

## **UNIT - I**

**British Literature III – SHS5011**

## **“Tintern Abbey”**

The full title of this poem is “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798.” It opens with the speaker’s declaration that five years have passed since he last visited this location, encountered its tranquil, rustic scenery, and heard the murmuring waters of the river. He recites the objects he sees again, and describes their effect upon him: the “steep and lofty cliffs” impress upon him “thoughts of more deep seclusion”; he leans against the dark sycamore tree and looks at the cottage-grounds and the orchard trees, whose fruit is still unripe. He sees the “wreaths of smoke” rising up from cottage chimneys between the trees, and imagines that they might rise from “vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,” or from the cave of a hermit in the deep forest.

The speaker then describes how his memory of these “beauteous forms” has worked upon him in his absence from them: when he was alone, or in crowded towns and cities, they provided him with “sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart.” The memory of the woods and cottages offered “tranquil restoration” to his mind, and even affected him when he was not aware of the memory, influencing his deeds of kindness and love. He further credits the memory of the scene with offering him access to that mental and spiritual state in which the burden of the world is lightened, in which he becomes a “living soul” with a view into “the life of things.” The speaker then says that his belief that the memory of the woods has affected him so strongly may be “vain”—but if it is, he has still turned to the memory often in times of “fretful stir.”

Even in the present moment, the memory of his past experiences in these surroundings floats over his present view of them, and he feels bittersweet joy in reviving them. He thinks happily, too, that his present experience will provide many happy memories for future years. The speaker acknowledges that he is different now from how he was in those long-ago times, when, as a boy, he “bounded o’er the mountains” and through the streams. In those days, he says, nature made up his whole world: waterfalls, mountains, and woods gave shape to his passions, his appetites, and his love. That time is now past, he says, but he does not mourn it, for though he cannot resume his old relationship with nature, he has been amply compensated by a new set of more mature gifts; for instance, he can now “look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth; but

hearing oftentimes / The still, sad music of humanity.” And he can now sense the presence of something far more subtle, powerful, and fundamental in the light of the setting suns, the ocean, the air itself, and even in the mind of man; this energy seems to him “a motion and a spirit that impels / All thinking thoughts.... / And rolls through all things.” For that reason, he says, he still loves nature, still loves mountains and pastures and woods, for they anchor his purest thoughts and guard the heart and soul of his “moral being.”

The speaker says that even if he did not feel this way or understand these things, he would still be in good spirits on this day, for he is in the company of his “dear, dear (d) Sister,” who is also his “dear, dear Friend,” and in whose voice and manner he observes his former self, and beholds “what I was once.” He offers a prayer to nature that he might continue to do so for a little while, knowing, as he says, that “Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her,” but leads rather “from joy to joy.” Nature’s power over the mind that seeks her out is such that it renders that mind impervious to “evil tongues,” “rash judgments,” and “the sneers of selfish men,” instilling instead a “cheerful faith” that the world is full of blessings. The speaker then encourages the moon to shine upon his sister, and the wind to blow against her, and he says to her that in later years, when she is sad or fearful, the memory of this experience will help to heal her. And if he himself is dead, she can remember the love with which he worshipped nature. In that case, too, she will remember what the woods meant to the speaker, the way in which, after so many years of absence, they became more dear to him—both for themselves and for the fact that she is in them.

### **Form**

“Tintern Abbey” is composed in blank verse, which is a name used to describe unrhymed lines in iambic pentameter. Its style is therefore very fluid and natural; it reads as easily as if it were a prose piece. But of course the poetic structure is tightly constructed; Wordsworth’s slight variations on the stresses of iambic rhythms is remarkable. Lines such as “Here, under this dark sycamore, and view” do not quite conform to the stress-patterns of the meter, but fit into it loosely, helping Wordsworth approximate the sounds of natural speech without grossly breaking his meter. Occasionally, divided lines are used to indicate a kind of paragraph break, when the poet changes subjects or shifts the focus of his discourse.

### **Commentary**

The subject of “Tintern Abbey” is memory—specifically, childhood memories of communion with natural beauty. Both generally and specifically, this subject is hugely important in Wordsworth’s work, reappearing in poems as late as the “Intimations of Immortality” ode. “Tintern Abbey” is the young Wordsworth’s first great statement of his principle (great) theme: that the memory of pure communion with nature in childhood works upon the mind even in adulthood, when access to that pure communion has been lost, and that the maturity of mind present in adulthood offers compensation for the loss of that communion—specifically, the ability to “look on nature” and hear “human music”; that is, to see nature with an eye toward its relationship to human life. In his youth, the poet says, he was thoughtless in his unity with the woods and the river; now, five years since his last viewing of the scene, he is no longer thoughtless, but acutely aware of everything the scene has to offer him. Additionally, the presence of his sister gives him a view of himself as he imagines himself to have been as a youth. Happily, he knows that this current experience will provide both of them with future memories, just as his past experience has provided him with the memories that flicker across his present sight as he travels in the woods.

“Tintern Abbey” is a monologue, imaginatively spoken by a single speaker to himself, referencing the specific objects of its imaginary scene, and occasionally addressing others—once the spirit of nature, occasionally the speaker’s sister. The language of the poem is striking for its simplicity and forthrightness; the young poet is in no way concerned with ostentation. He is instead concerned with speaking from the heart in a plainspoken manner. The poem’s imagery is largely confined to the natural world in which he moves, though there are some castings-out for metaphors ranging from the nautical (the memory is “the anchor” of the poet’s “purest thought”) to the architectural (the mind is a “mansion” of memory).

The poem also has a subtle strain of religious sentiment; though the actual form of the Abbey does not appear in the poem, the idea of the abbey—of a place consecrated to the spirit—suffuses the scene, as though the forest and the fields were themselves the speaker’s abbey. This idea is reinforced by the speaker’s description of the power he feels in the setting sun and in the mind of man, which consciously links the ideas of God, nature, and the human mind—as they will be linked in Wordsworth’s poetry for the rest of his life, from “It is a beauteous evening, calm and free” to the great summation of the Immortality Ode.

## **The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

An Ancient Mariner, unnaturally old and skinny, with deeply-tanned skin and a "glittering eye", stops a Wedding Guest who is on his way to a wedding reception with two companions. He tries to resist the Ancient Mariner, who compels him to sit and listen to his woeful tale. The Ancient Mariner tells his tale, largely interrupted save for the sounds from the wedding reception and the Wedding Guest's fearsome interjections. One day when he was younger, the Ancient Mariner set sail with two hundred other sailors from his native land. The day was sunny and clear, and all were in good cheer until the ship reached the equator. Suddenly, a terrible storm hit and drove the ship southwards into a "rime" - a strange, icy patch of ocean. The towering, echoing "rime" was bewildering and impenetrable, and also desolate until an Albatross appeared out of the mist. No sooner than the sailors fed it did the ice break and they were able to steer through. As long as the Albatross flew alongside the ship and the sailors treated it kindly, a good wind carried them and a mist followed. One day, however, the Ancient Mariner shot and killed the Albatross on impulse.

Suddenly the wind and mist ceased, and the ship was stagnant on the ocean. The other sailors alternately blamed the Ancient Mariner for making the wind die and praised him for making the strange mist disappear. Then things began to go awry. The sun became blindingly hot, and there was no drinkable water amidst the salty ocean, which tossed with terrifying creatures. The sailors went dumb from their thirst and sunburned lips. They hung the Albatross around the Ancient Mariner's neck as a symbol of his sin. After a painful while, a ship appeared on the horizon, and the Ancient Mariner bit his arm and sucked the blood so he could cry out to the other sailors. The ship was strange: it sailed without wind, and when it crossed in front of the sun, its stark masts seemed to imprison the sun. When the ship neared, the Ancient Mariner could see that it was a ghost ship manned by Death, in the form of a man, and Life-in-Death, in the form of a beautiful, naked woman. They were gambling for the Ancient Mariner's soul. Life-in-Death won the Ancient Mariner's soul, and the other sailors were left to Death. The sky went black immediately as the ghost ship sped away. Suddenly all of the sailors cursed the Ancient Mariner with their eyes and dropped dead on the deck. Their souls zoomed out of their bodies, each taunting the

Ancient Mariner with a sound like that of his crossbow. Their corpses miraculously refused to rot; they stared at him unrelentingly, cursing him with their eyes.

The Ancient Mariner drifted on the ocean in this company, unable to pray. One night he noticed some beautiful water-snakes frolicking at the ship's prow in the icy moonlight. Watching the creatures brought him unprecedented joy, and he blessed them without meaning to. When he was finally able to pray, the Albatross fell from his neck and sank into the sea. He could finally sleep, and dreamed of water. When he awoke, it was raining, and an awesome thunderstorm began. He drank his fill, and the ship began to sail in lieu of wind. Then the dead sailors suddenly arose and sailed the ship without speaking. They sang heavenly music, which the ship's sails continued when they had stopped. Once the ship reached the equator again, the ship jolted, causing the Ancient Mariner to fall unconscious. In his swoon, he heard two voices discussing his fate. They said he would continue to be punished for killing the Albatross, who was loved by a spirit. Then they disappeared. When the Ancient Mariner awoke, the dead sailors were grouped together, all cursing him with their eyes once again. Suddenly, however, they disappeared as well. The Ancient Mariner was not relieved, because he realized that he was doomed to be haunted by them forever.

The wind picked up, and the Ancient Mariner spotted his native country's shore. Then bright angels appeared standing over every corpse and waved silently to the shore, serving as beacons to guide the ship home. The Ancient Mariner was overjoyed to see a Pilot, his boy, and a Hermit rowing a small boat out to the ship. He planned to ask the Hermit to absolve him of his sin. Just as the rescuers reached the ship, it sank suddenly and created a vortex in the water. The rescuers were able to pull the Ancient Mariner from the water, but thought he was dead. When he abruptly came to and began to row the boat, the Pilot and Pilot's Boy lost their minds. The spooked Hermit asked the Ancient Mariner what kind of man he was. It was then that the Ancient Mariner learned of his curse; he would be destined to tell his tale to others from beginning to end when an agonizing, physical urge struck him. After he related his tale to the Hermit, he felt normal again.

The Ancient Mariner tells the Wedding Guest that he wanders from country to country, and has a special instinct that tells him to whom he must tell his story. After he tells it, he is temporarily relieved of his agony. The Ancient Mariner tells the Wedding Guest that better than any

merriment is the company of others in prayer. He says that the best way to become close with God is to respect all of His creatures, because He loves them all. Then he vanishes. Instead of joining the wedding reception, the Wedding Guest walks home, stunned. We are told that he awakes the next day "sadder and...wiser" for having heard the Ancient Mariner's tale.

## **Themes**

### **The Natural World: The Physical**

While it can be beautiful and frightening (often simultaneously), the natural world's power in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is unquestionable. In a move typical of Romantic poets both preceding and following Coleridge, and especially typical of his colleague, William Wordsworth, Coleridge emphasizes the way in which the natural world dwarfs and asserts its awesome power over man. Especially in the 1817 text, in which Coleridge includes marginal glosses, it is clear that the spiritual world controls and utilizes the natural world. At times the natural world seems to be a character itself, based on the way it interacts with the Ancient Mariner. From the moment the Ancient Mariner offends the spirit of the "rime," retribution comes in the form of natural phenomena. The wind dies, the sun intensifies, and it will not rain. The ocean becomes revolting, "rotting" and thrashing with "slimy" creatures and sizzling with strange fires. Only when the Ancient Mariner expresses love for the natural world-the water-snakes-does his punishment abate even slightly. It rains, but the storm is unusually awesome, with a thick stream of fire pouring from one huge cloud. A spirit, whether God or a pagan one, dominates the physical world in order to punish and inspire reverence in the Ancient Mariner. At the poem's end, the Ancient Mariner preaches respect for the natural world as a way to remain in good standing with the spiritual world, because in order to respect God, one must respect all of his creations. This is why he valorizes the Hermit, who sets the example of both prayer and living in harmony with nature. In his final advice to the Wedding Guest, the Ancient Mariner affirms that one can access the sublime, "the image of a greater and better world," only by seeing the value of the mundane, "the petty things of daily life."

### **The Spiritual World: The Metaphysical**

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" occurs in the natural, physical world-the land and ocean. However, the work has popularly been interpreted as an allegory of man's connection to the

spiritual, metaphysical world. In the epigraph, Burnet speaks of man's urge to "classify" things since Adam named the animals. The Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross as if to prove that it is not an airy spirit, but rather a mortal creature; in a symbolic way, he tries to "classify" the Albatross. Like all natural things, the Albatross is intimately tied to the spiritual world, and thus begins the Ancient Mariner's punishment by the spiritual world by means of the natural world. Rather than address him directly; the supernatural communicates through the natural. The ocean, sun, and lack of wind and rain punish the Ancient Mariner and his shipmates. When the dead men come alive to curse the Ancient Mariner with their eyes, things that are natural-their corpses-are inhabited by a powerful spirit. Men (like Adam) feel the urge to define things, and the Ancient Mariner seems to feel this urge when he suddenly and inexplicably kills the Albatross, shooting it from the sky as though he needs to bring it into the physical, definable realm. It is mortal, but closely tied to the metaphysical, spiritual world-it even flies like a spirit because it is a bird.

The Ancient Mariner detects spirits in their pure form several times in the poem. Even then, they talk only about him, and not to him. When the ghost ship carrying Death and Life-in-Death sails by, the Ancient Mariner overhears them gambling. Then when he lies unconscious on the deck, he hears the First Voice and Second Voice discussing his fate. When angels appear over the sailors' corpses near the shore, they do not talk to the Ancient Mariner, but only guide his ship. In all these instances, it is unclear whether the spirits are real or figments of his imagination. The Ancient Mariner-and we the reader-being mortal beings, require physical affirmation of the spiritual. Coleridge's spiritual world in the poem balances between the religious and the purely fantastical. The Ancient Mariner's prayers do have an effect, as when he blesses the water-snakes and is relieved of his thirst. At the poem's end, he valorizes the holy Hermit and the act of praying with others. However, the spirit that follows the sailors from the "rime", Death, Life-in-Death, the voices, and the angels, are not necessarily Christian archetypes. In a move typical of both Romantic writers and painters, Coleridge locates the spiritual and/or holy in the natural world in order to emphasize man's connection to it. Society can distance man from the sublime by championing worldly pleasures and abandoning reverence for the otherworld. In this way, the wedding reception represents man's alienation from the holy - even in a religious tradition like marriage. However, society can also bring man closer to the sublime, such as when people gather together in prayer.



## **La Belle Dame sans Merci**

The speaker notices a knight wandering alone on the road, and asks himself what troubles the knight could possibly have encountered. He appears in a poor physical and emotional state, his skin a deathly pallor. The speaker asks the knight about his troubles. He tells a story about a mysterious woman he met on the hillside. Her wild eyes quickly captivated the knight and, before long, they made love and rode away on the speaker's horse. However, the "faery-like" lady had a few tricks up her sleeve. In her home, a small cave on the hillside, the woman lulled him to sleep. In the knight's dream, he meets kings, princes, and warriors who were also seduced by the woman, only to be left eternally pale and loitering in the woods. He woke up alone, abandoned by the woman, lost like the others.

### **Themes**

#### **The supernatural**

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" deals with supernatural elements. The woman that the knight falls in love with is described as a "faery's child." A faery is a mythical, supernatural being, thus, by describing the woman as a faery's child, Keats brings out the theme of supernatural beings in this poem. Moreover, when the knight describes the time he spent with the woman, he states that she gave him wild food, thereby bringing out the eeriness of this woman.

In the end, the knight finds himself on a cold hillside along with other men who were rapt in the same woman's spell. When they saw the knight, they exclaimed that "La Belle Dame sans Merci / Thee hath in thrall!'. Through the setting and the description of the woman, Keats brings out the supernatural element in this poem.

#### **Erotic Love and Seduction**

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" can also be approached through the tensions between erotic love and seduction, and a ideal, chivalrous partnership. When we first meet the knight, he still has "a lily upon [his] brow," signifying his loyalty the courtly tradition. However, as the color quickly drains from his cheeks, he becomes vulnerable to the woman's charms. With his defenses lowered, he quickly succumbs to his desires. Here, love is immediately associated with sex, fantasy, and the supernatural: they make love in the meadows, ride away on the knight's horse,

and then the woman expresses her love for him in her "strange language," suggesting her words are closer to a magical spell than the truth.

