questioning in an attempt to come to terms with insecurity and doubt regarding one’s existence in the given circumstances. This is accompanied by the persona of Prufrock itself trying to take up, in the course of the poem, masks of heroes such as John the Baptist and Hamlet but finding himself totally unable to identify with them, and thereby laying bare his crisis of a loss of identity and sense of alienation from his cultural and class allegiances to his society, negotiated though a network of unconscious drives, hidden desires and a self-conscious, but at the same time detached, surrealist and symbolist language.

SAQ

What ideas of the ‘self’ , ‘irony’ and ‘image’ do you get from a reading of “The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock” ? (30 + 30 + 30 words)

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A similar poetic exercise was at the same period, taken out by Edith Sitwell who, along with her brother Osbert and her friend Nancy Cunard, brought out the periodical *Wheel* (1916-1921). Her poetry, preoccupied with an irate attack on Georgian poetry as well as on the Romantic

tradition, relied on extensive experimentation in free verse and a free association of images through similar sound.

However, by the late twenties, the energy and sense of rebellion inherent in Modernist poetry was subsiding and a newer trend was increasingly being taken up during the 1930s, chiefly by a new generation of poets including W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNiece, and Cecil Day Lewis. Their poetry, sometimes referred to as “committed poetry”, drew upon the communist philosophy of Marx and psychoanalytic theories of Freud to address the tremendously pressing nature of their times. Their poetry withdrew from the myths and legends that Eliot, Pound and Yeats subscribed to transferring the emphasis instead to immediate social realities, particularly British socio-economic and political realities. Thus, they sought to move away from the mysteriousness and remoteness of earlier modernist verse, and while at times preserving the idea and forms behind it, incorporated more popular and literary verse forms (such as ballads and songs associated with the former, and the sonnet and villanelle with the latter). While objectively considering the contemporary urban and industrial life and bringing out the sordidness and by extension moral and psychic corruption within it, they also felt able to celebrate or at least regard with favour modern technological innovation such as the aeroplane (as in Stephen Spender’s “The Landscape Near an Aerodrome” (1933)) and the railways (as in Auden’s “Night Mail” (1938), and Spender’s “The Express”, (1932)). Most of their poems were published particularly in the representative anthologies *New Signatures* (1932) and *New Country* (1933), and the journal *New Verse* (1933-9).

The writing of poetry, however, was to receive a serious setback with the coming of the Second World War, after which English poetry underwent further changes that made space for a mounting disillusionment in humanity as well as more topically, with current British society.

The Auden Generation

The poet, W.H. Auden, began his career towards the end of the 1920’s rising to prominence with *The Orators* in 1932. This work was seen to articulate the harsh realities of the period and the political crises that English society was passing through. The nineteen-thirties made up the period of Auden’s preeminence in English poetry, giving it a distinct shape and direction. He was publicly acknowledged to be ‘communist’ often putting into verse ideas, concepts and figures which constituted criticism of the establishment and polite society and displayed a leftist bias. Poets like

C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood and Louis MacNeice were some of his closest friends and together with many other lesser known poets, the whole generation came to be called the “Auden generation”.

We have to place this poetic history against the traumatic background of the period with the effects of the Depression, the rise to power of Adolf Hitler, the Spanish Civil War and support to it from intellectuals internationally, the spread of fascism, and the very concrete threat of the next great war. In many ways Auden is to be seen as the spokesman of an intensely traumatised generation of writers.

Check Your Progress

1. Briefly compare the main themes of the poets written before the First World War and after it. (200 words)

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2. Sketch the English poetic responses to the First World War. (150 words)

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3. To what extent does Eliot’s “The Wasteland” capture the mood of the inter-war years ? Justify your answer with textual examples. (200 words)

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4. Do you agree with the view that the metropolis predominates as a theme of modern poetry ? Give specific instances to illustrate your answer. (150 words)

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2.5 Modern Drama

Modernism as a concerted movement did not, unlike modern fiction or poetry, arrive in British drama till the end of the Second World War with such neo-realistic works as John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956),

except for some experiments by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, and a number of non-naturalistic plays by George Bernard Shaw, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge which were influenced by dramatic innovations taking place in Europe such as Expressionism, Italian Futurism, Dadaist Cabaret and Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" (that was part of the Surrealist experimentation).

The Swedish dramatist August Strindberg (1849-1912) and the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) were the torch-bearers of new trends in European drama towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Strindberg's plays, chief among them *The Father* (1887), *Miss Julie* (1888) and *The Creditors* (1889), incorporated naturalistic realism in order to lay bare the fault lines within bourgeois society and the inner conflicts in characters arising out of it as well as an awareness of the inequalities and strictures based on gender. His later plays such as *To Damascus* (1898-1901), *The Dance of Death* (1901), *A Dream Play* (1902), and *The Ghost Sonata* (1907) incorporated an Expressionistic blending of a sense of suffering and desire for salvation and redemption and at the same time emerged as symbolic of the deep psychic states of the individual. The psychological and symbolic features of Strindberg's plays later influenced the plays of Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, as well as the Theatre of the Absurd.

SAQ

What can be taken as the distinguishing marks of 'naturalism', 'expressionism', and 'the symbolic' in drama ? (20 + 20 + 20 words).

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Similarly, Ibsen had also started with a naturalistic exploration of society and the network of human relations within it through an innovative and powerful prose style that was to be adopted by many later Modernists. Most of his earlier works such as *A Doll's House* (1879), and *Ghosts* (1881), were informed more by naturalism, but gradually his work learned towards symbolism, as his later plays such as *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *The Master Builder* (1892) and *John Gabriel Borkman* stand testimony to. Added to an analysis of the problematic of bourgeois social and gender issues there are also a deepening interest in these plays on the forces and the workings of the unconscious, as well as

a flair for powerful dialogue, and a dispensing off of traditional theatrical effects. The plays of both these dramatists, made available to the British readers and audiences through translations (chiefly at the behest of G. B. Shaw) contributed in changing the settled climate of British drama at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The plays of George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and Oscar Wilde () though on extreme polarities, nevertheless were equally iconoclastic in effect. Shaw's plays, such as *Candida* (1894); *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898), *Saint Joan* (1924), *Arms and the Man* (1894-99), *Man and Superman*, and *Pygmalion* (1913), termed as problem plays or plays of ideas, were greatly influenced by Ibsen's plays, and attempted to make the society aware of its decadent values by undermining accepted values of class, morality and gender. Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) was, on the other hand, more a product of his Aestheticism, but was a potent pointer toward subsequent modernist practices due to its inverted morality and plural identities, as well as a caustic satire on prevailing upper and middle class values.

Another important development in modern drama was the revival of poetic drama or modern verse-drama. Nineteenth-century Naturalism in the theatre had been instrumental in establishing prose as the ideal vehicle to express the work-a-day world of the middle classes. This hegemony of prose was effectively challenged by W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot in their dramatic practice. The Irish dramatic movement, in particular, the work of Yeats as well as that of Synge (who, though writing in prose, invested it with a poetic quality not hitherto achieved in modern drama), was instrumental in reviving poetic drama in the English theatre. Yeats's finest verse-dramas, including *The Shadowy Waters* (1895), *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), *On Baile's Strand* (1904), *Purgatory* (1938) and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), evoking an Irish culture based on traditional and mythological themes, also showed an influence by anti-realist Japanese Noh Theatre, with its emphasis on performance relying more on music and dance than through dramatic presentation. His plays, staged in the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, sent out a positive signal for the potential of verse or poetic drama to confront contemporary realities through a ritualization of myth and reality.

Similarly , the plays of J. M. Synge (1871-1909), such as *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), and of Sean O'Casey (1880-1964), such as *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and

The Plough and the Stars (1926), also dwelt on the generational and racial conflicts inherent in the idea of an ancient, rural Ireland forced to be under the dominion both of the external authority of the English but at the same time, within its own culture, the authority of the now outdated and regressive Irish orthodoxy.

T. S. Eliot admired the masterly handling of verse in Yeats's plays and might have been influenced by him in his own plays. After the success of his verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot searched for a poetic drama based on modern life, with people on a level of easy familiarity with the accoutrements or accessories of modern life, such as apartments, telephones and motor cars. He had this end in view while writing the dramatic fragments of *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932) early in his career. However, he attempted it with more knowledge, experience and even more success in *The Cocktail Party* (1950) and *The Family Reunion* (1939).

Developments in Theatre Through a Historical Perspective

The famous critic, Raymond Williams, shows how nineteenth-century Naturalism appeared before full-fledged modernism in theatre. A technical innovation emerging from Naturalism was the 'lifelike' stage set. One part of modernist naturalism comes across in Ibsen, the early Strindberg and then Chekhov, with their dramatic "challenging selection of the crises, the contradictions, the unexplored dark areas of the bourgeois human order of its time." Considering the "furious denunciation" following upon such explorations, as in Ibsen's *Doll's House* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, because they were seen to threaten the "standards of decent society", Williams draws a line from modernist Naturalism to "the work and reception of the avant-garde". Since modernist Naturalism was "physically convincing", it was "intellectually insufficient" to explore crises and experiences beyond the living room (crises of social and economic dimensions, of subjectivity). These limitations were sought to be overcome by experiments by Ibsen, Chekhov, and Strindberg, leading to methods later named 'Expressionism'.

A form of "bourgeois dissidence", however, continues to give later, in works like *Man and the Masses* (Ernst Toller, 1921) and Erwin Piscator's Proletarian Theatre, "the eventually distinguishable forms of 'subjective' and 'social' Expressionism."

Williams observes, "New names were eventually found for these avant-garde methods, mainly because of these differences and complications of purpose. What was still there in common was the refusal

of reproduction: in staging, in language, in character presentation. But one tendency was moving towards that new form of bourgeois dissidence which, in its very emphasis on subjectivity, rejected the discourse of any public world as irrelevant to its deeper concerns.” This leads to forms like Surrealism and Artaud’s ‘Theatre of Cruelty’, parallel with the break from the bourgeoisie and affiliating with the working class—early Soviet theatre, Piscator, and finally, Brecht. This gives rise to what is called ‘political theatre’.

But what was probably the most radical of developments in modern drama was the Theatre of the Absurd, which gained wide currency during the 1950s and early 1960s. The function of the plays coming within the ambit of Absurd drama was to give a dramatic expression to the philosophical notion of “absurd”, a notion coming increasingly in significance especially after the publication of Albert Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942. It sought to depict the meaninglessness and purposelessness of life culminating in an inevitable death and attended by futile endeavours to grasp at hope, at meaning, as the endless wait for Godot (who never appears) by Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1955) demonstrates. Beckett was part of this new generation of playwrights writing after World War II and therefore showing the burden of the world-wide devastation and senseless destruction consequent to the War. The plays in this genre make extensive use of meaninglessness in dialogues as well as silences and aporias or gaps in meanings. All these Absurd dramatists, including Beckett (also in his later works as *Happy Days* (1961) and *Endgame* (1957), Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Federico Lorca, and Luigi Pirandello seek to represent the collapse of received human cultural and moral tradition and meanings, a spiritual aridity similar to the kind expressed in *The Waste Land*, and a severe exploration of illusion and reality, deception, disguise and play acting, as well as a general disorientation with one’s present fixities of location, due to splits within one’s very self.

The Philosophy of ‘Absurd’ drama

The philosophy of the absurd centers around the idea of the world as fundamentally mysterious and indecipherable in nature and the realization of the fact that this recognition is frequently associated with sense of loss, purposelessness, bewilderment, helplessness, metaphysical rootlessness and nothingness and so on. The idea of the ‘absurd’ was influenced by the famous existentialist philosophers like Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Following the widespread diffusion of the notion of the ‘absurd’

after the publication of Camus’s essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in 1942, it came to influence the ‘The Theater of the Absurd’ that grew immensely popular in the war ridden Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Significant amongst the absurd dramatists were Arthur Adamov, Edward Albee, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco, Alfred Jarry , Harold Pinter etc.

Lastly, in what becomes another achievement of modern European drama is the use of Absurd elements and shock tactics in modernist drama in order to bring about a correction or a change in the existing state of social affairs. This purpose was undertaken by the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) in an explicitly Modernist stand. In his theory of “epic theatre” combined with his Marxist sympathies, he rejected traditional Aristotelian notions of dramatic structure arguing in favour of a play as loosely connecting discrete scenes without necessarily having dramatic climaxes, and as using songs, (like chorus) to comment on the action. More importantly, for Brecht, drama did not need to create the illusion of reality but instead should distance the audience or spectators from the sense of recreation of reality through techniques of defamiliarization and denaturalization.

In order to confront social changes and the changing and flexible hegemony of capitalist forces an art, Brecht believed, the various games of art themselves had to change dynamically in order to be able to move a critique of society and human relations within it. In his plays such as *Mother Courage* (1941) and the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1949), Brecht set out precisely to attain these ends and at the same time take into account the inevitable and necessary radicalization of modernist aesthetics.

Check Your Progress

Attempt a consideration of Bertolt Brecht’s “epic theatre” as drawing on the elements of the modern. (150 words)

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Justify he view that modernism is a collective experiment in the art of representation. Support your answer with examples.(150 words)

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To what extent, do you think, verse becomes an important vehicle of modernism? Justify your stand with appropriate examples. (150 words)

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2.6 The Modern Novel

Like its counterparts in the Modernist movement - poetry and to a great extent even drama - the modern novel also registered a reaction against (what is now perceived as) the “classic realism” of Victorian fiction and its attendant notions of a reliable narrator, extensive use of free indirect discourse, and most of all, the projection of what D. H. Lawrence termed “the old stable ego”. In the larger European context, such a reaction had been evident in the later fiction of Gustave Flaubert, Emile Zola (who, however, was, for the most part, an ardent advocate of Naturalism), Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Henry James. Each of these novelists was preoccupied with an exploration of the inner desires of their characters which came in conflict with the demands of society and class on them, forcing to the surface deep faultlines within their psyche and forcing them at times towards a moral, mental, spiritual and emotional collapse. However, these authors differed in their approaches to their subjects. To have a more comprehensive understanding of modern novel, you may refer to the second unit on British Fiction (i.e. **British Fiction Down the Ages: The Nineteenth Century and After**) in Paper 1046.

2.7 Summing Up

In this unit, we have discussed various contexts of modern literature and how explorations of the possibilities of language was crucial to various literary experimentations known as ‘modernism’. We have also introduced various modern strands of modern literature such as poetry , drama, and novel. I hope, this unit, along with the previous one, will familiarize you with the modern world and its various literary , intellectual and artistic contexts and manifestations.

2.8 References and Suggested Readings

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Unit 3 : The Rise of ‘English’

Space for Learner

Unit Structure :

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 The Argument for ‘Literary Studies’
- 3.4 The Question of Gender
- 3.5 Imperialism and English Studies
- 3.6 The Leavisite Contribution
- 3.7 English Studies Thereafter
- 3.8 Summing Up
- 3.9 References and Suggested Readings

3.1 Objectives

In this unit, we are going to look at the historical backdrop of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century England which proved to be the most fertile ground for the ‘rise’ of English as an academic subject. This shows that prior to that period, English was not included in the curriculum of higher education. ‘Literature’ meant all sorts of discourses like history, philosophy, etc, and creative literature could not claim any separate identity of its own. But in the twentieth century, English literature became a major area of study in the entire globe.

This unit will take you to the causes behind this transition, helping you to

- *focus* on this interesting aspect of evolution of ‘English’
- *discover* the processes which gave shape to this discipline
- *identify* the critics whose works are influential
- *describe* the problems related to ‘English’ studies

3.2 Introduction

No one can deny the role of ‘English’ in the implementation of the western project of colonialism and its highly important role even in the era of post-colonialism and globalization. It is not a co-incidence that the Victorian period which witnessed the heyday of British imperialism also pioneered the introduction and consolidation of English studies both in England and in its colonies. Historically, the evolution of English studies can be categorized under three periods of English history.

