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KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017

SEMESTER 1

MA IN ENGLISH

COURSE 2: ENGLISH POTERY: CHAUCER TO THE NEO-CLASSICAL

BLOCK 2: METAPHYSICAL POETRY TO MILTON

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Unit 6: Introducing Metaphysical Poetry

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REFERENCES : For All Units

Subject Experts

Prof. Pona Mahanta, Former Head, Department of English, Dibrugarh University
Prof. Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami, Srimanta Sankardeva Chair, Tezpur University
Prof. Bibhash Choudhury, Department of English, Gauhati University

Course Coordinator : Dr. Prasenjit Das, Assistant Professor, Department of English, KKHSOU

SLM Preparation Team

Units	Contributors
6 & 8	Chayanika Roy, KKHSOU
7	Bashabi Gogoi, Former Academic Consultant, KKHSOU
9 & 10	Dr. Pritima Sarma, Former Academic Consultant, KKHSOU & Dr. Prasenjit Das

Editorial Team

Content: Prof. Udayon Misra, Former Head, Department of English, Dibrugarh University (Units 7,9,10)
In house Editing (Units 6 & 8)

Structure, Format and Graphics: Dr. Prasenjit Das

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SEMESTER 1

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BLOCK 2: METAPHYSICAL POETRY TO MILTON

DETAILED SYLLABUS

Unit 6 : Introducing Metaphysical Poetry **Page : 91 - 107**

The Tradition of Metaphysical Poetry, Beginning and Development, Important Practitioners: John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley, Andrew Marvell, Critical Receptions of Metaphysical Poetry

Unit 7 : John Donne: "The Good Morrow" & "Death Be Not Proud" **Page : 108 - 124**

John Donne: Life and Works, Reading the Poem: "The Sun Rising", and "Death Be Not Proud", Donne's Poetic Style

Unit 8 : Andrew Marvell: "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden" **Page : 125 - 142**

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Unit 9 : John Milton: Paradise Lost "Book I" (Part I) **Page : 143 - 157**

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The Plot of *Paradise Lost,* Reading *Paradise Lost* (Book I), Milton's Poetic Style

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is the second Block of the Course 2. This Block introduces you to Metaphysical poetry, which shall be studies in terms of a few poems selected from the great metaphysical poets like John Donne and Andrew Marvell of the 17th century. The 17th century poets still recognised God as the source of order. Yet, secular elements began to emerge with the Metaphysical poets like John Donne who excelled in his use of witty paradoxes and ingenious ideas. However, towards the end of the century, the focus of poetry becomes almost entirely secular. Although the 17th century poets like John Donne lost their popularity in the subsequent period, it was the modern poet, T. S. Eliot who restored the significance of these 17th century poets collectively known as the Metaphysical poets. Another significant 17th century poet is John Milton in whose poetry; especially in his epic *Paradise Lost,* we encounter the changes taking place during the Civil War of 1642-51 and the aftermath.

Block 2 : Metaphysical poetry to Milton is divided into five units, which are as the following:

Unit 6: Introducing Metaphysical Poetry serves as the introduction to Metaphysical Poetry. There has been no such thing as metaphysical poetry during the 17th century. However, the term was later applied to a certain group of poets of the 17th century, owing to the common features and techniques, use of wit and conceits in their poems. The knowledge about new scientific changes perplexed the minds of the poets of the 17th century, and triggered in them a tendency to challenge existing ideas and thoughts of the universe. The metaphysical poets emerged during such a literary climate with an aim to introduce newer poetic techniques, mixing intellect with emotions.

Unit 7: John Donne: "The Good Morrow" & "Death Be Not Proud" deals with two poems by John Donne: 'The Sun Rising' and 'Death, Be Not Proud'. John Donne was the leading English poet of the Metaphysical School of Poetry, and is often considered to be one of the greatest love poets in the English language. From this unit, the learners will be able to get some ideas contained in these two poems, while at the same time, also being acquainted with Donne's poetic style characterised by his use of conceits, paradox and puns.

Unit 8: Andrew Marvell: "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden" deals with Marvell's poems namely "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden". Just like Donne, Andrew Marvell is also acclaimed as one of the finest metaphysical poets. "To his Coy Mistress" is often considered one of Marvell's finest poems. The second poem "The Garden" too is often considered a famous English poem in which the poet's personal emotions and feelings are told throughout the words of nature.

Unit 9: John Milton: Paradise Lost "Book I" (Part I) deals with the life and works of John Milton with special reference to his epic poem *Paradise Lost.* Milton was a controversial writer of his time. Being a strict Puritan, he openly challenged some of the very basic biblical doctrines, particularly Preordination and Free will, which he deals with in *Paradise Lost*.

Unit 10: John Milton: Paradise Lost "Book I" (Part II), which needs to be studied along with the previous unit, deals with a detailed analysis of the various aspects of the poem *Paradise Lost.* What is so striking is the fact that the whole poem cannot be considered a continuous narrative as the main story begins in the middle (In Medias Res), and earlier events are presented in terms of dreams, reminiscences and conversations.

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the "FURTHER READING" list, which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred to in the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the block. As you know, the world of literature is too big and so we advise you not to take a unit to be an end in itself. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you should read the original texts of the writers as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 6: INTRODUCING METAPHYSICAL POETRY

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 The Tradition of Metaphysical Poetry

6.4 Beginning and Development

6.5 Important Practitioners

6.6 Receptions of Metaphysical Poetry in Subsequent Periods

6.7 Let us Sum up

6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints only)

6.9 Further Reading

6.10 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- gather an idea of the 17th century lyric poets who were commonly called metaphysical poets
- trace the beginning of metaphysical poetry
- analyse the common features in the poems of the metaphysical poets
- explain the development of metaphysical poetry and discuss its major practitioners
- analyse the impact of metaphysical poetry in the works of later writers

6.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of this Block and serves as the introduction to Metaphysical Poetry. This unit deals with some poets of the 17th century grouped under the term “metaphysical poets”, and the various nuances that are characteristics of their works. You must keep one thing in mind that there was no such thing as metaphysical poetry during the 17th century. However, the term was later applied to a certain group of poets of the 17th

century, owing to the common features and techniques, use of wit and conceits in their poems. Here we shall discuss the tradition of metaphysical poetry that began in the 17th century, differing from the preceding age in employing spiritual themes and unique comparisons. As you know, the Renaissance and Reformation led the way to a vast socio-political change in the society creating religious and political crisis. The knowledge about new scientific changes perplexed the minds of the writers and triggered in them a tendency to challenge existing ideas and thoughts of the universe. The metaphysical poets emerged during such a literary climate with an aim to introduce newer poetic techniques, mixing intellect with emotions.

By tracing the beginning of metaphysical poetry, we shall in this unit, reflect on its development, and analyse its important characteristics. The major poets who are commonly referred to by the term 'metaphysical poets' are John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley and Andrew Marvell. This introductory unit shall familiarise you with these poets and their major works. The unit shall focus upon the renewed significance of these poets due to the revival that interested later writers like Dr. Samuel Johnson, T.S. Eliot, etc. Although during its own time, metaphysical poetry did not receive its due recognition yet this form of poetry formed a significant area of study for modern writers as well as readers in the twentieth century.

6.3 THE TRADITION OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

The literature of 17th century in general depicted a critical and political inclination with a taste of satire. Apart from the prose writers and dramatists, the poets were charged immensely to write on religion, politics, love, nature, etc. A group of poets displayed a greater intellectual objectivity unlike the earlier poets of the Elizabethan age. Unlike Elizabethan poetry that was largely pagan, these metaphysical poets used poetry as a medium to reflect the richness of their intellect. Having a marked difference from its preceding age (Elizabethan age) in style and form, these poets made extensive use of their intelligence, and presented a new kind of poetry to the readers. They used 'wit' in exploring philosophical notions about the world and their

poetry was religious in tone. Their poetry was characterised by the presence of new forms of techniques that they had introduced to set them apart from the poets of the Elizabethan age. For these poets, the structure and form of a poem are more important. They devoted much of their passion on the style of the poems. A common feature found in these poets is the logical arrangement of thoughts or feelings. Love poems and religious poems are to be found in their poems. Most notable among the love poet was John Donne. It must be mentioned that the term metaphysical was primarily related to the poet John Donne. Other poets, who share common features with this poet, together came to be grouped under the metaphysical school of poetry later. Noticeable among all the features was the use of language by the metaphysical poets.

The poets of the Metaphysical School shared certain common characteristics like wit, inventiveness and a love of elaborate stylistic technique like conceits. This poetry is often dramatic in effect and is categorised as 'cerebral' or intellectual poetry.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. In what way, did metaphysical poetry, contradict the Elizabethan love poetry?

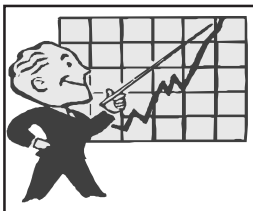
6.4 BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Metaphysical poetry is said to have begun with John Donne. The balanced manner in which he strategically juxtaposed intellect with emotions by drawing upon comparisons those are 'far-fetched' made him one of the greatest poets in English literature. His reflection of humanity and the terseness of his verses were able to capture the minds of the modern readers as well. As stated earlier, this kind of poetry was a reaction to the sensuous poetry of the preceding era, since the metaphysical poets were concerned with wit and expression of deeper psychological realms which was often dialectic. Inspired by Donne, a few other poets wrote on a similar plane by using conceits and intelligence in their poetry.

You must be interested to know that it was John Dryden who first used the term 'metaphysics' to refer to John Donne's poetry in his book called *Discourse Concerning Satire* in 1693. According to Dryden, Donne's poetry "affects the metaphysics". M. H. Abrams in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* described this as John Donne's use of "the terminology and abstruse arguments of the medieval Scholastic philosophers". (158)

The next significant reference to these poets appeared in Dr. Samuel Johnson's book *Lives of the English Poets*. In one of the chapters of his book titled "Life of Cowley", pointing to the faults of the metaphysical poets Dr. Johnson wrote:

"The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality, for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus, all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration; and the force of metaphors is lost when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2. Name the English poet who used the term metaphysics to refer to John Donne?

Q3. What, according to Samuel Johnson, was the defect of metaphysical poets?

6.5 IMPORTANT PRACTITIONERS

The following is a reference to some of the most dominant Metaphysical poets in 17th century English poetry.

John Donne: (1573-1631)

The most well known among the metaphysical poets is John Donne. Born in London, his father was a merchant. He was related to Thomas More and the dramatist John Heywood who belonged to his mother's side.

Both his parents were Catholic. Donne received education at Oxford and Cambridge; at Lincoln's Inn, he also pursued law. In 1596, John Donne found himself participating in the expedition of Essex for Cadiz and in 1597 for Azores. He wrote the poems titled "The Storm" and "The Calm" while he was on the sea and in the camp during the expedition. He befriended Thomas Egerton while on the expedition. Anne More was Egerton's niece with whom Donne fell in love. They married secretly in 1601 for which they had to pay price. Frustrated and left with poverty for almost seven years, the two of them suffered until Anne More's father accepted to look after the young couple by making an allowance. However, with his wife's demise, the allowance ceased to come his way and Donne and his seven children faced a difficult situation in extreme poverty. But, this was not to last very long because Donne became a preacher of great worth in the coming years and later became the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. He held this position until his demise in 1631. His reputation as a preacher was immensely great for he came to be known as one of the most eloquent preachers of his time. His sermons were very close to his heart. "Death's Duel" is an example of his sermon. As a poet, John Donne focussed mainly on themes such as love, religion and death among others.

John Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* was written around the time when he was bereaved out of poverty and his career did not make any advancement. It captures the essence of his bereaved situation having many religious allusions and at the same time reflecting his religious crisis. He renounced Catholicism at that time. This collection contains poems having varied tones, most of which have a dramatic beginning. Abrupt opening is a marked feature of his poetry as we can see in the following lines of his famous poem "The Canonization" that appeared in *Songs and Sonnets*:

"For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honor, or his grace,

Or the king's real, or his stampèd face
Contemplate; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love."

Other well known poems from this collection are "The Flea", "The Undertaking", "The Indifferent", "The Sun Rising", "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning", "The Broken Heart", "Farewell to Love" and "The Relic" to name a few. John Donne's treatment of love, through his use of conceits, has placed him among one of the greatest love poets in English literature. His poetry is marked by the growing skeptical attitude towards scientific progress and the dissemination of knowledge regarding the earth to shrink from its position of being the centre of the universe. In his "Introduction" to John Donne, John Hayward noted: "Donne's verse is intermittently overcast with dark imagery and charged with queer scientific tropes" (10) which reflected the struggle of doubt and faith in the poet.

Holy Sonnets, also called 'Divine Meditations', consisting of nineteen poems was included in the first edition of *Songs and Sonnets* which appeared two years after the poet's demise. The poems depicted his deep religious and personal opinions and are representative of his devotion towards God. Donne's obsession with the theme of death is evident in the sonnet namely "Death Be Not Proud". Another well-known sonnet is "Batter my Heart".

George Herbert: (1593-1633)

Born in a Welsh family, George Herbert was a preacher who pursued his education at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was the younger brother of Lord Herbert of Cherbury who was also a poet and a philosopher. After Donne, he was one of the greatest religious poets of the metaphysical school of poetry. His works mainly encompassed devotional writings—religious themes being his primary concern. His major work was *The Temple* that was published in 1633. The poems of this collection depicted his treatment of religious themes and his devotion towards the Church of England. His poems were personal in nature and carried an intimate dialogue between him and God. Written in a colloquial manner, his poems were directly addressed to God and are marked for the simplicity and lucidity of tone. This was possible because unlike Donne, he never

used far-fetched images to describe his point. Rather he drew inspiration from everyday ordinary sources to convey his concerns. Herbert's poems were, however, a reflection of his intellectual sensibility. The dignity of his subject matter was influenced by the metaphysical strain in him. As quoted by W.J. Long, Herbert's poems capture "the Church, her holidays and ceremonials, and the experiences of Christian life" (198). Among his poems, mention may be made of "Affliction", "The Church Porch", "The Pilgrimage", "The Pulley", "The Altar", "Easter Wings", "Church-Monuments", "Discipline", "Death", "Love" (III), etc. Herbert's greatness lies in employing different verse forms and metrical forms in his poems. His versatility and his use of wit established him as one of the best religious poets of the metaphysical school of poetry. As an example of his use of conceits and unique kind of versification, lines from the poem "Heaven" may be cited:

O who will show me those delights on high?

Echo. *I.*

Thou Echo, thou art mortall, all men know.

Echo. *No.*

Wert thou not born among the trees and leaves?

Echo. *Leaves.*

And are there any leaves, that still abide?

Echo. *Bide.*

What leaves are they? impart the matter wholly.

Echo. *Holy.*

Are holy leaves the Echo then of blisse?

Echo. *Yes.*

Then tell me, what is that supreme delight?