Does the knight, weak and weary in the forest, give in so quickly to the woman because of her supernatural charm, or because he longs for a love that falls outside of the strict, courtly restraints? While the poem explores the pleasures of sexual liberation, it ends cautiously. His love for the woman is briefly requited, but the satisfaction is short-lived: she leaves him the way she found him, "alone and palely loitering" among the hillside.

### **The femme fatale**

The theme of the femme fatale was popular among Romantic poets. The femme fatale is a seductive, beautiful woman who charms and ensnares men, leading them into dangerous situations. The poem clearly depicts the theme of the femme fatale as the woman, described as a "faery's child," makes the knight fall deeply in love with her, which later leads to his deterioration. Moreover, in the end of the poem, it is revealed that the speaker was not the only man to be ensnared by this woman. The dialogue spoken by the pale lovers—"La belle dame sans merci, / Thee hath in thrall"—further highlights the theme of the femme fatale.

### **Robert Browning: "Andrea del Sarto (Called 'The Faultless Painter')"**

This dramatic monologue is narrated by Renaissance painter Andrea del Sarto to his wife Lucrezia. They live in Florence. Andrea begs Lucrezia that they end a quarrel over whether the painter should sell his paintings to a friend of his wife's. He acquiesces to her wish and promises he will give her the money if she will only hold his hand and sit with him by the window from which they can survey Florence.

He admits to feeling a deep melancholy, in which "a common grayness silvers everything" (line 35), and hopes she can pull him from it. He tells her that if she were to smile for him, he would be able to pull himself from such sadness. Andrea considers himself a failure as an artist, both because Lucrezia has lost her "first pride" (line 37) in him and because he has only one talent: the ability to create faultless paintings. Though many praise him for creating flawless reproductions, which he admits he does easily, with "no sketches first, no studies" (line 68), Andrea is aware that his work lacks the spirit and soul that bless his contemporaries Rafael and

Michel Agnolo (Michelangelo). Considering himself only a "craftsman" (line 82), he knows they are able to glimpse heaven whereas he is stuck with earthly inspirations.

He surveys a painting that has been sent to him and notes how it has imperfections he could easily fix, but a "soul" (line 108) he could never capture. He begins to blame Lucrezia for denying him the soul that could have made him great, and while he forgives her for her beauty, he accuses her of not having brought a "mind" (line 126) that could have inspired him. He wonders whether what makes his contemporaries great is their lack of a wife.

Andrea then reminisces on their past. Long before, he had painted for a year in France for the royal court, producing work of which both he and Lucrezia were proud. But when she grew "restless" (line 165), they set off for Italy, where they bought a nice house with the money and he became a less inspired artist. However, he contemplates that it could have gone no other way, since fate intended him to be with Lucrezia, and he hopes future generations will forgive him his choices.

As evidence of his talent, he recalls how Michelangelo once complimented his talent to Rafael, but quickly loses that excitement as he focuses on the imperfections of the painting in front of him and his own failings. He begs Lucrezia to stay with him more often, sure that her love will inspire him to greater achievements, and he could thereby "earn more, give [her] more" (line 207).

Lucrezia is called from outside, by her cousin, who is implicitly her lover, and Andrea begs her to stay. He notes that the cousin has "loans" (line 221) that need paying, and says he will pay those if she stays. She seems to decline the offer and to insist she will leave.

In the poem's final section, Andrea grows melancholy again and insists he does "regret little... would change still less" (line 245). He justifies having fled France and sold out his artistic integrity and praises himself for his prolific faultless paintings. He notes again that Lucrezia is a part of his failure, but insists that she was his choice. Finally, he gives her leave to go to her cousin.

## **Analysis**

"Andrea del Sarto" is unique in Browning's dramatic monologue oeuvre because of its incredibly melancholic tone and pessimistic view of art. The voice, as well-drawn as usual, falls into blank verse, unrhymed, mostly iambic lines, but lacks the charisma of most of Browning's speakers. It's a fitting choice, since the character's basic approach to his dilemma is a rational, dialectical one – he follows several lines of thought in trying to find who or what is to blame for his unhappiness, reasoning through each option until he wears himself out. The piece veers between extreme moods and thoughts without any clear separations, suggesting the rhythm of depressive, desperate thought.

The irony is that his ability to rationalize does not mean he gets anywhere closer to truth, or that he is free from severe psychological hang-ups. First, a bit of history is useful. As with this poem's companion piece, "Fra Lippo Lippi," Browning was inspired towards this subject by Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, which tells of how Andrea was famous in his day for his ability to paint faultless work, though he was later eclipsed in greatness by his contemporaries, compared with whose work his looked vacuous. The other historical detail Browning draws upon is the painter's artistic life: he had painted for the French king for a while, until he and his wife Lucrezia took their bounty and went to Florence, where they used that money to buy a wonderful house.

Andrea's basic dilemma can be boiled down to one that still resonates with artists today: should he pursue high art or commercial art? Obviously, the two are not mutually exclusive, but the pursuit of the former demands great ambition and a willingness to fail, whereas the latter can be produced according to more easily categorizable formula. Andrea acknowledges that an artist ought to be drawn towards the demands of high art, which pushes him to reach for the heavens: "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?" (lines 97-98). And yet he repeatedly chooses to stay Earth-bound, choosing to create paintings for money, to stay within his comfort realm (in which he can create faultless paintings without any difficulty) and thereby maintain a high standard of living.

He spends the monologue seeking the cause of his choice. The most common cause he returns to is his wife, so much so that he wonders whether his more acclaimed contemporaries have perhaps gained in ambition by lacking a wife. It's clear that he is under Lucrezia's thumb, both at the beginning – in which he acquiesces to painting for the sake of her "friend's friend" (line 5)

even as it bothers him – and at the end, when he sends her off to a 'cousin' who is more than likely a lover, and whose debts Lucrezia forces her husband to work in order to pay. And yet, for all the ammunition he has to despise her, Andrea consistently pulls his punches. He accuses her of infidelity, of lack of faith in his art, of not having a "mind," but each time retreats and forgives her everything. Time and time again, he comes back to himself, insisting that he chose her. One question that then emerges is: does his refusal to directly confront her reveal a kindness in him or a weakness, a fear of recognizing his own inability to confront her and by extension himself?

His idea of ambition and great art seems well-founded and falls into a philosophy Browning often espoused, the doctrine of the imperfect. Like many artists before and after him, Browning believed that great art has to be willing to fail, whereas an artist like Andrea, who refuses to compromise his ability for faultless work, can only produce pretty pictures that reveal no depths of humanity. Perhaps the most telling irony of the poem comes in the speaker's continual return to the painting that sits in the room; he constantly notes how its arm is imperfect and how he could fix it, even as he notes that it reveals great soul in its artistry. In other words, while Andrea endeavors to discover the cause of his unhappiness, he reveals to the reader that his inability to take risks lies deep within himself.

It is here that the basic arc of the poem is revealed: ultimately, through his struggle to blame fate and Lucrezia for his unhappiness, Andrea constantly returns to himself as the villain. The dramatic irony is uncharacteristically light in this poem, because Andrea basically knows the answer to his query. Not only did he choose Lucrezia in the first place, but he also chose to escape France with her. Further, he chooses to let her go off to her lover, whom she refers to as her "cousin," and he chooses to continue painting in a way he despises. The deep fear at the heart of the poem is a fear of having no inspired purpose, of having talent but no direction. The heart of such despair is so deep that Andrea will use his every rational facility to avoid looking into that question, and so he instead convinces himself that all will be okay. His greatest weakness is that he barely asks the hardest question: what if all of this means nothing? Perhaps were he to fully confront that question, he would create work that resonated in a deeper way than his current paintings. But he is unwilling or unable to do so, and convinces himself that he chooses the material over the heavenly world, hoping he will be forgiven for future generations for the choice, even as he is deep-down certain that will not be the case.

## **In Memoriam**

Tennyson once believed that men would rise "on stepping stones" (little by little) from death to become something more.

He believed this along with believing in God, whom he presents in the image of someone singing to one harp with many voices. This might strike you as a significant image: music and unity coming from many things or people (remember that reference to music in line 28?).

(FYI: "divers" here means "diverse," not "a group of people who like to dive.")

But now Tennyson is finding it difficult to find a silver lining. His grief is too much.

Plus, people can't transcend time and cut out the grief in between to see what will happen. That would be a nifty trick, though.

Instead, the speaker suggests that we mix love and grief (notice the capital letters—he's personifying these concepts).

It's better, he argues, to be all dark and goth-y and intoxicated with grief than to let time win and gloat that the guy who loved and lost just ended up worn out by it all.

Tennyson is definitely struggling with that old saying, "It's better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all."

Tennyson now addresses an old yew tree that grows over some headstones. Its roots are wrapping around the dead man's head and bones—creepy.

The seasons will allow the tree to flower again, while the clock counts the hours of puny men.

There's a neat juxtaposition here between the longer natural cycles of the tree and the shorter years of men.

Are you starting to get the sense that Tennyson is really emphasizing how puny mere mortals are in the face of not only God, but also nature? Not even the wind or the sun can do much damage to the tree, which will live for a thousand years.

Now Tennyson's using apostrophe to address the tree, speaking directly to it with the super-dramatic Victorian "O."

He continues to address the tree, personifying it by calling it "sullen."

This is a great example of pathetic fallacy, where a writer describes the outside world in a way that reflects his/her own inner mood.

After all, a tree can't really be "sullen" or "stubborn," but we get the sense that Tennyson can, since he's so sad over his friend's death.

And he's grieving so much that he loses the sense of himself and grows bodiless ("incorporate") into the tree. This isn't happening for real, of course. It's just the speaker imagining being one with the tree. Far out, man.

Now Tennyson personifies sorrow, and again uses apostrophe. He characterizes her as a deceitful "priestess" of death.

There's also an oxymoron going on here. She offers the speaker fellowship that is cruel, and sweetness and bitterness in the same breath.

She's also telling him that the stars move "blindly," not because of any purpose. Hmm...does this mean that the speaker is now doubting there is a grand purpose to life?

That seems to be it. He follows this up with Sorrow's statement that Nature is a "phantom" (so, insubstantial), that her music is just a flimsy echo of Sorrow's, and that she has "empty hands." Yep—it certainly seems like Sorrow is trying to get him to believe there's nothing guiding the universe. "Hollow" is important here, too.

Tennyson asks himself if he'll give in to Sorrow, or if he should instead "crush her" upon his mind. He's definitely having a struggle here that's kicked off by the grief he's feeling.

### **Robert Southey's "the Slave Trade"**

The slave trade was a process that took place throughout the 16th-19th centuries. In this process, African Slaves were taken from their home and shipped across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. The African Slaves were forced to work and harvest crops, such as rum and sugar, that were then sent back to Great Britain. From Great Britain, the rum and sugar were sent to Africa in exchange for

slaves, which started the process all over again. Poet Robert Southey writes 6 sonnets pleading with the reader to open their eyes and see that what they are doing to the slaves is inhumane.

Sonnet IV is where the poet expresses the slaves emotions. In the beginning we see the “mercenary tyrants sleep as undisturb’d as Justice!” (Line 1-2). The poet then switches to a view of the male slave, waking up in the middle of the night to cry. The poet tells us that the slave did not groan or cry or whine at all through the day, no matter how tough the work was; he saves his troubles for when he is alone. There is a picture of the slaves who try to stay positive and sing their midnight song, then changes to a sad picture again. The woman that the man loves stands alone at the door and cries for her husband, who she knows will never return to her.

“Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword of Vengeance?” Southey asks at the beginning of

Basically Southey is taking the reader through the thoughts and feelings of a slave, trying to show how vicious it is to treat other humans like this. He does not sugar coat anything, and fully discloses how the slaves are treated.

### **How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.**

The speaker begins the poem by asking the question, “How do I love thee?” and responding with, “Let me count the ways.” One may assume that the speaker is either musing out loud—as one might do when writing a letter—or responding to a lover who may have posed such a question. The entire sonnet addresses this lover, “thee,” who may also be considered the listener. As it is known that Elizabeth Barrett Browning dedicated this poem to her husband, she is assumed to be the speaker addressing her husband.

The speaker describes all the ways in which she loves her husband. Her love is multifaceted, as it can be compared to many aspects of life. Initially, she describes her love as a powerful force of her soul so great in extent that she attempts to measure it in three-dimensional terms. Next, she illustrates a quieter love that sustains her in her daily life, just as the light of the sun illuminates her days. She then compares her love to the experiences of mankind as a whole, portraying her love as free, pure, and humble just as decent people strive to do good in the world without expectation of reward or praise. She then compares her love to the passionate intensity with which she once tried to overcome her past pains as well as the way in which she believed in good things as a child. Lastly, she compares her love to what she once felt for people she used to



revere but have somehow fallen out of her favor. Near the poem's conclusion, she states that her every breath, smile, and tear is a reflection of her love for her husband. The speaker concludes the sonnet by telling her husband that if God will allow her, she will love him even more after she is gone.

### **“When We Two Parted”**

"When We Two Parted" was written in 1816 by the British Romantic poet Lord Byron. It describes the pain and disillusionment that follow a break-up between the speaker and his lover. Though little detail is provided, it's implied that the original relationship was secret—most likely an extramarital affair—and that the speaker now feels bitter upon hearing about his lover having an affair with someone else. Most scholars believe this poem to be about Byron's relationship with Lady Frances Wedderburn-Webster, a married aristocrat with whom Byron had an alleged affair. She was later rumored to have also had an illicit relationship with the Duke of Wellington—a prominent British military leader—which in turn, the theory goes, prompted the writing of this poem.

### **Summary**

When you and I broke up, we were silent and tearful. Our hearts were broken as we tore ourselves apart from each other for years to come. During the break-up, your cheek became pale and cold to the touch—your kiss was even colder. It seems to me that the way we split up predicted the pain and sadness I feel now.

The morning dew sunk coldly into my forehead, foreshadowing the emotional coldness I now sense. All your promises are broken—and people gossip about you. When I hear someone say your name, I feel embarrassed.

Hearing your name is like a funeral bell ringing in my ear—it makes me shiver. Why did I ever love you like I did? People don't know how well I knew you, that in fact I knew you too well. I'll regret that for a long time, more deeply than I can say.

Our relationship was a secret, and so I grieve it secretly—and I hate that you have forgotten me, and that you misled me. If I meet you again after years have gone by, what should I do? I'll greet you silently, and with tears.

Lord George Gordon Byron's "When We Two Parted" is a short lyric poem written in the middle phase of Byron's poetic career. Like many of his poems, it contains biographical references, which the poet attempts to conceal. A key figure in the Romantic movement (an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophical, literary, and artistic movement with a variety of interpretations generally focusing on the love of nature, and the importance of individualism, independence, and imagination), Byron is often lauded more for his political satire and his longer narrative poems and plays than for poems such as "When We Two Parted."

"When We Two Parted" recounts the narrator's feelings of grief, betrayal, and regret

following the end of a clandestine romantic relationship. The poem exemplifies the typical romantic lyric prevalent at this point in Byron's career in that it is deeply introspective and expresses intense personal feelings. It is rooted in the pathos of human nature, rather than in the poet's experience with Nature. The latter is a common characteristic of the lyrical works of Byron's Romantic contemporaries, and thus the poet's work is somewhat atypical for its time.

## POEM

### Stanza 1

A brief lyric consisting of four short stanzas, "When We Two Parted" is a poem about grief and regret in which the first-person speaker mourns not only the loss of a romantic relationship, but also a loss of innocence. From the present tense, the poem looks back in time, to when the affair was ended. It also predicts the results of a possible future meeting of the two former lovers. In the first stanza, the speaker describes the pain of the ending of the romance. The tone in this stanza and throughout the poem is dark and bleak, with words and images that evoke feelings of depression and emptiness: the woman's pale cheek and cold kiss presage the depression now felt by the speaker.