In the Romantic period, creative literature achieved a major success as it had by then become a separate subject that was considered superior to other discourses because of its association with human life, its values and

passions. The formation of the hierarchy between the creative and non-creative discourses was accepted and consolidated in the Victorian period. It is significant to note that in the battle between science and humanism, the latter side won and on that account, ‘literature’ was introduced as the torch-bearer of humanistic ethics. Then, in the twentieth century, ‘English’ studies became an unquestionable agenda in academic and intellectual life. It was even accepted as the only possible answer to the ravages of war and industrialism. In the next part of our discussion we will focus on the evolution of English studies as a historical phenomenon.

SAQ

Which academic disciplines are generally grouped under ‘humanities’?
(40 words)

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3.3 The Argument for ‘Literary Studies’

(The Victorian Argument)

A major exponent of the mission of English studies in Victorian England was Matthew Arnold. During this period, English seemed to have been in competition with natural science, for educational reformers argued about the merits and demerits of these different subjects. T. H Huxley advocated the cause of science on the ground that scientific teaching was a great success in Germany. Arnold, on the other hand, argued:

“The middle age could do without human letters, as it could do without the study of nature..... (Now) human letters have an undeniable power of engaging the emotions, the importance of human letters in man’s training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of science in extripating what it calls “medieval thinking” (*Literature and Science*).

Matthew Arnold, the Victorian poet-critic, was a staunch believer in liberal humanism. He held the conviction that the English aristocracy could play a major role in disseminating proper cultural values and morality and in cultivating aesthetic awareness among the common people. He was a classicist in his assertion of the faith that modern poets should learn the art of poetry from the classical writers of the past (“Preface to Poems 1853”). In his essay “*The Function of Criticism in the Present Time*” he states that critical writings are as important as creative writings and the critics have the immense responsibility of circulating the best ideas in the society so that

the creative writers can use those ideas in their writings. Arnold's broad critical intelligence is reflected in his essays and lectures on literature, social questions and issues of religious beliefs. In his *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold suggests how a broad, humane intelligence needs to be cultivated to rise above the narrowly partisan and dogmatic beliefs. In his works such as *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* Arnold boldly states his beliefs that the language of scripture is fluid rather than static, literary rather than legalistic and requires an experience of life, a flexibility of spirit and the broad culture of the true critic.

The Cultural Project

Cultural criticism, in which is located the 'rise' of English, can be traced back to what Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in 1830, proposed in *On the Constitution of the Church and State*. He put forth the idea of a 'clerisy' of writers and artists, a kind of alternative 'National Church', "at the fountainhead of the humanities, in cultivating and enlarging the knowledge already possessed, and in watching over the interests of physical and moral science . . . the objects and final intention of the whole order being these - to preserve the stores and to guard the treasures of past civilization, and thus to bind the present with the past."

You can compare this with what Arnold suggested as an antidote to the philistinism of the middle classes : 'culture' as bringing to society "the best that has been thought and said".

In this direct combat with science, Arnold used literature or 'human letters' in its broader connotation to suggest "the best which has been thought and said in the world." Arnold's arguments were strong enough to defeat the claims of science. The victory of literature at this stage of history can be regarded as a milestone in the development of 'English' studies. The advocates of English studies of the Victorian age viewed the pursuit of English literature as a powerful substitute for religion. As Arnold said:

"More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us, without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry."

The Victorian crisis of faith had already relegated religion to the background. The Victorian ruling class, however, was much concerned about Christianity's gradual decline in power and influence in society. Traditionally, religion played the role of a great leveller; it spread a pacifying influence that fostered meekness, self-sacrifice and a contemplative inner

life. Living under the umbrella of Christianity, the people of England, particularly the middle-class and the common working-class people did not find religious encouragement to cry for political and economic justice. But with the emergence of scientific discovery and social change, the foundations of religion began to crumble, and the ruling class looked for an alternative medium of social control to prevent any threat of social and political disruption. The need for English studies was most urgently felt as the most easily available and best substitute for religion at this juncture.

Stop to Consider

Which works by Victorian writers are regarded as being the documents of this ‘Victorian’ crisis of faith ? You can turn to Tennyson’s famous poem, *In Memoriam*, for the flavour of this intellectual and spiritual crisis. It is widely considered to articulate this moment of doubt through its sustained debate over the issues brought up by Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Another famous document of this deeply critical moment is Arnold’s “Dover Beach”. While these two poems tell us of the Victorian mind beset by uncertainties, you should also remember that it is not easy to define “faith”. When we say that Tennyson expresses “doubt” or “faith” what we are looking at is his formulation of the issues brought up by new scientific theories such as Darwin’s. What is actually striking is that Tennyson saw this set of ideas related to evolution as encapsulating new directions of thought which could seriously undermine the moral fibre of society. You have to relate Tennyson’s anxiety to the larger turmoil of Victorian society which was being shaken politically, economically and culturally. The same could be said to apply to Arnold’s reflections on the “Sea of Faith” in “Dover Beach”.

Thus, though liberal humanists like Arnold advocated the cause of ‘literature’ for apparently apolitical reasons, the ideology of the ruling class was highly instrumental in the dissemination of English studies among the masses. The study of English literature was expected to cultivate the feelings of universal brotherhood, tolerance, generosity and other human values, since literature deals in universal human situation and enlarges the sympathies of the readers. Such an assessment of the value of reading English literature in Victorian England did justice to the ideology of both the ruling class and the liberal humanists.

3.4 The Question of Gender

Space for Learner

The rise of ‘English’ in England was, to some extent a natural concomitant of the gradual admission of women to the institutions of higher education. The distinction between literature and other academic disciplines like Physics and Chemistry is usually drawn on gendered lines: literature is supposed to have dealt in finer feelings and is more suitable for women rather than for men. But there is a paradox at the heart of this gendered thinking and classification of English as a ‘feminine’ subject. It is because the ruling power of Victorian England patronized the study of English literature to serve the project of imperialism which had nothing to do with the concept of ‘eternal feminine’

English in the ‘feminine’ curriculum

‘English’, as an institutionalized discipline, first found acceptance in the Mechanics’ Institutes, colleges for the working classes, and “extension lecturing circuits”. As Terry Eagleton describes it, “English was literally the poor man’s Classics - a way of providing a cheapish ‘liberal’ education for those beyond the charmed circles of public school and Oxbridge.”

But besides the working class, women were also the targets of ‘English’. In 1877, a Royal Commission witness suggested English as a “suitable subject for ‘women . . . and the second- and third- rate men who . . . become school-masters.” As Eagleton tells us, “The ‘softening’ and ‘humanizing’ effects of English, terms recurrently used by its early proponents, are within the existing ideological stereotypes of gender clearly feminine. The rise of English in England ran parallel to the gradual, grudging admission of women to the institutions of higher education; and since English was an untaxing sort of affair, concerned with the finer feelings rather than with the more virile topics of *bona fide* academic ‘disciplines’, it seemed a convenient sort of non-subject to palm off on the ladies, who were in any case excluded from science and the professions.”

SAQ

What kind of distinctions would you make between ‘literature’ and other disciplines? To what extent does ‘literature’ foster the ‘finer feelings’?
(20 + 20 words)

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3.5 Imperialism and English Studies

The Victorian age achieved the height of success in the extension and consolidation of imperial power in different parts of the globe, and significantly enough, English as an academic subject was introduced for the first time in the Victorian period itself. The complicity between the two projects can be understood taking into account the purpose designed to be fulfilled by the pursuit of English literature. The Victorian government put the stress on the study of English cultural and literary heritage to inspire patriotic feelings among the civil servants and members of the British army who were entrusted with the responsibility of serving and safeguarding the British overseas colonies. Imbibing the knowledge of such great writers as Shakespeare and Milton, the servants of British imperialism could display their sense of cultural superiority to their colonized subjects. Although English was introduced at Oxford in 1894 and in 1911 at Cambridge, philology formed a major component in English studies. Philology however, was closely bound up with Germanic influence. On the other hand, England defeated Germany in the First World War and this victory intensified the English hatred for everything German. As a result, English was freed from the philological component and the pursuit of English as literature, rather than as a language was made possible. As Terry Eagleton puts it: “English literature rode to power on the back of wartime nationalism.”

Stop to Consider

The Arnoldian enterprise of cultural enlightenment as providing the grounds of the new discipline of English was consolidated by a government report on ‘The Teaching of English in England’ in 1921 which erected English literature as the purveyor of English culture. English literature is seen here as the central humane discipline:

“English is not merely the medium of our thought, it is the very stuff and process of it . . . the element in which we live and work. In its full sense it connotes not merely an acquaintance with a certain number of terms, or the power of spelling these terms without gross mistakes. It connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves in our native environment.”

Academic literary study, from the beginning, was seen as part of “a broad project of moral regeneration, class harmonization and the promotion of a specifically national identity, and this project existed alongside, and sometimes sat uneasily with, the perceived need to establish English as a discipline.”

We can turn to what Patricia Waugh tells us of “Literature and the Academy”:

advocates of ‘humane’ literary study attacked a philology-ridden study of texts on the grounds that Arnoldian ideals of ‘culture’ and ‘criticism’ could provide the “self-cultivation and intellectual flexibility” now under threat from the advent of science. In the period from the 1880s to the first World War, “the humanist camp in the universities demanded and gradually won some space in the curriculum for the study of literature not as an illustration of grammatical principles but ‘as literature’.”

Philology, when it came to dominate academic study, was a product of the renowned German university system which led the educated world in philosophy, natural science, medicine, social science, and biblical scholarship. It “promised to explain not only the evolution of languages, but the unfolding of cultures and civilizations along with them, by deploying a set of new sciences ranging from phonetics and dialectology to comparative mythology and ethnology. . .” So philology commanded respect but it was too demanding and scientific to carry on the ‘humane’ project which only the “public” literary critic could undertake.

SAQ

1. What is understood by the phrase, ‘Liberal Humanism’? (30 words)

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2. What were the grounds of Arnold’s proposal to exalt literary study? (60 words)

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The situation of the colony

In her famous work, *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan, surveys the colonial rule of the British in India with the aim of showing how ‘English’ came to be an instrument of colonial domination.

She remarks, “The history of education in British India shows that certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature - for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense

or the disciplines of ethical thinking - were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition. Despite occasional murmurs to the contrary, the notion that these functions are unique to English literature still persists in modern curricular pronouncements, with a consequent blurring of the distinction between ‘English literature’ and ‘English studies’ . . . The distinction . . . is a useful one to bear in mind in connection with British Indian educational history, insofar as it draws attention to literary *education*, as opposed to *literature*, as a major institutional support system of colonial administration. The transformation of literature from its ambivalent ‘original’ state into an instrument of ideology is elsewhere described by another critic, Terry Eagleton, . . .”

Viswanathan points up the relevance of the history of British Indian education saying that “the emergence of the discipline of English in colonial India, its rootedness in strategies of sociopolitical control, opens up fresh inquiry into possible implications of empire for current debates on curriculum in general. When, in our own times, students and faculty clamor for a broadening of curriculum to include submerged texts of minority and third world cultures, the knowledge that the discipline of English developed in colonial times would appear likely to strengthen their claims and force their opponents to reconsider the premises of the traditional Eurocentric curriculum.”

Check Your Progress

1. How would you describe the ‘methods’ of English literary study in terms of a cultural project? Support your answer with a comparison of critical readings. (100 words)

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2. Write a brief note on Arnold as critic. (100 words)

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3. Give a summary of the Victorian argument for establishing ‘English’ as a branch of academic study. (100 words)

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3.6 The Leavisite Contribution

Space for Learner

F. R. Leavis was the true inheritor of Arnold in his conviction that the study and appreciation of literature is a moral as well as a humanizing enterprise. Leavis was wholeheartedly committed to the cause of English studies as he believed that the moral significance of literature lies in its capacity to reflect the whole quality of human life in a sensitive way. It was with this purpose to promote English studies that Leavis and Q. D. Roth, later Q. D. Leavis, launched the quarterly critical journal, *Scrutiny*, in 1932, the publication of which continued up to 1953. The ‘Scrutineers’ made a reassessment of the writers of English literature on the criterion of their commitment to the moral and cultural crusade against the commercial values of the mechanized society.

The writers who received the ‘Scrutineers’ unqualified approval were — Chaucer, Shakespeare, Johnson, the Jacobean and Metaphysicals, Bunyan, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, Austen, George, Eliot, Dickens, Hopkins, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Eliot and D. H. Lawrence. On the other hand, poets like Shelley and John Milton were given a secondary place for their verbally disembodied or abstract expression. Leavis’s disapproval of Milton can be seen in this estimate of Milton’s style: “He (Milton) exhibits a feeling for words rather than a capacity for feeling through words . . . habituation could not sensitize a medium so cut off from speech - speech that belongs to the emotional and sensory texture of actual living and is in resonance with the nervous system.” Leavis’s negative estimate of Milton springs from his conviction that the essence of ‘English’ lies in its ability to convey the robust vitality of life through concrete expressions. The glorification of such writers as Shakespeare, D. H. Lawrence and Hopkins is based on Leavis’s ideological preoccupation with the organic unity of the sensuous quality of language with the vital quality of life. The ‘Scrutineers’ believed in the myth of the organic society of the past that stands against the mechanical life of modern industrial society. They insisted that though a return to the organic society of the past is not possible yet literature itself can present the picture of organic society in front of the sensitive readers if English language strives for a concrete and sensuous ‘enactment’ of lived experiences.

F.R. Leavis, the Critic

From the 1930s to the 1950s, F.R. Leavis, in Cambridge, redefined English literature and the way it came to be studied. Leavis is remembered for his attack on the ‘culture’ of industrial society. Leavis was influenced in

his views both by Sir Arthur Quiller Couch and I.A.Richards, believing that mass culture of industrialised society had helped to destroy the authentic, unified culture of the ‘organic community. Leavis consistently pointed to the institutions of modern society as the symbols of the emptiness of commercialism. He saw ‘tradition’ as the repository of collective creativity which helps to sustain the inner resources of the community.

Leavis primary interest lay in stressing the links between culture and society. In 1933, together with Denys Thompson, Leavis published *Culture and Environment* in which industrial mass production was seen as creating the forms of contemporary culture.

SAQ

How would you understand ‘Mechanical’ in opposition to ‘Organic’ ?
(50 words)

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Leavis’s re-mapping of English literature is not above criticism, but the stress he put on the sensitive appreciation of literature and the right use of language greatly contributed to the promotion of English studies in the twentieth century. In 1930s the scholars of English studies were viewed as leading the most valuable life because it was supposed to have given them the opportunity to recreate the natural and organic society of the past. Leavis held the conviction that: “thinking about political and social matters ought to be done by minds of some literary education and done in an intellectual climate informed by a vital literary culture.” He ascribed tremendous importance to literary appreciation because it enhances the quality of human existence.

The arrival of T.S Eliot in England in 1915 was a significant event in the promotion of English studies. He insisted on the necessity for a positive reassessment of the metaphysical poets who displayed a unity of thought and feeling, experience and expression. He strongly believed in the impersonal order and dynamic power of tradition in the light of which the present and future work are to be judged. Eliot also felt the need for reviving the deep symbols and archetypes of mythology to connect the present with the past. This has resulted in a vigorous research for cultural and literary heritage, with a positive bearing on English studies.

The Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century like John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Abraham Cowley and many others were known for their bold experimentation with technique in the field of poetry. Their innovative practices, were denounced as unnatural by Dr Samuel Johnson in his work ‘The Lives of the English Poets’. Johnson’s criticism, however, was a reflection of his neo-classical sensibility. The credit of placing the Metaphysicals in a positive perspective goes to T. S. Eliot, the pioneer of modern English poetry after the war. In his *epoch-making* essay “The Metaphysical Poets”, Eliot asserts that these seventeenth century poets inherited the great tradition of “unifying sensibility” achieved by the great Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists like Shakespeare and Webster. ‘Unification of sensibility’ means an organic correspondence between emotion and thought, feeling and intelligence, of which metaphysical conceits are notable examples. Eliot made a strong appeal to the modern English poets to follow the art of the metaphysical poets because the complexity of the modern age requires for its articulation an equally complex technique.

Besides being a critic of great repute, Eliot was a poet (*The Waste Land, Four Quartets, Gerontion, The Ash Wednesday*) and a poetic dramatist (*The Family Reunion, Murder in the Cathedral, The Cocktail Party*)

While F. R. Leavis held the conviction that study of literature fosters transmission of human values, his contemporaries like I. A. Richards and William Empson restricted the role of literary appreciation to ‘close reading’ of the text. Following the norms of close reading, the scholars are expected to understand the text in isolation from the socio-cultural and historical contexts. I. A. Richards called it “practical criticism”. The pioneers of practical criticism like Richards, Empson, Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate among others insisted on scrutinizing the quality of language and style rather than focusing on the authorial and historical contexts of the texts, particularly in poems. They held the view that the goal of objective criticism can be attained by an analysis of ‘tensions’, ‘paradoxes’, images and ‘ambiguities’ embedded in the language of the poems. These practitioners of ‘new criticism’ and ‘close reading’ shifted their focus from literature a humanist enterprise to literature as a kind of dry formalism and it is one of its major limitations. Despite its shortcomings, the new critical orientation, however, made significant contribution to the cause of English studies. Of all literary genres, English poetry gained the most from the new critical orientation, because the length of the poem enables the critic to search for the elements of formal coherence in a poem with ease.

The rise of formalism/New Criticism

The example of I.A.Richards in the history of English literary criticism should remind us that literary study assumes its shape under the impress of different forces at work in society. While, with his death in 1979, Richards came to be less remembered, it is interesting to learn that it was his view of literature as the antidote to the serious deficiencies of modern society.

We recall Richards in the context of the establishing of ‘new’ criticism, a way of studying English literature as an autonomous discipline. What we must note is how Richards ‘freed’ English literature from the grip of German philology by setting up criticism on ‘scientific’ principles. His method, or principles, however, were seen by Leavis as contrary to what was desirable.

SAQ

How would you distinguish between a new critical reading of a poem from a traditional one? (40 words)

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3.7 English Studies Thereafter

As the study of English literature responded to the demands of the imperialist ideology during the colonial period, the promotion of English studies has not discontinued even in the decolonized world. It is because English has now been accepted as a global commodity to be used by all and it is the sign of cultural hybridity which marks the postcolonial condition. Moreover, a reinvigoration of critical activities has taken place in the decolonised nations since the postcolonial focus is directed even to the texts produced in imperial Britain - from Shakespeare and Dickens to Kipling and Foster.

Stop To Consider

- The establishment of “Scrutiny” is a milestone in the rise of English studies.
- F. R. Leavis, the great exponent of English studies, advocated an intense and sensitive reading of literary works because he believed that literature is conducive to life and vitality and the study of this subject is a moral experience.

- The upsurge of critical activities in the field of literary studies of the twentieth century can be attributed to the endeavours of the Leavisites, T.S Eliot and the New Critics, who focused on the ‘close reading’ of the text.
- English studies have received a new impetus and a new direction with the development of postcolonial theory and practice.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. Assess the impact that ‘science’ and other social forces had on the ‘rise’ of English. (150 words)

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2. Give a brief account of how ‘English’ became the ideological instrument of colonial domination. (150 words)

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3. Recount the Leavisite argument proposing English literature as the antidote to the moral and cultural deficiencies of modern society. (150 words)

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4. Make a brief consideration of ‘new’ criticism as the new direction of English literary study in modern times showing how it was in fact a response to a set of sociopolitical factors. (200 words)

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3.8 Summing Up

In this unit you have learnt the genesis of the rise of English as well as various socio-cultural and political contexts in which English studies flourished. We have discussed the contribution of S.T.Coleridge and Matthew Arnold. Especially Arnoldian mission of upholding English literature to fight the prevailing philistinism , and the interface between

English studies and imperialism have been discussed. The contribution of New Criticism in institutionalizing English literature as well as F.R. Leavis's contribution in enhancing the moral function of literature and in enumerating literature as embodied experience in the context of the modern world is another important chapter in the trajectory of English.

3.9 References and Suggested Readings

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Unit 4 : The Woman Question and Gender Studies

Space for Learner

Unit Structure :

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 The Woman Question: Early Stirrings
- 4.4 The First Wave
- 4.5 The Second Wave
- 4.6 Contemporary Trends
- 4.7 Definition of Gender Theory and Practices
- 4.8 Objectives of Gender Studies
- 4.9 key concepts in gender studies
- 4.10 Major Gender Theorists
- 4.11 Summing Up
- 4.12 References and Suggested Reading

4.1 Objectives

This Unit aims to enable you to

- reference to Gender studies.
- Identify the waves of Feminist Movements
- Understand how woman's question through various texts and movements
- Learn about the key concepts and theorists of gender studies

4.2 Introduction

'The Woman Question' in its nature was a concept that feminists campaigned to address the dispute of women for social change. Originating from French terminology (the French term *querelle des femmes*) was used in connection with social change in the nineteenth century. The woman question was about women's suffrage, reproductive rights, property rights and legal rights. This intellectual debate about female's role and status in the society not only challenged the Aristotelian notion that women are incapable of reason, but also attempted to defend the legal rights of women. You must go through literary works like Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1878), Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* to analyse this woman question. In the Victorian Era, the term was used to address women's status and position in the public sphere. The debate surrounding the Woman Question presented the conflicting roles of gender in society. One of the earliest

major works in feminism was Christine de Pizan's book *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) which debated the role of woman in society. The present unit is an attempt to make you familiar with some of the woman questions that Feminism and Gender studies tried to address and resolve.

4.3 The Woman Question: Early Stirrings

The presence of divergent and sometimes opposed strands of thought and action make an acceptable definition of 'feminism' virtually impossible. It is in this regard that we can have a better understanding of 'feminism' if it is defined in terms of its historical origins and development. That is, if feminism is addressed in terms of 'movements', a historical process encompassing multifaceted ideas and actions, then the important and common issues before all the feminists get highlighted. It is interesting to note that feminist activity and thought started long before the term was adopted to describe those who campaigned for women's rights.

To some extent, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) was a pioneering text for the women's movement. In her book Wollstonecraft argued for higher standards in education for women and for developing women's rational faculties and economic independence. She said "I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures". Wollstonecraft fearlessly attacked some pillars of patriarchy like John Milton and some supposed prophets of liberty like Rousseau who were not in favour of extending liberty to women. Mary Wollstonecraft's text, being a very courageous expression of women's concern about their social, economic and political condition, gave a direction to the development of women's rights movements in the mid- nineteenth century. It is to be noted that there were a few male figures who had seriously considered the subject of women's inequality.

What prompted women to fight against their subordination ? What made women conscious of their secondary role in society ?

If we consider the history of women's 'voices', we go back a long way into ancient times. Through the ages there have been expressions of women's dissatisfaction with a secondary social status, or their questioning of women's role in the order of things. We have to refer to the work of the ancient Greek poetess, Sappho, to the play *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes, to Chaucer's *Wife of Bath*, to Christine de Pisan in the Middle Ages, and many other examples which may yet be brought to light. In our own society can be found many names which voiced important concerns related to social structuring.

Aphra Behn and Anne Bradstreet are important names in literary history of the 17th century. The 18th century saw larger numbers of female names in the literary circuit.

In 1779, William Alexander published *History of Women*, noting therein, “We allow a woman to sway our sceptre, but by law and custom we debar her from every other government but that of her own family, as if there were not a public employment between that of superintending the kingdom, and the affairs of her own kitchen, which could be managed by the genius and capacity of women.”

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), whose husband was Ambassador in Turkey (1716 - 18), considered Turkish women to be ‘freer’ in comparison with English ladies. Her sentiments were shared by Judith Drake, who wrote *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (in 1696, which had come out in five editions by 1750), who voiced the opinion that men and women were alike in their ‘Souls’.

The history of the 18th century shows the greater participation, in intellectual life and in the print culture, of women. Women figured as historians, as intellectuals, as writers, as biographers, literary critics, and novelists. But Samuel Johnson refused women an entry in his *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), a refusal we can contrast with the account given by Mary Robinson in 1799, in her *Thoughts on the Condition of Women*.

Mary Astell, politically a conservative who rejected a contractual concept of government, she championed the development of women in relation to which she espoused the idea of a “female educational enclave”.

Mary Wollstonecraft came from Newington Green, a London suburb, from a close association with Dissenters. Wollstonecraft took up the cause of women’s education, inveighing against the role laid out for women in the matter of education. She called for a “Revolution in female manners”. Some rallied round to such calls; Anna Laetitia Barbauld, a Dissenter, in 1795, proclaimed in *The Rights of Woman*:

“Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
 Woman! too long degraded, scorned, oppressed;
 O born to rule in partial Law’s despite,
 Resume thy native empire o’er the breast . . .”

We should see here that the collective voicing of protest against the subjugation of women may be traced to the late 17th and then the eighteenth centuries. The last was the period when considerable change was to be seen in English society and prompted a public discussion of the women’s question.

John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Woman* (1869) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) by Frederick Engels had diagnosed the problem of woman's suppressed position in society. Back in 1791, Olympe de Gouges, a French revolutionary, published her 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Citizen' in response to the French Revolution's "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen". De Gouges argued that women were equal to men and they must have all the rights enjoyed by men. Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges were the architects of the political tradition or movement called 'feminism' that did not acquire self-conscious existence until the international suffrage battles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

SAQ

Which women united to speak in a united 'voice' ? (30 words)

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4.4 The First Wave

The history of feminist movements highlights the historical appearance of women's rights movements at different periods as a series of "waves". Thus, first-wave feminism is used to refer to the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century feminist movements that were concerned basically with gaining equal rights for women, particularly the right of suffrage.

If we attempt to insert women's movements within a larger social framework, we can see how it was in part the march of industrialization which set aside women, particularly married women, from the 'economy' which was seen in terms of those who are 'occupied', i.e. received an individual cash income. By this categorization, unpaid domestic work was 'unoccupied'. This resulted in a masculinized concept of 'labour' where the prejudice against women working, as among the bourgeoisie, was far greater and more readily applicable. As with the economy, politics too worked in the same pattern. As democratization advanced, the right to vote was extended after 1870, the exclusion of women became more marked. Politics thus became a masculine affair.

Women's exclusion from the exercise of political power was the chief reason behind the rise of the first wave of feminist movement in Europe. Politics continued to be an exclusively male-dominated activity since

women were denied the right to vote in western democracies and they remained politically unrepresented in formal political institutions. The European and American feminists have found that women's political exclusion was rooted in Western political theories and institutions. Political theorists and philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau argued for a natural difference between men and women. Their philosophical arguments classified women as too irrational to exercise political power and take part in public life.

The first wave feminists criticized the division of human activities as public and private on the basis of some arbitrary and false theories. On the other hand, they argued for the interdependence of the two spheres of life. The feminist action against women's exclusion from political sphere led to the suffrage movement which became prominent in Europe and the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, the single issue of suffrage brought to light many important differences between different feminist viewpoints. Many feminists did not consider the issue of suffrage as the central question or key area of inequality between men and women because large sections of the male population were also denied the right to vote. Many feminists, however, believed that suffrage was central to the feminist cause, but they had diverse ways and reasons to justify their claims. They also had to face a paradoxical situation in their attempts to justify the political rights for women. On the one hand, they had to claim that women were not different men and they were as rational as men to take part in public sphere. At the same time, in claiming rights for women they were affirming their sexual difference from men.

Stop to Consider

The feminist movements of the nineteenth century and twentieth century are renewals of the eighteenth century tradition of thought that focused on the question of women's inequality in the patriarchal system. The claim for women's inclusion in the political sphere gave rise to the first wave of feminism. The first wave feminism was marked diverse and even contradictory opinions on the importance of the issue of suffrage for women's liberation. There is not one but many feminisms; rigid classification among them is, however, not possible.

SAQ

What were the early objectives of the feminist movements ? (40 words)

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4.5 The Second Wave

Between the suffrage movement and the reinvigoration of feminist activity in the late 1960s and 1970s, called the second wave of feminism, the question of women’s emancipation did not lie dormant. The struggle for women’s citizenship which started with the call for suffrage ended the total exclusion of women from the political sphere. But the feminists soon realized that the move out of the private into the public sphere did not mean a total emancipation for women. In the late 1960s and 1970s women voiced their concerns about women’s inequality in the areas of family, sexuality and work. The issues of paid employment, equal salaries and the provision of condition such as childcare have been long-term feminist concerns. The second wave-feminism, called the radical feminist movement, referred to the emergence of feminist activity in the late 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to the failure of the New Left to fulfill their goals.

The radical feminists of the second wave stress women’s political power at an informal, grass-root level. “The personal is political” was the famous slogan of the second wave of the feminist movement. It suggests that relations between the male and the female are marked by what Wilhelm Reich called ‘Sexual Politics’. Using the phrase in the title of her work “Sexual Politics” (1970), Kate Millet argues that politics refers not merely to the “relatively narrow and exclusive world of meetings, Chairman and parties. The term ‘Politics’ shall refer to power- structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another”. The recognition that personal relationships are also based on the exercise of power is a significant step in the feminist questioning of the male-female relationships in the family, working place and decision -making bodies. The rise of the second wave of feminism can be ascribed to the socialist, including the Marxist, categorization of the question of women’s inequality as a marginal problem. The socialists believed that the redressal of the grievances of the oppressed class would automatically solve the problem of inequality faced by women. But the leftist movements failed to fulfill the demands of the women and the resurgence of feminist activity took place in the 1960s to focus on the question of women’s liberation as a separate problem.

Even after achieving suffrage in the first two decades of the twentieth century in all Western democracies, women came to realize that the right to vote could not mean full political citizenship. As a result, the focus of feminist thought shifted from the formal political institutions to the private sphere. The second wave feminist pointed out that complete emancipation of women could not be achieved if the private sphere of women's lives continued to be regulated by the male power-politics. Feminists have focused on questions regarding gender differentiation in the labour market since women had to do unpaid housework and earned less than men. Some Marxists- feminists have attempted to explain women's lower status in the labour-market through an examination of the capitalist system of production. In the capitalist system, the employers keep the women in low-paid jobs so that in case of demands for higher wages the employer can turn to this reserve force.

Some Marxist feminists describe how the two systems of capitalism and patriarchy force men and women to perform different economic roles. In the patriarchal system, men exclude women from better paid work to ensure women's financial dependence on men. Some other feminists examine issues such as sexuality and reproductive capacities of women as the primary cause of the division of labour on gendered lines.

Another major concern of the second wave of feminist movement has been the question of women's lack of control over their own sexuality and fertility. For some feminists, sexuality is not a central issue in the question of women's subordination, for others it is the very key to men's domination of women. Again for some feminists, reproduction and motherhood are a burden and a cause of women's oppression. They want liberation from this burden through new scientific technologies. Some feminists, however, consider motherhood as a very pleasurable and empowering experience and view technology as a means used by men to interfere in women's experience.