Echo. *Light.*

Light to the minde : what shall the will enjoy?

Echo. *Joy.*

But are there cares and businesse with the pleasure?

Echo. *Leisure.*

Light, joy, and leisure ; but shall they persever?

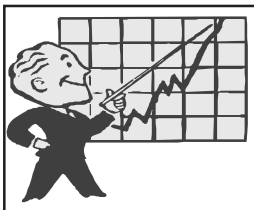
Echo. *Ever.*



LET US KNOW

Conceits: A *conceit* is an extended metaphor with a complex logic that governs a poetic passage or entire poem. By juxtaposing images and ideas in surprising ways, a ***conceit*** invites the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of an object of comparison.

The definition of conceit is provided by Dr. Samuel Johnson in "Life of Cowley" as 'Wit' which was "a kind of *Discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike . . . The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtle surprises. (*Lives of the English Poets*)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4. Write a very short note on John Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*.

Q.5. Describe George Herbert as a religious poet.

Richard Crashaw: (1613–1649)

Crashaw was included in this school of poetry for his use of conceits, and his religious poetry. He was, however, immensely influenced by Italian poetry, which found expression through his love poetry. As an imitator of Italian poetry, his poems were sensuous in tone, and later in his career, he diverted his themes to religion. The most noteworthy collection of poetry by Crashaw was *Steps to the Temple*, published in 1664. This collection also consisted of a section on secular poems under the heading "The Delights of the Muses". He belonged to the metaphysical school only by his extensive use of conceits. Among the poems that he had penned, mention may be made of "The Flaming Heart" and "The Hymn to Saint Teresa". There is a striking resemblance of Crashaw's poetry to that of the **Cavalier lyricists**. Extracts from the poem "The Flaming Heart" are given below for your reference:

O thou undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dow'r of lights and fires,
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove,
By all thy lives and deaths of love,
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they,
By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire,
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seiz'd thy parting soul and seal'd thee his,
By all the heav'ns thou hast in him,
Fair sister of the seraphim!



LET US KNOW

Cavalier Lyricists: In the latter half of the 17th century, another group of poets emerged who penned chiefly songs and lyrics for the court. Almost all of them were Royalists and supported King Charles I during the English Civil War. The poets associated with this group were Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace and Sir John Suckling. Being patrons of art, they shared a common practice of constructing secular poems that were refined, polished and elegant. They did not intend to use poetry as a medium, rather they emphasised on simple courtly topics. The love for nature is visible in all of their works. These poets were influenced by John Donne to a great extent. However, they wrote poems that were light-hearted and trivial exposing their sensuously expressive tones. These poets were also influenced by Ben Jonson's style of intermingling myth, allegory and fantasy in his poems. The most common themes of the Cavalier poets were thus to be found in dealing with issues of nature, beauty, love, war, etc.

Henry Vaughan: (1621–1695)

Another poet associated with this group is Henry Vaughan. He was born in 1622 at Breknockshire and received his education at Oxford.

However, he left Oxford and studied law in London. He also practised medicine in his later career. As a poet, he was very much influenced by George Herbert. Although he was not a priest like Herbert yet his most remembered poem are included in *Silax Scintillans*– a collection of religious poems. Even though he borrowed themes and metrical forms largely from Herbert, his poems reflected lucidly his own philosophy. He was remembered more for showing excellence in treating themes of childhood and nature. To him, nature was the medium through which he could reach out to Eternity. The metaphysical strain in him is evident from his meticulous handling of diction and images in his poetry. His poem "The Retreat" depicted his love and admiration for nature and had influenced poets of the Romantic age, particularly William Wordsworth. His works include poems such as "The World", "Departed Friends", "The Hidden Flower", "Regeneration", "The Retreat", "Idle Verse", "The Star", "I Walked the Other Way", "The Waterfall", etc. The juxtaposition of mystical elements with illustrative images and the solace he found in nature as a link to God– all these features make him a metaphysical poet.

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667):

He is one of the most important writers of his time. Born in 1618, he went to Westminster and Trinity College, Cambridge. Only in form, he can be called a metaphysical poet. He was more inclined to the poetic tendency found in John Dryden. His poetry lacked the passion that was filled in the poetry of John Donne. His use of conceits and images was rather a construction and ornamentation for he did not use them to explore deeper experiences and provide resolutions. In Cowley, the fading away of metaphysical strain is more pervading for he was at the crossroads between Metaphysical poetry and the Classicism which was to dominate the coming century. His love poems were published in *The Mistress*, which is full of wit. He laid much emphasis on wit as evident from his poem "Ode: Of Wit":

Hence 'tis a wit that greatest word of fame
Grows such a common name.
And wits by our creation they become,

Just so, as titular Bishops made at Rome.

'Tis not a tale, 'tis not a jest

Admir'd with laughter at a feast,

Nor florid talk which can that title gain;

The proofs of wit for ever must remain. (Ode: Of Wit, Cowley)

Cowley might not be very appealing as a metaphysical poet but his influence was greatly felt by Dryden and Pope in the eighteenth century. His entry in Dr Samuel Johnson's important work titled *Lives of the English Poets* is suggestive of his influence and continuing popularity. Cowley is best remembered as the last of the metaphysical poets when concepts like wit and conceits were losing their charm and literature showed influence of the Classics. "Written in Juice of Lemon", "My Picture", "Against Hope", "The Enjoyment", "On the Death of Mr Crashaw", "Hymn to Light", "My Picture", etc. are some of the poems penned by him.

Andrew Marvell: (1621–1678):

You will get a detailed discussion on Andrew Marvell in Unit 8 of this course. Some of his important sonnets include the following names:

"On a Drop of Dew", "Bermudas", "A Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body", "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn", "To His Coy Mistress", "Mourning", "The Definition of Love", "Damon the Mower", "The Garden", "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" and so on. Mention may also be made of **Thomas Traherne**'s poems like "The Preparative", "Felicity", "Shadows in the Water" and "Consummation" with regard to metaphysical poetry.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6. What was the influence of Italian poetry on the poems of Richard Crashaw?

Q.7. Name a few important poems by Henry Vaughan. What are his chosen themes?

Q.8. Name the metaphysical poet who was included in Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*.

6.6 RECEPTIONS OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY IN SUBSEQUENT PERIODS

The interest in Metaphysical poetry was revived in the early 19th century with Herbert J. C. Grierson's publication of John Donne's poems in 1921.Grierson's edition reflected the increasing influence of both the poet and the personality- John Donne after two decades from his death. However, Alexander Grossart's publication of the poems by Donne, Herbert, Crashaw and Marvell must be added to the list of influences that have helped in the revitalisation of metaphysical poetry. With the publication of Edmund Gosse's life writing on John Donne, a certain amount of importance was laid on the study of poetry of the great metaphysical poet John Donne. In the article titled "The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, 1872-1912", **Joseph E. Duncan** has been noted mentioning about the causes of the popularity of the most eminent metaphysical poet, John Donne as "[f]rom the mass of Donne criticism there emerged three closely related conceptions of the man: Donne the rebel, Donne the mystery, and Donne the unique individual. These conceptions of the man are basic to the recent critical accent on the originality, complexity, and psychological realism of his work." Indeed, Donne's versification was unique in the manner in which he broke away from the monotony that poetry fell into during the 16th century, by introducing innovative techniques and by emphasising on deeper psychological realms. Poetry became grave where intellect was displayed to its maximum. Much of the revival was attached, therefore, to the poet and preacher John Donne's personality.

Grierson in *Metaphysical Poets and Lyrics of the 17th Century: Donne to Butler* wrote that "metaphysical poetry . . . has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence". Grierson's "Introduction" is one of the landmarks in reviving the reputation of Donne in particular and metaphysical poetry in general. As mentioned by T.S. Eliot, this work of Grierson is a wonderful piece of criticism that triggered in Eliot an engaging thought about the 'metaphysical' poets and their taste of poetry.

Eliot was one of the 20th century poet and critic whose work brought about a significant amount of renewed significance in the study of metaphysical poets. His contribution in reviving metaphysical poets can be cited from his essays like “The Metaphysical Poets” which was originally published as a review to Grierson’s *Metaphysical Poets and Lyrics of the 17th century.* Refuting the metaphysical poets, Eliot in his essay declared that these poets do not belong to a different school but are a part of the Elizabethan tradition. He pointed out the ‘unified sensibility’ evident in the works of the metaphysical poets. They could synthesise their thought and feeling and express varied and often contradictory emotions in a unified way. This characteristic of the metaphysical poets is common to the modern poets who are their direct descendents.

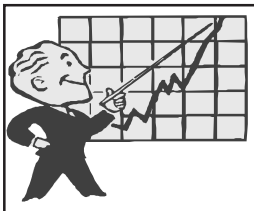


LET US KNOW

Dissociation of sensibility is a term first used by Eliot in his essay “The Metaphysical Poets”. It refers to the way in which intellectual thought was separated from the experience of feeling in 17th century poetry. Eliot used the term to describe the manner by which the nature and substance of English poetry changed “between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning.” In this essay, Eliot attempts to define the metaphysical poet and in doing so to determine the metaphysical poet’s era as well as his discernible qualities:

> “We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.”

Akin to the metaphysical poets, the poets in the modern age also transforms feelings into disparate images or thoughts. The complexity of thought is an essential feature of poetry common to the metaphysical as well as the modern poets. Apart from the emphasis on the modern lineage of the metaphysical poets, an increasing popularity was also prevalent in the structure of their poems. After Eliot, metaphysical poetry received favour in the hands of the New Critics. The New Critics believed in close reading of poetry as an independent aesthetic entity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: Who were the 'three G's generally referred to in relation of the revival of metaphysical poetry?

Q 10: What, according to Eliot, is the common feature of the metaphysical and the modern poet?



6.7 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of this unit, you have gained an idea about the metaphysical school of poetry of the 17th century. As you are aware, the term gained prominence with John Dryden and later on with Samuel Johnson in his "Life of Cowley" in the book called *Lives of the English Poets*. As a matter of fact, the metaphysical poets such as Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, etc. were not much in vogue in the 17th and 18th century. However, their importance was renewed in the 19th and 20th century with the works of many critics including Grierson, T. S. Eliot and the New Critics. The metaphysical poets dealt with issues like religion, science, philosophy, love, nature, etc. However, the term 'metaphysical' is more appropriate in terms of the techniques of these poets. Common features such as use of wit or intelligence, comparisons, use of figures of speech, etc. are prevalent in all the metaphysical poets. This unit has thus familiarised you with the beginning of the metaphysical school of poetry, and how it dominated literary thinking, though for a short period, in the 17th century. Although the growth of

Classicism and Romanticism hindered in the popularity and acceptance of these metaphysical poets in the 17th and 18th century, the modern poets laid much emphasis on them. Metaphysical poetry has carved a niche for itself by its innovative techniques although critics have often pointed to the obscurity in their use of far-fetched images.



6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: The poets used poetry as a medium to reflect the richness of their intellect… …it was markedly different from its preceding age (Elizabethan age) in style and form… …they poets made extensive use of their intelligence and presented a new kind of poetry to the readers… …they used 'wit' in exploring philosophical notions about the world and their poetry was religious in tone.

Ans to Q No 2: John Dryden first used the term 'metaphysics' to refer to John Donne's poetry in his book called *Discourse Concerning Satire* in 1693. According to Dryden, Donne's poetry "affects the metaphysics".

Ans to Q No 3: Johnson stated that the fault of the metaphysical poets was that of pursuing their thoughts to their last ramifications, by which the grandeur of generality got lost… …Thus all the power of description was destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration; and the force of metaphors is lost when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.

Ans to Q No 4: It captures the essence of his bereaved situation having many religious allusions and at the same time reflecting his religious crisis. He renounced Catholicism at that time. This collection contains poems having varied tones, most of which have a dramatic beginning.

Ans to Q No 5: His poems were personal in nature and carried an intimate dialogue between him and God. Written in a colloquial manner, his poems were directly addressed to God and are marked for the

simplicity and lucidity of tone. This was possible because unlike Donne he never used far-fetched images to describe his point. Rather he drew inspiration from everyday ordinary sources to convey his concerns. Herbert's poems were, however, a reflection of his intellectual sensibility. The dignity of his subject matter was influenced by the metaphysical strain in him.

Ans to Q No 6: As an imitator of Italian poetry, his poems were sensuous in tone and use of language.

Ans to Q No 7: "The Retreat", "The World", "Departed Friends", "The Hidden Flower", "Regeneration", "The Retreat", "Idle Verse", "The Star", "I Walked the Other Way", "The Waterfall", etc. … … his poems reflected lucidly his own philosophy. He was remembered more for showing excellence in treating themes of childhood and nature.

Ans to Q No 8: Abraham Cowley.

Ans to Q No 9: Herbert J. C. Grierson, Alexander Grossart and Edmund Gosse.

Ans to Q No 10: They could synthesise their thought and feeling and express varied and often contradictory emotions in a unified way. The complexity of thought is an essential feature of poetry common to the metaphysical as well as the modern poets.



6.9 FURTHER READING

Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 7th Edition. Thomson, Heinle.

Duncan, Joseph E. (1953). "The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, 1872-1912" *PMLA*, Vol. 68, No 4, p 658-671.

Eliot, T.S. (1921). "The Metaphysical Poets" in *Times Literary Supplement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. http://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/eliot_metaphysical_poets.htm

Grierson, Herbert J.C. *Metaphysical Poets and Lyrics of the 17thCentury: Donne to Butler.* https://archive.org/stream/metaphysicallyri00grieuoft/metaphysicallyri00grieuoft_djvu.txt

Hayward, John. (1950). *John Donne: A Selection of His Poetry*. England: Penguin.

Johnson, Samuel.(1905). *Lives of the English Poets*. Ed. G. B. Hill. Oxford: Clarendon Press. https://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/cowley.html

6.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q1. What do you understand by 'Metaphysical Poetry'? Examine the features of Metaphysical poetry of the 17th century.

Q2. Write short notes on:

i) John Donne
ii) George Herbert
iii) Richard Crashaw
iv) Abraham Cowley
v) Beginning and Development of Metaphysical Poetry
vi) Critical Reception of Metaphysical Poetry



Q3. What is unification of sensibility, according to T. S. Eliot? How are the Metaphysical poets received in the 20th century, especially by a poet critic like Eliot?

Q4. Relate the revival of metaphysical poetry in the latter half of the 19th century with that of its characteristics.

Q5. Do you find a close affinity between the metaphysical and the modern poets? Explain.