### Stanza 2

In the second stanza, the cold imagery is reinforced with the chilly dew foretelling of the narrator's future feelings of sorrow. Mention is made of the woman's broken promises, and the tarnishing of her reputation. In a letter from 1823, Byron refers to this poem and its relation to his 1813 flirtation with Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster. In 1816, when many scholars

believe the poem was written, Lady Frances was scandalously linked with the Duke of Wellington. Byron had written earlier sentimental sonnets to Lady Frances and in "When We Two Parted" he appears pained to hear of her entanglement with the Duke. When he speaks of the vows she has broken it is possible that he is referring either to her wedding vows to her husband that Lady Frances has betrayed with her affair, or alternatively, promises she may have made to Lord Byron. He discusses as well the shame he feels. This could be viewed as an empathetic response to what his former sweetheart is going through. It could also be interpreted as a judgment upon her. The relationship between Lady Frances and Lord Byron was rumored to not have been consummated sexually, and perhaps the poet is, in his way, scolding her for having actually gone through with an adulterous affair.

### Stanza 3

The third stanza speaks of the secretive nature of the affair, how others did not know of the narrator's relationship with the woman. Again the tone is dark, he hears her name as a "knell," an ominous toll typically associated with death. The speaker reveals the depth of his regret and predicts he is likely to retain such feelings indefinitely. "Why wert thou so dear?", a key line in this stanza, offers the only indication of the nature of the speaker's relationship to the woman. He has not even spoken of loving her; in fact the word love does not appear at all in the poem. But this question "Why wert thou so dear?" is the singular suggestion in the poem of the warm and positive connection the two people had shared.

### Stanza 4

In the fourth and final stanza, the narrator once again refers to the clandestine nature of the affair and his grief at what he perceives to be the woman's betrayal. The future is once more referred to, with the portent that a future meeting with the woman would bring the speaker to tears, and would result in his continued silence. By this he refers not only to the fact that he no longer communicates with his former lover, but to the fact that he has never discussed their secret relationship and he will continue to keep his silence on the matter. This emphasizes the fact that while she may have defamed herself by being caught in another affair, he at least has handled himself like a gentleman by not revealing the truth about their own relationship with one another. The speaker expresses his grief that his lover has forgotten him, and emphasizing his betrayal with the lines "That thy heart could forget, / Thy spirit deceive." It seems unlikely that Byron is

speaking of Lady Frances deceiving her husband. Rather, his betrayal stems from the fact that when Lady Frances did choose to commit adultery it was with another man, the Duke of Wellington, and not with him. The final stanza ends with a reiteration of the "silence and tears" phrase from the first stanza, emphasizing the speaker's sense of being frozen in this moment of betrayal and heartbreak.

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## **UNIT - II**

**British Literature III – SHS5011**

### **Charles Lamb: "A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig"**

The narrator opens the essay by asserting that for a long period of early human history, people did not cook their meat but ate it raw. He claims that this was hinted at in the writings of Confucius, who mentioned an era known as the "cook's holiday," implying that the Chinese did not cook animals prior to his writings. According to the narrator, Confucius' essay goes on to describe how roasting was discovered by Bo-bo, the son of swineherd Ho-ti.

Bo-bo was one day playing with fire, as he was wont to do, and accidentally burned down his family's cottage along with the nine pigs that were trapped in the blaze. While trying to devise an explanation for what happened, Bo-bo was tempted by the smell of the burnt pigs and went to taste them. He found these burnt pigs delicious and could not stop eating them.

Ho-ti was not just upset with Bo-bo for burning down the cottage, but for being enough of a fool to eat the pigs. Bo-bo eventually convinced his father to try the pig, and the father loved it too,

but they agreed to keep the burnt pigs a secret. Yet, more and more frequently, a cottage fire could be seen at Ho-ti's property, at all hours of the day and night. When their secret was found out, Ho-ti and Bo-bo were placed on trial in their town. During this trial, the jurors asked to try the burnt pig in question, and finding it delicious, they decided to let the father and son off.

The judge was outraged, but a few days later there was one of those mysterious fires at his house too. Soon enough, these fires were occurring all around town, and the burnt pig became a cherished food.

Done with this history, the narrator begins singing the praises of roast pig, speaking of the crackling skin and succulent fat. He draws a humorous link between the swine—so often considered a gluttonous, base animal—and the type of man who enjoys eating that swine.

The narrator admits to enjoying all of the fine meats available, from strange fowl to oysters, and sharing them with friends. He then recalls how, as a child, having nothing to offer a beggar on the street, he brought that beggar a plum cake his auntie had baked. He blames the hypocrisy of his giving spirit on the indiscretion. The essay concludes with an anecdote about how ancient people used to sacrifice pigs by whipping them, raising a moral conundrum about enjoying the

meat of that animal. But the narrator seems indifferent to the conundrum, and suggests a tasty sauce made of shallots to eat the pig with.

## **Analysis**

Among the most light-hearted of Lamb's essays is this freewheeling comic dissertation on the pleasure of eating roasted pig. It features a copious use of the literary device of hyperbole, with Lamb going to all sorts of eccentric ends to extol the flavor of roasted pork. The logic of hyperbole is also evident in Lamb's use of a heightened tone to tell the absurd story of how roast pork was discovered after a house fire in China. Once again, Lamb construes literary devices and narrative forms in such a way that he manages to sneak some fiction into his essay work. The fable he constructs speaks to how odd it is that humans eat cooked animals at all.

We can see the tropes of Romanticism on full display in this essay, even though the subject of that Romantic meditation is a curious one. Lamb uses florid language and a subjective voice to give a vivid account of his experience with his subject. But whereas, for instance, fellow Romanticist Henry David Thoreau uses these techniques to describe Walden Pond and meditate on how his experience there reflects on man's participation in society, Lamb makes a culinary delight the subject of his Romantic inquiry, indulging his epicurean side and reflecting on the way good food makes friends out of those who may otherwise be suspicious of one another.

The culinary essay in and of itself is a storied subgenre. The most famous one may be Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," which satirically advocates cooking and eating England's children. A more recent popular example is David Foster Wallace's "Consider the Lobster," which like Lamb's essay explores the delights of eating lobster but, unlike Lamb's, lingers on the inherent cruelty of cooking and eating the animal. In the case of Swift's, Wallace's, and Lamb's essays, there is an essential social component to their discussion of a specific food, and they seek to extract some wisdom about the human condition from practices of cooking and eating.

## **On Depth and Superficiality - William Hazlitt**

### **Introduction**

William Hazlitt is widely regarded as one of the greatest British essayists of all time and possibly the single most gifted writer in that field of prose of the 19th century. What makes this

accomplishment all the more impressive is that though Hazlitt was born in 1778, he would not begin seriously setting himself to writing essays until the second decade of the next century. His most well-known works and the essays on which much of his reputation rests would not be written before his fortieth birthday.

Hazlitt took a circuitous route to finding his talent and carving his niche in the gloried history of British literature. He was gifted artist as his portrait of Charles Lamb on display in the National Gallery proves. He also pursued to one degree or another careers in philosophy, politics, and journalism. He even tried making a go at longer, book-length non-fiction studies, but sales were anemic and his talent was better put to use in short-form works of literary criticism, human observation, and political muckraking of a sort.

The overwhelming bulk of the essays which lent him his eventual lofty reputation were published between 1812 and the year of his death, 1830. Initially appearing in periodicals like *The Examiner*, *New Monthly Magazine*, *Morning Chronicle*, *The Liberal*, *Constable's Edinburgh Magazine* and others. In addition, collections of Hazlitt's voluminous output were collected in special editions even during his lifetime. A 20-volume collection of the complete works of Hazlitt was published in the early 20th century.

If that seems like overkill, it should be noted that it might well be easier to list the subjects and topics on which Hazlitt did not publish an essay than those he did. In addition to a volume devoted to nothing but analysis of Shakespeare's characters and profiles of a number of notable contemporary British figures, the individual essays published on a particular theme is nothing less than breathtaking in scope. If one just considers the various essays which feature the "On \_\_\_\_\_" title, one will be considering Hazlitt's opinions and analysis on "Milton's Versification," "Religious Hypocrisy," "Disagreeable People," "Indian Jugglers," "People with One Idea," "Sitting for One's Picture," and "The Treatment of State Prisoners." Suffice to say there plenty of other topics on which Hazlitt provided opinions so well and entertainingly written that even if you disagree with him, it is still time well spent.

If the sheer breadth and range of interest were all that Hazlitt could provide, he might well have already been forgotten. He is the rare writer who truly seems capable of writing on any subject and making not just the subject itself interesting, but his opinion on it as well.



## SUMMARY

Like all great familiar essayists, Hazlitt had but one subject: himself. Whether writing of books, a prizefight, or the necessity of hating things, his own reaction to his material was his subject. Thus Hazlitt continues to read because of the intriguing quality of mind revealed in the essays, a strange mixture of vivacity and gloom. He said of himself in “On Depth and Superficiality”: “I am not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term a good-natured man. . . .” This assessment may be taken as an understatement. Although cheerful and happy as a child, he passed through some crisis in adolescence that left him gloomy and morose. Irrascibility alone is probably as dull as superficial optimism, but in Hazlitt it was coupled with an amazingly vivacious intellect, stocked with vivid recollections of a staggering number of books, penetrating in vision, and never tired of examining all aspects of existence. That such a mind should be linked with such a temperament perhaps accounts for the remarkable productions of his pen, which in their diversity, penetration, and vivacity of expression are unequaled. His unusual temperament affected several aspects of his essays: it lent a distinctive cast to his style and it made him eschew rigid, formal structure in favor of a more casual organization.

## HOROSCOPE

In *Past and Present*, Thomas Carlyle brings to the task of social commentary the same searching, tenacious, and idiosyncratic analysis that characterized his *Sartor Resartus* (1835). In the earlier work, Carlyle explores his crisis of faith; in *Past and Present*, however, he analyzes the problems of newly industrialized England both by invoking historical events and by dissecting contemporary issues. Carlyle offers his assessment in four books: “Proem,” “The Ancient Monk,” “The Modern Worker,” and “Horoscope.”

Born into a family of resolute Scottish Calvinists, Carlyle was never shy about offering opinions, advice, criticism, and even insults in his essays. While he no longer accepted the tenets of the faith, Carlyle never shed its didactic approach. For this reason, some Victorian critics considered his style indecorous, even grotesque. Readers, however, will find his unpredictability and exaggeration surprisingly modern. Carlyle also inherited from his family an abiding respect for and insistence upon work. Throughout *Past and Present* he demands constructive efforts from all persons “each in their degree” and lambastes the idle gentry, whom he calls “enchanted dilettantes.”

Despite his admiration for the worker and emphasis on solid, practical accomplishment, Carlyle remained scornful of the prevailing Victorian doctrine of utilitarianism. Expounded by Victorian optimists, including Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, utilitarianism sought to achieve “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” Its method required assessing every act, belief, or idea for its usefulness or “utility.” Like the utilitarians, Carlyle had little use for existing religious and social institutions; however, he found their emphasis upon happiness infantile and their confidence in utility exaggerated and mechanistic. To Carlyle, the utilitarians wasted energy in endlessly classifying and codifying human efforts. By contrast, he claimed that, given the appropriate conditions, a genuine “Aristocracy of Talent” would arise to lead society. Such “heroes” deserved to be worshiped; they possessed a vital energy capable of reinventing and ordering society. Later generations have deemed such views authoritarian, even fascistic, but Carlyle’s defense of his position in *Past and Present* defies easy labeling. In book 4, “Horoscope,” Carlyle returns to the subject of true aristocracy, reiterating that it is “at once indispensable and not easily attained.” He implores his readers to use the continuity between past and present to instruct the future. The nineteenth century has a new epic to write, “Tools and the Man” (in contrast to Vergil’s “Arms and the Man”), which must address unprecedented social forces such as industry and democracy. Carlyle warns that the present parliamentary system, rife with corruption and ineptitude, is incapable of organizing labor and managing the working classes. Characteristically, he asserts that these problems can only be solved “by those who themselves work and preside over work,” in other words, a “Chivalry of Labor.” Carlyle’s manifesto replaces a feudal aristocracy with an industrial aristocracy. He exhorts them to abandon an economics of supply and demand and to offer in its place “noble guidance” in return for “noble loyalty.” He stresses that this must be a permanent bond. The freedom afforded by monthlong (versus lifelong) contracts is comparable to the liberty guaranteed by democracy; for Carlyle, it is a worthless commodity. While the bond between laborer and master is sacred to Carlyle, the worker is no mere serf. Carlyle raises the possibility of jointly owned ventures in which the worker’s interests, as well as his efforts, are permanently represented.

The landed gentry remain relevant in Carlyle’s scheme only to the extent that they exert themselves and use their accumulated resources on behalf of their fellow beings. Otherwise, they are scarcely human; they are “living statues” who are pampered, isolated, and absurd. Similarly, the “gifted”—writers, artists, and thinkers—cannot be segregated from those who haul timber or

dig ditches; their position in a “Chivalry of Labor” depends upon active contribution and is no more or less honorable than any other.

For Carlyle, these are the prerequisites for an epic future. Though he has been accused of fascism, Carlyle seeks, ultimately, to reawaken and to recover the connections between persons. (In this respect, his ideas heavily influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson and American Transcendentalism.) Past and Present closes with a memorable avowal of this human interdependence: “Men cannot live isolated: we are all bound together, for mutual good or else for mutual misery, as living nerves in the same body.

### **On Depth and Superficiality**

Like all great familiar essayists, Hazlitt had but one subject: himself. Whether writing of books, a prizefight, or the necessity of hating things, his own reaction to his material was his subject. Thus Hazlitt continues to read because of the intriguing quality of mind revealed in the essays, a strange mixture of vivacity and gloom. He said of himself in “On Depth and Superficiality”: “I am not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term a good-natured man. . . .” This assessment may be taken as an understatement. Although cheerful and happy as a child, he passed through some crisis in adolescence that left him gloomy and morose. Irrascibility alone is probably as dull as superficial optimism, but in Hazlitt it was coupled with an amazingly vivacious intellect, stocked with vivid recollections of a staggering number of books, penetrating in vision, and never tired of examining all aspects of existence. That such a mind should be linked with such a temperament perhaps accounts for the remarkable productions of his pen, which in their diversity, penetration, and vivacity of expression are unequaled. His unusual temperament affected several aspects of his essays: it lent a distinctive cast to his style and it made him eschew rigid, formal structure in favor of a more casual organization.

### **SWEETNESS & LIGHT**

Central to the universal apprehending of “culture” are two elements that Arnold terms “Sweetness and Light,” the title of the first chapter of Culture and Anarchy. These terms, borrowed from Jonathan Swift’s “The Battle of the Books,” are rather vague and abstract, but they suggest an analogy to beauty and truth as they are used by Keats in “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” “Sweetness,” as Arnold uses it, is the apprehension and appreciation of beauty, the aesthetic

dimension in human nature; “Light” is intelligence, brightened by open-mindedness, a full awareness of humankind’s past, and a concomitant capacity to enjoy and appreciate the best works of art, literature, history, and philosophy. They are linked entities, aided in their development within the individual by curiosity and disinterestedness, the essential impartiality that dispels prejudice.

The successful infusing of Sweetness and Light into the individual and general character also requires a coalescence and a balance of two elements that are integral to the history of Western civilization. Arnold terms these elements “Hebraism and Hellenism,” the title of chapter 4. Hebraism is the intellectual and spiritual heritage that is the basis of a Semitic and subsequently Judeo-Christian tradition. It is from the Hebraic influence that Western civilization derives a sense of duty, a work ethic, the value of self-control, and the importance of obedience to the will of God. This value of obedience is enforced by a strictness of conscience, a sense of imperfection rooted in a shared stigma of Original Sin. Hellenism, on the other hand, is an Indo-European rather than a Semitic heritage. Its worldview is largely the opposite of Hebraism. From Hellenism, humanity derives an open “philosophic” perspective, an ardor for thinking and knowing. It is characterized by a striving for an unclouded clarity of mind, an unimpeded play of thought among the questions of the universal order. It stresses a clear intelligence and a seeking to apprehend. In opposition to Hebraic strictness of conscience, Hellenism emphasizes a spontaneity of consciousness, a total intellectual and spiritual freedom in the pursuit of perfection. An inevitable collision, Arnold explains, occurred in the Renaissance, the period when Europe rediscovered Hellenic ideas and perspective. The result of this proximity and subsequent collision was the Hebraistic view that identified Hellenism with “moral indifference and lax rule of conduct.” Hellenism, from the Hebraic perspective, was associated with a loss of spiritual balance, a weakening of moral fiber. The reaction solidified into Puritanism, bringing an end, in the seventeenth century, to the Renaissance in Europe.