In view of the divergent thought and functions followed within the second wave of feminism itself, the term "Radical Feminism" has been coined to make reference to the feminist politics which was responsible for uncovering the extent of violence against women. It was born in North America out of dissatisfaction with radical left politics. It argued that sex roles are socially constructed, not biologically designed. The insistence that 'the personal is political' and that sexuality is to be totally freed from male domination is associated with radical feminism. While radical feminism put the stress on man-woman difference, liberal feminism campaigned for equal rights and changes in the legal system to provide equally to women. Feminists of the second wave were also deeply influenced by the revival of

Marxism in 1960s. Attempting to achieve some kind of synthesis between Marxist theory and feminist accounts of gender systems, Marxist feminism exposed some of the weaknesses of the theory of production which had not included the labour of ‘reproduction’, performed at home unpaid, by women. They wanted a revision of these theories so that Marxism could be applied as a critique of the gender discrimination in modern capitalist society.

An overview of the two waves of feminism establishes the point that it has been a political movement in its origin and subsequent evolution. All the feminists agree that politically, socially and economically women were relegated to a secondary status on the basis of the natural difference between men and women. For centuries, women’s biological capacity for reproduction and their lesser physical strength have been seen as determining their subordinate roles at home and making them unfit for participating in the public sphere. They are judged to be closer to nature, less reasonable than men and ruled by emotion. The feminist, on the other hand, argue that muscularity and femininity are mere social constructions, formulated by the conventions of the patriarchal society for the benefit of men. Simon de Beauvoir, in her work *The Second Sex* (1949) asserts that ‘woman’ is a biological category, and all the behaviour associated with femininity is a social construction. “One is not born a woman: one becomes one”——this famous statement of de Beauvoir suggests that the psychological and behavioural aspects of ‘sex’ are the products of patriarchal cultures and not the natural results of biological difference. She points out that societies are organized on the assumption that man is ‘self’ and woman is ‘other’. In this patriarchal binarism, the ‘self’ treats the ‘other’ as a supplement or threat but never as an equal. Feminists of both the waves have tried to dismantle the hierarchies of self-other, active-passive, rational-irrational, formulated by the male-dominated society.

Stop to Consider

A few notable Feminist Writers in the West:

- Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1791), *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798)
- Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
- Margaret Fuller ‘s *Women in the Nineteenth century* (1845)
- Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847)
- Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899)
- Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of one’s Own* (1929)
- Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949)

SAQ

How would you see the differences between the two waves of feminism? (40 words)

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Do you find any continuing concerns in feminist movements? (40 words)

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Space for Learner

4.6 Contemporary Trends

The classification of the feminist movement into two waves should be read as a useful summary of a historical process which started in the late eighteenth century and is still going on. Moreover, the classification of the movement into two waves should not overlook the diversity of feminist thought and action that exist within the two waves. Again, feminist thinking in recent times has taken a textual turn with the proliferation of newer and newer forms of discourses. The academic appropriation of the concepts of psychoanalysis, structuralism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and post-modernism in the field of feminist thinking of 1980s and 1990s has led to its being labelled as the “third wave”. The French Feminism’s focus on language as an instrument of male domination says that language represents the male point of view and advocates a special, feminine language—”écriture feminine”. North American feminism, on the other hand, adopts the strategy of close textual reading of the canonical work. Undertaking a revisionist reading of the western literary tradition they attempt to expose patriarchal ideology as reflected in the so-called literary classics.

Again, a revision of the main tradition of feminism as followed in Europe and North America has given rise to Black feminism and feminism of the third-world countries. The Black feminists claim that black women are oppressed both sexually and racially and they challenge the white women’s ability to speak for black women. The white feminists are also accused of Eurocentrism in their overlooking the impact of colonialism on the women of the colonized third world countries. Thus, third world feminism has developed in response to the particular problems faced by woman in the third-world countries. The diversity of the feminist thinking is,

however, accompanied by debates over the role of theory and the relevance of academic feminism to the lives of ordinary woman.

4.7 Definition of Gender Theory and Practices

Individualist views of gender include a wide variety of sociological and psychological perspective. Though they differ from one another in some important respects, these perspectives share the view that gender is an attribute-or characteristic-of people. (Wharton 23)

In the definition above Wharton explains that whether it is sociological or psychological perspective, gender is defined as an attribute. Wharton further states that gender refers to traits, abilities and behavioural dispositions (Wharton: 24).

Gender theory and studies have their roots in Feminism, woman's studies and politics. You have been familiar with the various waves of Feminism that incorporate the question of woman. The First wave of Feminism addressed the issue of woman's voting rights and rights to education while the second wave of Feminism which began in early 1960s made remarkable contribution by aiming at equality for all women concerning her family, domesticity and sexuality. However, the second wave could not address the plight of women of colour.

To understand the feminist trends of thoughts you need to go through the writings of famous women writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Marry Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Betty Friedan and Rebecca Walker. The main branch of feminism or mainstream feminism was called Liberal Feminism which focussed on gender equality through political and legal reforms. Liberal Feminists addressed issues concerning women's reproductive rights, child care, abortion access and believed in reforms against gender discrimination.

4.8 Objectives of Gendre Studies

Gender studies address and incorporate some of the major key terms and concepts such as sexuality, race, class, religion, status, citizenship etc. Gender theory and practice study and examine gender as an identity category and discusses how gender is being normalised and naturalized across cultural and historical contexts. To understand Gender theory and identity, you have to be clear about gender roles, gender stereotypes etc. gender roles are culturally defined based on a binary division. Such binaries sustain the oppression of women. The gender roles assigned to women such as biological role of reproduction and relative qualities such as

nurturing, intelligence, aggression lead to gender representation. Gender roles became an object of study during the nineteenth century under the influence of Havelock Ellis (1859- 1939) and Sigmund Freud (1856- 1939). Gender stereotype and gender roles are related terms. Stereotypes refer to set of predetermined behavioural traits and attitudes typical of men and women. This belief is based on the biological fact of sexuality that there are only two genders- male and female and that all men and women are heterosexual. Besides, Gender Dysphoria is a technical term that deals with identity disorder representing physical and mental confusion and discomfort.

Stop to Consider:

Trans gender identity

Transgender, on the other hand, is a technical term used to refer to a diverse group of individuals who challenge socially and culturally constructed gender norms. This category remains outside the binary distinction of male and female.

In the introduction to the book *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, Imelda Whelehan and Jane Pilcher writes,

Along with developing a critique of gender inequalities, in both personal relationships and in social positioning (especially economically and politically), second wave feminism began to draw attention to the ways in which academic disciplines and sets of knowledge acted to exclude the experiences, interests and identities of women. (Whelehan & Pilcher: pp.ix)

In the quote above you will find the function and objectives of gender studies. Before 1970s, social sciences ignored gender and they mainly studied men and their involvement in works and politics. The differences and inequalities between men and women were taken into discourse of humanities only during the 1970s. Gradually women's experiences about paid work, domesticity, motherhood and male violence found revelation through the writings of many women writers. For instance, Women Studies as a specialised academic area evolved after publication of many women's writings such as Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1971). Women writer's interest in humanities marked a great transformation in the history of Western Literature because, the hegemony of Western literature almost excluded women's writers. George Eliot, the Bronte Sisters, Jane Austen published their novels and other writings in pseudonyms. In 1969, in many

US colleges and Universities, women studies began to be taught. It is important to mention here that the first national women's studies conference in the UK took place in 1969. Such studies served two main objectives: they challenged the existing boundaries of knowledge and aroused consciousness among people about gender discrimination and violence. Some of the key concepts in gender studies are discussed briefly:

4.9 Key concepts in Gender Studies

Androcentrism: The term 'androcentric' was used by Charlotte Perkins Gillman who wrote the book *Our Androcentric Culture* in 1911. The androcentric tendencies prefer an androcentric use of language to marginalize the women. Androcentrism, the word has a Greek origin and it means the doctrine of male-centeredness. Here the male experiences are generalized against which the female discourse and experiences are organized. Another word that is discussed in relation with Androcentrism is Phallogocentrism which again incorporates the notion of phallogocentric language that rationalizes ideas in masculine terminology. Until 1980s, the terms like 'mankind', 'man' were in wide use in place of gender neutral words like 'humankind'.

Masculinity/ Femininity: Masculinity and Femininity are gendered identities attributed to men and women respectively. How to decide about Masculinity and Femininity? That is through gender socialization process through which individual inherits gendered qualities and characteristics. Wharton argues that gender socialization involves two sided process- one side is the target of socialization while the other side of socialization process are the agents of socialization who pass on cultural information (Wharton: 31)

Patriarchy: A social system where the absolute authority is exercised by the male elder over the community. Within a patriarchal set up instead of a single standard behaviour for all, there exists 'double standards' –one for man and other woman.

Gender Essentialism: The second wave feminist identified this term as the mode of thinking that assume gender difference as innate, transcultural and historical thereby that expresses about biological essentialism about sexual difference. Such mode of thinking was, however rejected by majority of feminists in favour of a homogeneous identity.

Queer Theory: The Queer Theory has its root in gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements of the 1960's and 1970's that paved the way for the lesbian/ Gay movement in late 1980's. The theory developed dealt

with the concept of sexuality particularly through the work of Michel Foucault.

Gender order: Jill Matthews first developed this concept in 1984. In the formation of gendered identity (masculine and feminine), gender order of a society forms separate codes for the masculine and feminine. Gender order follows a pattern of ideological and material practices that are made to be observed by individuals of a society.

Standpoint Feminism: Standpoint theory emerged in 1970's and 80's as a feminist critical theory that deals with the relations between the production and practices of power. According to Sandra Harding, Standpoint theory is a kind of organic epistemology, methodology and philosophy of science and social theory that arise whenever oppressed people gain public voice (Harding: 4). The American Feminist theorist Sandra Harding coined the term 'standpoint theory' to refer to epistemology that constitute women's knowledge. Like postmodernist and post colonial approaches, standpoint theory believes that all knowledge claims are socially situated (Harding: 11). During the 1970s, feminist writers were influenced by Marxist insights and explained that society is stratified by gender, race, class that shape the knowledge system of society.

Gender Identity Politics: The belief that politics has been influenced by gendered identity is incorporated in gender identity politics. The battle involves questions concerning racial minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ, religious minorities. Identity politics was inherently present in the women's liberation movement and such politics also remained between different feminist groups.

Men's Studies: It is interesting to note that when the Woman's Liberation Movement was on rise, men's consciousness raising groups gathered together during the early 1970s. Men's studies began to develop in two sides- its one side emerged as a reaction against gender studies and feminism. The other side envisaged a peaceful coexistence with feminism and gender studies

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider

Feminism and Gender Studies:

Gender Studies is interdisciplinary in nature and its subjects incorporate history, language, sociology and even psychology. Feminisms are mostly concerned with political and theoretical agenda that address the secondary status of women in society. Gender studies make an all inclusive approach to the question of gender identity (both male and

Space for Learner

female). In terms of object of study, feminist studies deal with feminist criticism and viewpoints. On the other hand, gender studies deal with both masculinise and feminist perspectives and criticism. One more distinction must be made here between gender studies and Women's studies. Gender studies are more extensive because it incorporates women's studies, men's studies and queer studies within its ambit of discussion and analysis. Women's studies has been an interdisciplinary academic programme that discusses the role of women in social culture, literature and history.

Stop to Consider

Black Feminist Standpoint:

In the context of African American Women the American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins has written an important book named *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment* (1990) where she argued that African American Women's marginalised status can be understood from the 'matrix of oppression' that includes system of race, gender and class oppression. She saw that African American women were denied their rights and were economically exploited and harassed through stereotypes. (www.britanica.com)

SAQ

1. How did gender studies differ from feminist studies? (40 words)

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2. Define Androcentrism and Phallagocentrism. (40 words)

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3. Discuss the role of patriarchy in the discrimination of gender. (50 words)

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4.10 Major Gender Theorists

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Dorothy E Smith was a pioneer feminist in standpoint theory. Her works were a critique of the role of sociology in marginalizing knowledge about women. She was an expert in sociology of knowledge and family studies. Her notable works include *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* and *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. She is known for her ideas on Institutional Ethnography, Ruling Relations, Feminist Standpoint Theory and Bifurcation of Consciousness.

American academic, Judith Butler is known for his work on gender studies *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) where he mentioned about performativity based on gender, sex, sexuality. Butler's text is a founding text in queer theory.

Patricia Hill Collins was a prominent Gender theorist from Philadelphia who was mostly known for her work on Black Feminism. Collins used the term ' Matrix of Domination ' to explain the pattern of domination through relations of power.

Raewyn Connell (1944) was mostly known for her books *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture* (1977), *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities*(1995), Connell was concerned about the 'resiliency' of gender roles and the patterns of domination over women by men.

Stop to Consider:

Institutional Ethnography: the concept was first developed by Dorothy Smith in Marxist Feminist sociology. According to this philosophy, social relations and interactions are institutionalised by social institutions like school, marriage, work.

SAQ

1. What is the Standpoint theory in gender studies? (50 words)

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2. Briefly write about queer theory and performativity. (100 words)

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4.11 Summing Up

The emergence of women's questions on the grounds of human social and cultural relations challenge the historical contexts of patriarchy and male domination. The debate about the women question is a multifaceted one due its complexity and historicity. Women's struggle for equal rights and equal representation has mobilized feminist organizations towards emancipation of women. This unit will enable you to explore deeper into the world of feminism and gender studies.

4.12 References and Suggested Readings

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), pp. 519-531 Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893>

Hill Collins, Patricia (2009). *Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge

Pilcher, Jane & Imelda Whelehan. *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. London: Sage Publications, 2004

Wharton, Amy S. (2005). *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Jane Freedman: *Feminism* (2002)

Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell and Carol Wolkowitz: *A Glossary of Feminist Theory* (2000)

K K Ruthven: *Feminist Literary Studies, An Introduction* (1984)

Maggie Humm ed.: *Feminism- A Reader* (1992)

Unit 5 : The Cultural Turn

Space for Learner

Unit Structure:

- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction: What is the cultural turn?
- 5.3 The Limitations of Formalist Approaches
- 5.4 Marxism and the cultural turn
- 5.5 Feminism and the cultural turn
- 5.6 Postcolonialism and the cultural turn
- 5.7 Cultural Studies and the Cultural Turn
- 5.8 Impacts of the Cultural Turn
- 5.9 Summing up
- 5.10 References and Suggested Readings

5.1 Objectives

The objective of this unit is to acquaint you with the concept of “The Cultural Turn” and how it has changed the entire process of critical thought. You shall learn the key aspects, theoretical frameworks, and impacts of the cultural turn, all interspersed with prominent intellectuals connected to these topics. In the following sections, I will attempt to draw your attention to major theoretical frameworks that have influenced this turn, such as Marxism, feminism, postcolonialism and cultural studies and how they played an extremely key role in connecting literature with socio cultural dynamics along with motivations of critics to explore. I shall also attempt to give you a brief and comprehensive understanding of some of the critics and debates that surround this idea in the academic circles. By the end of the Unit, you shall be able to-

- Remember the key ideas involved in the process of the aforementioned ‘turn’.
- Understand the various movements and debates involved in this major development
- Apply this knowledge further to various Literary and theoretical works you will find in your syllabuses
- Analyse the ethos of the critical and theoretical fields of the 20th century
- Create your own ideas regarding the necessity of including social, historical and cultural contexts for a comprehensive understanding of the literary texts.

5.2 Introduction: What is the cultural turn?

The cultural turn in English literature marks a significant shift in the field of literary studies, transforming the ways in which scholars approach and interpret literary texts. This unit will explore the key aspects, theoretical frameworks, and impacts of the cultural turn, which emerged in the latter half of the 20th century. This turn reflected a departure from traditional approaches that focused primarily on formal analysis and instead placed emphasis on the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which literature is produced and received. The unit will examine the contributions of influential theoretical frameworks such as Marxism, feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies, exploring how they have illuminated the connections between literature and broader socio-cultural dynamics. By examining literature within its broader cultural context, we will see how scholars have sought to uncover the complex relationships between texts and the societies in which they are embedded. This unit will also consider the criticisms and debates surrounding the cultural turn, highlighting its strengths and limitations. Ultimately, it will demonstrate how the cultural turn has enriched our understanding of literature by emphasizing its intricate connections to the social, historical, and cultural dimensions of human experience.