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Unit 7: JOHN DONNE: “THE GOOD MORROW”, “DEATH BE NOT PROUD”

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 John Donne: The Poet

7.3.1 His Life

7.3.2 His Works

7.4 Reading the Poem: “The Sun Rising”

7.5 Reading the Poem: “Death Be Not Proud”

7.6 Donne’s Poetic Style

7.7 Let us Sum up

7.8 Further Reading

7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

7.10 Possible Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of John Donne
- trace briefly the tradition of Metaphysical Poetry
- explain the poems prescribed and its various important aspects
- discuss Donne’s poetic style
- assess the significance of John Donne as a ‘metaphysical’ poet

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to two poems by John Donne viz. ‘The Sun Rising’ and ‘Death, Be Not Proud’. John Donne was the leading English poet of the Metaphysical School of Poetry and is often considered to be one of the greatest love poets in the English language. You will be acquainted with the life of this great poet and his major poetic works in which “wit” is a major component. The poem ‘The Sun Rising’ is one of Donne’s most

charming and successful metaphysical poems. It is essentially a love poem. On the other hand, 'Death, Be Not Proud' is a Holy sonnet, which reveals Donne's defiance of, and an unconventional challenge to, Death. Death is not something to be feared, rather something that can easily be defeated. You will be given an explanation of the ideas contained in these two poems. Finally, you will be acquainted with Donne's poetic style, which is characterised by his use of conceits, paradox and puns. In this unit, an attempt has been made to discuss Metaphysical poetry through a discussion of John Donne's poems.

7.3 JOHN DONNE: THE POET



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John Donne, often regarded as the foremost of the metaphysical poets, wrote his poetry, which is both intense and riddling. A reading of his poems opens up the generalisation that Donne's love poems and divine poems correspond to his early and later life respectively. This is based on the biographical fact that his youth was spent as a passionate and romantic ladies man, and a debonair man-about-town, but after his wife's death, he mellowed down considerably, and thereafter enjoyed divine love. Let us now delve into this great poet's life.

7.3.1 His Life

John Donne was born in Bread Street, London in a prominent Roman Catholic family. His father was a prosperous London ironmonger merchant who descended from a very ancient family in Wales. His mother was a lineal descendant of Sir Thomas More, and was the daughter of John Heywood, the epigrammatist and playwright. After his father's death, Donne's mother married Dr. John Syminges who raised her children. Donne attended the University of Oxford for three years, but left early because as a Roman Catholic,

he could not swear the oath of allegiance to the Protestant Queen Elizabeth, and acknowledge her supremacy over the Church of England. He then went to the University of Cambridge before leaving the continent and travelling abroad. He returned to London to study law in the early 1590s and entered Lincoln's Inn in 1592. There he dwelt on a comparative examination of Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, and started writing verse and also engaged in womanising. In 1596, Donne sailed on the Earl of Essex's expedition against Cadiz, and in the following year, he joined the inconclusive Islands expedition with Sir Walter Raleigh and Essex, hunting for Spanish treasure ships in the Azores.

On his return to London in 1597, Donne became secretary to one of the most influential men in England, Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and was well launched upon a brilliant career. You will be interested to know that while in Egerton's service, Donne met Anne Moore, the 14-year-old niece of Egerton's second wife and the daughter of Sir George Moore, and fell desperately in love with her so much so that he married her secretly. This betrayal of his employer's trust jeopardised his plans for service as a courtier, and Donne was also briefly imprisoned and dismissed from his post with Egerton. Thus, at 30, Donne found himself married but jobless, and with no adequate funds to support his household. He lived in poverty and on the charity of Anne's cousin and some noble patrons. In the meantime, Donne fathered 12 children, of whom only 7 survived. He was deeply in love with his wife, and was very depressed because he considered himself responsible for her wretched fortune.

Donne's friends had urged him to take up Holy Orders in the Church of England as early as 1607, but he felt unworthy and deferred it. However, when he failed to find employment, Donne decided that the Church looked like the only prospect for professional success, and so he agreed to take Holy Orders. He was ordained on 23rd January 1615, and appointment soon followed. Donne was

made a royal chaplain and received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Cambridge. He was also made the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, which was an administrative and spiritual occupation, and he carried out his duties with sincerity and integrity.

In spite of his miseries, Donne studied and tirelessly wrote prose pieces on theology, and also composed religious and love lyrics. The literary scene during this time was dominated by sonnet writers who drew inspiration from Petrarch, but Donne carved his own niche by following the Roman poet Ovid. He also found a new patron in Sir Robert Drury, with whom he travelled to Amiens and Paris in 1611-12. Donne and his wife settled in a small house provided by the Drurys on their estate in London, where Donne lived until 1621 after the death of his wife in 1617. He never recovered from this grief and vowed never to marry again, even though he had to raise his children in modest financial circumstances. His bereavement led him to a career in the Anglican Church and his powerful sermons established him as the foremost preacher of the England of his day, and a favourite of both James I and Charles I.

Donne became seriously ill in 1623 during an epidemic of either typhus or relapsing fever, but even in sickness, he began a prose work *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), consisting of prayers, meditations and expostulations. Donne became ill again in 1630, but even then, he insisted on preaching sermon on 25 February, the first Friday in Lent, 1631 at court. The theme was "Death's Duel", and it was to be his final, also considered to be his own funeral sermon. John Donne breathed his last on 31st March 1631, and was buried at St. Paul's. Nicholas Stone constructed a marble effigy of Donne, which survived the Great Fire of 1666, and still stands today in St. Paul's Cathedral.

7.3.2 His Works

As mentioned in the previous section, John Donne was a prolific writer of poetry and prose. However, you will be interested to

know that almost none of Donne's poems was published during his lifetime, so it is difficult to date them accurately. The first two editions of his poetry entitled *Poems* were published posthumously in 1633 and 1635. His poetry is generally divided into the secular lyrics and religious verses, and most of his poems were preserved as manuscript copies. Scholars agree that Donne's *Elegies*, verse letters and satires were written in the 1590s, the *Songs and Sonnets* from the 1590 until 1617, and the *Holy Sonnets* and other religious lyrics from the time of his marriage till he was ordained in 1615. His elegies are colloquial and racy, and are poems of love rather than of mourning. His satires show evidence of his rational strength. Donne's *Anniversaries,* published in 1611-12, were the only important works by him published during his lifetime. His best-known poems like 'The Canonization', 'The Bait', 'The Good Morrow' etc. belong to his pre-marriage period and are frequently erotic. His love lyrics provide in-depth psychological insight about a broad range of lovers and a wide gamut of amorous feelings. Donne's lovers exalt in the compatibility of their sexual and spiritual love, and elevate the emotion to an almost religious dimension. The theme of death is pervasive in Donne's poetry. There is a memorable poem in his *Holy Sonnets* called 'Death, Be Not Proud', which we will discuss in this unit. His religious poems are more difficult than the secular. In these poems, Donne explores his love for God, sometimes through sexual metaphors, and depicts his doubts, fears and sense of spiritual unworthiness. His poems attempt to conquer doubt and achieve faith.

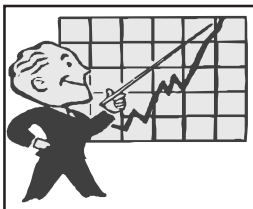
Among Donne's prose works, the earliest include *Paradoxes and Problems*, probably begun during his days in Lincoln's Inn. In 1607, he wrote *Biathanatos*, a scholarly prose work about Christianity and suicide. His most notable prose work was *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), and it was written to persuade the English Roman Catholics to swear the oath of allegiance to the king, which was required after the Gunpowder Plot (1605). He also wrote *Ignatius His Conclave*, a

prose satire on the Jesuits, and both the former and the latter met the approval of James I. Donne completed his *Essays in Divinity* in 1611, and as mentioned earlier, upon recovering from his illness wrote *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* in 1623. The *Devotions* correlate his physical illness with spiritual sickness, and like his poetry, are known for their dramatic immediacy and metaphysical conceits. However, Donne is best known for his *Sermons*, which illustrate his mastery of prose. His sermons are brilliant though severe, and explore the basic principles of Christianity rather than simply indulge in theological disputes. His sermons are at times dramatic, at times candid, and engage us with their intensity, rhythm and use of conceits. At the end of his life, Donne was hailed as the "Monarch of Wit" for his poetic ingenuity and for establishing a powerful new style of his own. With his astute observance of human nature, the broad range of human experience is brought to life vividly, and his verse enthrals us with its dramatic intensity.



LET US KNOW

The *Anniversarie* poems are the most sustained of Donne's poetic efforts. They are written to commemorate the death of Elizabeth Drury, the 14-year-old daughter of his patron and friend Sir Robert Drury, on whose estate he lived. These poems incorporate their perceived subject into a philosophical meditation on the decay of the world. He idealizes Elizabeth Drury as "the Idea of a woman". Through this idealized female figure, he, in *The First Anniversarie: An Anatomie of the World* laments humanity's continuing spiritual death from the loss of Eden to the dissolution of the contemporary world. In *The Second Anniversarie: Of the Progres of the Soule*, Donne finally regains the wisdom that directs him towards an immortal existence.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Name the poets who influenced the literary career of John Donne?

Q 2: Why did Donne take up Holy Orders? What led him to turn to the Anglican Church?

Q 3: List some of the important works written by John Donne.

Q 4: Write a short note on Donne's prose works.

7.4 READING THE POEM: "THE SUN RISING"

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late schoolboys and sour 'prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long.
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late tell me
Whether both th'Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, "All here in one bed lay."
She's all states, and all princes I;
Nothing else is:
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,

All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, Sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy centre is, these walls thy sphere.

'The Sun Rising' is a typical metaphysical poem by Donne and is characterised by his usual vigour and freshness. Passion and reason are woven together in this poem. You may know that much 16th century poetry were full of praise for the quiet beauty of dawn. However, Donne with his characteristic wit and subtlety of thought subverts the tradition, and chides the rising Sun for disturbing his sleep while lying in bed with his mistress. The poem is an emotional outpouring on the part of the poet-lover in the form of a dramatic monologue. The three stanzas of the poem is a systematic exercise in dwarfing the Sun, which is generally upheld as the Lord of all Heavenly bodies. This can be perceived in the dramatic opening lines where the Sun is rebuked for being an elderly voyeur of sorts:

"Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?"

The poet speaker has realised the essence of a love, which transcends time in the happy and complete possession of his mistress in a solitude that he deems as an inviolable privacy. It is important to remember that the real subject here is not the Sun, which is the universally acknowledged standard of temporal order, regulation and law, but the lady. In addition, it is not the personified Sun who rules and controls the universe, but the lover himself, and his lovemaking with his mistress is the only reality that is not limited by time. In 'The Sun Rising', passion and wit cohere to enact the exaltation of this joyous sensual experience. The lover's argument is at once logical and emotional, serious and light, persuasive and fantastic. The Sun is ridiculed as a "saucy, pedantic wretch" and an interfering "fool".

Donne's purpose in the poem is to argue and prove the exalted experience of the lovers. The poem is inspired by the poet's undying love and passion for his beloved wife Anne Moore. The metaphysical conceits in the second and third stanzas elevate the mistress to an altogether different level. The poet-lover feels as if he could obliterate the intense brightness of the sun simply by closing his eyes, but he refuses to do so as he does not want to lose sight of his beloved for even one moment. The mistress combines in herself all the fragrance and gold of the East and the West Indies.

"Look, and tomorrow late tell me
Whether both th'Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me."

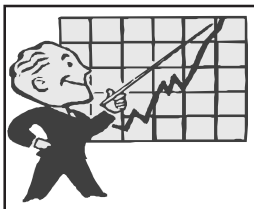
For the poet, the bed is a microcosm of the outside world with all its kings and kingdoms, and the Sun is rhetorically pushed away. The lover and the beloved are compared to all the states and princes of the world, rolled into one. Thus, his mistress rises upon all the earlier Elizabethan sweethearts in as much as she is an exalted being.

"She's all states, and all princes I;
Nothing else is:"

The poet is of the opinion that the Sun need not wander around the world, its sole duty is now to shine upon him, and his beloved as the entire world has contacted into the lovers' bedroom. This is indeed a bold statement and Donne needs to be lauded for his originality of execution. Donne seems to be following the Ptolemaic belief that the Sun moved round the earth when he says that the bed of the lovers is the centre of the Sun i.e. the earth around which it can revolve.

"This bed thy centre is, these walls thy sphere."

'The Sun Rising' is thus built around a few hyperbolic assertions-that the Sun is a conscious busybody, that love knows "no season" and no "clime", and that the world is literally contained within the bedroom of the lovers. This is one of Donne's most successful and charming metaphysical love poems. The lovers create a microcosmic world within the realm of their bedroom, which is far more important than the larger universe, and their bodies are the gravitational centre.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Why is the Sun called a "busy old fool"? What is regarded as more exalted than the Sun?

Q 6: Why, according to the poet, the Sun need not move around the world?

7.5 READING THE POEM: "DEATH BE NOT PROUD"

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so.
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then, from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, ware, and sickness dwell.
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die.

'Death, Be Not Proud' is included as Sonnet X in the *Holy Sonnets*. These *Holy Sonnets* provide a fertile ground for theological speculation. As mentioned earlier, Donne's holy poems correspond to the latter period of his life; his wife's death dramatically reforming his earlier callous and womanising behaviour. He thereby enjoyed divine love, though not without a struggle at times. Anne's death made him lose his "world" and thereafter he yearned for the "other world".

The *Holy Sonnets* may be regarded as poems of repentance, and entreaties for divine grace, without being didactic. The major themes, which encompass the entire gamut of Donne's religious verse, are sin, repentance, death, salvation and the continuing desire to be one with God's love and

mercy in this life in order to enjoy everlasting happiness in the next. The shadow of death is all pervasive, but Donne's references to death do not bespeak any morbid obsession, for he treats death as merely the end of earthly life, and the beginning of the more rewarding "other" life of the soul. For Donne, there is always an intense awareness of the inevitability of death, but no fear or sense of unease is born out of this awareness, as he is besotted with the hope of an after-life and the immortality of the soul. The *Holy Sonnets* reflect and embody his deeply felt emotions in a language, which reveal conscious craftsmanship.

Let us now come to the poem 'Death, Be Not Proud'. In this poem, Donne subverts two accepted notions about death- first, that it is something to be dreaded, and second, that it is mighty. The poem confirms the Christian belief that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross has liberated mankind from the fear of death. The sonnet portrays an unconventional challenge to death. Death is personified and addressed to directly. In a sense, the poem points to Donne's sensibility and brings into focus the consciousness of the age in which he lived and wrote. Donne not only defied death, but also the contemporary man who is so demotivated by the thought of death, that he cannot evoke the strength of spirit to instil hope and confidence in himself.

Donne argues in this poem that death does not deserve to be proud; it only has a certain power over man and gives temporary sleep. Repeated references to death in many of the *Holy Sonnets* do not speak of any morbid obsession, rather it reveals the significance of that vital moment when the soul will be released from the mortal body and will achieve the honour of "meeting" God. Death is rendered inactive by the fact of the immortality of the soul. The might of death is treated in a vein of mockery.

"Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so."