Arnold’s leaning in *Culture and Anarchy* is clearly toward Hellenism and away from the dominance of Hebraism; but he recognizes that the path to perfection, the theme and purpose of the book, is to be found in a coalescence of the two, an extracting of the best of both elements. Neither Hebraism nor Hellenism is a law of human development, but each is a contribution. He advocates a reintroduction of Hellenism to counteract the static inflexibility of Puritan influence

in the English character. What is needed is a Hebraic-Hellenic central authority, the establishment of the state as an organ of society's collective "best" self. This authority would be guided by Sweetness and Light and "right reason," Western civilization's Hellenic legacy. Such a central authority would check self-serving, solipsistic individualism, encourage culture, and eventually transform society.

It is important to recognize that Arnold does not offer Culture and Anarchy as an active blueprint for the reconstruction of society. He was, in the strictest sense of the word, apolitical. The book is intended as a spiritual awakening, but spiritual in a far broader context than a strict adherence to the "machinery" of organized religion. There is a better self that lies within collective humanity that Arnold urges his readers to rediscover. To avert anarchy, humankind must pursue culture, must keep as an essential objective the achieving of perfection. In such pursuit alone lies the eventual salvation of humanity and society.

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## **UNIT - III**

### **British Literature III – SHS5011**

## **Prometheus Unbound**

Shelley's reputation is based on the 1820 volume of verse containing *Prometheus Unbound*, a lyrical drama on a cosmic scale that presents more fully than any other poem Shelley's philosophy of life.

In ancient mythology, Prometheus was the smartest of the Titans. He separated humanity from the gods and gave it fire, symbolizing imaginative powers of thought. Jupiter punished him by nailing him to a rock in the Caucasus mountain range. Shelley begins his sequel to Aeschylus's play *Prometheus desm'ts* (date unknown; *Prometheus Bound*, 1777) with Prometheus still in that predicament after some time has elapsed. The Titan describes his ordeal and tells the hopeful Ione and the faithful Panthea that he has secret knowledge of the time when Jupiter will fall from power. Misery has made Prometheus wise. He has realized that hatred makes one like the object of hate, and thus his bondage is primarily internal, self-imposed, and even within his will to end. His hatred for Jupiter having cooled to mere pity, Prometheus wants to gather his sundered strength, reunite with his beloved Asia, and recall the curse that he had cast upon Jupiter. However, he cannot remember it and Nature is too fearful to utter it, so he summons the Phantasm of Jupiter to repeat it. Once divulged, the curse is repudiated by Prometheus, who declares, "I wish no living thing to suffer pain." Earth mistakenly thinks Jupiter's victory is now complete, and Mercury carries that message to Jupiter while Panthea goes in search of Asia. As the first act closes, Prometheus has been regenerated, but the creatures of earth are still slaves to the tyranny of heaven, still split apart by self-hate, blaming themselves for committing sins and abandoning ambitions.

In the five scenes of the second act, Asia learns of Prometheus's change of heart and sets out on a symbolic journey to rejoin him. She passes through the world of sensuous experience to the higher level of ideal Truth and Beauty. That is the realm of Demogorgon, an awesome deity not named in the classical pantheon but invented by Shelley. Gazing into his cave, Asia beholds the deep Truth and finds it imageless. Only the radiant reflection of her own beauty appears. Demogorgon is beyond the forms and shapes and images of things; utterly fundamental, he is sheer process, the inevitability of change. Asia's love has stirred him to action. When she asks him the fateful hour of Jupiter's fall, he responds, "Behold!" This work is no stage play. Shelley

has collapsed the familiar dimensions of time and space into an ideal, eternal moment and place within the human mind.

Jupiter opens the third act by confidently declaring his omnipotence. However, his fate is about to be sealed, for it had been prophesied that his son would return to overthrow him at the destined hour, just as he himself had overthrown Saturn. Indeed, that fatal child is Demogorgon, now making his way toward Jupiter's throne in the Car of the Hour. He arrives and delivers his ultimatum, "Descend, and follow me down the abyss." Thus, Jupiter is deposed and free will is restored to humankind. Hercules releases Prometheus to rejoin Asia. The rest of the drama surveys the regeneration of humanity and nature in the new Promethean age of perfection. Earth sings out the joys of Shelley's apocalypse, when Man as one harmonious soul sports gentle and free in the familiar world made newly beautiful by love. The last word belongs to Demogorgon, who professes Shelley's artistic credo:

To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

### **The Poem**

Prometheus, the benefactor of humankind, is bound to a rocky cliff by order of Jupiter, who is jealous of the Titan's power. Three thousand years of torture Prometheus suffers there, while an eagle continually eats at his heart and he is afflicted by heat, cold, and many other torments. Prometheus nevertheless continues to defy the power of Jupiter. At last Prometheus asks Panthea and Ione, the two Oceanides, to repeat to him the curse he had pronounced upon Jupiter when Jupiter first began to torture him. Neither his mother Earth nor the Oceanides will answer him. At last the Phantasm of Jupiter appears and repeats the curse. When Prometheus hears the words, he repudiates them. Now that he has suffered tortures and finds that his spirit remains unconquered, he wishes pain to no living thing. Earth and the Oceanides mourn that the curse has been withdrawn, for they think that Jupiter has at last conquered Prometheus's spirit.

Then Mercury approaches with the Furies. Mercury tells the captive Prometheus that he will suffer even greater tortures if he does not reveal the secret that he alone knows—the future fate



of Jupiter. Jupiter, afraid, wishes to avert catastrophe by learning the secret, and Mercury promises Prometheus that he will be released if he reveals it. Prometheus, however, refuses. He admits only that he knows Jupiter's reign will come to an end, that Jupiter will not be king of the gods for all eternity. Prometheus says that he is willing to suffer torture until Jupiter's reign ends. Although the Furies try to frighten him by describing the pains they can inflict, they know they have no power over his soul.

The Furies mock Prometheus and humankind, showing Prometheus visions of blood and despair on earth; they show him the Passion of Christ and humanity's disregard for Christ's message of love. Fear and hypocrisy rule; tyrants take the thrones of the world. A group of spirits appear and prophesy that Love will cure the ills of humankind. They prophesy also that Prometheus will be able to bring Love to earth and halt the reign of evil and grief. When the spirits have gone, Prometheus acknowledges the power of Love, for his love for Asia, his wife, has enabled him to suffer pain without surrendering.

While Asia, alone in a lovely valley, mourns for her lost husband, Panthea appears to tell of two dreams she has had. In one, she saw Prometheus released from bondage and all the world filled with sweetness. In the other dream she received only a command to follow. Just then the echoes in the valley break their silence, calling for Asia and Panthea to follow them. The listeners obey and follow the echoes to the realm of Demogorgon, the supreme power ruling the gods. They stop on a pinnacle of rock, but spirits beckon them down into Demogorgon's cave. There Demogorgon tells Asia and Panthea that he will answer any question they put to him. When they ask who made the living world, he replies that God created it. Then they ask who made pain and evil. Prometheus had given knowledge to humankind, but humankind had not eradicated evil with all the gifts of science. They ask whether Jupiter is the source of these ills, the evil master over humanity. Demogorgon answers that nothing that serves evil can be master, for only eternal Love rules all.

Asia asks when Prometheus will gain his freedom and bring Love into the world to conquer Jupiter. Demogorgon then shows his guests the passage of the Hours. A dreadful Hour passes, marking Jupiter's fall; the next Hour is beautiful, marking Prometheus's release. Asia and Panthea accompany the Spirit of the Hour in her chariot and pass by Age, Manhood, Youth, Infancy, and Death into a new paradise.

Meanwhile, Jupiter, who has just married Thetis, celebrates his omnipotence over all but the human soul. Then Demogorgon appears and pronounces judgment on Jupiter. Jupiter cries for mercy, but his power is gone. He sinks downward through darkness and ruin. At the same time, Herakles approaches Prometheus. In the presence of Asia, Panthea, the Spirit of the Hour, and Earth, the captive is set free. Joyfully, Prometheus tells Asia how they will spend the rest of their days together with Love. Then he sends the Spirit of the Hour to announce his release to all humankind. He kisses Earth, and Love infuses all of her animal, vegetable, and mineral parts.

The Spirit of Earth later comes to the cave where Asia and Prometheus live and tells them of the transformation that has come over humankind. Anger, pride, insincerity, and all the other ills of humanity have passed away. The Spirit of the Hour reports other wonders that have taken place. Thrones are empty, and all human beings rule over themselves, free from guilt and pain. People are, however, still subject to chance, death, and mutability, without which they would oversoar their destined place in the world.

Later, in a vision, Panthea and Ione see how all the evil things of the world lay dead and decayed. Earth's happiness is boundless, and even the moon feels the beams of Love from Earth as snow melts on its bleak lunar mountains. Earth rejoices that hate, fear, and pain have left humankind forever. Humanity is now master of its fate and of all the secrets of Earth.

#### Prometheus

Prometheus (proh-MEE-thee-uhs), a Titan punished by Jupiter for having befriended humankind. He is chained to a rocky cliff for three thousand years while eagles tear at his heart, but he will not repudiate the curse he has pronounced on Jupiter. Aided by spirits and gods, Prometheus finally is unbound. His freedom heralds an age of sweetness and light for humankind.

#### Jupiter

Jupiter (JEW-pih-tur), the chief of the gods, who has had Prometheus bound to the cliff. As Prometheus is released, Jupiter loses his power and falls, impotent, into darkness.

#### Demogorgon

Demogorgon (dee-muh-GOHR-guhn), the supreme god and ruler of all gods, who finally reverses prevailing circumstances, thus causing Jupiter's downfall and Prometheus' release from torment.

Panthea

Panthea (PAN-thee-ah) and

Ione

Ione (i-OH-nee), two Oceanids. Panthea and Asia, Prometheus' wife, learn from Demogorgon that Prometheus will be set free. They are Demogorgon's interlocutors as he explains what will come to pass on Earth.

Herakles

Herakles (HEHR-uh-kleez), the hero famous for his strength. Herakles, before spirits friendly to Prometheus, releases the captive from his bonds and torment.

Mercury

Mercury (MUR-kyew-ree), the messenger of the gods, sent by Jupiter to Prometheus to learn from the captive how long Jupiter will reign.

Earth

Earth, Prometheus' mother.

Asia

Asia, Prometheus' wife.

Phantasma of Jupiter

Phantasma of Jupiter (fan-TAZ-mah), a wraith who appears to Prometheus to repeat for him the forgotten curse he had put on Jupiter.

The Furies

The Furies, agents of torment who go with Mercury to punish further the bound Titan.

The Spirit of the Hour

The Spirit of the Hour, one of a group of Hours, figures who move in Demogorgon's realm to show the passing of time by Age, Manhood, Youth, Infancy, and Death. The Spirit of the Hour announces Prometheus' release to all of humankind and describes the pleasant things that will occur on Earth now that the Titan is free

Prometheus Unbound glorifies the rebellious impulse toward freedom in the human spirit. The poem dramatizes and explains Percy Bysshe Shelley's philosophical and religious understanding, which was individual. Prometheus Unbound is Shelley's credo; the impulse to freedom and to rebel against authoritarian orthodoxy is one he valued highly. Shelley's beliefs typify Romanticism. As did such Romantic poets as William Blake, Lord Byron, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Shelley wrote of the freedom of the individual and of the primacy of the imagination. Institutions, social structures, and established belief were, in these poets' views, suspect. For them, evil lay in limitation imposed on the human spirit, which, when free, was good.

Shelley and other Romantic poets also at times did more than write about their beliefs. They were activists in the causes of liberty and reform of their times. Shelley, for example, favored vegetarianism, freedom for Ireland and for slaves, the abolition of monarchy and marriage, the overthrow of established religion, extension of voting rights, empowerment of the working class, and equality for women. He advocated these ideas in his writings, which in his time was a provocative and courageous act. While a student at Oxford he collaborated on a pamphlet titled *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811) and sent copies to all the college authorities and every bishop in the Church of England. He was expelled from the university as a result.

Prometheus Unbound is a play in verse in which the poetry takes precedence over the drama. This work could not easily be brought to the stage; the reader may best realize the drama of the conflicts of gods and allegorical figures with the imagination. From Prometheus's opening oration to the paeanlike ending, the reader is carried along with the delicacy, vivacity, thunder, or choric effect of the lines. The spacelessness of the work is its virtue, and its muted, ethereal effect is lyrically matchless. This work illustrates how well Shelley fashions not only his own invented lyric patterns but also the Pindaric ode, the fourteen-syllable line, the Spenserian stanza, couplets, and infinite variations of the Greek choral effects. Every conceivable meter can be detected; the inversions, the intricately developed rhythm patterns are numerous. A "lyrical flowering" seems an appropriate phrase for the entire work, perhaps Shelley's greatest.

Although Shelley wrote poetry that was intended to generate controversy, and did, his poetry is unmatched in its civilized, urbane, and elegant spirit. His work is still capable of offending those whose political or religious convictions are conservative. Perhaps for this reason, his verse is sometimes wrongly described as being strident or self-centered.

*Prometheus Unbound* uses the well-known Greek myth as a vehicle for Shelley's themes. The playwright Aeschylus's tragedy *Prometheus Bound* (fifth century b.c.e.) was known to Shelley, who could read Greek. In Aeschylus's version of the myth, Prometheus made humanity out of clay. Zeus, envious, retaliated by oppressing human beings and depriving them of fire. Prometheus stole fire from heaven and gave it to humans; he also taught the humans many arts. Aeschylus's play opens with Zeus's causing Prometheus to be chained to a rock for his rebellion and refusing to free him until Prometheus agrees to reveal a secret prophecy with which he has been entrusted.

In the preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley points out that writers in ancient Greece felt free to revise myths as needed for their themes. Shelley states that it is not his purpose to restore the lost play *Prometheus Unbound*, which Aeschylus was supposed to have written after *Prometheus Bound*. Rather, Shelley intends in his play to create a new myth appropriate to Shelley's times. Shelley compares Prometheus with Satan, who, in Christian myth and in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674), rebels (for many Romantics, heroically) against God. "Prometheus," Shelley argues, "is . . . the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends."

Utilizing a greater variety of verse forms than appear together in any major English poem, Shelley celebrates the change of heart in Prometheus by demonstrating that his hero's discovery of love triggers its affirmation throughout the entire universe. Not only is Asia, Prometheus' wife, raised from her cave in the Caucasus and freed to rejoin her husband by the power released through his loving heart, but even the moon and earth dance in their orbits in heavenly sympathy and self-discovery.

Jupiter is overthrown by Necessity, embodied in the terrifying Nemesis of Demogorgon, who rises in the form of Jupiter's own child to cast the tyrannical father from his throne. Demogorgon coincides his judgment on Jupiter with Prometheus' declaration of universal love. Necessity is

not the instrument of revolutionary destruction, determinism, or any rational critique; necessity is the unfolding force of love.

Shelley's great song of liberty and love is his answer to 18th century rationalism as well as a rebuttal of Aeschylus' intention in his unfinished trilogy on the story of Prometheus. The great Greek tragedian had planned to reconcile Prometheus and Zeus (Jupiter) through the Titan's revealing of the secret that the head of the gods feared: that Zeus's son, born of his marriage to Thetis, would overthrow him. Shelley could imagine no such understanding between love and evil. *PROMETHEUS UNBOUND* is one of Romanticism's greatest contributions to the doctrine that "Love Conquers All."

\*Caucasus

\*Caucasus. Mountain range between the Black and Caspian Seas. The mountain to which Prometheus is chained may be seen as an image of permanence, similar to Mont Blanc in Shelley's poem of the same name, externally symbolizing the Titan Prometheus's unalterable refusal to give in to tyranny while he is being punished for having befriended humankind. Even as the mountains endure the extremes of wind and cold, so too does Prometheus endure extremes in torment that include Zeus's eagle, the icy weather, thoughts of unending pain, and the Furies. Paradoxically, however, the mountains alter in appearance over the passage of time.

Prometheus also changes his attitude toward Jove. Suffering over a long period of time leads him from curses and hatred of Jove to wisdom and feelings of pity for the tyrant god. From this pity, hope and love are renewed, echoed in the landscape's alteration from winter to spring and in his wife, Asia's, alteration from passive sleep to active journey through a forest and up to a mountain pinnacle where she enters Demogorgon's cave, the seat of the spirit of revolution. Asia's passionate dialogue with the supreme god Demogorgon ends with the latter's trip to Heaven, where he dethrones his father, Jove. Thus the play comes to the conclusion that Shelley came to after experimenting with other forms of revolution: changing the world through love.