5.3 The Limitations of Formalist Approaches

Formalist approaches dominated literary studies for much of the early 20th century, emphasizing close reading and textual analysis. However, the cultural turn in English literature emerged as a response to the limitations of formalist approaches. While formalism prioritized the aesthetic qualities of literary texts in schools like New Criticism and Russian and French formalism, it often neglected the larger social, historical, and cultural implications of literature. It explored the key limitations of formalist approaches within the cultural turn and highlighted the need for a more comprehensive understanding of literature.

Firstly, formalist approaches tended to detach literature from its cultural and historical contexts. By focusing solely on the internal coherence and structural elements of a work, formalism ignored the ways in which texts are shaped by social and historical forces. Literature could not be seen as a detached realm of art but rather a product of specific historical conditions and social relations. Understanding literature within its broader cultural context was found essential to uncovering the complex relationships

between texts and the societies in which they are embedded, regarding which, several critics started to write. One of the good examples and forerunners of this turn was Gustav Lanson's contribution to the concept of "explication de texte", where lies in his emphasis on historical and contextual analysis. He believed that understanding a literary work requires taking into account the social, cultural, and historical context in which it was produced. Lanson advocated for a rigorous examination of the text's form, language, and imagery, as well as an exploration of the author's intentions and the cultural influences of the time. It was well documented in his book *Bibliographical Manual of Modern French Literature* (1894).

Secondly, formalism often neglects the social and political implications of literature. By emphasizing close reading and textual analysis, formalist approaches were found to be overlooking the ways in which literature reflects and critiques prevailing economic and power structures. Literature, in the cultural turn was seen as a powerful medium through which social conflicts, ideologies, and power dynamics were represented and contested. Ignoring these aspects was thought of as limiting our understanding of the broader cultural and political implications of literary texts. Several lines of thought like Marxism were incorporated into literary ideas and a new canon was built.

Moreover, formalist approaches can reinforce traditional canons and hierarchies. By focusing primarily on a select group of established literary works, the risk of formalism excluding diverse voices and perspectives was taken into account. It was understood that literature encompasses a range of cultural expressions and experiences that are not always represented within the traditional canon. The cultural turn sought to challenge these exclusions by recognizing the significance of marginalized and underrepresented voices in literature.

Lastly, formalist approaches can undermine the interdisciplinary nature of literary studies. The thinkers of the cultural turn felt literature could not exist in isolation but was a product of interaction with other cultural forms and phenomena. Formalism, by primarily emphasizing the internal elements of a text, had isolated it from the broader social, historical, and cultural dynamics that shape and are shaped by literature. Interdisciplinary approaches such as cultural studies, feminism and postcolonialism offered valuable insights into the interconnections between literature and other fields, fostering a more holistic understanding of literary texts.

Stop to Consider

Here are some two key figures that, among others, are well known for their criticism of the formalist method

- Raymond Williams, a key figure in cultural studies, criticized formalism for its narrow focus on the internal structure of the text, disregarding the socio-historical contexts that shape literary works. He argued that literature cannot be divorced from its cultural and political dimensions, highlighting the importance of understanding literature as a reflection of society and the lived experiences of individuals.
- Edward Said’s work on Orientalism challenged the ahistorical and decontextualized nature of formalist approaches. He argued that close reading alone could not capture the underlying power dynamics and ideological biases present in literary works. Said advocated for a contextualized analysis that considers the historical, cultural, and political circumstances that shape texts, particularly in relation to colonialism, imperialism, and postcolonialism.

SAQ

1. How did the cultural turn first emerge? (30 words)

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2. What does the Formalist approach undermine? (60 words)

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5.4 Marxism and the Cultural Turn

Marxism has made a significant contribution to the cultural turn in English literature, offering a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between literature and social class. The intersection of Marxism and the cultural turn highlights how Marxist literary criticism has illuminated the socio-political dimensions of literary texts. By examining issues of class struggle, labour, ideology, and social conflict in literature, Marxism provided insights into the ways in which literature reflected and critiqued prevailing economic and power structures. Through

its focus on the socio-cultural implications of literature, Marxism has played a crucial role in broadening the scope of literary analysis within the cultural turn. *Marxism and Literature* by Raymond Williams and *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* by Georg Lukács are good examples of this comprehensive framework.

Marxist literary criticism emerged as a response to the need for a socio-political understanding of literature. It focused on how literature reflects and critiques the prevailing economic and power structures in society. Marxist critics argued that literature is not a self-contained realm of art, but is intricately connected to the socio-economic conditions in which it is produced. They examined the ways in which literature represents and challenges class struggle, labour exploitation, and social inequality. Marxist literary criticism aimed to uncover the underlying ideologies and power dynamics embedded in literary texts, providing insights into the socio-political implications of literature.

Within the cultural turn, Marxism additionally offered a valuable lens for analyzing literature within its broader social and cultural contexts. It recognized that literature is not created in isolation but is shaped by the social and historical conditions of its time. Marxist scholars explored how literature reflects and critiques the dominant ideologies influencing various power structures prevalent in society. By examining the representational tools of social class, labour, and social conflict, Marxism systematically deconstructed the ways in which literature engaged with the socio-political realities of its era.

Marxist literary criticism within the cultural turn emphasizes the role of literature in shaping and reflecting the consciousness of different social groups. It explored how literature both reflects and influences the perception of social classes and class struggle. Marxist critics argued that literature could provide a platform for marginalized voices, offering a counter-narrative to dominant ideologies and power structures.

Moreover, Marxism within the cultural turn **challenges traditional canons and hierarchies** within literature. It sought to uncover the voices and experiences of the working class, often neglected or marginalized in mainstream literary discourse. By highlighting the perspectives of the oppressed and disempowered, Marxist literary criticism contributed to a very different view of literature and its significance. As such, Marxism within the cultural turn has expanded the scope of analysis, moving beyond Formalist approaches to consider the socio-political implications of literary texts.

However, Marxism within the cultural turn is not without criticisms. Some argue that it has led to an overemphasis on the socio-political aspects of literature, overshadowing the aesthetic and formal qualities of works. Additionally, there are debates about the universality of Marxist analysis and its applicability to all literary texts. Critics argue that literature is a complex and multifaceted domain that cannot be reduced to a mere reflection of social conditions.

Check Your Pprogress

1. Write an essay on the contribution of Marxism to the cultural turn. (100 words)

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2. Perform an analysis for the causes of the fall of Formalism. Elaborate with critical ideas. (200 words)

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3. What is the central focus of Marxist literary criticism? Compare various ideas of critics in the field. (150 words)

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4. Elaborate creatively on the connections between the rise of Marxism and the fall of Formalism as a mainstream analytical tool for literature. (150 words)

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5.5 Feminism and the Cultural Turn

Feminism has played a pivotal role in the cultural turn in English literature, challenging patriarchal assumptions and highlighting the gendered dynamics within literary texts. The role of feminism in the cultural turn needs to be examined by analysing how feminist literary criticism has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of literature. By analyzing the

depiction of women characters, the construction of femininity and masculinity, and power dynamics based on gender, feminism unveils the ways in which literature reflects and critiques prevailing gender norms and power structures. We will see that through its focus on the gendered implications of literature, feminism has significantly influenced the cultural turn by broadening the scope of literary analysis.

Feminist literary criticism initially emerged as a response to the need for a gender-conscious approach to literature. It focused on the representation of women and gender issues within literary texts, as well as the exploration of women's writing and perspectives. Feminist critics argued that literature was not a neutral realm but rather a reflection and perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies and power structures. They examined the ways in which literature constructed and challenged notions of femininity, masculinity, and gender roles. Feminist literary criticism aimed to uncover the gendered dynamics embedded in literary texts, providing insights into the socio-cultural implications of gender. *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf and *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir are two good examples of feminist texts that influenced the cultural turn greatly.

Within the cultural turn, feminism offered a crucial lens for analyzing literature within its broader social and cultural contexts. It recognized that literature is not created in a vacuum but is influenced by the prevailing gender norms and power dynamics of its time. Feminist scholars explored how literature depicts and questions patriarchal ideologies, gender inequalities, and the experiences of women.

It emphasized the representation of women characters in literature, investigating how women are portrayed, examining stereotypes, archetypes, and the agency granted to female characters. It further revealed the ways in which literature was connected to societal expectations of women, providing insights into the construction of femininity within different historical and cultural contexts.

Moreover, feminism within the cultural turn questioned the construction of masculinity and its enunciation on its impact on gender dynamics. It interrogated the power relations between men and women, exploring reflections and critiques of patriarchal power structures. In more recent times, feminist literary criticism has begun to highlight the intersectionality of gender with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality.

Feminism within the cultural turn incorporated a comprehensive study of women's voices and experiences in literature. It laid stress on the importance of women's writing, calling the literary canon male-dominated

and recognizing the unique perspectives as well as contributions of women authors. This offered a more inclusive and diverse understanding of literature within the cultural turn and has had a profound impact on the field of English literature. The scope of analysis, once again moved beyond formalist approaches to consider the gendered implications of literary texts. By emphasizing the representation of women, the construction of femininity and masculinity, and power dynamics based on gender, feminism began to explore several multidisciplinary schools of thought such as Judith Butler in psychoanalysis, Patricia Hill Collins in sociology and Carolyn Merchant in ecology.

However, some critics argue that too much boxing into this theoretical framework can lead to an overemphasis on gender at the expense of other important aspects of literature. Critics contend that a multifaceted domain like Literature cannot be reduced to a singular perspective. There are also important discourses about the level of viability and degree of overinterpretation done sometimes by the more radical branches of feminist thought.

Stop to Consider:

Following are some important thinkers who brought about the feminist line of thought in order to usher in the cultural turn.

- Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking work, *The Second Sex*, laid the foundation for feminist theory and its impact on literature. She argued for the deconstruction of traditional gender roles and the liberation of women from societal constraints. De Beauvoir's ideas have influenced the cultural turn by encouraging scholars to critically examine how gender norms and expectations are represented and challenged in English literature.
- Virginia Woolf's works, such as *A Room of One's Own* have had a profound influence on feminist literary criticism. Woolf emphasized the importance of female perspectives and experiences in literature and highlighted the limitations imposed on women's creative expression. Her ideas have contributed to the cultural turn by foregrounding the need to analyze gender dynamics, the patriarchal gaze, and the representation of women in English literature.
- Judith Butler's work on gender performativity has shaped feminist theory and its impact on the cultural turn. Butler argues that gender is not a fixed identity but a socially constructed

performance while also exploring how gender norms are maintained and subverted through language and cultural practices. Butler's ideas have contributed to the analysis of gender representations and the destabilization of binary notions in English literature.

- Bell Hooks, a prominent feminist scholar, has critiqued the cultural turn for its limited engagement with race and class. She argues that feminist theory must address intersecting systems of oppression by emphasizing the importance of analyzing how gender, race, and class intersect in literature. Her ideas advocate for an inclusive and intersectional feminist approach to the cultural turn in English literature.

Space for Learner

SAQ

1. Why was the Feminist influence on the cultural turn deemed necessary? (60 words)

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2. Write briefly on any one issue dealt with by the Feminist critics influencing the cultural turn. (60 words)

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5.6 Postcolonialism and the Cultural Turn

Postcolonialism has been a driving force in the cultural turn in English literature, offering a critical lens through which to examine the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. We will explore how postcolonialism analyses and critiques the ways in which postcoloniality as a viewpoint has enriched our understanding of literature. By analyzing the representation of colonized peoples, the dynamics of power, and the effects of colonial history, postcolonialism unveils the ways in which literature portrays and refracts the consequences of colonial domination. It has significantly influenced the cultural turn by broadening the scope of literary analysis and opening the door to a plethora of such creative viewpoints.

Postcolonial literary criticism emerged as a response to the need for a decolonized approach to literature. This approach sought to expose the

lingering effects of colonialism on both the colonized and colonizer. Postcolonial critics analyzed the ways in which literature dealt with the legacies of colonial domination, addressing issues such as cultural identity, hybridity, resistance, and the subversion of colonial narratives. Postcolonial literary criticism contributed a great deal towards unearthing the complexities of postcolonial societies and to providing a voice to the marginalized and silenced.

Within the cultural turn, postcolonialism invented a crucial framework for analyzing literature within its broader social and cultural contexts. It recognized that literature is deeply intertwined with colonial histories and the power dynamics of colonization. Postcolonial scholars focussed on ideas like colonial domination, cultural encounters, and the negotiation of identity in the postcolonial world. *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by Frantz Fanon are two seminal texts that well capture the ethos of the cultural turn in this regard.

One of the major points of Postcolonial literary criticism within the cultural turn is that it emphasizes the representation of colonized peoples in literature. It investigates how colonial subjects are portrayed, challenging stereotypes, exoticization, and the erasure of their voices and **experiences**. It reveals the ways the power dynamics of colonization affect the literary arenas, especially delving into the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism.

Moreover, it examines the hybridity and intercultural encounters that emerge in postcolonial literature. This involves an unwavering focus on the blending of cultural traditions, languages, and identities as a result of colonial encounters. Postcolonial critics explore the ways in which literature reflects the complexity of cultural negotiation and the potential for resistance and subversion.

This phenomenon has also shown the historical and political dimensions of literature, investigating the social, economic, and political contexts in which literature is produced and received. This was greatly achieved by highlighting the literary engagement of postcolonial societies and their struggles for liberation, decolonization, and self-determination.

Thus, it is evident that postcolonialism within the cultural turn has had a profound impact on the field of English literature. Like all of the other frameworks so far discussed, it has, in its own way, expanded the scope of analysis, **moving beyond formalist approaches to consider the postcolonial implications of literary texts**. By emphasizing the representation of colonized peoples, the dynamics of power, and the effects

of colonial history, postcolonialism has successfully managed to shed light on the ways in which literature engages with the socio-political consequences of colonial domination.

Like every other theoretical framework to have majorly influenced the critical community, even this aspect of the cultural turn is not without criticisms. The overemphasis on postcolonial concerns is definitely bound to eclipse other important aspects of literature. It has been mostly acknowledged in the critical community that postcolonial analysis forced upon all literary texts shall diminish the multifaceted domain of literature that is supposed to encompass various historical periods, cultures, and experiences.

Space for Learner

SAQ

1. Why did postcolonial theories emerge in the cultural turn?
(60 words)

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2. What does Spivak say about marginalized voices? (30 words)

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Stop to consider-

Here are some important thinkers whose ideas brought about the angle of postcolonialism in the cultural turn.

- Edward Said’s seminal work, “Orientalism,” has been instrumental in shaping postcolonial theory and the cultural turn. Said argues that Western literature and scholarship perpetuate power dynamics and stereotypes by representing the East as exotic and inferior. He calls for a critical examination of the colonial discourse present in literary texts and emphasizes the importance of challenging hegemonic narratives.
- Homi Bhabha’s work on hybridity and the “third space” has influenced the cultural turn in English literature. Bhabha examines how colonial encounters give rise to cultural and identity formations that challenge fixed notions of belonging. He emphasizes the cultural negotiations and complexities that

occur in postcolonial contexts, highlighting the importance of analyzing literature as a site of resistance and subversion.

- Gayatri Spivak's ideas on subalternity and representation have been significant in postcolonial literary criticism. Spivak explores how marginalized voices, particularly those of the subaltern, are silenced and misrepresented in colonial and postcolonial contexts. She calls for a deconstruction of dominant discourses and a reclamation of subaltern agency. Spivak's work emphasizes the ethical responsibility of scholars to amplify marginalized voices in the analysis of English literature.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's contribution to postcolonial theory lies in his focus on language and the decolonization of the mind. He argues for the use of indigenous languages and the recognition of linguistic imperialism in literary production. Thiong'o advocates for a decolonized literature that reflects the perspectives and experiences of colonized peoples, challenging the dominance of English and other colonial languages.