The poem opens with a dramatic demolishing blow hurled upon Death, which rips apart Death's arrogance. Donne asserts the fact that the knowledge of death as a potent horror is a myth created and sustained by some, whereas the real truth is that Death is not the inflated force it is sustained to be. It is not "mighty and dreadful", it has no great power, and it

cannot strike terror in the hearts of the faithful and the fearless. It is not dreadful because those whom Death claims to have "killed" are actually having a long and peaceful sleep.

"For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me."

The perception of Death becomes meaningless and superfluous and it is scaled down to the level of a presumptuous fool. By moving from the general to the particular, Donne vehemently asserts that "nor yet canst thou kill me" and mocks at death by referring to it as "poor Death".

Then, he goes on to explain the fact that death is nothing but an eternal sleep. Just as sleep refreshes a person, death will refresh a person eternally. It brings a calm and peace instead of horror in its wake:

"From rest and sleep which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then, from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery."

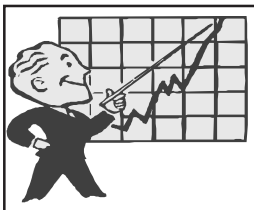
Sleep, which invigorates man, is only a reflection of death, so it follows logically that Death would bring more and greater soothing pleasure than its mere images rest and sleep. Therefore, the best and noble men in this world are never afraid to embrace Death. Donne says that the best find ready solace in death which provides rest to the fatigued body and emancipates the soul. The immortality of the soul ensures the survival of man.

Death is reduced to the position of a "slave", and thus there is a complete subversion of death in which the vein of mockery continues: "Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men." The slave-like presence of death is reflected in its servile agents like poison, wars and sickness. Intoxicants like poppy and the charms can also put a man to a restful sleep, which may be even more perfect than Death. Therefore, it only follows that Death has nothing to be proud of; it is a hollow feeling: The faithful and fearless soul will chart its own course and "defeat" Death, which is believed to be the mightiest power of all. As the sonnet ends, there is a direct reference to the victory of Christian resurrection over Death, and the analogy of "rest and sleep" is extended to the point of waking. Donne triumphantly asserts that:

"One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die."

Donne therefore emerges victorious over the insidious power of death. The sonnet ends paradoxically leaving behind a swift and sweeping impression when Donne persuasively tells Death: "Death, thou shalt die."'Death, be not proud' is the revelation of a soul's involvement with God, a relationship that is underscored by what Yeats says a sense of "passionate intensity". Donne is aware of his frailties as a sinner, and he is willing to face God and invoke his sanctifying grace in repentance and redemption. Death therefore does retain its conventional image of being an all-powerful leveller. The physical end of life is not to be dreaded, but welcomed as a higher state of existence in an eternal afterlife.

The octet establishes the fact that Death is neither dreadful nor mighty, and the sestet is more personal as Death is regarded as a "slave", and a passage to an immortal existence. Christian dogma is basis of Donne's iconoclastic attitude towards Death. He remains invincible in his belief in the words of Christ: I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and he who lives and believes in me shall never die."(From the New Testament)



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What are the major themes in the *Holy Sonnets*? Which incident prompted him to immerse himself in religious verse?

Q 8: How is Death challenged in the poem?

Q 9: Why do the faithful not fear Death? Identify the paradox at the end of the poem.

7.6 DONNE'S POETIC STYLE

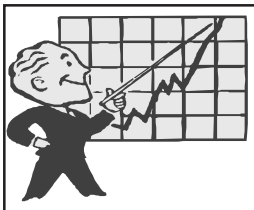
The poetry of John Donne is characterised by a strikingly original departure from the conventions of 16th century English verse, especially that of Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. He has made a virtuoso

contribution to English poetic diction and versification. His poetic style and diction is very unconventional. Donne's early satires and elegies, inspired by Latin models, show his experimentation with genre, form and imagery. T. S. Eliot opined that: "A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility." Donne's vocabulary and syntax reflect the emotional intensity of a confrontation, and his metrical style and verbal music conform to the needs of a particular dramatic situation. His directness of language has an electrifying effect on the reader. This can be seen in 'The Canonization', which begins: "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love", or as you have seen in 'The Sun Rising': "Busy old fool, unruly Sun". These explosive beginnings develop into closely reasoned arguments or propositions that rely heavily on the use of conceits.

The Elizabethan conceits were ornate and decorative, while the metaphysical conceits were the products of the intellectual process of thinking in figures. Donne used the conceit as a vehicle for transmitting multiple, and sometimes even contradictory feelings and ideas. His imagery is drawn from different fields such as alchemy, astronomy, medicine, politics, philosophy etc. As mentioned earlier, his famous analogy of two parting lovers to a drawing compass is a prime example. The critic Allen Tate has this to say about the nature of Donne's conceits. It is an idea not inherent in this subject, but exactly parallel to it, elaborated beyond the usual stretch of metaphor into a supporting structure for a long passage or even an entire poem. It may be torn away from its original meaning, like the Angels in Donne's Elegie XI, and yet remain the vehicle of 'poetic truth': that is to say, of heightened emotion in the poet's dramatisation of his own personality. The conceit in itself is neither true nor false. From this practice, it is but a step to Dryden and the 18th century, to the rise of the historical consciousness, and to ourselves." Donne's conceits offer brilliant and multiple insights into the subject of the metaphor and help give rise to the ambiguity in his lyrics.

Donne combined the complexity of substance with the simplicity of expression. He uses a rhythm that expresses his passionate argument and his mood, and therefore his verses are as startling as his phrasing. He has infused the English language with energy and a sinewy strength. Due to the invigorating influence of his poetic style, John Donne has brought a

new luster to English literature. Grierson has this to say about the salient characteristics of Donne's style and versification: "Donne's verse has a powerful and haunting harmony of its own…Donne plays with rhythmical effects as with conceits and words and often in much the same way…he writes as one who will say what he has to say without regards to conventions of poetic diction or smooth verse, but what he has to say is subtle and surprising, and so are the metrical effects with which it is presented…Donne is perhaps our first great master of poetic rhetoric…"



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Briefly reflect on Donne's poetic style.

Q 11: What is a conceit? How did Donne use his conceits?



7.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you must have understood the importance of John Donne as a leading English poet of the Metaphysical School of Poetry. You have read about the life of this great poet and the kind of poetry and prose he wrote. 'The Sun Rising' is a systematic exercise in dwarfing the Sun, which is generally upheld as the Lord of all Heavenly bodies. The poet is of the opinion that the Sun need not wander around the world, its sole duty is now to shine upon him, and his beloved as the entire world has contacted into the lovers' bedroom. The lovers create a microcosmic world within the realm of their bedroom, which is far more important than the larger universe, and their bodies are the gravitational centre. While, in 'Death, be not proud', Donne subverts two accepted notions about death- first, that it is something to be dreaded, and second, that it is mighty. The poem confirms the Christian belief that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross has liberated mankind from the fear of death. The sonnet portrays an unconventional challenge to death. You have also learnt about the characteristics of Donne's poetic style, which helped confirm his position as one of the greatest metaphysical poets in English literature.



7.8 FURTHER READING

Abrams, M. H. (2005). *A Glossary of Literary Terms. 8th Edition*. New Delhi: Thomson Wadsworth.

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Dickson, Donald R. (ed). (2007).*John Donne's Poetry*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Encyclopedia Brittanica (Vol 4). 2005. New York: Brittanica Educational Publishing.

Gardner, Helen. (1957).*Metaphysical Poets.* Penguin Books.

Ousby, Ian. (1992). *Companion to Literature in English*. London: Cambridge University Press.

7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: The Italian poet Petrarch… …the Roman poet Ovid… …Donne's new patron Sir Robert Drury

Ans to Q No 2 : Because, he failed to find employment… ...he was bereaved by his wife's death… …such experiences led him to a career in the Anglican Church… …his powerful sermons established him as the foremost preacher of the England of his day.

Ans to Q No 3 : For the answer section 7.3.2 may be referred.

Ans to Q No 4: *Paradoxes and Problems* was begun in Lincoln's Inn… …he wrote *Biathanatos* which is about Christianity and suicide… …most notable prose work is *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610)… …*Ignatius His Conclave*, a prose satire on the Jesuits… …However, Donne is best known for his *Sermons.*

Ans to Q No 5: The Sun peeps into the bedroom… ...disturbs the lover… ...the lady is the main subject and not the Sun.

Ans to Q No 6: Donne seems to be following the Ptolemaic belief that the Sun moved round the earth when he says that the bed of the lovers is

the centre of the Sun i.e. the earth around which it (the Sun) can revolve.

Ans to Q No 7: Sin, repentance, death, salvation… ...desire to be one with God's love and mercy in this life……everlasting happiness in the next life… …death of his wife prompted him.

Ans to Q No 8: Reduced to the level of slave… ...it is only a short sleep…….similar to rest… …intoxicants can also induce sleep… …death has no power.

Ans to Q No 9: It is only a short sleep… ...awaken to eternal life… ...immortality of the soul… the paradox is—death itself will die.

Ans to Q No 10: Departure from the conventions of 16th century English verse… …vocabulary and syntax reflecting the emotional intensity of a confrontation… …his metrical style conforms a particular dramatic situation… …his directness of language has an electrifying effect on the reader… …explosive beginnings develop into closely reasoned arguments or propositions.

Ans to Q No 11: Conceit is a vehicle for transmitting multiple, contradictory feelings and ideas… …Donne drew his imagery from alchemy, astronomy, medicine, politics, philosophy etc… he made conceits the products of the intellectual processes of thinking in figures.



7.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write a comprehensive note on the tradition of Metaphysical Poetry with special reference to John Donne's poetry.

Q 2: Why is Metaphysical Poetry called "the poetry of strong lines"? How did Eliot help bring the poetry of Donne back into favour?

Q 3: Do you think that the poem 'The Sun Rising' is "informal" in any way? Discuss the central philosophy in the poem.

Q 4: How is Death ridiculed in the poem 'Death, be not proud'? How, according to the poet, does Death "die" in the poem?

Q 5: Write a note on Donne's poetic style with examples from his poems.

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UNIT 8: ANDREW MARVELL: "TO HIS COY MISTRESS" & "THE GARDEN"

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Andrew Marvell: Life and Works

8.4 Reading the Poems: "To His Coy Mistress" & "The Garden"

8.5 Marvell's Poetic Style

8.6 Let us Sum up

8.7 Further Reading

8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

8.9 Possible Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- gather ideas on the life and works of Andrew Marvell
- trace briefly the contributions of Marvell to Metaphysical Poetry
- explain two of his poems namely, "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden"
- analyse critically the thematic concerns in these two poems
- discuss the poetic style of Andrew Marvell

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with two poems namely "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden" by Andrew Marvell who is acclaimed as one of the finest metaphysical poets in the history of English Poetry. Marvel wrote the first poem either during or just before the English Interregnum (1649–60). This poem is considered one of Marvell's finest and is possibly the best-recognised carpe diem poem in English that became popular among the courtier poets of Charles I. The second poem "The Garden", too is often considered to be a famous English poem of the 17th century. This poem

was first published in *Miscellaneous Poems* in 1681. In this poem, the poet's personal emotions and feelings are told throughout the words of nature. The poet explains the value of nature and is explaining it through the poem. One of the last of the 17th century Metaphysical poets, Andrew Marvell is noted for intellectual, allusive poetry that is rich in metaphor and conceit. By the end of this unit, you will find that his work incorporates many of the elements associated with the Metaphysical school: the tension of opposing values, metaphorical complexities, logical and linguistic subtleties, and unexpected twists of thought and argument.

8.3 ANDREW MARVELL: LIFE AND WORKS



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

The son of an Anglican clergyman, Marvell was born in Winestead-in-Holderness, Yorkshire. He received his early education at nearby Hull Grammar School and later attended Trinity College at Cambridge University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1638. Marvell remained at Cambridge until 1641, though he left without taking a master's degree. During the next four years, Marvell travelled in Europe, employed as a tutor. By the early 1650s, he was living at Nunappleton in Yorkshire, where he was tutor to Mary Fairfax, the daughter of Sir Thomas Fairfax, retired commander-in-chief of the Commonwealth army under Oliver Cromwell. It was during his stay at Nunappleton that Marvell wrote most of the lyric poems that form the basis of his literary reputation.

Then, he moved to Eton to tutor Cromwell's ward William Dutton. In 1657, he was appointed Assistant Latin Secretary to the Council of State through the influence of his friend John Milton, who then held the post of Latin Secretary. Two years later, Marvell was elected Member of Parliament for Hull; from this point on, he ceased to write lyric poetry, concentrating instead on political satire and polemics in prose. A dedicated, conscientious statesman, Marvell channelled all his energy and talent into his political career, serving in Parliament until his death.

More relevant to the reading of his poetry is the mystery of Marvell's political convictions, more accurate knowledge of which, scholars believe, would do much to clarify obscurities in his work. Marvell lived during a tumultuous period of British history. Although he did not actively participate in the English Civil War, which broke out in 1642 while he was travelling in Europe, Marvell was deeply affected by the bitter fighting between the **Royalists** (primarily supporters of Anglicanism) and **Parliamentarians** (primarily supporters of Puritanism) and later by Charles I's execution and Cromwell's assumption of the Protectorate. Scholars have often attempted to determine where Marvell's sympathies lay. But, they have been unable to definitively place the poet in either camp. Some suggest that this political inconclusiveness mirrors the indecision found in Marvell's poems. Regardless, critics have emphasised that an understanding of Marvell's life and poetry, particularly ''An Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland,'' requires some comprehension of this politically volatile time.

Works in Literary Context:

Duality: Marvell directly addressed the theme of the duality of spirituality and temporality in many of his overtly religious poems, including ''A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure'' and ''A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body.'' As their titles indicate, both these poems are discussions between the body and its pleasures on the one hand and the soul and its spirituality on the other, yet critics have remarked on an important distinction between the two works. In ''A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure,'' Marvell uncharacteristically and, many commentators believe, unsatisfactorily, resolves the conflict.

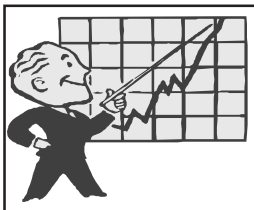
Ambiguity: Political poems, such as ''An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" and ''Upon Appleton House,'' have prompted much critical debate due to their ambiguity. ''An Horatian Ode'' in particular has invited biographical interpretation as commentators have attempted to clarify Marvell's real attitude toward the political and social upheavals of the Civil War and Cromwell's assumption of the Protectorate. Ostensibly, a paean to Cromwell's military and political victories, ''An Horatian Ode'' includes a moving and sympathetic description of Charles I's execution

that commentators have found disconcerting. An additional critical dilemma has been raised by subtle hints in the poem that indicate the poet's belief that Cromwell's base of power, founded as it was on usurpation and bloodshed, may have been inevitable but can hardly be praiseworthy. Ambiguities also abound in ''Upon Appleton House,'' outwardly a poem in praise of the retirement of Marvell's benefactor Fairfax from the political arena. The extent to which this praise may be regarded as sincere has long been a critical obstacle, as the rest of the poem seems to endorse the course of action and movement.