### **The Importance of Being Earnest**

Algernon Moncrieff prepares for the arrival of his aunt, Lady Bracknell, and her daughter, Gwendolen, in his stylish London flat in 1895. His butler, Lane, brings in "Ernest Worthing" (who is listed as "John Worthing" in the cast list and "Jack" in the body of the play, although

both Lane and Algernon believe his name is Ernest), who has just returned from the country. Jack reveals he has come to London to propose to Gwendolen. Algernon ridicules the notion of marriage, and says that before Jack can marry Gwendolen, he has to clear up the issue of Cecily. Algernon orders Lane to bring in Jack's cigarette case and shows the inscription: "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." Jack says his name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country. Algernon says he has always suspected Jack was a "Bunburyist," and now he has proof.

Jack explains that Thomas Cardew, who adopted him, willed Jack to be guardian to his granddaughter, Cecily. Cecily now lives at Jack's place in the country under the guidance of her governess, Miss Prism. Since Jack must maintain a high level of morality to set an example, he needs an excuse to get into town. He has invented a ne'er-do-well younger brother named Ernest who lives in Albany, and whose problems frequently require Jack's attendance. Algernon confesses that he has invented an invalid in the country, Bunbury, for when he needs to get out of town. Jack insists that he is through with "Ernest," but Algernon maintains that he will need him more than ever if he marries.

Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen arrive. Algernon tells Lady Bracknell that he will be unable to attend her dinner tonight, as Bunbury is ill. They go into the music room. Jack confesses his feelings to Gwendolen, and she admits that she likes him, too, especially since she has always wanted to love someone named Ernest. Jack asks if she would still love him if his name were not Ernest. She would not, she maintains. He proposes to her, and she accepts. Lady Bracknell comes in, and Gwendolen informs her of their engagement. Lady Bracknell says that only she or her father can engage Gwendolen, and orders her to wait in the carriage. After she leaves, Lady Bracknell learns from Jack that he was an orphan, found in a handbag on a train. She is aghast and says she will not allow her daughter to marry him. She leaves and Algernon enters.

Jack tells Algernon what happened, and promises to "kill off" his brother Ernest later in the week. Algernon expresses interest in meeting Cecily, but Jack does not want this to happen, as she is young and pretty. Gwendolen returns. She tells Algernon to turn his back. She asks Jack his address in the country, and Algernon slyly writes this down and checks a train timetable. Gwendolen promises to write Jack daily when he returns to the countryside, and Jack escorts her out. Algernon informs Lane that he will be going Bunburying tomorrow.

In the garden at Jack's country house, Miss Prism and Cecily discuss Jack's seemingly serious demeanor; Miss Prism believes it is due to his anxiety over his reckless brother. Dr. Chasuble enters the garden. He and Miss Prism leave for a walk together. Merriman, their butler, announces the arrival of Ernest Worthing. Algernon enters, pretending to be Ernest. He and Cecily briefly discuss his "wicked" reputation. When he learns that Jack will be back Monday afternoon, Algernon announces that he must leave Monday morning. He flirts with Cecily and they exit into the house.

Miss Prism and Chasuble return. She urges him to get married to a mature lady. Jack enters the garden, dressed in black. He tells Miss Prism he has returned earlier than expected, and explains that he is dressed in black for his brother, who died in Paris last night. Jack asks Chasuble if he would christen him this afternoon. He agrees, and Cecily emerges from the house. She tells him that his brother is in the dining room; Jack says he doesn't have a brother. She runs into the house and brings out Algernon. Jack refuses to shake Algernon's hand, but Cecily says that "Ernest" has been telling him about his friend Bunbury, and that someone who takes care of an invalid must have some good in him. Everyone but Jack and Algernon leaves. Jack orders Merriman to get the dogcart, as Ernest has been called back to town (he wants to get rid of Algernon). Jack tells Algernon he must leave, while Algernon expresses an interest in Cecily. Jack exits.

Cecily enters the garden. Merriman tells Algernon that the dogcart is ready, but Cecily says it can wait. Algernon compliments Cecily to her great delight. She then tells Merriman that the dogcart can come back next week. He asks Cecily to marry him, and she points out that they have been engaged for three months. "Ever since [she] heard of Jack's wicked brother Ernest" she has loved him. Cecily shows him the box of letters he "wrote" to her (which she really wrote to herself). She also admits that she loves him because his name is Ernest. Upon promptin, she doubts she would be able to love him were his name Algernon. He says he needs to see Chasuble quickly about "christening...I mean on most important business." Algernon exits.

Merriman announces that Gwendolen has asked to see Mr. Worthing (Jack). Cecily informs him that he has gone off to see Chasuble some time ago, but invites her in. Gwendolen immediately takes to Cecily, but wishes Cecily were not so young and alluring, as "Ernest," despite his moral nature, is still susceptible to temptation. Cecily tells her that she is not Ernest's ward, but his brother Jack's. Rather, she is going to marry Ernest. They compare diary entries. Gwendolen



feels she has the prior claim, since Ernest asked to marry her yesterday. The girls argue and insult each other.

Jack enters the garden, and Gwendolen asks if he is engaged to Cecily; he laughs and denies it. Cecily says the man before them is her Uncle Jack. As Gwendolen goes into shock, Algernon enters, and Cecily calls him Ernest. She asks if he is married to Gwendolen; he denies it. Gwendolen says that his name is Algernon. Cecily is shocked, and she and Gwendolen hold each other and make up. Jack confesses he has no brother Ernest, nor any brother at all. The women retire to the house. Jack is angry at Algernon for stirring up trouble with his Bunburying. They have both arranged for Chasuble to christen them "Ernest" later that evening. Jack tells Algernon to go, but he refuses.

Jack and Algernon join Gwendolen and Cecily inside the country house. The women tell the men their "Christian names are still an insuperable barrier." The men reveal that they are to be re-christened this afternoon, and the couples hug. Lady Bracknell arrives, and Gwendolen informs her of her engagement. Lady Bracknell tells Jack that he may not speak any more to her daughter.

Jack introduces Cecily to Lady Bracknell, and Algernon says that he is engaged to her. Only when Lady Bracknell discovers Cecily has a large personal fortune does she give her consent for their marriage. However, Jack claims that, as his ward, Cecily may not marry without his consent until age 35. He declines to give the necessary consent. He says that he suspects Algernon of being untruthful. He recounts this afternoon's events, in which Algernon impersonated Jack's brother. Jack tells Lady Bracknell that if she consents to his marriage with Gwendolen, he will consent to Cecily's with Algernon. Lady Bracknell refuses and tells Gwendolen to get ready for the train.

Chasuble enters and announces that he is prepared for the christenings. Lady Bracknell refuses to allow Algernon to be baptized, and Jack tells Chasuble that the christenings will not be necessary any more. Chasuble says he will leave, and mentions that Miss Prism is waiting for him. Lady Bracknell asks to see Miss Prism. When she enters, she goes pale upon seeing Lady Bracknell, who accuses her of kidnapping a baby boy from her house 28 years ago. Under Jack's questioning, Miss Prism reveals that she accidentally left the baby in a handbag on the Brighton railway line. Jack leaves excitedly.

Jack returns with this very handbag. Jack tells her he was the baby. Lady Bracknell informs Jack that he is the son of her sister, making him Algernon's older brother. Jack asks Lady Bracknell what his original name was. She says he was named after his father; after locating his name under the Army Lists, they learn his full name is Ernest John Moncrieff. All three couples, Chasuble and Miss Prism, Algernon and Cecily, and Jack and Gwendolen, embrace. Jack tells Lady Bracknell that he has realized, for the first time in his life, "the vital Importance of Being Earnest."

## **Themes**

### **Morals and Morality**

Much of *The Importance of Being Earnest*'s comedy stems from the ways various characters flaunt the moral strictures of the day, without ever behaving beyond the pale of acceptable society. The use of the social lie is pervasive, sometimes carried to great lengths as when Algernon goes "Bunburying" or Jack invents his rakish brother Ernest so that he may escape to the city. Another example is Miss Prism's sudden headache when the opportunity to go walking (and possibly indulge in some form of sexual activity) with Canon Chasuble presents itself.

### **Love and Passion**

One of Wilde's satiric targets is romantic and sentimental love, which he ridicules by having the women fall in love with a man because of his name rather than more personal attributes. Wilde carries parody of romantic love to an extreme in the relationship between Algernon and Cecily, for she has fallen in love with him—and in fact charted their entire relationship—before ever meeting him. She writes of their love in her diary, noting the ups and downs of their affair, including authoring love letters to and from herself.

### **Culture Clash**

The play's action is divided between the city and the country, London and the pastoral county of Hertfordshire. Traditionally, locations like these symbolize different attitudes toward life, contrasting, for example, the corruption of urban living with the simple bucolic pleasures of rural farm life. As Jack says, "when one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring." Wilde's symbolism does not adhere rigidly to

audience expectations, however. Though Jack is more sedate while in the country and more festive when in London, Cecily is far from the innocent she appears (and pretends to be around her guardian). Her handling of her "affair" with Algernon/Earnest shows her to be as competent in romance as any city woman. The trait is seen again when Gwendolen visits. During their tiff over just who gets Earnest (who they believe to be one man), Cecily holds her own and then some against her sophisticated city guest.

### **Language and Meaning**

Those familiar with semiotic theory (signs and symbols) will notice the ways various characters in the play obsess over the signifier. The best example is the desire of both Gwendolen and Cecily to love men named Earnest. They see something mystical in the processing of naming and assume some connection between the word (the signifier) and the person (the signified), that one who is named Earnest will naturally behave earnestly.

### **Freedom**

Both Jack and Algernon struggle to remain free of the restrictions of Victorian convention. Jack does so by maintaining a double identity, being Jack in the country and Earnest in the city. Algernon achieves similar results by inventing an invalid named Bunbury who constantly requires his attentions. This similarity in Algernon and Jack's behavior also offers a clue to the men's true relationship as brothers (further duality is indicated by their respective attractions to very similar women, Gwendolen and Cecily).

### **Characters**

#### **Algernon (Algy) Moncrief**

Algernon (Algy) Moncrief, a young man of fashion and considerable worldly charm. He is a confirmed Bunburyist; that is, he uses an imaginary sick friend's name and condition as an excuse to leave London when he finds his aristocratic aunt, Lady Bracknell, too domineering or her dinner parties too dull. He delights in the artificial, the trivial, and the faddish, and he employs them for his own amusement, the only thing about which, as he insists, he is ever serious. Out for a jape, he poses as John Worthing's fictitious brother Ernest to court his friend's ward, Cecily Cardew. Although genuinely in love, he never abandons his pose of reckless

pretense or his cynically amusing observations on country and city life, manners, fashions, and relatives.

### **John (Jack) Worthing, J.P.**

John (Jack) Worthing, J.P., Algernon Moncrief's friend, who poses as Ernest to win the hand of Algy's cousin, the Honorable Gwendolyn Fairfax, Lady Bracknell's daughter. Also a Bunburyist, he has invented a fictitious brother Ernest, a reprobate who is always getting into scrapes, as an excuse for his frequent visits to London. Jack is serious about most things, especially love. He was a foundling, brought up by a wealthy man who made Jack the guardian of his benefactor's granddaughter, Cecily Cardew. When Jack proposes to Gwendolyn, he arouses Lady Bracknell's displeasure because he cannot trace his family tree. All he knows is that he had been found abandoned in a leather bag left at Victoria Station. Finally, his parentage is traced, and he learns that he is the long-lost son of Lady Bracknell's sister, that Algy is his younger brother, and that his Christian name really is Ernest. This last fact is the most pleasing, for Gwendolyn could not possibly love him under any other name.

### **Lady Augusta Bracknell**

Lady Augusta Bracknell, Algernon Moncrief's aunt, a strong-willed woman of fashion who lives only by society's dictates. The hostess at numerous dinner parties to which her nephew is always invited but that he seldom attends, she dominates the lives of all about her in the same compulsive fashion that makes her move only in the best circles. Although Jack Worthing is an eligible young bachelor of means, she rejects his suit of Gwendolyn and advises him to find some acceptable relatives as quickly as possible. Although witty in her pronouncements, she never deviates into good sense about the artificial world she inhabits with other snobs and pretenders. Her sense of social superiority is punctured when she learns that her daughter's rejected suitor is her own nephew.

### **The Honorable Gwendolyn Fairfax**

The Honorable Gwendolyn Fairfax, Lady Bracknell's daughter. She is in love with Jack Worthing, whose name she believes to be Ernest. Although she moves in the same conventional snobbish social world as her mother, her outlook is whimsical and rebellious. Determined to marry the man of her choice, she is pleased to discover that Worthing, once his parentage is

revealed, can offer her not only the right name and devotion but also family connections and wealth. She accommodates herself to her good fortune.

### **Cecily Cardew**

Cecily Cardew, an eighteen-year-old given to romantic dreams and a diary of fictitious events. She is the ward of Jack Worthing, who had been adopted by her eccentric grandfather. Lovely, determined, and rusticated, she is seemingly without guile, but she is in reality as poised as her newly discovered friend, Gwendolyn Fairfax. As the dupe of her guardian's story that he has a wicked brother named Ernest in the city, she is charmed and won when that supposed roue, as impersonated by Algy Moncrief, appears in the country. She is also pleased that the man she intends to marry is named Ernest. After learning the truth, she decides that she still loves him, in spite of his having such a name as Algernon.

### **Miss Letitia Prism**

Miss Letitia Prism, the forgetful authoress of a sentimental three-volume romance, the governess of Cecily Cardew and, earlier, of Jack Worthing. Bent on marriage herself, she contrives to keep her charge's mind on the serious business of learning inconsequential. In the end, she is revealed as the absent-minded nurse who twenty-eight years earlier had placed the infant Ernest Moncrief in a leather handbag deposited in the cloakroom at Victoria station and the manuscript of her novel in a perambulator.

### **The Reverend Frederick Chasuble, D.D.**

The Reverend Frederick Chasuble, D.D., an Anglican clergyman who is amenable to performing any rite for anyone at any time, in much the same way that he fits one sermon into many contexts. Delightful in his metaphorical allusions, he meets his match in Miss Prism, whose allusions contain direct revelation of matrimonial intent.

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## **UNIT - IV**

**British Literature III – SHS5011**

## **Historical Context of Pride and Prejudice**

During Austen's career, Romanticism reached its peak of acceptance and influence, but she rejected the doctrines of that movement. The romantics celebrated the power of feeling, whereas Austen upheld the supremacy of the rational faculty. Romanticism advocated the abandonment of restraint; Austen was a staunch exponent of the neo-classical belief in order and discipline. The romantics saw in nature a transcendental power to stimulate men to better the existing order of things, which they saw as essentially tragic in its existing state. Austen supported traditional values and the established norms, and viewed the human condition in the comic spirit. The romantics exuberantly celebrated natural beauty, but Austen's dramatic technique decreed sparse description of setting. The beauties of nature are seldom detailed in her work.

Just as Austen's works display little evidence of the Romantic movement, they also reveal no awareness of the international upheavals and consequent turmoil in England that took place during her lifetime. Keep in mind, however, that such forces were remote from the restricted world that she depicts. Tumultuous affairs, such as the Napoleonic wars, in her day did not significantly affect the daily lives of middle-class provincial families. The ranks of the military were recruited from the lower orders of the populace, leaving gentlemen to purchase a commission, the way Wickham does in the novel, and thereby become officers.

Additionally, the advancement of technology had not yet disrupted the stately eighteenth-century patterns of rural life. The effects of the industrial revolution, with its economic and social repercussions, were still most sharply felt by the underprivileged laboring classes. Unrest was widespread, but the great reforms that would launch a new era of English political life did not come until later. Consequently, newer technology that existed in England at the time of *Pride and Prejudice*'s publication does not appear in the work.

## **Introduction**

*Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen's first novel, published in 1813. Some scholars also consider it one of her most mature novels.



Austen began writing *Pride and Prejudice* under the title *First Impressions* in 1796, at the age of twenty-one. She probably wrote the first draft as an epistolary novel, meaning the plot unfolded through an exchange of letters. In 1797, Austen's father offered his daughter's manuscript to a publishing company, but they refused to even consider it.