5.7 Cultural Studies and the Cultural Turn

Cultural Studies has been instrumental in the cultural turn in English literature, providing a multidisciplinary approach to the study of literature including various social, historical, and cultural areas. In the cultural turn, this development highlights the ways in which the inclusion of cultural interpretation using certain factors enriches our understanding of literature. By examining the social and cultural dimensions of literary texts, cultural studies unveils the complex relationships between that cultures embedded in societies has on its literature. Through its focus on the cultural implications of literature, cultural studies has significantly influenced the cultural turn by expanding the scope of literary analysis and promoting interdisciplinary perspectives.

Cultural studies, like the other mentioned thought patterns, emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional literary criticism and its narrow focus on formalist analysis. It viewed literature as a cultural artefact shaped by social, historical, and political contexts. It included theories and ideas from various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, and media studies to analyze the ways in which literature reflects and contributes to broader cultural phenomena. It highlighted the importance of studying

popular cultures and subcultures, and everyday life as significant sites for understanding literature and society. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) by Clifford Geertz and *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* (1996) by John Storey are good examples of this unique area of the cultural turn.

Its most successful endeavour was formation of ideas on how readers interpret and negotiate meanings that made leaps in considering the role of literature in shaping individual and collective identities. It further interrogated the role of institutions, such as publishing houses, educational systems, and literary awards, in the production and dissemination of literature.

This line of thought was also known for its own unique take on the analyses of power. It skilfully demonstrated how literature reinforces or challenges existing social hierarchies, ideologies, and power structures. Cultural studies scholars critically engaged with issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and intersectionality, recognizing the ways in which literature can both perpetuate and subvert dominant cultural norms and discourses along with its practical repercussions in the real world. It encourages a reflexive (referring to itself) approach to the study of literature. This allows the reader to acknowledge the subjective positionality of scholars and the need to critically reflect on one's own cultural biases, privileges, and perspectives. Scholars of this line of thought also emphasize the importance of engaging with diverse voices and marginalized perspectives within the analysis of literature.

Sometimes, too much emphasis on these ideas can lead to an overshadowing of aesthetic and formal considerations. There are also debates about the boundaries and methodologies of cultural studies, as it encompasses a wide range of approaches and perspectives which seems problematic on several levels. Critics contend that the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies can result in a lack of methodological coherence and rigor.

Stop to Consider

Here are some important critics who contributed to the cultural turn in cultural studies:

- Stuart Hall, a pioneering figure in cultural studies, emphasized the importance of understanding culture as a site of contestation and meaning-making. Hall argued that culture is not fixed but constantly negotiated and shaped by social, historical, and political contexts. His ideas have contributed to the cultural turn

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by highlighting the role of power and ideology in cultural production and consumption. Hall's work has influenced the analysis of English literature by examining how texts reflect and challenge dominant cultural discourses.

- Raymond Williams, another key figure in cultural studies, focused on the relationship between culture and society. He argued that culture is a dynamic and lived experience that shapes and is shaped by social processes. Williams emphasized the need to study the everyday practices, discourses, and representations that constitute culture. His ideas have influenced the cultural turn by emphasizing the importance of analyzing the social and historical contexts of English literary works.
- Lawrence Grossberg has contributed to cultural studies by highlighting the role of popular culture in shaping social identities and power relations. He explores how popular culture, such as music, television, and film, mediates social and political meanings. Grossberg's ideas have influenced the cultural turn by expanding the scope of analysis to include popular cultural texts alongside traditional literary works. His work encourages scholars to examine the cultural dynamics of English literature beyond the canon.
- Angela McRobbie's contributions to cultural studies include feminist perspectives on popular culture and the media. She explores how popular culture constructs and represents gender identities.

SAQ

1. What is the central focus of cultural studies? (60 words)

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2. What does Raymond Williams state about cultural studies? (60 words)

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5.8 Impacts of the Cultural Turn

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One of the key impacts of the cultural turn in English literature is the expansion of the scope of analysis by moving beyond solely examining the formal aspects of literary texts to consider the broader socio-cultural contexts in which they are produced and consumed. The cultural turn encouraged scholars to explore the historical, political, social, and ideological dimensions of literature as we have seen in the earlier sections. This expanded scope allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural significance of literary works, their connections to contemporary issues, and their contributions to broader cultural discourses.

The cultural turn in English literature has also challenged traditional approaches to the study of literature by questioning the idea of literature as an autonomous realm separate from society and challenges the notion of literary value based solely on aesthetic criteria. The cultural turn advocated for a more inclusive and diverse range of texts, recognizing the value of popular culture, marginalized voices, and non-traditional forms of literature.

Another significant impact of the cultural turn is the incorporation of interdisciplinary perspectives. By drawing insights from various fields such as sociology, anthropology, history, gender studies, and postcolonial studies, the cultural turn enriches the analysis of literary texts as we have already seen. It allows for deeper exploration of the intersections between literature and other cultural phenomena, providing a more nuanced understanding of the social and cultural dynamics reflected in literary works.

Check Your Progress

1. Write a critical essay on Feminism and its role in the cultural turn.
2. Write a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in the ideas of postcolonial and Feminist theorists.
3. Would you consider Cultural Studies to be a crucial part of the cultural turn? Give a well reasoned response.
4. Write a critical essay on the various impacts of the cultural turn on English literature. Situate the ideas of various critics in connection.

Stop to Consider

We have already discussed several literary critics in various specialised areas of the cultural turn, here are two more important thinkers in the line-

- Michel Foucault's theories on power and knowledge have had a significant impact on the cultural turn in English literature. His

ideas about the relationships between power, discourse, and social institutions shed light on the ways in which literature is embedded in power structures and cultural systems. Foucault's work encourages scholars to analyze the power dynamics in literary texts and question the discursive frameworks through which knowledge is produced.

- Jacques Derrida's ideas on deconstruction have influenced the cultural turn in English literature by challenging fixed meanings and hierarchies in texts. His deconstructive approach examines the binary oppositions and underlying assumptions present in literary works. Derrida's work invites scholars to question established interpretations, opening up new possibilities for understanding the multiple meanings and cultural complexities within literary texts.

5.9 Summing Up

Thus we have seen that the cultural turn in English literature marks a significant shift in literary studies, moving away from traditional formalist approaches towards a focus on the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which literature is produced and received. This unit explored the key aspects, theoretical frameworks, and impacts of the cultural turn, including Marxism, feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies.

The first section shows us that Formalist approaches, which prioritize close reading and textual analysis, have limitations in that they detach literature from its cultural and historical contexts, neglect social and political implications, reinforce traditional canons and hierarchies, and undermine interdisciplinary approaches. The cultural turn addresses these limitations by examining literature within its broader cultural context and uncovering the complex relationships between texts and society.

The following section clarifies how Marxism within the cultural turn focuses on the relationship between literature and social class, analyzing how literature reflects and critiques economic and power structures. It emphasizes the socio-political implications of literature, challenges traditional canons, and recognizes the significance of marginalized voices.

Next, we see that Feminism within the cultural turn highlights gender dynamics within literary texts, analyzing the representation of women characters, the construction of femininity and masculinity, and power relations based on gender. It broadens the scope of analysis, challenges patriarchal assumptions, and recognizes the importance of women's writing.

After this section, the next one states how Postcolonialism within the cultural turn examines the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, analyzing how literature reflects and challenges the socio-political consequences of colonial domination. It focuses on the representation of colonized peoples, cultural identity, hybridity, and resistance, providing insights into the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism.

Finally, we see that Cultural Studies within the cultural turn adopts a multidisciplinary approach, analyzing literature within its broader social, historical, and cultural contexts. It recognizes the interconnectedness of literature with other cultural forms and phenomena, explores the reception and consumption of literature, interrogates power dynamics, and encourages reflexivity in the study of literature.

The unit ends with a brief explanation of the impacts of the Cultural turn on English literature, as it broadened the scope, challenged power hierarchies taken for granted earlier as well as encouraged more multidisciplinary work along the line.

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Unit 6 : Migration, Consumerism and Globalisation

Space for Learner

Unit Structure:

- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Introduction: What is Migration, Consumerism and Globalisation?
- 6.3 Migration and English Literature
- 6.4 Consumerism and English Literature
- 6.5 Globalisation and English Literature
- 6.6 Summing Up
- 6.7 References and Suggested Readings

6.1. Objectives

The objective of this unit is to acquaint you with the role of Migration, Consumerism and Globalisation in the world and English literature. You shall study one section of the unit on each one of the aforementioned three topics. The explanation of each one of these topics will be given to you interspersed with examples from well known works of literature. After every section there is an additional “Stop to Consider” part in order to elaborate the critical ideas of five eminent literary critics on the particular topic with the objective of enhancing your understanding of the current day views and opinions in vogue in the academic community. I will attempt to also engage your retention capacities by providing short answer questions with given word limits after each section. This is aimed at enabling you to test yourself by summarizing these ideas in your own words in a concise and lucid manner. Finally, I have also provided two “know your progress” sections with four Masters’ level questions each in order for you to get acquainted with the examination process. This unit ends with a brief and comprehensive summary to jog your memory and allow you to have these ideas at your disposal to incorporate in your own creative arguments. All in all, by the end of this Unit, you will be able to-

- *Remember* the key ideas involved in the process of the aforementioned three topics in context of literature
- *Understand* the various movements and debates involved in the literary arena in the three contexts
- *Apply* this knowledge further to various Literary and theoretical works you will find in your syllabuses
- *Analyse* the ethos of the critical and theoretical fields of the 20th century, and predict the direction in which it is headed as a general pattern

- *Create your own ideas regarding the necessity of analyzing Migration, Consumerism and Globalisation for a comprehensive understanding of the literary texts, as well as speculate about what may be lacking in such mainstream views.*

6.2 Introduction: What is Migration, Consumerism and Globalisation?

Migration, consumerism, and globalization are three interrelated phenomena that have significantly shaped contemporary society and influenced various aspects of human existence, including culture, economics, and social dynamics. Each of these phenomena represents a distinct facet of the modern world, yet they are interconnected and mutually influential, giving rise to complex and multifaceted discussions. This unit will explore the intersections and interplay between migration, consumerism, and globalization, specifically within the context of English literature.

Migration, as a timeless human phenomenon, involves the movement of individuals or groups from one geographical location to another, often driven by factors such as economic opportunities, political instability, or social upheaval. Throughout history, migration has played a pivotal role in shaping cultures, economies, and societies, with profound implications for both the migrants and the host communities. The literature with narratives of migration, both factual and fictional, offers invaluable insights into the experiences, challenges, and triumphs of migrants, as well as their impact on the cultural fabric of their adopted homes.

Consumerism, on the other hand, is a prevailing ideology that places a strong emphasis on the acquisition and consumption of goods and services as a means of personal fulfillment and social status. This culture permeates various aspects of modern life, influencing individual behaviors, societal values, and economic systems. English literature provides a platform for critical examination of consumerism, offering insightful critiques of its dehumanizing effects, its role in perpetuating social inequalities, and its impact on personal identity and human connections.

Globalization, as a complex process of interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, has accelerated in recent decades, driven by advancements in technology, communication, and transportation. It has facilitated the flow of ideas, capital, and people across borders, leading to increased cultural exchange, economic integration, and the blurring of traditional boundaries. English literature has responded to the challenges

and opportunities of globalization by refracting them in themes of cultural hybridity (a mixture of cultures of the coloniser and the colonized), postcolonial encounters, and the renegotiation of identity in a globalized world.

By examining the interconnections between migration, consumerism, and globalization, this unit will shed light on the complex dynamics and transformative effects that these phenomena have on society and individuals. Through the lens of English literature, we will explore how literary works have engaged with these ideas, providing critical insights into the experiences of migrants, the consequences of consumerist culture, and the implications of globalization on cultural identities and social structures. By delving into these topics, we will deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between migration, consumerism, and globalization and their impact on contemporary society.

6.3. Migration and English Literature

Migration, being a timeless phenomenon of human movement and displacement, has left an indelible mark on English literature. The intricacies of migration, encompassing the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural assimilation, have been recurrent themes explored by literary masters throughout history. This unit undertakes an exploration of the intersection between migration and English literature, examining how migration narratives, including poetry, have been portrayed, the impact of migration on literary creativity, and the profound role of literature in shaping our understanding of migration within the realm of English literature.

Migration narratives in English literature span across a vast array of genres, epochs, and voices. From timeless epics like Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to relatively contemporary novels like Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, English literature offers a rich tapestry of migration narratives that delve into the physical, emotional, and psychological journeys of migrants. These narratives intricately depict the challenges, triumphs, and complexities faced by migrants as they navigate unfamiliar territories, confront cultural clashes, and grapple with questions of identity, assimilation, and home.

One notable example of migration narratives in English literature is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which explores the solitary journey of a shipwrecked protagonist forced to adapt and survive in an unfamiliar environment. This seminal work not only showcases the physical aspects of migration but also delves into the psychological implications of isolation, self-reliance, and the quest for a sense of belonging.

Migration inherently presents a crucible for identity formation, and English literature has long been a fertile ground for the exploration of this complex relationship. Literary masters such as Salman Rushdie, with his novel *Midnight's Children*, and Andrea Levy, with her novel *Small Island*, unravel the intricate dynamics of migrant identity, interrogating themes of assimilation, cultural preservation, and the formation of hybrid identities. These narratives delve into the tensions and negotiations experienced by migrants as they navigate the clash between their native heritage and the expectations of the host society, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of identity in the context of migration.

Moreover, English poetry has also provided a profound exploration of migration and identity. The works of Derek Walcott, such as his collection *Omeros*, artfully blend myth, history, and personal experiences to illuminate the complexities of post-colonial migration and the negotiation of identity within the fragmented landscapes of the Caribbean. Walcott's poems challenge conventional notions of identity and nationhood, emphasizing the fluidity of these concepts and the enduring legacy of migration on individual and collective identities.

English literature, in its power to provoke introspection and foster empathy, serves as a catalyst for understanding the migrant experience. Through nuanced portrayals of migrants, literature dispels stereotypes and humanizes their stories. Novels such as Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* invite readers to empathize with the hopes, fears, and aspirations of migrants, deepening their understanding of the profound impact of migration on individual lives.

Furthermore, English poetry has long been an evocative medium for capturing the essence of the migrant experience. Poets like W.H. Auden, with his poem "Refugee Blues," and Carol Ann Duffy, with her collection *The World's Wife*, illuminate the struggles, alienation, and resilience of migrants. Through vivid imagery and poignant language, these poets transcend borders, inviting readers to partake in the emotional journey of migrants and urging society to confront the moral imperative of empathy and compassion.

Migration is after all, a theme intricately woven into the fabric of English literature which captures the essence of human movement, identity, and belonging. Through diverse narratives and poetic expressions, literary masters illuminate the challenges, triumphs, and transformative power of migration. As we delve into these narratives, we not only expand our knowledge but also develop a deeper appreciation for the richness and

depth of human experiences in the context of migration within the realm of English literature.