During his lifetime and for generations after his death, Marvell was known primarily for his political career; he was lauded as an upright, incorruptible statesman, his name becoming synonymous with disinterested patriotism. Consequently, his prose satires and polemics, controversial and often severe attacks on government policy, were highly praised. As you know, the crowning of King Charles II marked the beginning of the Restoration period, so named for the restoration of the English monarchy after its abolition by Oliver Cromwell and the execution of Charles's father, King Charles I, in the wake of the English Civil War. While his poetry, when it was considered at all, was judged to be clever and talented, but of secondary importance; throughout the 17th and 18th centuries Marvell's reputation was that of a major statesman but a minor poet. In the 19th century, critical opinion began to shift: critics of Marvell, though few in number, assigned his poetry a greater importance, while his prose works suffered a corresponding decline in popularity. William Hazlitt praised the ''elegance and tenderness in his descriptive poems,'' while decrying Marvell's ''forced, far-fetched method of treating his subject'' in the political satires. 19th century commentators emphasised what they deemed his ''Romantic'' attributes: the theme of the mutability of earthly life in ''To His Coy Mistress,'' the description of nature and solitude in ''The Garden,'' and the sensitive portrayal of human emotion in ''The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Faun.''

In the 20th century, critical appraisal of Marvell's work has undergone a still more radical metamorphosis. Although the satires continue to be generally censured for their heavy-handedness and crudity—considered

of some historical interest, perhaps, but of negligible literary importance—the lyric poetry has come to be seen in an entirely new light, largely due to T. S. Eliot's pivotal essay of 1921. Eliot emphasised for the first time Marvell's Metaphysical wit, the recognition of which has both enlarged and redefined subsequent critical thought. As Marvell is now seen to be closely allied to the Metaphysical school, so also is he viewed as a much more complex and rewarding poet, both thematically and stylistically, than had been previously assumed. ''To His Coy Mistress''.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Name the ode by Andrew Marvell that he wrote for the Lord Protector of England.

Q 2: How was John Milton associated with Andrew Marvell?

Q 3: Comment on Marvell's political commitment.

Q 4: Which are the two most dominant literary contexts of Marvell?

8.4 READING THE POEMS: "TO HIS COY MISTRESS" & "THE GARDEN"

"To His Coy Mistress"

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise

Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble **vault**, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your **quaint** honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul **transpires**
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like **amorous** birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than **languish** in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Thine: yours.
Vault: a burial chamber underground.
Quaint: strange in a pleasant way.
Transpires: exude water vapour.
Amorous: displaying or related to sexual desire.
Languish: lose vigour.

Explanation:

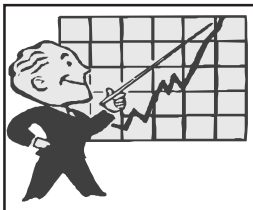
The speaker of the poem is a lover who addresses his lady love about the limitations of time in human life. He intends to convince the modest lady of letting her 'coyness' go so that the two of them can pass their time together by loving one another. He wants the lady to surrender herself to him because he wants to show his extravagant admiration towards her while there is time enough. Her 'coyness' would not have been a 'crime' if 'time' was not a deciding factor for fulfilling his desire. The speaker's ardent wish to establish intimacy with the lady is quite evident from the poem.

The speaker reveals that if the two of them are given time and space, they would "sit down, and think which way/ To walk, and pass our long love's day". He fantasises how she would collect rubies by the side of the Indian Ganges. He, on the other hand, would complain of the distance between them by the tides of the Humber River.

In the above lines, Biblical allusions are used by the speaker to refer to the ever-lasting love he has for his 'coy mistress'. He travels back in time and convinces her that he will keep waiting for her. The metaphor of 'vegetable love' might be an indication to eroticism. However, the poet uses nature and makes a point to refer to the steady growth of vegetables in relation to human feeling or desire. Although the metaphor appears to be somewhat obscure, the speaker expresses that adoring the beauty of the lady, part by part, would take him over thousands of years. That way his love is compared to the natural growth of vegetables that too takes time to grow and attain full maturity. As evident, 'time' is an important element in the poem. The lady deserves such attention and limited time (one human span) would be less to praise her beauty. The speaker desperately wants to please his lady and to achieve her.

The poem abruptly changes the tone. The lover now warns the lady about the limitations of Time. The "deserts of vast eternity" lies open to her where her beauty will no longer be valued. The image of death is starkly drawn where the lady's pride and beauty loses their charm. Even the speaker is aware that his lust for the lady will also turn into 'ashes' with Time. Death/ Time will terminate everything, be it material or otherwise. In one way or the

other, the speaker urges his mistress that while there is time, they should take the opportunity of the moment and live it to the fullest. The emphasis on the word 'now' in the last stanza is in connection to the 'carpe diem' theme of the poem. The speaker offers a resolution by asking his mistress to gather strength and courage so that they could make their way through the 'iron gates of life'. The poem concludes with the argument of the speaker who persuades his mistress about the idea of how lovemaking can enable them to defy the restrictions of Time. As the poem is addressed by an impatient lover, it ends on a note of persuasion.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Who is the speaker of the poem "To His Coy Mistress"?

Q 6: Explain the metaphor 'vegetable love'.

Let us read the second prescribed poem entitled "The Garden".

"The Garden"

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their uncessantlabours see
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow verged shade
Does **prudently** their toils upbraid;
While all flow'rs and all trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose.



Prudently: in a careful and sensible way.

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear!
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men;
Your sacred plants, if here below,

Only among the plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen
So am'rous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name;
Little, alas, they know or heed
How far these beauties hers exceed!
Fair trees! wheres'e'er your barks I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have run our passion's heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
Still in a tree did end their race:
Apollo hunted Daphne so,
Only that she might **laurel** grow;
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
Not as a **nymph**, but for a reed.

What wond'rous life in this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The **luscious** clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The **nectarine** and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons as I pass,
Ensnar'dwith flow'rs, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;



Laurel: aromatic trees of the laurel family with dark green glossy leaves, in particular.
Nymph: refers to a beautiful maiden of mythological nature who is believed to inhabit rivers and woods.
Luscious: extremely pleasing in taste.
Nectarine: a variety of peach with smooth skin and firm yellow flesh.
Ensnar'd: catch in or as if in a trap.
Annihilating: destroying.

The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find,
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide;
There like a bird it sits and sings,
Then **whets**, and combs its silver wings;
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
Waves in its **plumes** the various light.



Whets: sharpen by rubbing.
Plumes: the light horny waterproof structure forming the external covering of birds.

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk'd without a mate;
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skillfulgard'ner drew
Of flow'rs and herbs this dial new,
Where from above the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;
And as it works, th' industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we.
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckon'd but with herbs and flow'rs!

Explanation:

"The Garden" is a beautiful lyric poem by Andrew Marvell where he invokes Nature and praises the blessings of nature. The poem begins on an assertive note on Marvell's inclination towards the rawness of nature and how the poet builds his Garden of Eden. The poet or the speaker's search for spiritual bliss in the garden of nature is evidently portrayed throughout the poem. Compared to the serenity that the speaker finds in his solitude amidst nature, earthly praises and appreciation are transitory. The poem emphasises man's struggle for power and fame by working endlessly for hours without noticing the beauty and serenity that their soul may find in mingling with the nature. The poem opens by reflecting upon this very idea of man ignoring the nature for fulfilment of their material happiness.

However, in the second stanza, the speaker expresses his contentment by living in the garden, far away from the worries and struggles that is prevalent in the society. To the speaker, the society cannot provide him with inner spiritual harmony and oneness with his own soul, which he finds in the garden. Addressing the society as rude, the speaker feels secured among the plants of the garden and enjoys being freed of all humanly associations. He prefers 'delicious solitude' that the garden provides.

Contemplating the beauty of the garden that is green and soothing which also depicts a peaceful state of mind, the speaker reflects on how the 'fond lovers', that is, the couples who are very much engulfed in their romantic disposition tends to overlook the beauty of nature. Metaphorically, this is implied by the line 'cut in these tress their mistress' name'. According to the speaker, this act of the lovers cannot be justified and hence points out them to be 'cruel' lovers. These trees surpass humanly beauty according to the speaker. The speaker also points out how he would have preserved and protected it.

The garden provides the best retreat to the lovers whose passion has fade away. By this, the speaker perhaps refers to the fading away of physical pleasures or intimacy of the ones in love. If we carefully read the

stanza, we tend to understand the personification of "Love". From a mere feeling, love is equalled to a person and the garden is 'his best retreat'. Referring to Greek mythology, the poet explains how even the Gods, Apollo and Pan, ended up in loving trees. Marvell very wittily cites the examples of Apollo and Pan, the Gods and their love for the nymphs Daphne and Syrinx respectively. Mythically seen, the two nymphs are turned into plants by river gods when they were being chased by Apollo and Pan. Hence, it conveys meaning when the speaker relates the stories of the Gods to their love for 'laurel' and 'reed'.

All this while, the speaker talked about his preference for a life in the garden rather than in the society. In this stanza, we are exposed to the wonderful life that the garden offers to the speaker. The tone is pastoral as it describes the richness of nature with its 'ripe apples', 'luscious vine', 'nectarine peach', etc. Here, the poet speaker busily falls for the objects of nature that makes him lively and energetic. He indulges himself by playing and enjoying the richness bestowed upon by the nature. 'Ensnared with flowers', the speaker falls cosily on the grass. This is the amount of luxury that the dwellers indulge in at the garden.

The speaker not only finds pleasure amidst nature, his mind also takes recourse into its own. The speaker's mind attains a state of happiness. The poet describes the mind as an ocean where every object has its own significance and resemblance. The capability of the mind is stressed further to be holding not only the images of objects that exist in the real world but also of objects, which do not exist or are imaginary things. The speaker emphasises on the mind's ability to surpass all worldly ideas by creating its own source of happiness with objects of its imagination, which can better take place in the garden surrounded by the greenery of nature.

Shifting the idea from the body to the soul, the speaker compares his soul to that of a bird. His soul glides effortlessly into the branches of trees and rests there. The commonplace activities of a bird are well captured in this stanza. Like the bird, the speaker's soul rests and sings, combing its 'silver wings' and prepares itself for a longer flight. This is symbolic of the soul's journey from one world to the other.

Akin to the Garden of Eden, when untouched by 'Eve', this garden was also pure. He exclaimed that it would have been better if man could get solitude in this garden. However, it was beyond a human being's fate to wander freely in such a solitary and peaceful atmosphere. Had the garden been available to man alone, he could get two paradises in one, that is, the garden. It implies that solitariness is in itself a paradise. By double paradise, the poet refers to the life in the garden with oneself.

Praising the gardener for his skill, the poet talked about the flowers and herbs and their part in keeping track of time. The poet described that as the different positions of the sun symbolise different zodiac symbols, so does the fragrance of the flowers stand for 'fragrant zodiac run' implying the seasonal blooming of different flowers at different times in a year. Spiritually considered, the gardener may be the God and the 'zodiac run' may be compared to the different phases of a man's life. The bees are like the people who are busy in their lives and 'computes its time'. Just as the bees in the garden, the speaker wishes to live amidst nature in the garden. However, he could still keep track of the time through the 'fragrant' flowers of the garden.



LET US KNOW

As we summarise the poem, it becomes clear that the emphasis is on the wilderness of nature, its exotic life and the peaceful boon it provides to mankind. The garden symbolises nature as well as the Garden of Eden. It is interesting to note that these two poems contradict one another on a point, that is, the emphasis on woman's presence. While Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress" explores the intense passion of a lover towards his lady love, his poem "The Garden" dwells upon the idea of a life adrift from woman in particular and society in general. Markedly different in tone and themes, both the poems reveal Marvell's genius as a poet and his poetic brilliance. Poems like these have established Marvell's reputation as one of the greatest among the metaphysical poets.

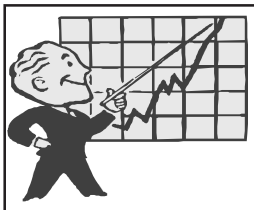
8.5 MARVEL'S POETIC STYLE

Marvell's genius as a satirist was well known and evident from the influence he had on his contemporaries like John Dryden and later on Alexander Pope. During his own time, Marvell's reputation as a political satirist was immense. He was able to establish himself as a leading satirist with political inclinations and was noted for his patriotism. He favoured the Parliament, and raised his voice against courtly corruptions. However, the lyric poems by Marvell were not popularised until the 19th century with the revival of metaphysical poetry.

As a metaphysical poet, Andrew Marvell employed conceits widely in his poems. With reference to the two poems that we have discussed, Marvell's poetic style is vibrant and lively. Marvell designed "To His Coy Mistress" in the 'carpe diem' style, that is, the poet speaker fully took hold of the particular situation or the moment where he argued against the coyness of his lady by asking her to fulfil his sensual regards for her. 'Carpe diem' is a term borrowed from Horace, the great Roman poet which meant "seize the day". In this poem, a contrast pervaded on the one hand there was the lover's desire for his lady and on the other hand, the limitations of Time. Fluctuating in between two contrasting states of mind, the lover however emphasised on living the present moment to the fullest. As Eliot pointed out in his essay "Andrew Marvell", the "high speed, the succession of concentrated images, each magnifying the original fancy" of this poem brings about the 'poetic effect'. Along with Marvell, all the metaphysical poets belonging to the 17th century had a 'unified sensibility' that enabled them to juxtapose thought and feelings into a single whole, as stated by Eliot in his essay titled "The Metaphysical Poetry". "The Garden" is set in a meditative tradition with a dismissing attitude towards the outer world. His use of figures of speech like hyperboles is evident as in, for example, "short and narrow verged Shade", "While all Flow'rs and all Trees do close / To weave the Garlands of repose", etc. Marvell's "The Garden" also has a pastoral quality that brings it in close proximity to the Romantic poets.

It is important to note that Andrew Marvell is perhaps the finest of the Metaphysical Poets after John Donne. He mingles the polish of Jonson

with the wit of Donne, and the subtlety with which he deploys his knowledge of Latin poetry embeds his work profoundly in tradition without lessening its originality. Marvell wrote mostly in tetrameter couplets, and his command of this meter is so complete that it yields a complete command over meaning too-or rather, his poems show how intimately the two skills are connected: a slight metrical nuance or semantic ambiguity, can turn a very ordinary and traditional line into one of striking profundity. T.S. Eliot's famous phrase, "a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace," applies better to Marvell than to anyone else. Marvell's poem "To his Coy Mistress" is certainly the finest carpe diem poem in English, while "The Garden" sums up all the ambivalences of the pastoral tradition in its polished couplets. "No white nor red was ever seen / So amorous as this lovely green" both asserts and smiles at the view that retreat from the world gives us the essence of the experiences we are avoiding. (Source: *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics)*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: In what way, does the poem "The Garden" provide the best retreat to the lovers?