Shortly after completing *First Impressions*, Austen began writing *Sense and Sensibility*, which was not published until 1811. She also wrote some shorter stories during this time, which she later expanded into full novels. Between 1810 and 1812, Austen rewrote *Pride and Prejudice* for publication. While the original ideas in the novel came from a 21-year-old girl, the final version reflects the literary and thematic maturity of a thirty-five year old woman who had spent years painstakingly drafting and revising, as Austen did with all of her novels. *Pride and Prejudice* is the most popular of Austen's novels.

### **Pride and Prejudice**

*Pride and Prejudice* is set primarily in the county of Hertfordshire, about 50 miles outside of London. The story centers on the the Bennet family, particularly Elizabeth. The novel opens at Longbourn, the Bennet family's estate. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have five children: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia. The family engages in a conversation about Mr. Bingley, "a single man of large fortune" who will be renting the nearby estate of Netherfield Park. Mrs. Bennet sees Mr. Bingley as a potential suitor for one of her daughters.

The Bennets first meet Mr. Bingley and his companions at the Meryton Ball. The townspeople conclude that Mr. Bingley is perfectly amiable and agreeable. Meanwhile, Mr. Bingley takes an immediate liking to Jane Bennet. Mr. Bingley's friend Mr. Darcy, however, snubs Elizabeth. The community decides that Darcy is proud and disagreeable because of his reserve and his refusal to dance. Jane finds Bingley's sisters - Caroline and Mrs. Hurst - to be amiable, but Elizabeth sees them as arrogant.

After further interactions, it becomes evident that Jane and Bingley are interested in one another. However, while Bingley makes his partiality quite obvious, Jane is universally cheerful and somewhat shy. Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend, has a very pragmatic view of marriage. She recommends that Jane make her regard for Bingley more obvious. At the same time, Mr.

Darcy begins to admire Elizabeth, captivated by her fine eyes and lively wit. She, however, remains contemptuous towards him.

When Jane is invited for dinner at Netherfield, Mrs. Bennet refuses to provide her with a carriage, hoping that the impending rainstorm will force her to spend the night there. After getting caught in the rain, Jane actually falls ill and has to remain at Netherfield for many days. Upon hearing that Jane is ill, Elizabeth walks to Bingley's estate through the muddy fields. Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are scandalized by Elizabeth's rumpled appearance, but join Bingley in welcoming her nonetheless.

Elizabeth continues to impress Darcy during her time nursing Jane at Netherfield. However, she remains blind to his affections and continues to see him as a proud and haughty man. Caroline, who hopes to attract Mr. Darcy herself, grows extremely jealous of Elizabeth and mocks her lowly status.

Mrs. Bennet and her younger daughters come to Netherfield to check on Jane, and Elizabeth is mortified by their foolish behavior and complete lack of manners. Bingley's admiration for Jane continues unabated, though, and his affection is evident in his genuine solicitude for her recovery. After Jane recovers, she returns home with Elizabeth.

Meanwhile, a militia regiment is stationed at the nearby town of Meryton, where Mrs. Bennet's sister Mrs. Phillips lives. Mrs. Phillips is just as foolish as Mrs. Bennet. Lydia and Kitty love to stay with their aunt in Meryton so they can socialize (and flirt) with the military officers.

Mr. Collins, Mr. Bennet's distant cousin, writes a letter stating his intention to visit. Collins is in line to inherit Longbourn because the estate has been entailed away from any female children. Mr. Collins is a clergyman, and his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh (who is also Darcy's aunt), has suggested that he find a wife. Therefore, Collins hopes to make amends for the entailment by marrying one of Mr. Bennet's daughters. Mr. Collins proves himself to be a silly man, speaking in long, pompous speeches with an air of solemn formality. The Miss Bennets and Mr. Collins go for a walk to Meryton. On the way, they meet an officer in the regiment named Mr. Wickham. They also run into Mr. Darcy. When Darcy and Wickham see one another, both men become visibly uncomfortable.

Wickham shows an immediate partiality for Elizabeth, and they speak at length over the following days. In one of these conversations, Wickham explains his past with Darcy. Darcy's father had promised that Wickham, his godson, would inherit a good living after the elder man's death. However, Darcy failed to fulfill his father's dying wishes and left Wickham to support himself. Elizabeth, already predisposed to think badly of Darcy, does not question Wickham's account. When Elizabeth tells Wickham's story to Jane, however, Jane refuses to think badly of either Wickham or Darcy, insisting that there must be some misunderstanding.

Bingley hosts a ball at Netherfield. He and Jane spend the whole evening together and their mutual attachment becomes increasingly obvious. However, Mrs. Bennet speaks loudly about their imminent engagement, and Elizabeth notes that Darcy overhears her. Later that evening, Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance and she reluctantly accepts. She does not enjoy it and cannot understand why he asked her. Mr. Collins pays particularly close attention to Elizabeth at the ball, and even reserves the first two dances with her.

The next day, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth. She refuses, but it takes him a while to accept her rejection; he assumes she is simply playing coy (as he believes females do). Mrs. Bennet is extremely angry at Elizabeth for refusing Collins, but Mr. Bennet is glad. Mr. Collins quickly shifts his attentions to Charlotte Lucas. He proposes to Charlotte, and she accepts. Elizabeth is disappointed in her friend for agreeing to marry such a silly man simply for the sake of financial security.

Bingley travels to London for business but plans to return to Netherfield. His sisters and Darcy soon follow him. Soon thereafter, Caroline writes to Jane to say that Bingley has changed his plans and will not return to Netherfield for at least six months. Caroline also informs Jane that she hopes Bingley will marry Darcy's younger sister in order to unite the two families' fortunes. Jane is heartbroken. Elizabeth thinks that Darcy and Bingley's sisters have somehow managed to dissuade Bingley from proposing to Jane.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, Elizabeth's aunt and uncle, come to Longbourn to visit. Noting Jane's sadness, they invite her to stay with them in London for a while. Elizabeth hopes that Jane will run into Bingley while in London. Mrs. Gardiner warns Elizabeth against marrying Wickham because of his poor financial situation. While Jane is in London, Caroline Bingley is extremely rude to her. Jane assumes that Mr. Bingley knows she is in London, and since he does not call,

she decides he no longer cares for her. In Meryton, Wickham suddenly transfers his attentions from Elizabeth to Miss King, a woman who has recently acquired 10,000 pounds from an inheritance.

Elizabeth travels to visit Charlotte (now Mrs. Collins) at her new home in Kent, along with Sir William Lucas and Maria Lucas. On their way, the travelers stop to visit Jane and the Gardiners. Mrs. Gardiner criticizes Wickham's change of affections, but Elizabeth defends him. During her stay in Hunsford, Elizabeth and the others are often invited to dine at Rosings, Lady Catherine's large estate. Lady Catherine is completely arrogant and domineering. After Elizabeth has been at the parsonage for two weeks, Mr. Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam visit Rosings. Elizabeth and Colonel Fitzwilliam get along very well. Darcy also pays a lot of attention to Elizabeth and often visits the parsonage. He also purposely meets her during her daily walks through the nearby gardens. One day, Colonel Fitzwilliam mentions to Elizabeth that Darcy recently saved a close friend from an imprudent marriage. Elizabeth realizes that Fitzwilliam is referring to Bingley and Jane. She is so angry at Darcy that she gives herself a headache, which keeps her from visiting Rosings that night.

Darcy visits Elizabeth while she is alone at the parsonage and confesses that he wants to marry her despite her low family connections. Elizabeth is shocked at his arrogant address and rudely refuses him. She also rebukes him for acting in such an ungentlemanly manner and accuses him of ruining Jane's future happiness and betraying Wickham. Darcy is shocked that Elizabeth has declined his proposal and leaves.

The next day, Darcy finds Elizabeth and hands her a letter. She reads it after he is gone. First, Darcy defends himself for dissuading Bingley from proposing to Jane. Not only were Jane's family connections low, but she did not seem to show any particular preference for Bingley. Darcy then details his side of the Wickham story. Before his death, Darcy's father asked Darcy to provide Wickham with a living, provided Wickham enter the clergy. Wickham, however, did not want to enter the clergy, and asked Darcy for 3,000 pounds to study law. Wickham soon squandered all his money on a dissolute lifestyle and then asked Darcy for another stipend, promising to enter the clergy this time. When Darcy refused, Wickham seduced Darcy's teenage sister, Georgiana. Before they could elope, Darcy intervened and saved Georgiana's honor.

Elizabeth initially refuses to believe Darcy's claims, but comes to consider the possibility as she reflects on Wickham's behavior. She realizes she was inclined to believe Wickham because she was prejudiced against Darcy and because she was flattered by his attention. Soon afterwards, Elizabeth returns home, stopping to collect Jane on the way. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, and Kitty are upset because the regiment is leaving Meryton and moving on to Brighton. Lydia is then invited to join Colonel Forster and Mrs. Forster in Brighton. Elizabeth advises her father to refuse Lydia's request, believing that her sister's frivolous nature will get her in trouble there. However, Mr. Bennet does not heed Elizabeth's advice.

Soon afterwards, Elizabeth goes on vacation with the Gardiners. Their first stop is close to Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's estate. The Gardiners want to take a tour, and Elizabeth only agrees once she learns that Darcy is currently away. During their tour of the estate, Mrs. Reynolds, the Pemberley housekeeper, praises Darcy unequivocally. Elizabeth also expresses some regret that she will never be mistress of this estate. The travelers suddenly run into Darcy, who has arrived early. Surprisingly, Darcy is extremely cordial to both Elizabeth and the Gardiners. He tells Elizabeth that he wants her to meet Georgiana as soon as she arrives the next day. The next morning, Darcy and Georgiana visit Elizabeth and the Gardiners at their inn. Bingley soon joins them, and Elizabeth can see that he still thinks fondly of Jane. Elizabeth and Mrs. Gardiner return the courtesy by visiting Pemberley, where Bingley's sisters treat them quite rudely.

One morning, Elizabeth receives a letter from Jane, announcing that Lydia has eloped with Wickham. Worse yet, the family fears that Wickham does not actually intend to marry her. Jane asks Elizabeth to return home immediately. As soon as Elizabeth reads the letter, Darcy arrives at the inn. In her frantic state, Elizabeth tells him what has happened. Darcy feels partially to blame, since he never publicly exposed Wickham's wickedness.

Elizabeth and the Gardiners depart for Longbourn almost immediately. There, a hysterical Mrs. Bennet has locked herself in her room. They learn from Colonel Forster that Wickham has amassed over 1,000 pounds of gambling debts. The next day, Mr. Gardiner leaves for London to join Mr. Bennet, who is already there looking for Lydia. After many days of fruitless searching, Mr. Bennet returns home, leaving the search in Mr. Gardiner's hands.

Soon, a letter arrives from Mr. Gardiner announcing that Lydia and Wickham have been found. Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia if Mr. Bennet provides her with her equal share of his

wealth. Considering the size of his debts, Mr. Bennet knows that Wickham would never have agreed to marry Lydia for so little money. He concludes that Mr. Gardiner must have paid off Wickham's debts to solidify the deal. After their marriage, Lydia and Wickham visit Longbourn. Lydia is not the least bit remorseful for her conduct. Nevertheless, Mrs. Bennet is very happy to have one of her daughters married. At dinner, Lydia lets it slip to Elizabeth that Darcy was present at her wedding. Curious, Elizabeth writes to Mrs. Gardiner for details. Her aunt explains that it was Darcy who found Lydia and Wickham and paid off Wickham's debts. Mrs. Gardiner believes that Darcy did this out of love for Elizabeth.

Bingley and Mr. Darcy soon return to Netherfield Park, and they call at Longbourn frequently. After several days, Bingley proposes to Jane. She accepts, and the family is very happy. In the meantime, Darcy leaves on a short business trip to London. While he is gone, Lady Catherine comes to Longbourn, furious after hearing a rumor that Elizabeth and Darcy are engaged. She forbids Elizabeth from ever accepting a proposal from Mr. Darcy, but Elizabeth is completely offended and refuses to promise anything. Lady Catherine leaves in a huff.

After returning from his trip, Darcy tells Elizabeth that his affection has not changed. She then reveals that her feelings have changed and that she would be happy to marry him. They discuss how and why their sentiments have changed since Darcy's first proposal. Darcy has since realized he was wrong to act so proudly and place so much emphasis on class differences. Elizabeth, meanwhile, accepts that she was wrong to judge Darcy prematurely and admits that she allowed her vanity to affect her judgment.

Both couples marry. Elizabeth and Darcy live at Pemberley. After living in Netherfield for a year, Jane and Bingley move to an estate near Pemberley. Lydia and Wickham tire of each other eventually, and Lydia keeps asking her sisters for money. Kitty spends most of her time with her two elder sisters, and her education and character begin to improve. Mary remains at home to keep her mother company. Mr. Bennet is very happy that his two oldest daughters have married so happily, and Mrs. Bennet is glad that her daughters have married so prosperously.

## **Jane Eyre**

Published to widespread success in 1847 under the androgynous pseudonym of "Currer Bell," the novel "Jane Eyre" catapulted 31-year-old Charlotte Brontë into the upper echelon of Victorian

writers. With the novel's success, Brontë was able to reveal her true identity to her publisher, and it soon became widely known that the author of the popular novel was a woman. This revelation allowed "Jane Eyre" to achieve an additional level of interest in contemporary society by forcing the public to redefine sexist notions of female authorship. Although the text presumably relates events from the first decade of the 19th century, contemporary Victorians, particularly women, identified with Brontë's critique of Victorian class and gender mores. In particular, Brontë's commentary on the difficult position of a governess during the time period was one with which many woman could relate and empathize.

Written as a first-person narrative, the novel follows the plain but intelligent Jane Eyre in her development as an individual from her traumatic childhood. Brontë describes five specific stages of Jane's growth over the course of the novel: first, her childhood among oppressive relatives; second, her time as a student at Lowood School; third, her months as a governess at Thornfield Manor; fourth, her time with her cousins at Marsh's End; and finally, her return to Thornfield Manor and marriage to Mr. Rochester. As a classic example of the Germanic Bildungsroman, or novel of formation, the text demonstrates Jane's attempts to define her identity against forces of opposition in each of these five stages.

Bronte also employs many elements of the Gothic novel, another classic literary tool from the period, in order to provide a more tragic bent to Jane's struggles. Mr. Rochester's characterization as a stereotypical Byronic hero, the ominously gothic nature of Thornfield Manor, Jane's unrequited love for Mr. Rochester, and the concept of the Madwoman in the Attic--each of these aspects of the novel relate directly to understandings of the Gothic tradition.

Many aspects of the novel are modeled on Brontë's own life. She wrote of the novel, "I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself," and, indeed, the characterization of the protagonist as unattractive was largely unheard of in Victorian literature. Like Jane, Bronte was forced to rely on her intellect in order to achieve economic independence and worked a governess with several different families. She attended the harsh evangelical Cowan Bridge School, on which she modeled Lowood. Moreover, the death of Helen Burns at Lowood is a clear reference to the deaths of Brontë's two sisters during their time at the Cowan Bridge School. John Reed's descent into gambling and alcoholism also parallels the behavior of Brontë's

beloved brother, Patrick Branwell, who took to opium and alcohol and died the year after "Jane Eyre" was published.

The tragic and subdued tone of the novel also speaks to Brontë's personal experiences in a more general way. With the death of her mother and two elder sisters during her childhood, Brontë was forced to cope with a strict and severe father and grow up on the desolate moors of Yorkshire (which appear in all their bleakness in Emily Brontë's novel "Wuthering Heights"). The deaths of her three remaining siblings came in the midst of her literary successes, and Brontë was forced to live in a loveless marriage for the few years before her death. Although "Jane Eyre" ends happily--Jane marries Mr. Rochester--there is still a pervasive sense of darkness and depression in the text as a reflection of Brontë's personal state of mind.

Since its publication, "Jane Eyre" has become a staple of British literature; Brontë's characterization of the honest Jane Eyre, tortured Mr. Rochester, and tragically insane Bertha Mason continue to spur the imagination of readers even today. The novel has inspired several films, as well as numerous literary sequels and prequels (the most famous of which is Jean Rhys' "Wide Sargasso Sea," which describes Mr. Rochester's courtship and marriage to Bertha Mason).