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider

Some eminent critics and their ideas on Migration and its impact on English Literature-

- Homi K. Bhabha is known for his work on postcolonial theory and cultural hybridity. He emphasizes the concept of “third space,” where cultures intersect and new identities emerge. In the context of migration and English literature, Bhabha argues that migrant writing disrupts traditional notions of fixed identity and highlights the complexities of cultural negotiation and adaptation.
- Edward Said’s influential work, *Orientalism* and his exploration of the relationship between power, knowledge, and representation have shaped postcolonial studies. He examines how Western literature has often portrayed migrants and the “other” as exotic or inferior, perpetuating stereotypes. Said calls for a reevaluation of these portrayals to challenge dominant narratives and embrace more nuanced perspectives.
- Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, focuses on the concept of cultural identity and the impact of migration on individuals and societies. He argues that migration forces a renegotiation of identity, leading to hybrid identities and the emergence of new cultural forms. In English literature, Hall explores how migrant writers enrich the literary landscape by bringing diverse perspectives and challenging existing literary canons.
- Paul Gilroy’s work on the Black Atlantic highlights the interconnectedness of African diasporic cultures across the Atlantic Ocean. He explores how migration has shaped the cultural and literary production of Black communities. Gilroy emphasizes the importance of recognizing the contributions of Black migrants to English literature and acknowledges the role of cultural exchange and resistance in this context.
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is known for her work on postcolonial theory and her concept of the “subaltern,” referring to marginalized and oppressed groups. Regarding migration and English literature, she emphasizes the need to amplify the voices of migrant writers from historically marginalized backgrounds. Spivak calls for a decolonization of the literary canon and a recognition of the multiple perspectives brought by migrant literature.

Space for Learner

SAQ

1. How do migration narratives in English literature explore the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural assimilation? (40 words)

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2. In what ways do literary masters such as Salman Rushdie and Andrea Levy examine the dynamics of migrant identity and the tensions between native heritage and the expectations of the host society in their works? (50 words)

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6.4. Consumerism and English Literature

Consumerism is an ideology that emphasizes the acquisition and consumption of goods and services as a measure of social status and fulfilment. It is seen as one of the ideas that have deeply permeated modern society. It is important to analyse the intricate relationship between consumerism and English literature, examining how literary works have critiqued, responded to, and shed light on the societal impacts of consumerist culture. By exploring selected texts and poems, we will unravel the ways in which authors and poets have reflected upon consumerism, revealing its consequences on societal values and individual identity.

English literature, across various genres, has served as a lens through which to scrutinize consumerist culture. From Charles Dickens’ novels, such as *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations*, to Aldous Huxley’s dystopian masterpiece *Brave New World*, authors have explored the dehumanizing effects of consumerism and its influence on society. These literary works expose the detrimental consequences of excessive materialism, shedding light on the erosion of moral values, the loss of authentic human connections, and the perpetuation of social inequalities.

Within the realm of poetry, the Romantic poet William Blake challenges consumerist values in his collection *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. In poems like “London” and “The Chimney Sweeper,” Blake confronts the dehumanizing aspects of a society driven by materialistic desires, exposing the exploitation of the working class and the moral decay

resulting from the relentless pursuit of wealth. Through his evocative language and vivid imagery, Blake offers a critique of consumerism and calls for a return to human empathy and spiritual nourishment.

English also literature provides a platform to examine the consumerist culture as a perpetuation of an illusion as presented in contemporary texts. F. Scott Fitzgerald's iconic novel *The Great Gatsby* meticulously dissects the illusion of the American Dream and the emptiness that lies beneath the pursuit of material wealth. The character of Jay Gatsby, with his extravagant parties and relentless desire for status, embodies the superficiality and moral bankruptcy inherent in consumerism. Fitzgerald's work challenges the notion that material possessions equate to personal success, emphasizing the moral and emotional bankruptcy that can result from a society driven by consumerist aspirations.

In the domain of poetry, T.S. Eliot's groundbreaking poem *The Waste Land* captures the disillusionment and fragmented nature of a consumer-driven society. The poem's fragmented structure and juxtaposition of various voices and perspectives reflect the fragmented values and sense of disconnection prevalent in a world obsessed with material desires. Eliot's critique of consumerism highlights the emptiness and spiritual desolation that can arise when individual and societal values are dictated by the pursuit of material gain.

The impact of consumerism on individual identity is a recurring theme in English literature. J.D. Salinger's timeless novel *The Catcher in the Rye* presents a scathing critique of consumerist culture through the disillusioned voice of its protagonist, Holden Caulfield. Holden rebels against the superficiality and materialism he sees around him, yearning for authenticity and genuine human connection. The novel explores the tension between conforming to societal expectations driven by consumerism and forging an authentic sense of self.

Within the realm of poetry, Sylvia Plath's collection *Ariel* contains poems that interrogate the stifling effects of consumerism on individual identity. In poems such as "Mirror" and "Lady Lazarus," Plath delves into the pressures to conform to societal standards of beauty and success, revealing the toll consumerism can take on one's sense of self-worth and personal identity. Plath's poignant verses explore the struggle to reconcile one's authentic desires and aspirations with the commodification and objectification perpetuated by consumerist culture.

Through both prose and poetry, English literature unveils the multifaceted impacts of consumerism on society and individual identity. By

critically examining the dehumanizing effects of excessive materialism, the erosion of moral values, and the loss of authentic human connections, literature can be studied as a reflection of the social perception and the positioning of ethical values involved in such issues. Writers in different genres and modes challenge consumerist values, offering poignant critiques and reflections on the consequences of a society driven by material desires, as we have already discussed. This serves as a very useful tool for readers who are compelled to critically reflect on consumerist culture, reconsider societal values, and contemplate alternative paths towards a more meaningful and authentic existence. English literature, through its exploration of consumerism, serves as a catalyst for introspection and calls for a re-evaluation of our relationship with material possessions and the pursuit of genuine human fulfilment.

Check Your Progress:

1. How do migration narratives in English literature explore the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural assimilation? Provide examples and discuss the themes and challenges depicted in these narratives.
2. Analyze the ways in which literary masters like Salman Rushdie and Andrea Levy examine the dynamics of migrant identity and the tensions between native heritage and the expectations of the host society in their works. Discuss the themes and conflicts presented in their narratives, highlighting their contributions to the understanding of migration in English literature.
3. Examine the role of English literature in exploring the impact of consumerism on individual identity formation. Using examples, discuss how authors like J.D. Salinger and Sylvia Plath challenge consumerist values and delve into the struggle between conforming to societal expectations driven by consumerism and forging an authentic sense of self.
4. In what ways do texts and poems in English literature critique and respond to the societal impact of consumerist culture? Choose specific examples from the passage and discuss how authors and poets shed light on the dehumanizing effects of consumerism, erosion of moral values, and perpetuation of social inequalities.

6.5. Globalisation and English Literature

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Globalization, the complex process of interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, has had a profound impact on various aspects of human existence, including culture, economics, and politics. We will critically examine the relationship between globalization and English literature, exploring how literary works engage with the themes of cultural exchange, identity formation, and representation in the context of a globalized world. By analyzing select texts from different periods, we will uncover the ways in which authors have navigated the challenges and opportunities brought about by globalization, offering insights into the multifaceted implications of this global phenomenon.

English literature has evolved in response to the changing global landscape, reflecting the interconnectedness of cultures and societies. From Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, literary works have examined the consequences of globalization, including cultural hybridity, postcolonial encounters, and the complexities of identity in a globalized world. These texts shed light on the interplay between local and global forces, revealing the power dynamics and tensions that arise in the context of globalization.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad explores the imperialistic enterprise in Africa and its impact on both the colonizers and the colonized. The novella reflects the global power dynamics of the time, revealing the destructive consequences of European colonialism on the African continent. Conrad's work highlights the clash of cultures, the exploitation of resources, and the moral ambiguities that emerge when different societies collide.

English literature offers a rich tapestry of narratives that grapple with the complexities of cultural identity in a globalized world. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a prime example, as it explores the experiences of characters caught between their Indian heritage and the influences of British colonialism. Rushdie weaves together historical events and magical realism to illustrate the challenges faced by individuals navigating cultural hybridity and the collision of East and West. The novel invites readers to critically reflect on the fluidity of identity in a globalized context, challenging essentialist (or generalising) notions of nationality and culture.

Postcolonial literature, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, engages with the consequences of globalization on formerly colonized societies. These texts address the disruptions and transformations caused by cultural, economic,

and political interactions between colonizers and the colonized. They explore themes of cultural assimilation, loss, resistance, and the search for agency in the face of global power structures.

English literature also grapples with the challenges of representation in a globalized world. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* serves as a response to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, reclaiming the voice and agency of Bertha Mason, the marginalized character in Brontë's novel. Rhys provides an alternative perspective on the colonial encounter and subverts dominant narratives, questioning the representation of "Otherness" in Western literature. The novel challenges readers to examine the ways in which globalization has shaped literary canons and influenced the construction of cultural identities.

Authors like Mohsin Hamid, in his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, tackle the complexities of cultural representation in the context of globalization and post-9/11 politics. Hamid's protagonist, Changez, grapples with questions of identity, belonging, and the consequences of a globalized world where cultural stereotypes and prejudices abound. The novel raises important questions about the impact of globalization on the perception and representation of individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Thus we have seen that globalization has significantly shaped the landscape of English literature, challenging traditional notions of culture, identity, and representation. Literary works have provided us with a critical lens through which to examine the complexities and consequences of globalization, offering insights into the power dynamics, cultural hybridity, and struggles for representation that characterize our globalized world. By engaging with these texts, readers are encouraged to critically reflect on the ways in which globalization has transformed societies and individuals, and to consider the possibilities for a more inclusive, diverse, and empathetic global community. As a reflection of our shared human experience, English literature has served as a powerful tool to navigate the complexities of globalization and to envision a more just and equitable global future.

Stop to Consider

Some eminent critics and their ideas on Migration and its impact on English Literature-

- Arjun Appadurai is a cultural anthropologist whose work focuses on globalization and its impact on culture. He argues that globalization creates new cultural flows and hybrid

identities. In the context of English literature, Appadurai explores how literature engages with globalized themes, characters, and narratives, reflecting the complexities of interconnected societies.

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a postcolonial theorist who examines the effects of globalization on the marginalized and oppressed. She explores the uneven power dynamics and inequalities perpetuated by globalization. In relation to English literature, Spivak interrogates how literature grapples with these global power structures and highlights the need for ethical and inclusive storytelling.
- Homi K. Bhabha's work on postcolonial theory and cultural hybridity is also relevant to globalization. He emphasizes the interplay of different cultures and identities in a globalized world. In the context of English literature, Bhabha explores how global flows of people, ideas, and texts shape narratives of displacement, diaspora, and cultural negotiation.
- Emily Apter is a literary scholar who examines the intersection of literature and globalization. She explores how literary texts respond to and engage with the challenges and opportunities of global interconnectedness. Apter investigates the role of translation, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism in English literature, highlighting their significance in a globalized context.
- Simon Gikandi's work centers on postcolonial literature and the effects of globalization on cultural production. He explores how globalization has transformed the landscape of English literature, expanding its scope and diversifying its themes. Gikandi analyzes how authors negotiate global flows of ideas and identities, offering nuanced perspectives on the impact of globalization on literary texts.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the role of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in exploring the consequences of globalization, particularly in relation to power dynamics, cultural clashes, and the moral ambiguities of European colonialism in Africa.
2. How does Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* navigate the complexities of cultural hybridity and identity formation in a

- globalized context, challenging essentialist notions of nationality and culture? Provide examples from the novel to support your analysis.
3. Analyze the themes of cultural assimilation and resistance in postcolonial literature, using Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* as primary examples. Discuss how these texts shed light on the consequences of globalization on formerly colonized societies.
 4. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* offers an alternative perspective on the colonial encounter and questions dominant narratives of "Otherness" in Western literature. Discuss the ways in which globalization has influenced the construction of cultural identities and literary canons, using the novel as a case study.

6.6. Summing Up

Thus, in the first section of this unit we have explored the theme of migration in English literature. It highlighted how migration narratives have been portrayed throughout different genres and time periods, delving into the challenges, triumphs, and complexities faced by migrants. The section mentioned notable works such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and the novels of Salman Rushdie and Andrea Levy, which explore the formation of migrant identities and the clash between native heritage and host society expectations. It also emphasized the role of English poetry, particularly the works of Derek Walcott, in capturing the complexities of post-colonial migration and the negotiation of identity.

In the second section we have focussed on consumerism and its relationship with English literature. We have discussed how literary works, including novels by Charles Dickens and Aldous Huxley, critique the dehumanizing effects of consumerism, the erosion of moral values, and the perpetuation of social inequalities. The role of poetry, such as the works of William Blake and T.S. Eliot, in challenging consumerist values and emphasizing the importance of human empathy and spiritual nourishment has also been examined. The impact of consumerism on societal values and individual identity has been explored through novels like F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, as well as the poetry of Sylvia Plath.

In the third part, we delved into the theme of globalization in English literature. It highlighted how literary works reflect the interconnectedness of cultures and societies, exploring the consequences of globalization such as

cultural hybridity, postcolonial encounters, and the complexities of identity. Works such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* had been shown to examine the power dynamics and tensions that arose in the context of globalization. We also discussed the exploration of cultural identity in a globalized world through novels like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. We further examined the challenges of representation in a globalized world through works like Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Overall, in this unit, we have illustrated how English literature engages with and reflects upon themes of migration, consumerism, and globalization. Through diverse narratives and poetic expressions, literary works provide critical insights into the complexities and consequences of these phenomena, encouraging readers to reflect on societal values, cultural identities, and the possibilities for a more inclusive and just global community.

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Unit 7 : The smart world: Life in the 21st century

Space for Learner

Unit Structure:

- 7.1. Objectives
- 7.2. Introduction
- 7.3. Socio-literary scenario
- 7.4. Summing Up
- 7.5. Short answer questions
- 7.6. References and Suggested Readings

7.1 Objectives

The main intention of this unit shall be to acquaint readers with the idea of ‘smart’ in the 21st century and how its applicability has become a much needed requirements in humanities and literary efforts. In this regard, an attempt shall be made to introduce few of the most significant and relevant technocratic approaches in theoretical and literary efforts. Also, the key scholars of these approaches shall be introduced to the readers along with their most notable works so that readers can get an initial access to the mapping of the ‘smart world’. Such an effort shall be highlighted the ultimate goal of the smart world, which is an integrated cyber-physical-social thinking hyperspace involving comprehensive interconnections of the physical, cyber, social and cognitive thinking in our daily life.

7.2 Introduction

As the 21st century has witnessed a massive socio-economic boost with the increased usage and accessibility of digital networking, there has also been a drastic shift in the theoretical and literary efforts that seems to be increasingly adapting and improvising its horizons of humanities and literatures to become more inclusive and interdisciplinary in their propositions. In fact, this approach seems to be more relevant as we are trying to deconstruct the traditional boundaries of humanities, science and literature. While, this had been an intention of many thinkers throughout various historical timelines, its success seems more visible today. As we are encountering new situations and benefits, there has been a sudden outburst of breakthrough in creative and literary productions in the 21st century that seem to be not only technologically oriented but also solution and goal-driven. Under these circumstances, it becomes important for us to explore new areas that have developed from the ‘smart’ collaboration of science, AI, cyber, technology, theory and literature. This is because every

technological breakthrough tends to have catastrophic effect on literature for it threatens the reading culture among youths. As the smart communication technologies start to produce new frameworks that adjust the ways of perceiving and responding to literature. While technology in its initial contact with literature was seen as a partially ‘dangerous’ act, it has added value to literature as it has brought a sense of ease of reproduction and dissemination. However, its role and influence on literature in the 21st century has witnessed a radical shift with the emergence of transhumanism and posthumanism.

The seeping in of ‘smart’ tendencies in theory and literature saw a milestone response in the 1960s that witnessed a massive movement within humanism as it attempted to expand its traditional limits. Within this context, the most successful movements had been Posthumanism and transhumanism; both of which seems to philosophize the inclusion of reason, science and technology in re-valuing Man by enhancing their basic cognition, bio-medical stimulation and social progress in the technocratic period. Realizing their growing interests in academic, the unit shall aim to discuss both the approaches in details; while also discussing in brief other related approaches such as post-truth, bio-ethics, cyber studies. These literary schools through their individual perspectives help us to better understand the fast-changing ‘smart world’ of the 21st century.