Q 8: How does Marvell begin the poem "The Garden"?

Q 9: What do you understand by 'carpe diem'?

Q 10: Comment on Marvell's Poetic Style.



8.6 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that Andrew Marvell is one of the most noted poets of the last of the 17th century Metaphysical poets. His work incorporates many of the elements associated with the Metaphysical school: The tension of opposing values, metaphorical complexities, logical and linguistic subtleties, and unexpected twists of thoughts and arguments as reflected in the poems about which you have read in the above sections. You have learnt that "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden"—both first

published in *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681)—are characterised by complexity and ambiguous morality, which critics believe both define his talent and account for his appeal. The poems that we have discussed in this unit have helped you to gain a critical insight into the poems of Marvell inculcating in you a fair idea about Marvell's use of conceits, wit, use of literary allusions, etc.



8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" in 1650.

Ans to Q No 2: John Milton helped Marvell in securing the post of an Assistant Latin Secretary and became his friend… …Andrew Marvell saved John Milton from a possible execution by the monarchical government with the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660.

Ans to Q No 3: Marvell lived during a tumultuous period of British history… …was deeply affected by the bitter fighting between the Royalists and Parliamentarians and later by Charles I's execution and Cromwell's assumption of the Protectorate… …some comment that the political inconclusiveness mirrors the indecision found in his poems.

Ans to Q No 4: Duality of spirituality and temporality as reflected in poems like "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure" and "A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body."… …Ambiguity regarding Marvell's real attitude toward the political and social upheavals of the Civil War and Cromwell's assumption of the Protectorate.

Ans to Q No 5: An impatient lover is the speaker of the poem who puts argument against the coyness of his lady by emphasising to live in the present moment and engage in the glory of physical intimacy.

Ans to Q No 6: The metaphor of 'vegetable love' might be an indication to eroticism. However, the poet uses nature and makes a point to refer to the steady growth of vegetables in relation to human feeling or

desire. Although the metaphor appears to be somewhat obscure, the speaker expresses that adoring the beauty of the lady, part by part, would take him over thousands of years. That way his love is compared to the natural growth of vegetables that too takes time to grow and attain full maturity.

Ans to Q No 7: The garden provides the best retreat to the lovers whose passion has fade away. By this, the speaker perhaps refers to the fading away of physical pleasures or intimacy of the ones in love.

Ans to Q No 8: The poem begins on an assertive note on Marvell's inclination towards the rawness of nature and how the poet builds his Garden of Eden. The poet or the speaker's search for spiritual bliss in the garden of nature is evidently portrayed throughout the poem.

Ans to Q No 9: 'Carpe diem' is a term borrowed from Horace- the great Roman poet which meant "seize the day". Marvell designed "To His Coy Mistress" in the 'carpe diem' style, that is, the poet speaker fully took hold of the particular situation or the moment where he argued against the coyness of his lady by asking her to fulfil his sensual regards for her.

Ans to Q No 10: Marvell's use of tetrameter couplets… …his command of this meter is so complete that it yields a complete command over meaning… …his poems show how intimately a slight metrical nuance or semantic ambiguity, can turn a very ordinary and traditional line into one of striking profundity.



8.8 FURTHER READING

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8.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. Write a note on Andrew Marvell as a metaphysical poet.

Q.2. Attempt a critical analysis of the poem "The Garden" by Andrew Marvell.

Q.3. Discuss Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" as a love poem.

Q.4. Discuss the significance of Andrew Marvell in the 17th century poetic tradition by reflecting upon his poetic style and techniques.

Q.5. Analyse the themes of the two poems "To His Coy Mistress" and "The Garden" by Andrew Marvell.

Q.6. Summarise Marvell's views on tyranny and oppression. Whom does he view as the oppressor? Are these political tracts as ambiguous as Marvell's poems?

Q.7. Contrast ''To His Coy Mistress'' with some of William Shakespeare's love lyrics. Identify how both authors utilise or reject irony in their works.

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UNIT 9: JOHN MILTON: PARADISE LOST "BOOK I" (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 John Milton: Life and Works

9.4 Context of the Poem

9.5 Extracts from *Paradise Lost* (Book I)

9.6 Let us Sum up

9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

9.8 Possible Questions

9.1 Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the life and works of John Milton
- locate the proper context in which Milton wrote this poem
- relate the poem to Milton's life and the events of his age
- place the poet in the English poetic tradition
- appreciate the range of issues raised by Milton in the poem

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is based on the life and works of John Milton, and his epic poem *Paradise Lost.* Milton was a controversial writer of his time. Being a strict Puritan, he openly challenged some of the very basic biblical doctrines, particularly Preordination and Free will, which he deals with in *Paradise Lost*. It is a long poem, which elaborately tells the Biblical story of Satan's expulsion from Heaven, his tempting of Eve, and the subsequent expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. Thus, this poem deals with "Man's first disobedience" and the awful consequences of tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree. By his treatment of the subject, Milton wishes to 'assert' 'Eternal Providence' and 'justify the ways of God to men'. By the time you finish reading this unit, you will not only get to know about the life history of Milton,

but will also be able to discuss the various issues raised in this poem by Milton.

9.3 JOHN MILTON: LIFE AND WORKS



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

Born in London on December 9, 1608, into an upper middle class and deeply religious Puritan family, John Milton is one of the most significant early 17th century poets. His father was a well-to-do scrivener who had also keen interest in literature and music. He had inherited from his father puritanical and republican tendencies. In Milton's time, London was a city of narrow lanes and muddy streets. However, soon London became a leading trading centre of the world. At some point, in *Paradise Lost,* when Satan has a glimpse of Eve, Milton very artistically diverts the attention of the readers from the action in the epic and compares Satan's pleasure in Paradise with the pleasure of walking out of the city of London in a summer morning.

Milton was educated at home and at Saint Paul's school which was perhaps the best school during that time for humanistic studies of Latin and Greek. Later he received education from Christ's College, Cambridge. By the time, he went to Cambridge at the age of 17. Milton had already consumed an impressive range of ancient authors and was an expert in Latin composition in prose and verse. His father, in addition to sending his son to an expensive school, hired private tutors to instruct him in subjects like modern languages like French and Italian which were not taught at Saint Paul's. By the time he went to Cambridge, he was proficient in at least three languages—English, Latin and Greek. One significant information is that Milton read voraciously and he always used to burn midnight's oil. While at Cambridge, Milton wrote several Latin Poems including the significant "Ode on the Morning of Christ Nativity". After taking his B.A. in March 1630, Milton took his M.A. in July 1632 and then embarked on another six years of voracious private study first at Hammersmith, upstream from

London on the Thames, and then at Horton, in Buckinghamshire. Milton's parents wanted him to become a priest in the Anglican Church. However, the corruption, conservatism, worldliness and authoritarianism of the Church made him abandon the decision. Milton instead concentrated more on poetry and learning. At the university, Milton was noted for his personal beauty and the strictness of life. After 1638, Milton travelled extensively and spent many months in Italy. He saw himself the scenes which he had read in the ancient poets, and got a chance to converse with scholars. But, he got the news of political troubles in England and he felt it to be his duty to return. Back in London, he undertook the education of two nephews and married the young daughter of a Cavalier Squire. In addition, he kept his eyes on the public affairs of his contemporary London.

You should be interested to know that by the time he became 31 year old, Milton could befriend many intellectuals from Florence, Rome and Naples. During his visit to Florence, he even visited Galileo, the most important scientist in Europe at that time. Milton recalls Galileo with admiration in his *Aeropagitica* and mentions him in *Paradise Lost* every time references to the idea of the Cosmos are made. In Naples, Milton met Giovanni Manso who also happened to be the patron and biographer of the famous Italian epic poet Torquato Tasso whose poem *Jerusalem Liberated* demonstrated things that were very important for Milton. From Tasso, Milton realised that an epic poem in the tradition of Homer and Virgil could be written even in the modern age and that the convention of the epic poem like battles and combats, noble speeches and debates, epic similes, supernatural interventions and invocation of the muse could be adapted even to a Christian subject.

In 1643, he married Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royal family. Soon, Mary found Milton's Puritan austerity and intellectual stature too much for her. A few weeks later, she left him although later, he was reconciled with his wife. Early in 1652, Milton's eyesight weakened and he became totally blind. After few months, his wife Mary Powell too died leaving him three daughters to raise, the oldest of whom was only six. For a devoted teacher and scholar, one who had worked all his life with his eyes, Milton might have thought that his education and talents were now useless without

eyesight. You should note that his sonnet 19 entitled "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent" is a response to this anxiety only.

Milton married Katherine Woodcock in 1656. Both she and the child she bore to him died in 1658. As some scholars think that Milton's sonnet 23 entitled "Methought I Saw My Late Espoused Saint" might have been addressed to Katherine whom Milton never saw. It is both pathetic and interesting to read that Milton 'saw' his wife come back to him in dream. With the death of Katherine, the catastrophes of Milton's middle years were far from over. Living more in relative obscurity Milton gave his nights and mornings to the composition of *Paradise Lost* his magnum opus. In 1663, he married Elizabeth Minshull, who survived him and by 1665, before retiring to the country during the Great Plague of 1665-66, he completed *Paradise Lost*.



LET US KNOW

You should note that after the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, James I was on the English throne. Soon the tension between the King and the Parliament, and between the Anglican Church and the Puritans, grew so intense that it finally led to the Civil War and the execution of James's son Charles I. What is also interesting to note is the fact that this troubling time in England produced excellent pieces of literature one of which is undoubtedly the *Paradise Lost*. This period is also famous for the publication of the *Authorised Version* of the Bible, Shakespeare's last plays, John Donne's Metaphysical Poetry and Ben Johnson's plays.

The Civil War ended with the victory of the Parliament and the execution of the king. When the Commonwealth was established, Milton became Latin Secretary with the official title of 'Secretary for Foreign Tongues'. His main role was to write pamphlets justifying government policies. With the fall of the Commonwealth and the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, he went into retirement. He was living quietly in the outskirts of London. He dedicated to his daughters his great epic *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistics*. He died in 1674. He was buried beside his father in the London church of Saint Giles, Cripplegate.

Critic Throndike states that Milton had great virtues. His life was pure, honest, upright, and independent. With humour, he had intended bitter irony. You should realise that perhaps no other English poet has been so closely involved in the events of his time than John Milton has. Before the publication of his *Paradise Lost* Milton was hardly known as a great poet. He was known more as a political controversialist, as a disestablishmentarian, as a proponent of divorce, as a defender of regicide and a great propagandist under the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. Today, Milton's significance as a writer lies in the *Paradise Lost* if not in anything else.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Briefly reflect on Milton's educational background.

Q 2: Whom did Milton meet in Florence and Naples and what did he learn from them?

Q 3: What did Milton write to address his blindness?

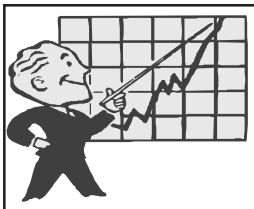
Milton's Works:

Milton's work can be divided into three periods. The first period covers his poetry up to 1640. In his period, he wrote various short poems. His first important work in English is "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity". The poems "On Shakespeare" and "On Arriving at the Age of Twenty three" also came out during this period." Ode on Christ's Nativity" is a dignified lyric. It celebrates the birth of Christ. This poem shows Milton's lifelong preoccupation with the Christian vision of history. Here, Milton uses classical poetic forms to express Christian forms and ideas. The poem indicates the influence of Spenser on Milton. When Milton left Cambridge, went to Horton, and spent six years in study, during this period the companion poems "L'Allegro" (The Happy Man) and "II Penseroso" (The Serious Man), the masque *Comus*, the pastoral elegy "Lycidas", and a number of sonnets including the famous autobiographical sonnet "Twenty Third Birthday" were written. In this poem, Milton expresses his concerns that even at the age of twenty-four he has achieved very little. The lyrics of *L'Allegro* and *II*

Penseroso deal with the delightful sights and sounds of the English countryside. They give the impressions of the poet, first in joyful mood and again, in a mood of thoughtful melancholy. While *Comus* marks an important stage in the development of Milton's thoughts.

Milton's second period, which begins from 1638 to 1660, is a period of prose writing. In this period political writing in prose in the form of pamphlets attacking the existing political social and religious systems were prominent. *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Areopagitica* or *A speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing, The Image Breaker, First Defence of the English People (written in Latin), The Second Defence of the People of England* came out in the second period. This is an important period in Milton's literary career as being the Latin secretary under Cromwell he was compelled to justify certain policies of the Government but at the same time, some of his pamphlets are also inspired by the exiled Royalists. Therefore, Milton in these works, mainly in the *The Second Defence* seeks to defend his position as a writer with many autobiographical information as we get to know that his liking for studies finally damaged his eyesight.

Milton's third period significantly, coincides with the 14 years of the Restoration from 1660 to 1674. Milton completed *Paradise Lost* in this period. Around the year 1658, he began the composition of the great epic *Paradise Lost*. As you have read in the previous subsection, at the time of writing it Milton was totally blind. The failure of the English people to understand the meaning of history and liberty, made Milton begin this poem with a Fall with the loss of liberty by Adam and Eve. Milton claimed that he sacrificed his eyes in the service of liberty and Cromwell's government. Milton's two other works, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were published together in 1671, i.e. three years before the poet's death.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Mention the three periods in Milton's literary career?

Q 5: What connection can you make between the Restoration and the writing of *Paradise Lost*?

9.4 CONTEXT OF THE POEM

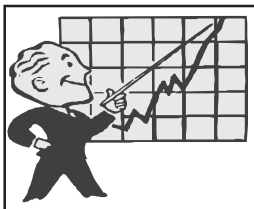
There are at least two possible contexts in which the poem *Paradise Lost* has been written— one is the **religious context**, and the other is the **political context**. The Fall of Man is envisaged as the one central issues inspiring John Milton to write *Paradise Lost*. The whole of the epic opens with the direct reference to the Fall of Man caused by "First disobedience." The consequence of this historic action is a tragic act, resulting in man's loss of eternal grace, bliss and liberty. On the surface level, Eve plucked and ate the fruit of the Forbidden Tree and faced eternal damnation after being seduced and tempted by Satan disguised as a serpent. However, in religious connotation it is a transgression of God's divine order and justice, of man taking the law into his own hands instead of testifying to the supreme and unquestioned power of the Almighty. The Fall of Man does not merely mean triumph of Satan, but it is Milton's objective in *Paradise Lost* to trace the history of man's salvation and redemption, which were important theological issues during his days. Man will be redeemed by the supreme sacrificial act of Christ, the son of God, by his life, actions, suffering and death on earth. Milton's treatment of the Fall yields the obvious Puritanical meaning and warning to Man to understand the basic issues of life, and to pay heed to every action, however trivial it may seem.