### **Jane Eyre**

Ten-year-old orphan Jane Eyre lives unhappily with her wealthy relatives, the Reed family, at Gateshead. Resentful of the late Mr. Reed's preference for her, Jane's aunt and cousins take every opportunity to neglect and abuse her as a reminder of her inferior station. Jane's only salvation from her daily humiliations is Bessie, the kindly servant who tells her stories and sings her songs. One day, Jane confronts her bullying cousin, John, and Mrs. Reed punishes her by imprisoning her in the "red-room," the room in which her uncle died. Convinced that she sees her uncle's ghost, Jane faints. When she awakes, Jane is being cared for by the apothecary, Mr. Lloyd, who suggests that she be sent off to school. Mrs. Reed is happy to be rid of her troublesome charge and immediately sends Jane to the Lowood School, an institution fifty miles from Gateshead.

Jane soon discovers that life at the Lowood School is bleak, particularly because of the influence of the hypocritical headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, whose cruelty and evangelical self-righteousness results in poor conditions, inedible meals, and frequent punishments for the



students. During an inspection of the school, Mr. Brocklehurst humiliates Jane by forcing to stand on a stool in the middle of the class and accusing her of being a liar. The beautiful superintendent, Miss Temple, believes in Jane's innocence and writes to Mr. Lloyd for clarification of Jane's nature. Although Jane continues to suffer privations in the austere environment, Miss Temple's benevolence encourages her to devote herself to her studies.

While at Lowood, Jane also befriends Helen Burns, who upholds a doctrine of Christian forgiveness and tolerance. Helen is constantly mistreated by Miss Scratcherd, one of the more unpleasant teachers at the school, but maintains her passivity and "turns the other cheek." Although Jane is unable to accept Helen's doctrine completely – her passionate nature cannot allow her to endure mistreatment silently– Jane attempts to mirror Helen's patience and calmness in her own character. During the spring, an outbreak of typhus fever ravages the school, and Helen dies of consumption in Jane's arms. The deaths by typhus alert the benefactors to the school's terrible conditions, and it is revealed that Mr. Brocklehurst has been embezzling school funds in order to provide for his own luxurious lifestyle. After Mr. Brocklehurst's removal, Jane's time at Lowood is spent more happily and she excels as a student for six years and as a teacher for two.

Despite her security at Lowood, Jane is dissatisfied and yearns for new adventures. She accepts a position as governess at Thornfield Manor and is responsible for teaching a vivacious French girl named Adèle. In addition to Adèle, Jane spends much of her time at Thornfield with Mrs. Fairfax, the elderly housekeeper who runs the estate during the master's absence. Jane also begins to notice some mysterious happenings around Thornfield, including the master's constant absence from home and the demonic laugh that Jane hears emanating from the third-story attic.

After much waiting, Jane finally meets her employer, Edward Rochester, a brooding, detached man who seems to have a dark past. Although Mr. Rochester is not handsome in the traditional sense, Jane feels an immediate attraction to him based on their intellectual communion. One night, Jane saves Mr. Rochester from a fire in his bedroom, which he blames on Grace Poole, a seamstress with a propensity for gin. Because Grace continues to work at Thornfield, Jane decides that Mr. Rochester has withheld some important information about the incident.

As the months go by, Jane finds herself falling more and more in love with Mr. Rochester, even after he tells her of his lustful liaison with Adèle's mother. However, Jane becomes convinced

that Mr. Rochester would never return her affection when he brings the beautiful Blanche Ingram to visit at Thornfield. Though Rochester flirts with the idea of marrying Miss Ingram, he is aware of her financial ambitions for marriage. During Miss Ingram's visit, an old acquaintance of Rochester's, Richard Mason, also visits Thornfield and is severely injured from an attack - apparently by Grace - in the middle of the night in the attic. Jane, baffled by the circumstances, tends to him, and Rochester confesses to her that he made an error in the past that he hopes to overturn by marrying Miss Ingram. He says that he has another governess position for Jane lined up elsewhere.

Jane returns to Gateshead for a few weeks to see the dying Mrs. Reed. Mrs. Reed still resents Jane and refuses to apologize for mistreating her as a child; she also admits that she lied to Jane's uncle, John Eyre, and told him that she had died during the typhus outbreak at Lowood. When Jane returns to Thornfield, Rochester tells her that he knows Miss Ingram's true motivations for marriage, and he asks Jane to marry him. Jane accepts, but a month later, Mason and a solicitor, Mr. Briggs, interrupt the wedding ceremony by revealing that Rochester already has a wife: Mason's sister, Bertha, who is kept in the attic in Thornfield under the care of Grace Poole. Rochester confesses his past misdeeds to Jane. In his youth he needed to marry the wealthy Bertha for money, but was unaware of her family's history of madness. Despite his best efforts to help her, Bertha eventually descended into a state of complete madness that only her imprisonment could control. Jane still loves Mr. Rochester, but she cannot allow herself to become his mistress: she leaves Thornfield.

Penniless and devastated by Mr. Rochester's revelations, Jane is reduced to begging for food and sleeping outdoors. Fortunately, the Rivers siblings, St. John (pronounced "Sinjin"), Diana, and Mary, take her into their home at Moor House and help her to regain her strength. Jane becomes close friends with the family, and quickly develops a great affection for the ladies. Although the stoically religious St. John is difficult to approach, he finds Jane a position working as a teacher at a school in Morton. One day, Jane learns that she has inherited a vast fortune of 20,000 pounds from her uncle, John Eyre. Even more surprising, Jane discovers that the Rivers siblings are actually her cousins. Jane immediately decides to share her newfound wealth with her relatives.

St. John is going to go on missionary work in India and repeatedly asks Jane to accompany him as his wife. She refuses, since it would mean compromising her capacity for passion in a loveless

marriage. Instead, she is drawn to thoughts of Mr. Rochester and, one day, after experiencing a mystical connection with him, seeks him out at Thornfield. She discovers that the estate has been burned down by Bertha, who died in the fire, and that Mr. Rochester, who lost his eyesight and one of his hands in the fire, lives at the nearby estate of Ferndean. He is overjoyed when she locates him, and relates his side of the mystical connection that Jane had. He and Jane soon marry. At the end of the novel, Jane informs the readers that she and Mr. Rochester have been married for ten years, and Mr. Rochester regained sight in one of his eyes in time to see the birth of his first son.

### **The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy**

The novel opens on a dirt road near the village of Weydon-Priors, in the English county of Wessex. Michael Henchard, a hay-trusser, is traveling with his wife, Susan, and young daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. However, a passing farmer tells the Henchards that there is no chance of finding employment or housing in the village. Discouraged, Michael takes his family to a furmity seller's tent in Weydon-Priors. The furmity seller adds liquor to Michael's meal, and after several servings Michael becomes an angry drunk. Because he believes his marriage at a young age ruined all his chances for success, he offers to sell his wife and daughter to the highest bidder. After several unanswered calls for bids, Susan says that someone should buy her, since her present owner isn't to her liking. Most of the other customers in the tent treat the auction as a joke, but soon a passing sailor hears the announcements and enters the tent. He offers to buy Susan and Elizabeth-Jane for five guineas, first making sure that Susan is willing to go. When Michael takes the money, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane leave with the sailor. Before leaving, Susan hurls her wedding-ring at Michael. Michael merely falls into a drunken slumber as the rest of the shocked customers leave.

The next morning, Michael awakens. Seeing the wedding ring and the money brings the events of the previous evening back to him. He realizes that he was partly to blame for his actions, but he also blames Susan for actually thinking that the auction would be binding. Nevertheless, because his excessive drinking caused the whole situation, he makes an oath: he will abstain from all liquor for twenty-one years. Then he sets out to search for his wife and daughter. At first the search is unsuccessful because Michael refuses to explain the circumstances of their parting. Finally he learns that three people matching the descriptions of the sailor, Susan, and Elizabeth-

Jane have just emigrated. Resigned, Michael gives up the search and goes to another town in Wessex, the town of Casterbridge.

Eighteen years later, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane return to Weydon-Priors searching for Michael. Elizabeth-Jane believes that Michael is just a relative, since Susan has kept her previous marriage a secret. Susan seeks Michael because she believes that he can help them now that the sailor, named Newson, has died. The women stop in the furmity seller's tent, which is still there. They learn that Michael stopped in the tent a year after the auction and left word that he lived in Casterbridge. Susan and Elizabeth-Jane leave for Casterbridge right away.

When the women arrive in Casterbridge, they learn that Michael has become extremely influential as a prosperous merchant and as the mayor of the town. The night they arrive, the townspeople are discussing Michael's bad business deals in selling sprouted grain. A young Scotsman, Donald Farfrae, overhears the discussion and gives Michael some suggestions for making the grain usable. Farfrae also engages in a light flirtation with Elizabeth-Jane.

Eventually Michael and Susan meet secretly. They decide to keep their past relationship a secret from Elizabeth-Jane. In fact, Michael suggests that they begin their relationship again. Susan should rent a cottage and allow Michael to court her in a respectable manner. Susan complies, and soon after they marry. Michael hopes that someday he can openly acknowledge Elizabeth-Jane as his daughter. At the same time, Michael has success in business as well by choosing Farfrae as his general manager and confidant. Farfrae's charm impresses all the townspeople and gains the attentions of Elizabeth-Jane once again. Michael has taken the young man under his wing and regards him almost as a brother. The only enemy Farfrae has is Joshua Jopp, a man who wanted the position of general manager.

When Susan and Michael remarry, Michael has another period of prosperity thanks to Farfrae's skills. The new wealth to which Elizabeth-Jane has been introduced produces a new beauty in her. Michael becomes fond of her and wants her to take his name legally. Susan, however, is reluctant to agree. Farfrae also takes an interest in Elizabeth-Jane. However, Elizabeth-Jane's shyness and discord between Farfrae and Michael have stopped any hope of a romance. Farfrae and Michael first have a disagreement over the punishment for an habitually late worker, Abel

Whittle. Next, during a public celebration, Farfrae's diversions are a success while Michael's are a complete failure. The townspeople openly praise Farfrae, which leads Michael to remark that Farfrae's term as general manger is ending. Farfrae resigns and opens up his own corn and hay store.

Susan dies, leaving a letter for Michael that is not to be opened until Elizabeth-Jane's wedding-day. Michael is lonely from the arguments with Farfrae and the lack of any tie with Elizabeth-Jane, so he tells the girl that he is her father. After thinking it over, Elizabeth-Jane is convinced. Meanwhile, Michael finds Susan's letter and reads it. The letter reveals that Michael's own daughter died, and this Elizabeth-Jane is the child of the sailor Newson. The discovery shocks and angers Michael, and he becomes cold to Elizabeth-Jane without telling her the truth.

Elizabeth-Jane is confused, but tries to win the love of Michael by immersing herself in her studies. She also visits her mother's grave. One day she meets a wealthy and charming young woman at Susan's grave, and she pours out her story to the woman. The lady, Miss Lucetta Templeman, says she will soon be a resident of Casterbridge, and she would like it if Elizabeth-Jane can be her companion. Michael allows it despite his misgivings, and Elizabeth-Jane leaves that day.

Lucetta invites Michael to her home, even going so far as to send Elizabeth-Jane away on errands just to convince him to visit. Michael and Lucetta had an agreement long ago when he was in Jersey, but it had been put on hold because of his marriage. Now that Susan is dead, Lucetta wishes to renew the agreement. To her joy, a caller comes--but it is Farfrae coming to call on Elizabeth-Jane. Lucetta and Farfrae are instantly attracted to each other, and she begins to ignore Michael completely. While Michael tries to propose to Lucetta despite the presence of an unknown rival, Elizabeth-Jane realizes that Farfrae and Michael are in love with Lucetta, and she renounces any interest she may have had in Farfrae.

The competition between Farfrae and Michael extends into business, complicating the situation. Michael hires Joshua Jopp as his general manager, and orders Jopp to do all he can to force Farfrae out of business. Michael tries to base his grain purchase on the predictions of a weather-prophet, but the prediction is incorrect, and the bad investment drives Michael into debt. Farfrae buys wisely and gains money.

Despite his losses, Michael is still determined to marry Lucetta. After learning that Farfrae is the secret suitor, Michael forces Lucetta to agree to marrying him--or he will reveal their past connection by using her earlier love letters. Lucetta reluctantly agrees. The next day, Michael hears the trial of an old woman. The old woman is the furnity seller from long ago, and she tells the story of the wife auction. Lucetta is so horrified that she runs away to Port-Bredy. There she marries Farfrae secretly, and she tells Michael a few days later.

Meanwhile, Michael has terrible luck in business. One of his debtors fails; his men make bad decisions about corn to bring about Michael's bankruptcy. Farfrae takes the opportunity to buy Michael's headquarters and offer a job to Michael. Michael accepts, but feels real hatred at Farfrae's success. After all, Farfrae is the popular choice for mayor, and he has Lucetta. Michael looks forward to the ending of his oath not to drink liquor.

Elizabeth fears that Michael will hurt Farfrae, and the townspeople know all about Michael's hatred of Farfrae. Although Farfrae gives up the idea of giving Michael his own shop, he cannot leave Casterbridge because he is offered the position of mayor. Lucetta begs Michael to return her letters, and a combination of pity and contempt makes him agree.

Joshua Jopp meets Lucetta after her meeting with Michael. He asks her to help him get a position with Farfrae. Lucetta refuses. Michael gives Jopp a package to deliver to Lucetta, and Jopp reasons that they are love letters. He shares the letters with some poor townswomen who hate Lucetta. They plan to have a skimmity-ride through town the next night. When the effigies of Michael and Lucetta ride through town, Lucetta sees and is so shocked that she has a seizure that kills her.

The whole world has crashed around Michael, yet he still has the love of Elizabeth-Jane. Even this reconciliation is threatened by a surprise visit from Newson, whom everyone thought dead. Michael tells him that Elizabeth-Jane is dead, and the sailor accepts this, then leaves. Although Michael and Elizabeth-Jane soon settle into a peaceful life, Michael constantly worries about Newson's return.

Meanwhile, Farfrae returns to court Elizabeth-Jane. Michael is nervous about their courtship, and he becomes even more nervous when Elizabeth-Jane says she must meet someone. She meets Newson, who tells her the truth about her birth. At the wedding of Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae,

Michael comes to reconcile with his step-daughter, but he sees Newson and decides to never trouble Elizabeth-Jane again. Later, Elizabeth-Jane realizes that Michael wanted to make peace with her, and she sets out to find him. Abel Whittle, the man whom Michael wanted to fire once, cared for Michael in his last days. He tells Elizabeth-Jane that Michael is dead. Michael's last will states that no man should remember him. Elizabeth-Jane resolves to do as she is told, preferring to concentrate all her love on her husband and family.

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## **UNIT - V**

**British Literature III – SHS5011**



## **"The Signal-Man"**

"The Signalman" opens with an unnamed narrator calling "Halloa! Below there!" to a signalman standing at the bottom of a steep rail cutting. The signalman, rather than look up, stares into the train tunnel. The narrator notices something strange about the way the man looks into the abyss. The signalman eventually looks up and shows the narrator a zigzag path he takes to the bottom.

Inside the signalman's box, the two men have a conversation. The narrator notices that the signalman attends to his telegraph and flagging duties with exactness, though the man looks ill at ease. At two points he looks at the telegraph bell and then at the red danger light above the tunnel, even though there is no coming train or telegraph message, nor sound from the bell. The narrator agrees to come the next day to hear what is troubling the man. Before he leaves, the signalman asks if the narrator said "Below there!" because the words were conveyed to him from some supernatural source.

The narrator returns the next day. The signalman explains how an apparition has been visiting him, a figure standing near the red danger light. The figure first appeared a year earlier, and the appearance foretold a horrific train collision in the tunnel. The signalman had rushed to the stranger, but the moment he approached the figure vanished. The signalman telegraphed both ends of the line to find out what the danger was, but he received all-clear messages in reply. A few hours later, the accident happened. Six or seven months later, the specter had appeared again, covering its face in its hands, as if mourning. The next train that passed had to stop, as a young woman died suddenly as the train entered the tunnel. The signalman explains to the narrator that he is so uneasy because the apparition is back, and he is waiting for something dreadful to happen, but he doesn't know where the danger will strike. The apparition has lately been covering his face and waving his arm, shouting "Below there!" and "Look out!"