7.3 Socio-literary Scenario

As the term ‘smart’ is gaining more weightage in the contemporary technocratic period, traditional human conditions and doctrines are now getting more questioned by scientific and technological questions. In fact, this attitude has taken a structural framework through the efforts of both transhumanism and Posthumanism, both of which are recent but prominent schools that have emerged from the intellectual pool of ‘new’ studies. As both the approaches have attempt to reconsider “what it means to be human”, there have unintentionally created “a widespread conceptual confusion” (Ranisch and Sorgner 7). As a starting point, let us understand what is transhumanism and how it leads to the state of a posthuman. Transhumanism can be seen as an intellectual, cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, technology and science to enhance longevity and welfare as well as human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities. To achieve this, advanced technology of genetic mapping, nanotechnology, bio-engineering, cybernetics, computer and

technological stimulation are often used as a tool to create a ‘super’ man. The movement seems to have had its roots in the “Enlightenment thought and their commitment to secular humanism” (Ranisch and Sorgner 9); while the term transhumanism is frequently associated with Julian Huxley as he first used it in his work, *New Bottles for New Wine* (1957). However, the notion of transhumanism has changed from its first usage to now indicate a movement devoted to create an enhanced social environment through technological and spiritual development. This conception of transhumanism was introduced by Fereidoun M. Esfandiary in the mid-1960s to speculate ideas about the future of human conditions (Ranisch and Sorgner 10). In addition to them, both the transhumanistic critics Natasha Vita-More, who drafted the Transhuman Manifesto in 1983; and Robert Ettinger who is frequently regarded as another pioneer of the transhumanist movement as “he emphasize[d] the role of cryonics for transhumanity”.

Transhumanism in the 1980s saw a radical boost as the science fiction emerged and assimilated into the mainstream culture as the world seems to be highly interested on the technological future of humanity. Some of the seminal works of this time period include Marvin Minsky’s *The Society of Mind* (1986), Eric Drexler’s *Engines of Creation* (1986), Hans Moravec’s *Mind Children* (1988), and Ray Kurzweil’s *The Age of Intelligent Machines* (1990); all of which reflected on the future impacts of technologies. In fact, when internet was established in digital networking, transhumanism as a movement gained momentum. During this period, the World Transhumanist Association (WTA) was also founded through its “Transhumanist FAQ”, firstly drafted in 1998. “Transhumanism today is a slogan for a variety of cultural, political, philosophical or digital movement, promoting techno-futuristic visions about the transgression of human biology. In addition to the WTA, some transhumanists also organized a non-profit organization called the “Humanity+” (H+), which have been committed to popularize transhumanist ideas (Ranisch and Sorgner 11-12).

Stop to Consider

Although Transhumanism may appear to be “the earliest manifestation of new evolutionary beings” which seems to play a “bridging role in evolution” and also enabling us to envision a ‘wonderful’ imagined future where people will be freed from mental diseases and physical decrepitude. To achieve this, transhuman philosophy sees communication technology as an aid to a “massive, planetary expansion of humanity’s technological reach as suggesting coming mutations in the

basic nature of the human condition”. Therefore, transhumanism now appears as “a major step in the right direction” but one that “contains too many outdated values and ideas.” Despite this, Francis Fukuyama warns us of such a transhumanist vision as being “the most dangerous idea in the world” that also has a “variety of dangerous and dubious rhetorical associations”. As a transitional link between human and the posthuman, transhumanism intends to radically alter “the nature and potentials of humans in our current age articulates an inherently evolutionary version of futurism” that may appear to offer “a uniquely alien vision of the future that is simultaneously made less strange through a variety of rhetorical strategies”.

On realizing these attributes of transhumanism, Cary Wolfe as cited by Nayar sees it “as an intensification of humanism... [that] believe in the perfectibility of the human”. In this sense, transhumanism seems to emphasize on the basic ideals of the Enlightenment that “treats humanity as a species separate and self-contained”. Adding to this, Ranisch and Sorgner view transhumanism as “a contemporary renewal of humanism [that] embraces and eventually amplifies central aspects of secular and Enlightenment humanist thought, such as belief in reason, individualism, science, progress, as well as self-perfection or cultivation” (8). Also, “its popular manifestation in sci-fi, there [has been] an overarching emphasis on the machination of humans and the humanization of machines” seem to threaten humans who often take the shape of a posthuman- an advanced human who is a forceful and unpredictable mingle of human and machine (16-17). However, it would be wrong to say that transhumanism and Posthumanism sees human as ‘another’ construct. They simply claim the basic attributes of the human get enhanced through technological intervention to make them a posthuman.

Posthumanism then is a philosophical approach that promotes rethinking of subjectivity “because it sees human subjectivity as an assemblage, co-evolving with machines and animals” (Nayar 19). This technologically-induced version of human evolution addressed by Posthumanism has aimed to modify human nature into not as “something ‘better,’ [but] merely something different, something no longer human, something we might call ‘posthuman’” (Turner 13). The term “Posthumanism” was coined by the postmodern philosopher Ihab Hassan in 1977 in his famous essay, “Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture (Ranisch and Sorgner 15). The main aim of posthumanistic studies have not been to “change the world but to change

ourselves to fit better, to compare better, or to live better in the world as it is. And along the way, these technologies change the way we see ourselves, turning our bodies and brains into something to be changed at will” (Turner 7).

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider

A posthuman would no longer be a human being, having been so significantly altered as to no longer represent the human species. Underlying this worldview is a core belief that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development, but rather its beginning. It also calls for a more inclusive definition of life, and a greater moral–ethical response, and responsibility, to non-human life forms in the age of species blurring and species mixing. Posthumanism therefore has a definite politics in that it interrogates the hierarchic ordering. Additionally, it also raises an even more profound question, however, about the transformation of the human species: Is the enhanced person still human?

In fact, both transhumanism and posthumanism believe both human evolution and social progress in the 21st century are technologically-driven that produces change that result in the emergence of a new kind of a Homo sapiens. Some believe that given enough time, technology will modify human beings so much that they will no longer be human in the usual sense but will have become some other species of hominid. If this were to happen, would it amount to a kind of species suicide, the death of human nature as evolved and as we have always known it. The result of such technologically induced version of evolution is referred to as the posthuman.

Considering the broad purview of posthumanism, it “serves as an umbrella term for ideas that explain, promote or deal with the crisis of humanism” (Ranisch and Sorgner 14). In fact, Nayar while citing Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles “present[ed] metaphors of the ‘cyborg’ and the ‘posthuman’, which resemble concepts that can also be found in transhumanism”. The metaphorical reference of the cyborg has been used by these critics as a means “to question persisting binaries in the Western tradition” for “technoscience studies and cyborg theories see the human and the human self as always already imbricated with technology”. In this regard, humans who have been classified as Homo sapiens could be seen as “always [being a] Homo faber, man as maker, the user of tools, of which the body was the first” (15 and 34).

The recognition of the evolving nature of man has been traced by both transhumanism and posthumanism as technologically-driven in the recent years of the 21st century where technology is considered as “the emancipatory powers to free humanity from rigid categories”. Such a claim was cited by Nayar as he agreed with Haraway’s proposal “that the human evolved with the machine”. This made the cyborg appear as “a luminal creature, between the human and the machine, neither human nor machine, both human and machine”. For Nayar, “the cyborg [is] significant because it breaks these categorical boundaries” as well as “demolish the origin stories [of power relations] and suggest new/alternative futures for the human race. On this note, both Nayar and Hayles comment that “it is not the question ‘whether we will become posthuman’, because ‘posthumanity is already here’. The question is, ‘what kind of posthumans we will be’” (16 and 36).

Stop to Consider

Although the term ‘cyborg’ is a recent development, it is not entirely new because human beings have always been closely connected to technology. The scientist who launched the term ‘cyborg’ in 1960, Manfred Clynes, says: ‘ Homo sapiens , when he puts on a pair of glasses, has already changed’. A few decades after Clynes coined the term ‘cyborg’, Donna Haraway launched the idea of the cyborg as a figure that typically embodies fluid identity offered by technology, because it has ‘made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self- developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines’.

In this sense, Posthumanism seems like “a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms”. The term “posthumanism” itself seems to have worked its way into contemporary critical discourse in the humanities and social sciences during the mid-1990 that aimed to investigate the “specificity of the human—its ways of being in the world, its ways of knowing, observing, and describing—by (paradoxically, for humanism) acknowledging that it is fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically “not-human” and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is” and the ‘othered nonhuman’

(Wolfe xii, xv-xvi, xxv). In this sense, Braidotti considered “posthuman theory [as] a generative tool to help us re-think the basic unit of reference for the human in the bio-genetic age known as ‘anthropocene’, the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet” (5). Through its radical efforts, the movement “which began as a political cause in the 1960s, turned into an academic project in the 1970s, and evolved into an epistemological approach in the 1990s, resulting in a multiplication of situated perspectives; attempts to deconstruct the “human” to explore the non-hierarchical relations and situatedness of the nonhuman animal “to artificial intelligence, robotics, and even unknown forms of life”. In fact, for Ferrando “Posthumanism can be considered as a second generation of Postmodernism, leading the deconstruction of the human to its extreme consequences by bringing to its theoretical revision speciesism, that is, the privilege of some species over others” (2).

Stop to Consider

As we move forward, we start to understand that transhumans are “those who are in the process of becoming posthuman”. In this respect, Posthumanism for Wolfe, is the opposite of transhumanism, and in this light, transhumanism could be seen as an intensification of humanism. This theoretical model makes us realize that Posthumanism is not an approach that comes ‘after’ the human; but an overlapping culture. In this sense, Posthumanism has been observed to have generated out of postmodernism as it attempts to explore dimensions beyond the ‘human’ while transhumanism seeks its origins in the Enlightenment, as it centers their primal study on the intensification of humanism through the enhancement of humans. As both the concepts stand in opposite of each other, metahumanism appears to “offer a compromise and an alternative to these movements by acknowledging a need for pragmatic and technologically mediated progress as well as theoretical debates about the (post) human”.

As both the concepts advocate the use of technology to change the human species, Turner questions on “what direction or with what goal in mind” should these alterations occur. With this, he opens crucial debates on bioethics of “species enhancement up to the aggregate of individual choices made by those with the means and the motivation to use the emerging technologies of enhancement”. In fact, for him, there is “no invisible hand

guiding the process, no deep purpose or goal of evolution, and no objective measure of progress along the pathway of species enhancement” (11). A central debate that seems to reoccur in these approaches had been on the issue of the proper role and use of technology as they see it as an integral part of Man’s improvement of themselves and to an extent, of others. The posthuman experimentation of ethics appears “creative, imaginative and require a certain kind of frightening and hopeful good faith as definite outcomes and so also power driven hypotheses are not viable as they presume the nature of relations and their involved entities in advance” (MacCormack 346).

In fact, both the approaches have seen a massive popularity in academic discourses following the developments in cybernetics and systems theory in the contemporary technocratic period. Such a “co-evolutionary self-referential systems construct complex co-dependencies and co-observances”. This system, for neocybernetics have “immerse[d] the human once more into the coupled multiplicities of living and non-living systems and their environments (Clarke 282). Such a form of network media in the technocratic period attempts to conceptualize information management, retrieval and exchange, [and] online communications [for] not merely about storing and sharing data but also about the spread, attachment, amplification and dissipation of affective intensities. These ideas, then aim to “shape and form connections and disconnections between different bodies, both human and nonhuman”. Commenting on this further, Paasonen while citing Jodi Dean explored the uses of social media and how it is driven by “affective intensity that orients and provokes the interest and curiosity of users as they move across plat forms, click on links, share and comment, searching for a shiver of interest, amusement, anger or disgust”. This intensity for Dean is also “the drive” which moves across sites and applications that users generally encounter on social media platforms. The drive is not only motivated based on ‘other’ people but also includes “image and video files, animated GIFs, emojis, comments, algorithms, information architecture and data”. Although these parameters are curated by humans, “these non-human factors curate the shapes that our sociability may take, what we can see and in what kinds of constellations on these plat forms – and, perhaps to a degree, how we may feel about these interactions. In fact, in the post-truth era, such drives not only manipulate information but also unconsciously affect the users’ emotional states and decision-making capacities without their awareness. This engagement of the “rational intelligence and with the passions or

feeling” further encapsulates both personal as well as collective aspects that are “linked to memories, feelings, attachments, monetary value, politics, professions and fleeting titillations (283-284).

The development of digital technologies have in so many ways have not only rewired our neural networks but also seems to have altered our thought patterns, even as objects acquire ever- increasing capabilities for intelligent learning, reaction, judgement and response. As these ‘smart’ changes profoundly affect our consciousness and sensory evolution, it also attempt to deconstruct the human/nonhuman binary to initiate our dialogues about the digital as “an ahuman form – a digital agent in its own right, with its own intelligibility, whose sense of the world is genuinely beyond the anthropocentric”. In this sense, smart gadgets driven by technology and digital media seem to be “remaking the planet... [and] generat[ing] new materialities and milieus” that seem to form posthuman conditions (Goldberg and Ng 26).

Stop to Consider

With the increased intervention of the ‘smart’ in our day-to-day life, it seems to have become a panopticon machinery to “control and discipline” of humans through mass surveillance and behaviour regulation in exchange of free internet and smart apps. In consequences, humans are no longer the only ones that that think; our machines are smarter and more cognitive than ever before. They perform many thinking and perceiving operations for us, and thus the incorporation of artificial intelligence and augmented intelligence into our daily lives questions the classical sense of human subjectivity and the autonomy of consciousness.

In fact, as “technology is now evolving faster than fashion trends”, it is encapsulation its influence in every sector. As noted by e Smelik while citing Barillova and Quinn, today there is a new field in fashion for “wearable technology” that seems to make our life easier as well as enhance our daily-life abilities. As these smart materials and smart garments protect our bodies or extend our physical functions, it makes us appear ‘more posthuman’ (458). The increased demand of ‘smart’ fashion trends among the new generation of the 21st century has now become a part and parcel of the contemporary socio-cultural milieu that shapes new forms of embodiment and human identity. As the human body gets more and more reshaped beyond its infinite contours, science and technology attempts to

offer a new future where human skin, body and identity have merged with smart digital media.

7.4. Summing Up

In the 21st century, as literature is getting more readily influenced by technological progress, it is also becoming a tool of transformative cultural power. In fact, it has promoted to the idea of ‘hypertext’ fiction which have been considered by many to be the next technical revolution in literature. While many are of the opinion that technologically ‘smart’ tools may destroy the reading culture of literature through the surge of free online contents, e-readers, phone and computer usage; many continue to advocate that it is making users gain more access to literature through varied portals and online library archives. In fact, open access policy is transforming how to publish research, too. Through all these technological revolutions, literary fiction has been itself a sensitive recording device that both records these shifts and generates compelling narratives that make sense of them.

7.5 Short Answer Questions

1. What is the difference between Transhumanism and Posthumanism?
2. What does the ‘post’ indicate in Posthumanism?
3. What are cyborgs?
4. Briefly discuss the role of bio-ethics?
5. Why has the idea of ‘smart’ become so relevant in the 21st century?
6. How can you advocate technology as a dangerous tool for literature?
7. What is the main of transhumanism?

Check Your Progress

1. How has Posthumanism become “the philosophy of the 21st century”?
2. Trace how transhumanism and Posthumanism have contributed in changing the traditional view of what is to be a human?
3. “Is technology ruining literature in the 21st century?” Comment.
4. “Literature in the 21st century has become a source for technological innovation that is still under-explored territory.” Discuss how transhumanism is adding theoretical value to this notion.
5. How can you consider the concept of the ‘smart world’ in the 21st century as a relevant necessity?

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