However, you must also be aware of the Restoration politics of the 17th century to understand the context of the *Paradise Lost.* Milton lived through a period of politically turmoil and violent change. After the death of Elizabeth I, King James of Scotland became then King of England. However, even after 5 years of reign till 1608, James lacked popularity. It was believed that James had been called to rule by God's command rather than by the will of the people. Subsequently, James indulged in frequent clashes with Parliament over the control of the Government. James also thought that he should control the church through the Bishops. Gradually, there also emerged a group of people called the Puritans who favoured a more austere and purer form of worship of Church organisation rather than the Pope who held more than one living backed by the king. Puritanism soon became an

attitude of mind and along with Parliamentarianism it sought to resist royal absolutism first by constitutional means and then from 1642, by forces of arms. James I's son Charles I quarrelled bitterly with the Parliament until 1629 as he was determined to rule without a Parliament at all. In 1642, he even used forces to crush down the Puritan rebellion under the brilliant leadership of Oliver Cromwell. Subsequently, in 1649 Charles I was beheaded and Cromwell became the ruler of England as the Lord Protector until his death in 1658. However, the Commonwealth became increasingly unpopular, as there was none to replace Cromwell. Therefore, in 1660, the Stuart monarchy had to be restored to the English throne in the person of Charles II. When Milton died in 1674, Charles II was still on the English throne. However, England was moving towards a second revolution after a few years to secure Parliamentary rule in England and making its monarchy more constitutional. Critics would like to make connections with Satan's rebellion against God in *Paradise Lost* with Cromwell's rebellion against the King Charles I.

Epic:

You have already read about epic as a literary form in Course II. This is just a recapitulation of what you already know. An epic is a long narrative poem that presents heroic characters who take part in heroic actions over an extended period. It is centred on a grand and serious subject, is related in a lofty style and has as its protagonist a heroic or divine figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, a nation or the entire human race. The traditional epics also called the Primary epics were written from historical and legendry material which has developed first in the oral tradition of a nation during a period of expansion and warfare. To this group are ascribed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer and the Anglo Saxon *Beowulf*. The Literary or Secondary epics were composed by sophisticated craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the traditional form. Of this kind, Virgil's Latin epic *Aeniad*, served as the chief model for Milton's *Paradise Lost* which in turn became the inspiration for Keats' fragmentary epic *Hyperion* and *Jerusalem*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is an epic?

Q 7: Which are the two contexts of the poem *Paradise Lost*?

9.5 EXTRACTS FROM *PARADISE LOST* (BOOK I)

[Lines quoted from the Oxford Edition of *Paradise Lost*]

In 1667, *Paradise Lost: A Poem Written in Ten Books by John Milton* appeared in quarto. *Book* I of *Paradise Lost* consists of 798 lines. For the convenience of discussion, we have quoted only lines 1-282 of Book I. However, we insist that you read the entire Book I in the Norton Critical edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heavenly muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos: or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first, for heaven hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep tract of hell, say first what cause
Moved our grand parents in that happy state,
Favoured of heaven so highly, to fall off
From their creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
The infernal serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from heaven, with all his host
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,

He trusted to have equalled the most high,
If he opposed; and with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in heaven and battle proud
With vain attempt. Him the almighty power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the omnipotent to arms.
Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf
Confounded though immortal: but his doom
Reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate:
At once as far as angels' ken he views
The dismal situation waste and wild,
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed:
Such place eternal justice had prepared

For those rebellious, here their prison ordained
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far removed from God and light of heaven
As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelmed
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and weltering by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and named
Beelzebub. To whom the arch-enemy,
And thence in heaven called Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

If thou beest he; but O how fallen! how changed
From him, who in the happy realms of light
Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine
Myriads though bright: if he whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
Joined with me once, now misery hath joined
In equal ruin: into what pit thou seest
From what height fallen, so much the stronger proved
He with his thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire arms?yet not for those,
Nor what the potent victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though changed in outward lustre; that fixed mind
And high disdain, from sense of injured merit,
That with the mightiest raised me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of spirits armed
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power opposed
In dubious battle on the plains of heaven,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?

That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power,
Who from the terror of this arm so late
Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath
This downfall; since by fate the strength of gods
And this empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal war
Irreconcilable, to our grand foe,
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven.

So spake the apostate angel, though in pain,
Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair:
And him thus answered soon his bold compeer.

O prince, O chief of many thronèd powers,
That led the embattled seraphim to war
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds
Fearless, endangered heaven's perpetual king;
And put to proof his high supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
Hath lost us heaven, and all this mighty host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as gods and heavenly essences
Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallowed up in endless misery.
But what if he our conqueror (whom I now
Of force believe almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength entire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of war, whate'er his business be
Here in the heart of hell to work in fire,
Or do his errands in the gloomy deep;
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminished, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?
Whereto with speedy words the arch-fiend replied.

Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;
Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.
But see the angry victor hath recalled
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the gates of heaven: the sulphurous hail
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
The fiery surge, that from the precipice
Of heaven received us falling, and the thunder,
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
Let us not slip the occasion, whether scorn,

Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,
And reassembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not what resolution from despair.

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed, his other parts besides
Prone on the flood, extended long and large
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream:
Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays:
So stretched out huge in length the arch-fiend lay
Chained on the burning lake, nor ever thence
Had risen or heaved his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enraged might see
How all his malice served but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
On man by him seduced, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured.
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and rolled
In billows, leave i' the midst a horrid vale.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights, if it were land that ever burned
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire;
And such appeared in hue, as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side
Of thundering Aetna, whose combustible
And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singèd bottom all involved
With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
Of unblessed feet.Him followed his next mate,
Both glorying to have scaped the Stygian flood
As gods, and by their own recovered strength,
Not by the sufferance of supernal power.

Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
Said then the lost archangel, this the seat
That we must change for heaven, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid
What shall be right: furthest from him is best

Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields
Where joy forever dwells: hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; the almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in hell:
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
The associates and copartners of our loss
Lie thus astonished on the oblivious pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy mansion, or once more
With rallied arms to try what may be yet
Regained in heaven, or what more lost in hell?

So Satan spake, and him Beelzebub
Thus answered. Leader of those armies bright,
Which but the omnipotent none could have foiled,
If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
Of battle when it raged, in all assaults
Their surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lie
Grovelling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,
As we erewhile, astounded and amazed,
No wonder, fallen such a pernicious height.



9.6 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that John Milton was an English poet, polemicist, man of letters, and a civil servant for the Commonwealth Regime under Oliver Cromwell. He wrote at a time of religious flux and political upheaval, and he is best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost* which is written in blank verse and which tells the Biblical story of human being's 'Fall'. You have learnt that Milton's poetry and prose reflect deep personal convictions, a passion for freedom and self-determination, and the urgent issues and political turbulence of his day.



9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Milton was educated at home and at Saint Paul's school… …he also went to Christ's College, Cambridge… …privately he also learnt modern languages like French and Italian… …after receiving B.A. and M.A. degrees, Milton embarked on voracious private study and concentrated more on poetry and learning.

Ans to Q No 2: In Florence Milton met Galileo… …Galileo influenced Milton's ideas of the Cosmos which are noticable available in *Paradise Lost…* …In Naples, Milton met Giovanni Manso, the patron and biographer of the famous Italian epic poet Torquato Tasso… …From Tasso, Milton revived the idea of writing one epic.

Ans to Q No 3: He wrote a sonnet entitled "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent"… …By 1652, Milton's eyesight weakened and he became totally blind… …After few months, his wife Mary Powell too died… …Milton thought that his education and talents were now useless without eyesight… …subsequently, he tells about his anxiety through this poem.

Ans to Q No 4: First period upto 1640… …second period begins from 1638 to 1660… …third period starts from 1660 to 1674.

Ans to Q No 5: Milton contextualises his *Paradise Lost* in the experiences of the Restoration… …he addresses why the revolution failed… …Milton could easily understand the failure of the English people to understand the meaning of history and liberty… …Milton began his poem with the idea of a Fall with the loss of liberty by Adam and Eve.

Ans to Q No 6: An epic is a long narrative poem… …it presents heroic characters… …it is centred on a grand and serious subject… …is related in a lofty style… …its protagonist is a heroic or divine figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, a nation or the entire human race.

Ans to Q No 7: One is the **religious context**, and the other is the political context… …Religious context is rooted in Milton's objective to trace

the history of man's salvation and redemption… … political context can be explained in terms of Restoration politics of the 17th century England based on Oliver Cromwell's rejection of Charles I.



9.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1. How do you think the Restoration politics influenced John Milton's poetic self? Give reasons for your answer.

Q 2. Discuss the significance of Milton as a 17th century poet with particular reference to his poem *The Paradise Lost*.

Q 3. Provide a detailed sketch of the religious and political contexts of the poem *Paradise Lost*.

Q 4. Discuss the life and works of Milton.

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UNIT 10: JOHN MILTON: *PARADISE LOST* "BOOK I" (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 The Plot of *Paradise Lost*

10.4 Reading *Paradise Lost* (Book I)

10.5 Milton's Poetic Style

10.6 Let us Sum up

10.7 Further Reading

10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

10.9 Possible Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- retell the Biblical story implicit in the poem *Paradise Lost*
- identify the different aspects of BOOK I of the poem on the basis of your reading
- discuss Milton's Poetic style used in the poem

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit needs to be read in connection with the previous unit. In 1667, *Paradise Lost: A Poem written in Ten Books* by John Milton appeared in quarto without either the "arguments" or the poet's note on the verse. Although, the poem was divided into 10 books, it was substantially complete, only a handful of verses shorter than the later twelve–book version. The second edition of twelve book version which reads *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books* was published in 1674. What is so interesting is the fact that the whole work cannot be considered a continuous narrative as the main story begins in the middle (In Medias Res) and earlier events are presented in terms of dreams, reminiscences and conversations. Milton starts the poem

stating his general purpose to tell the story of men's fall and the consequences that stemmed from it. Let us, in this unit, have a look at the plot of this great epic, its various aspects and Milton's poetic style. However, for our discussion, we shall stick to Book I of the poem as our prescribed text.

10.3 THE PLOT OF *PARADISE LOST*

In 1667, *Paradise Lost: A Poem written in Ten Books* by John Milton appeared in quarto without either the "arguments" or the poet's note on the verse. Although, the poem was divided into ten books, it was substantially complete, only a handful of verses shorter than the later twelve–book version. The second edition of twelve book version which reads *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books* was published in 1674. What is so interesting is the fact that the whole work cannot be considered a continuous narrative as the main story begins in the middle (In Medias Res) and earlier events are presented in terms of dreams, reminiscences and conversations. Milton starts the poem stating his general purpose to tell the story of men's fall and the consequences that stemmed from it. Let us have a look at the plot of this great epic.



LET US KNOW

In Medias Res: It is the practice of beginning an epic or other narrative by plunging into a crucial situation, in the middle of things, that is part of a related chain of events; the situation is an extension of previous events and will be developed in later action. The principle of in medias res is based on the practice of Homer in the Iliad and the Odyssey. The *Iliad*, for example, begins dramatically with the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon during the Trojan War. Though its roots are in ancient epic poems, in medias res can be found today across numerous fiction and nonfiction narrative forms

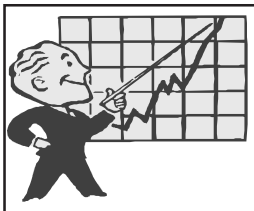
The scene of action is Hell and the time is nine days after the expulsion of Satan and his followers from Heaven. Stupefied, they lie on the burning lake. Actually, they have been hurled into hell following their defeat

in the war in heaven. Satan addresses his comrades and urges them to rise on the wings and get ready for a battle. They may still regain heaven or there may be other worlds to conquer in particular 'Eden' a newly created place for newly created creatures. Subsequently, 'Pandemonium' is created where a council will be held to discuss the future course of action. It is also agreed that Satan will fly off to the new world of men to see if he can somehow strike at God through his new creation—'man'. Satan escapes from Hell, meets 'Sin' and 'Death', voyages through 'Chaos' and finally comes within sight of the Universe hung in space. In Heaven where God deliberates on man's freedom to choose between good and evil and on the complicated philosophical considerations of free will and predestination. Meanwhile Satan reaches the outer surface of the Universe, wanders through various regions, and finally finds his way in. Adam and Eve are enjoying marital happiness in Eden. Satan overhears their discussion on the Tree of Knowledge and perceives the means to compass their Fall. Uriel, the regent of the Sun, who had shown Satan the way, observes his behaviour and reports back to Heaven. God sends Gabriel to defend man. Satan is frustrated in his first attempt to tempt Eve in dream and finally gets expelled from Eden.

God sends Raphael to Eden to enlighten and warn Adam, to tell him about the revolt of Satan against God and how, inspired by pride, ambition, and envy, he persuaded one-tenth of the angelic host into following him, how Satan was defeated by God's Son in a terrible war in Heaven. Raphael informs Adam, how the universe was created, culminating in the creation of man himself. Adam, having asked some questions on astronomy, reveals Milton's knowledge of Galileo's discoveries and proceeds to give his own version of his creation and that of Eve. Raphael departs once again warning Adam. However, the warning goes in vain, as God already knew that it would not be like this.

Eve falls prey to the temptation of Satan now disguised as a serpent. She eats the fruit and induces Adam to do the same. Adam also eats as he is determined to share Eve's fate. They suddenly become intemperate through lust and anger, and blame each other bitterly. The Son of God comes down to Eden to pronounce God's order of expulsion, hard labour and mortality. Both Adam and Eve are reconciled to accept their fate. Meanwhile, triumphal Satan returns to Pandemonium and is welcomed by a universal

hiss in Hell, as all his followers have now become serpents. The last two Books of *Paradise Lost* recounts another epic tradition, that of looking into the future. For example, in **Book XI** God sends Michael to Eden to reveal the future of Adam and his hope of redemption by Christ on the cross. Michael takes Adam to a high mountain and unfolds a vision of the world's history until the flood. While in **Book XII** reconciled to his fate by a promise of ultimate redemption, Adam takes Eve by hand and they pass out of Eden to face the hardships of the outside world of affairs.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What happens in the first few lines of the poem *Paradise Lost*?

Q 2: What happens after Satan tempts Eve?

10.4 READING *PARADISE LOST* (BOOK I)

In this section, we shall try to discuss Book I of *Paradise Lost* line by line. However, we strongly advise that you read all the 12 Books of epic poem from a standard edition like the Oxford Edition of the Book, and enjoy Milton's art of narrating the story of 'Man's Fall'.

Lines 1-26

Milton begins Book I by affirming his general purpose of 'justifying the ways of God to men' and by stating how benevolently, God dealt with men before and after his Fall. To follow the epic convention, he invokes the heavenly muse for assistance in writing his epic in a style that should match the greatness of his grand design. Milton describes his ambition to tell

"Of Man's First disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose moral taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe…" (lines 1-3)

This way from line 1-16, Milton states his epic purpose. He begs the 'Heavenly Muse' to aid his 'adventurous song' while it pursues things 'unattempted yet in prose or rhyme'. In the invocation of the Muse, Milton follows a poetic tradition adopted from antiquity. But, that poetic tradition

has also been given significance. The Heavenly Muse (that is, Urania, originally the Muse of astronomy) is in reality that divine inspiration which revealed the truths of religion to Moses. Milton also refers to Biblical mountains in preference to Olympus, Helicon, Horeb where Moses saw the burning bush, and Sinae where God gave him the Ten Commandments. It is also the spirit of God which dwells in the heart of every believer. Milton's invocations are, therefore, really part of Christian prayers.

Lines 27-298

These lines opens with the scene of a fiery lake in Hell, in which lie, stunned and shocked, Satan and all rebellious angels who, with their leader Satan, have been hurled there from high Heaven by the wrath of God. Milton describes Satan's appearance and reveals his character through his dialogue with Beelzebub or 'Lord of the Flies', his chief lieutenant. Most interestingly, Satan's pride and pre-eminence, even in defeat, are stressed. Milton's own passion for liberty finds expression in Satan's speech–"Here at least we shall be free". Although he is beaten fiercely in the battle with God, his determination to take revenge is so strong that he rouses himself and makes his way to the burning lake. Like a true epic hero, he rallies his broken legion. In line 74, the distance between Hell and Heaven is also stressed. This distance is three times the distance from earth the centre of the Universe. In the address to the multitude of angels in Book I, he assumes the role of an inspiring leader rousing his troops from a state of lethargy by stinging words and filling them with his own great spirit. You can see that even in this moment of defeat and humiliation, the defiant Satan, in his fury, thinks of new war and revenge:

"…What though the field be lost /

All is not lost: the unconquerable will." (lines 105-6)

He gathers his strength to rise from the lake of fire. The rebels must make the most of the dreadful place where they find themselves:

"The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven…

…To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:

Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven." (lines 254-263)

Finally, Satan recognizes the supremacy of Fate and not God who according to him is a tyrant as we find in line 123-24— "Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy / Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heaven." In line 133, Beelzebub also satisfies Satan's pride by denying that God is the ultimate source of authority. Satan speaks for himself by saying that by right, he is equal with God but superior strength has made God victorious and thus powerful enough to impose His will on others. However, in Hell Satan is the king and God will not envy him for his new and horrible kingdom in Hell.

Lines 299-587

The Fallen Angels are listed and equated with the false Gods of the scriptures and the classics. This helps the readers to comprehend them in human terms. In lines 351-5, the Fallen Angels are compared to a carpet of leaves. This is an example of epic simile. They have lost their original names by which they were known in Heaven and are now given new names by which they would be known on earth as pagan Gods, and Idols of the Old Testament and Pagan Deities of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Milton states that even God also allowed the worship of the Fallen Angels as heathen deities as part of his plan to taste mankind and to retain his superior status.

"Then were they known to man by various names,
And various idols through the heathen world." (**l**ines 374-5)

Then, there is a reference to the Pagan Gods who seduced the Israelites from the worship of Jehovah. Line 384, tells that Manasseh set up alters to Heathen Gods in the Temple. Thus, there are references to the biblical places and people to describe how the Fallen Angels were so dominant in society—they had the ability to take any shape of either sex, for their essence is unmixed with any other element in a way the human spirit is contained in a body. This is very interesting. However, in the poem, Satan too assumes many different shapes.

Lines 588-798

To this end, Satan will mobilise his disordered army and established a dark, evil kingdom of his own. His pre-eminence is once again stressed. He urges his comrades to remain determined to unitedly resist God. To his prostrate followers "He called so loud that all the hollow deep/Off Hell resounded" issuing the challenge to take up once more the fight, and assert

their strength and courage. He further encourages them like this: "Awake, arise, or be for even fallen!" They rise promptly in answer to this call of Satan and respond positively to his purpose to attempt further mischief:

"…out-flew/Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze
Far round illumined Hell..."(lines 664-66)

With mighty labours, they speedily build the huge palace called Pandemonium, Hell's capital, under Mammon's direction. And, this is how, Book I comes to an end. The Fallen Angels hold a conference to plan some vast revenge. In this parliament of Fallen Angels and evil spirits, some urge open warfare, to invade Heaven once again. Others remembering the defeat they have suffered are for building and maintaining their own kingdom in Hell. Milton portrays Satan not as a horrible figure of the medieval imagination, damned in Hell. Instead, we experience the darkened splendour and the exploitative power of a Fallen archangel like Satan as Milton writes: "he above the rest/In shape and gesture proudly eminent/Stood like a tower" (lines 589-91)

The question of Free Will is one of the most vexed and theological issues that directed Milton's own course of thinking. Milton was perhaps obsessed with to what extent a man or a Fallen Angel is free to choose his own course of action. Milton remains very firm when he insists that man's power of reason gives him the freedom to choose between good and evil. However, this insistence also brought Milton into conflict with the Presbyterian faction of the Republican party. The Fallen Angels also think about their freedom. They are free to chose their own destiny and Satan upholds leadership not only by heavenly decree but by his own merit, pre-eminence in battle and by free election. A fervent lover of liberty and individual freedom, Milton for a time allied himself with the Presbyterians who condemned Free Will and despised basic equality of all men. His portrayal of Satan as the grand rebel against imposed authority, divine and benevolent though that authority may be, has encouraged the poet, P.B. Shelly to very famously mention that Milton was of the Devil's party without knowing it. This makes one think seriously about the character of Satan. Satan represents a character with whom the reader most readily identifies or sympathises, and Milton makes

Satan hold the centre stage in Book I of *Paradise Lost.* We should not make any mistake in understanding that Satan has many admirable characteristics like courage, leadership, dare devil spirit, imagination to realise the enemy's weakness and the courage to exploit that. He never gives up. He has fought and failed but never stops at anything, he continues to fight through other means. This liking for Satan is called by many as 'antinomism' which means working towards an evil end in a manner worthy of good one.

Critics still debate on Milton's use of two cosmologies, the Ptolemic and the Copernican, in *Paradise Lost.* The changeover from the first to the other affected the whole of Western world an echo of which can be found in John Donne's poems like "First Anniversary" and "And New Philosophy Calls All in Doubt." In the Middle Ages, under the Ptolemic system, it was accepted that man was the centre of the universe and earth as the hub of the entire planetary system. It was also believed that a kind of Devine Love made the world go round. However, the most important aspect of Milton's Cosmology is that he seems to have known the discoveries Galileo had made with his telescope and the validity of the Copernican Cosmology which recognises that the Sun and not the earth as the centre around which the entire planetary system revolves. But, Milton derived literary advantages from the older but erroneous system because the Ptolemic system was more orderly. Milton found it easier to work with, and it made God and man the two ends of a "Great Chain" that also showed that Man could ascend to union with the divinity which was almost impossible in the Copernican system.

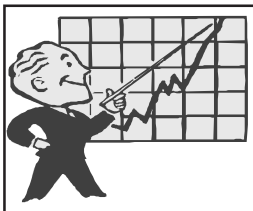


LET US KNOW

Milton's universe contains Heaven (also called 'Empyream'), Chaos, Earth or the World, and Hell. Heaven in *Paradise Lost* is vast, but not infinite. It has battlements, long unbroken walls, and doors that open into Chaos. Before the Fall of Satan, there were only Heaven and Chaos described as "a dark illimitable ocean, without bound".

If you read all the 12 Books of the poem, you will find that it sets out to justify God's ways to mankind and through Jesus Christ, we find an answer

to the problems Milton was dealing with. However, some critics also tend to suggest the poem finally ends up justifying men's ways to God. This idea has been represented through Adam who is also rebellious yet loyal to Eve. Satan is an evil figure, yet his human qualities and energy are really so impressive. Finally, the redemption of the human kind through Christ, the son of God, is foretold to immortalise the connection between God and man.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Why is it that Milton's invocations can be considered part of Christian prayers?

Q 4: What is 'Free Will' in the Miltonic sense?

Q 5: How does Milton portray the character of Satan?

Q 6: How did the idea of cosmology influence Milton while writing the poem?

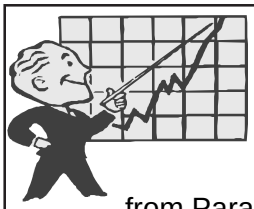
10.5 MILTON'S POETIC STYLE

Different stylistic features characterise Book I of *Paradise Lost*. One of them is the abundance of similes, allusions, references and proper names. They help create an impression of an encyclopaedic sweep, a quality integral to any epic narrative. Consistency is another feature of Book I of the poem. It is at work in the description of different locations, in the portraitures of the Devils, in the speeches of Satan, and over all, in the debate in Hell. More than anything else, Book I has a lot of contemporary significance, a fact that can be immensely helpful in placing the text in its context. Stopford A. Brooke commented on Milton's style like this: "To the greatness of the artist Milton joined the majesty of a clear and lofty character. His poetic style was as stately as his character, and proceeded from it."

You perhaps have noted that *Paradise Lost* is a Literary epic, but the conscious grandeur of the style in which this epic is written gains the status of a Primary epic. Milton in *Paradise Lost* employs a specific language remarkable for sustained dignity. The theme of *Paradise Lost* is lofty and elevated. The first full stop after 16 long lines is not without significance. The other most significant characteristic of the epic style is the use of Epic

Similes, which pervade the whole of Book I. These similes also contain other stylistic elements like Biblical references or classical allusions, and single sentence paragraphs. Here are a few examples although there are many. In lines 351-384, the long list of the devil's leaders is presented in the epic manner and it parallels the list of Homer's warriors and their ships in the *Iliad.* In lines 594-96, the newly risen sun's losing its beams while shining horizontally is compared to Satan's losing his halo. Similarly, in lines 351-5, the Fallen Angels have been compared to a carpet of leaves while lying down and a swarm of locusts when in flight are likened to the barbarian hordes invading Rome. Milton himself insisted that Biblical form and content were superior to classical literature. Although you find that references from the Old Testament predominate in Book I, the prevailing stylistic influence in Book I is Latin vocabulary and grammatical constructions.

However, if you read the other Books of *Paradise Lost* you will notice that within the epic framework, Milton also uses other poetic style-like his argument in long verse, his logical, progressive and convincing changeover from one point of view to the other. Book I contains the poetry of invocation and the poetry of polemic both of which are primarily rhetorical. He intends the poem to have sublimity of subject and grandeur of style. Milton also explores the idea of a long narrative in occasional portraits of his characters. He creates a language and diction, which is quite appropriate to his theme. Let me tell you in this respect, that he is quite different from Wordsworth who was of the opinion that there is no essential difference between the language of the prose and the language of poetry. Milton did not use natural and everyday language even for describing simple and natural objects. His diction is, at all times, the language of a special art, and not of natural expression of feeling. Milton's style consists in the excellence of the similes by which he conveys his meaning in the *Paradise Lost.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What is an Epic Simile? Give some examples from Paradise Lost Book I.

Q 8: What is the difference between Milton and Wordsworth?



10.6 LET US SUM UP

You must have realised by now that Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a landmark text of the 17th century English poetry. From the sections and subsections, you have read in this unit, you must be in a position to connect the life of the poet John Milton to the poem prescribed for you. You have seen how the political and religious concerns of his time found a way into the poem. If Milton is placed in his proper historical period and context, your reading of the text becomes more meaningful. You have also read about the major literary preoccupations and the contradictions of a 17th century poet like Milton. This also helps in comprehending many of his other poems whose contexts are based on specific issues of Milton's society. We have the section "Reading the Text" tried to discuss the poem in terms of the different possible aspects, and you should now be in a position to comment on the range of meanings available in the text of the poem. However, in order to appreciate the poem in its totality, we advise you to read the whole poem and read the important issues addressed by Milton.



10.7 FURTHER READING

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10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: The scene of action is Hell and the time is nine days after the expulsion of Satan and his followers from Heaven… …Satan urges his comrades to get ready for a battle… …They may still regain heaven or 'Eden' a newly created place for newly created creatures… … 'Pandemonium' is created where a council will be held to discuss the future course of action.

Ans to Q No 2: Eve falls prey to the temptation of Satan disguised as a serpent… …eats the fruit and induces Adam to do the same… …Adam also eats as he is determined to share Eve's fate… …become intemperate through lust and anger.

Ans to Q No 3: The Heavenly Muse (that is, Urania, originally the Muse of astronomy) is in reality that divine inspiration which revealed the truths of religion to Moses. Milton also refers to Biblical mountains in preference to Olympus, Helicon, Horeb where Moses saw the burning bush, and Sinae where God gave him the Ten Commandments.



Ans to Q No 4: Free Will is a theological issue… …Milton was obsessed with to what extent to which a man or a Fallen Angel is free to choose his own course of action… …Milton remains very firm when he insists that man's power of reason gives him the freedom to choose between good and evil.

Ans to Q No 5: Milton makes Satan hold the centre stage in Book I of *Paradise Lost…. …* Satan has many admirable characteristics like courage, leadership, dare devil spirit, imagination… …he never gives up… …he continues to fight through other means.

Ans to Q No 6: Milton was influenced by the Ptolemic and the Copernican views of cosmology in *Paradise Lost*… …the Ptolemic system accepted man as the centre of the universe… …the most important aspect of Milton's Cosmology is that he seems to have known the discoveries Galileo, and the validity of the Copernican Cosmology

that recognises that the Sun and not the earth as the centre… …but for Milton, the Ptolemic system was more orderly.

Ans to Q No 7: Epic simile refers to an extended simile often running to several lines, to intensify the heroic stature of the subject and to serve as decoration… …in lines 351-5, the Fallen Angels have been compared to a carpet of leaves while lying down and a swarm of locusts when in flight are likened to the barbarian hordes invading Rome… …in lines 351-384, the long list of the devil's leaders is presented in the epic manner and it parallels the list of Homer's warriors and their ships in the *Iliad.*

Ans to Q No 8: Wordsworth believed that there is no essential difference between the language of the prose and the language of poetry… …Milton did not use natural and everyday language… …his language was always of a special art, and not of natural expression of feeling.



10.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Comment on Milton's choice of the Biblical theme for his epic.

Q 2: How would you relate Milton's *Paradise Lost* with the English political scene of the 17th century?

Q 3: Bring out the significance of Milton's description of Hell in the poem. Outline the cosmology, which underlies the poem.

Q 4: Explore the functions of the epic similes and allusions used by Milton in Book I of *Paradise Lost*. .

Q 5: Comment on the character of Satan as revealed in Book I of *Paradise Lost.*

Q 6: Milton was of the Devil's Party without knowing it. Justify your views.

Q 7: Briefly comment on Milton's poetic style as found in the poem?

Q 8: Explain how John Milton infuses political history with the religious history of the 17th century. Can we say that Satan's revolt replicates Cromwell's against Charles I?

*** ***** ***



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