The narrator, though frightened by what he hears, tries to reassure the man that these must have been coincidences. The visions were likely hallucinations, and the shouts were sonic distortions produced by the wind whistling through the valley and playing the telegraph wires like harp strings. He leaves the signalman unsure if he should alert the man's superiors. He feels it would be unfair, so instead he vows to himself that he'll return the next day and convince the signalman to consult a doctor for his medical opinion on what's causing him to see and hear the apparition.

The next day, the narrator arrives to learn the signalman was run down by a train. The men on the scene are surprised, as no man knew his work and duties as well as the signalman. The train driver explains how it happened, and says the signalman didn't seem to hear the train whistle or his shouts of "Below there!" The driver demonstrates how he covered his eyes and waved his arm as he ran the man down. The story ends with the narrator commenting on the eerie coincidence of the driver's shouts and gesticulations matching the apparition's. He also notes that the driver said "For God's sake, clear the way!"—a phrase he had earlier added in his own mind to the gestures the signalman demonstrated.

### **"Miss Ophelia Gledd"**

Here we have another of Trollope's short stories in this volume which is clearly based on his life, in this case on a semi-romantic attachment to Kate Fields which has intrigued his biographers.

What I'd like to bring up tonight is that it is written in the first person. Trollope is again the gauche Mr Archibald Green. He was or is Mr Green in the two Irish tales, in "The Panjandrum", in "The Man who Kept His Money in a Box". All these may be originally meant to be part of a group of comic stories centering on a single persona -- with whom Trollope identified -- the inadequate male. I guess "green" had some of the same connotations in the 19th century as it has today. Ophelia is clearly a romantic lady name, and Gledd brings us back down to earth.

It's not a bad story: it was written for a feminist magazine of the day, and it contains a convincing portrait of a gay confident and pretty young woman whose strength of character has enabled her to rise above "the loss of wealth" so that Miss Gledd feels no "no other discomfort than the actual want of those things which hard money buys." The scene of sleigh-riding is very well done (there is another similiar one in Howells's *A Modern Instance*). The story presents a debate or meditation over the differences between American and English culture, and I certainly was attracted to Mr Green's way of describing what he found so attractive in Miss Gledd:

"By this time I had quite become a convert to the general opinion, and was ready to confess in any presence, that Miss Gledd was a beauty. As I started with her out of the city warmly enveloped in buffalo furs, I could not but think how nice it would be to drive on and on, so that nobody should ever catch us. There was a sense of companionship about her which no woman

that I have ever know excelled her. She had a way of adapting herself to the friend of the moment which was beyond anything winning" (Sutherland, p 450).

One hopes Rose assumed this was a fiction, but it's hard to deny there seem to be a number of passages directly transcribed from life. For example, "Mr Green" also goes on to say:

"Her voice was decidedly very pleasant; and as to that nasal twang I am not sure that I was ever right about it. I wasn't in love with her, and didn't want to fall in love with her."

And at another point in the story he says this "nasal twang which had at first been so detestable to me, had recommended itself to my hearing. At different periods of my life I have learned to love an Irish brogue and a northern burr" [the latter was Rose's accent].

When sleighing it is Trollope himself who says:

"I felt that I should have liked to cross the Rocky Mountains with her, over to the Pacific, and to have come home round by California, Peru, and the Pampas" (Sutherland pp 442 & 450).

It's not provable that these stories which are in the first person and are closely connected to Trollope's experiences, life, deepest memories of joy or trauma are inferior to those transmuted or displaced into stories which are distanced from him. In Volume Two some of the best stories, those which form "The Editor's Tales," are in the first person, and in my opinion--and Trollope's too--the best story he ever wrote (he asserts this somewhere in his Autobiography) is "The Spotted Dog," an editor's tale.

Still it seems that in this volume, with the exceptions of "A Ride Across Palestine" and "The Man Who Kept His Money in a Box," those stories which are written in the first person and can uniformly also be directly connected to Trollope's own life are not works of art in the same way his displaced stories in the third-person are. They often lack a good ending, or we are provided with a punch line.

It's not clear if this is because they are too close to his life or because of the character of the persona. In "The Editor's Tales" we shall find the first-person narrator is not this boisterous, bull-in-a-china shop type who makes a fool out of himself and says uncomfortable things of all sorts. The editor is self-deprecating, quiet, self-questioning, very quiet and restrained, embarrassed and distressed for the people who bring their manuscripts to or need work from him. I also think one

of the reasons "A Ride Across Palestine" works is the narrator is more not a John Bull or George Walker--or Archibald Green. I am half-tempted to conclude it is the character of the first-person narrator, the face of himself that Trollope shows to us, we don't like.

On the other hand I wonder if he didn't work hard enough on these because he didn't have to invent the story. Thus he didn't have to imagine the structure and work through it through scenes and created presences. "The Man who Kept His Money in a Box" works because of the virtuous use of irony and finally enigmatic nature of what happened--a matter of art.

Since no-one was able to answer my earlier query--is there is novel told in the first-person by Trollope?--it may be that such questions don't interest others. But I find them of real interest because I always want to understand the art of a tale and where the power of literature comes from. After all it's only words on a page.

### **"Miss Ophelia Gledd"**

What I'd like to bring up tonight is that it is written in the first person. Trollope is again the gauche Mr Archibald Green."

Yes, although here we've got an Archibald Green who's no longer a green youth himself. And I didn't find him so gauche as to be off-putting as the narrative voice.

In fact, I liked the opening of this story quite a lot. It managed to hook my interest immediately. The person who could read the opening paragraphs and not want to continue is a stronger soul than me.

"The story presents a debate or meditation over the differences between American and English culture, and I certainly was attracted to Mr Green's way of describing what he found so attractive in Miss Gledd:

'By this time I had quite become a convert to the general opinion, and was ready to confess in any presence, that Miss Gledd was a beauty.'"

I liked this bit too, and found it true to life in addition to being well-written. Surely we all have known people who were acknowledged to be lovely women or handsome men, even though they didn't have classically regular features. There is an extent to which intelligence, animation, good

humor, empathy, or some combination of the four can render a person striking who doesn't seem so at first blush.

"It's not provable that these stories which are in the first person and are closely connected to Trollope's experiences, life, deepest memories of joy or trauma are inferior to those transmuted or displaced into stories which are distanced from him."

Oh, certainly. Even though my experience, at the moment, is limited to the early short stories, I'll agree that Trollope wasn't doomed to failure when he wrote in the first person. Or when he used some anecdote or situation from life, for that matter.

"Still it seems that in this volume, with the exceptions of "A Ride Across Palestine" and "The Man Who Kept His Money in a Box," those stories which are written in the first person and can uniformly also be directly connected to Trollope's own life are not works of art in the same way his displaced stories in the third-person are. "

Here too I agree, although "Ophelia Gledd" is I think one of the better stories in this volume, from those that appear to have come directly from Trollope's life.

"It's not clear this is because they are too close to his life or because of the character of the persona... I am half-tempted to conclude it is the character of the first-person narrator, the face of himself that Trollope shows to us, we don't like."

That could be, you're right. Sometimes when he's writing in the first person Trollope seems to be expecting an emotional reaction from me that I find myself unready to give. This isn't a problem most of the time, but occasionally it gets in my way. Maybe we'll have more to say on this heading after the group has tackled some of the Editor's Tales from the next volume.

"On the other hand I wonder if he didn't work hard enough on these because he didn't have to invent the story. Thus he didn't have to imagine the structure and work through it through scenes and created presences. To me "The Man who Kept His Money in a Box" works because of the virtuoso use of irony and finally enigmatic nature of what happened--a matter of art."

Whereas "George Walker," say, despite evidence of art in the writing, winds up being mostly the unadorned story of something that once happened to a trivial man? Telling point, I think. The first-person stories I haven't liked have been those where what Trollope took to be the tension or

crux of the tale was something I found either uninteresting or silly. This hasn't happened in the stories Trollope constructed from the outside in, rather than making use of his experience and going too directly from the inside out.

### **The Hidden Cash.**

I.

Parson Tibbald, a magistrate living within a day's ride of the ancient city of York, surprised the members of his family, one morning, by presenting himself at breakfast without an appetite. Upon his wife asking him if the dishes on the table were not to his taste, he answered, "My day's work is not to my taste. For the first time since I have been one of his majesty's justices, a charge of murder is coming before me, and the man accused is one of our neighbors."

The person in this miserable plight was Thomas Harris, an inn-keeper, charged with murdering James Gray, a traveller sleeping in his house.

The witnesses against him were his own servants: Elias Morgan, variously employed as waiter, hostler and gardener; and Maria Mackling, chamber-maid. In his evidence against his master, Morgan declared that he had seen Thomas Harris on the traveller's bed, killing the man by strangling. In fear of what might happen if he remained in the room, Morgan feigned to go downstairs. Returning secretly, he looked through the keyhole of a door in an adjoining bed-chamber, and saw the landlord rifling James Gray's pockets.

Harris answered to this, that all his neighbors knew him to be an honest man. He had found Gray in a fit, and had endeavored to restore him to his senses without success. The doctor who had examined the body, supported this assertion by declaring that he had found no marks of violence on the dead traveller. In the opinion of the magistrate, the case against Harris had now broken down, and the prisoner would have been discharged, but for the appearance of the maid-servant asking to be sworn.

Maria Mackling then made the statement that follows:

"On the morning when my fellow-servant found Mr. Harris throttling James Gray, I was in the back wash-house, which looks out on the garden. I saw my master in the garden, and wondered what he wanted there at that early hour. I watched him. He was within a few yards of the

window, when I saw him take a handful of gold pieces out of his pocket, and wrap them up in something that looked like a bit of canvas. After that, he went on to a tree in a corner of the garden, and dug a hole under the tree and hid the money in it. Send the constable with me to the garden, and let him see if I have not spoken the truth."

But good Parson Tibbald waited awhile to give his neighbor an opportunity of answering the maid-servant. Thomas Harris startled everybody present by turning pale, and failing to defend himself intelligently against the serious statement made by the girl. The constable was accordingly sent to the garden with Maria Mackling—and there, under the tree, the gold pieces were found. After this the magistrate had but one alternative left. He committed the prisoner for trial at the next assizes.

## II

The witnesses having repeated their evidence before the judge and the jury, Thomas Harris was asked what he had to say In his own defence.

In those days the merciless law did not allow prisoners to have the assistance of counsel. Harris was left to do his best for himself. During his confinement in prison, he had found time to compose his mind, and to consider beforehand how he might most fitly plead his own cause. After a solemn assertion of his innocence, he proceeded in these words:

"At my examination before the magistrate, my maid-servant's evidence took me by surprise. I was ashamed to acknowledge what I am now resolved to confess. My lord, I am by nature a covetous man, fond of money, afraid of thieves, and suspicious of people about me who know that I am well-to-do in the world. I admit that I did what other miserly men have done before me: I hid the gold as the girl has said. But I buried it in secret for my own better security. Every farthing of that money is my property, and has been honestly come by."

Such was the defence in substance. Having heard it, the judge summed up the case.

His lordship dwelt particularly on the circumstance of the hiding of the money; pointing out the weakness of the reasons assigned by the prisoner for his conduct, and leaving it to the jury to decide which they believed—the statement given in evidence by the witnesses, or the statement

made by Harris. The jury appeared to think consultation among themselves, in this case, a mere waste of time. In two minutes they found the prisoner guilty of the murder of James Gray.

In these days, if a man had been judicially condemned to death on doubtful evidence, after two minutes of consideration, our parliament and our press would have saved his life. In the bad old times Thomas Harris was hanged; meeting his fate with firmness, and declaring his innocence with his last breath.

### III.

Between five and six months after the date of the execution, an Englishman who had been employed in foreign military service returned to his own country, after an absence of twelve years, and set himself to discover the members of his family who might yet be in the land of the living. This man was Antony Gray, a younger brother of the deceased James.

He succeeded in tracing his mother's sister and her husband, two childless old people in feeble health. From the husband, who had been present at the trial, but who had not been included among the witnesses, Antony heard the terrible story which has just been told. The evidence of the doctor and the defence of Thomas Harris produced a strong impression on him. He asked a question which ought to have been put at the trial:

"Was my brother James rich enough to have a handful of gold pieces about him, when he slept at the inn?"

The old man knew little or nothing of James and his affairs. The good wife, who was better informed, answered: "He never, to my knowledge, had as much as a spare pound in his pocket at any time in his life."

Antony, remembering the landlord's explanation of his brother's death, asked next if his aunt had ever heard that James was liable to fits. She confessed to a suspicion that James had suffered in that way. "He and his mother," she explained, "kept this infirmity of my nephew's (if he had it) a secret. When they were both staying with us on a visit, he was found lying for dead in the road. His mother said, and he said, it was an accident caused by a fall. All I can tell you is, that the doctor who brought him to his senses called it a fit."



After considering a little with himself, Antony begged leave to put one question more. He asked for the name of the village in which the inn, once kept by Thomas Harris, was situated. Having received this information, he got up to say good-by. His uncle and aunt wanted to know why he was leaving them in that sudden way.

To this he returned rather a strange answer: "I have a fancy for making acquaintance with two of the witnesses at the trial, and I mean to try if I can hear of them in the village."

#### IV.

The man-servant and the woman-servant who had been in the employment of Thomas Harris, had good characters, and were allowed to keep their places by the person who succeeded to possession of the inn. Under the new proprietor the business had fallen off. The place was associated with a murder, and a prejudice against it existed in the minds of travellers. The bedrooms were all empty, one evening, when a stranger arrived, who described himself as an angler desirous of exercising his skill in the trout-stream which ran near the village.

He was a handsome man, still young, with pleasant manners, and with something in his fine upright figure which suggested to the new landlord that he might have been at one time in the army. Everybody in the village liked him; he spent his money freely; and he was especially kind and considerate towards the servants.

Elias Morgan frequently accompanied him on his fishing excursions. Maria Mackling looked after his linen with extraordinary care; contrived to meet him constantly on the stairs; and greatly enjoyed the compliments which the handsome gentleman paid to her on those occasions.

In the exchange of confidences that followed, he told Maria that he was a single man, and he was thereupon informed that the chambermaid and the waiter were engaged to be married. They were only waiting to find better situations, and to earn money enough to start in business for themselves.

In the third week of the stranger's residence at the inn, there occurred a change for the worse in his relations with one of the two servants. He excited the jealousy of Elias Morgan.

This man set himself to watch Maria, and made discoveries which so enraged him, that he not only behaved with brutality to his affianced wife, but forgot the respect due to his master's guest.

The amiable gentleman, who had shown such condescending kindness towards his inferiors, suddenly exhibited a truculent temper. He knocked the waiter down. Elias got up again with an evil light in his eyes. He said, "The man who once kept this house knocked me down, and he lived, sir, to be sorry for it."

Self-betrayed by those threatening words, Elias went out of the room.

Having discovered in this way that his suspicions of one of the witnesses against the unfortunate Harris had been well founded, Antony Gray set his trap next to catch the woman, and achieved a result which he had not ventured to contemplate.

Having obtained a private interview with Maria Mackling, he presented himself in the character of a penitent man. "I am afraid," he said, "that I have innocently lowered you in the estimation of your jealous sweetheart; I shall never forgive myself, if I have been so unfortunate as to raise an obstacle to your marriage."

Maria rewarded the handsome, single gentleman with a look which expressed modest anxiety to obtain a position in his estimation.

"I must forgive you, if you can't forgive yourself," she answered, softly. "Indeed, I owe you a debt of gratitude. You have released me from an engagement to a brute. And, what is more," she added, beginning to lose her temper, "an ungrateful brute. But for me, Elias Morgan might have been put in prison, and have richly deserved it!"

Antony did his best to persuade her to speak more plainly. But Maria was on her guard and plausibly deferred explanation to a future opportunity. She had, nevertheless, said enough already to lead to serious consequences.

The jealous waiter, still a self-appointed spy on Maria's movements, had heard in hiding all that passed at the interview. Partly in revenge, partly in his own interests, he decided on anticipating any confession on the chambermaid's part. The same day he presented himself before Parson Tibbald as a repentant criminal, resigned to enlighten justice in the character of King's Evidence.

V.

The infamous conspiracy to which Thomas Harris had fallen a victim had been first suggested by his own miserly habits.

Purely by accident, in the first instance, the woman-servant had seen him secretly burying money under the tree, and had informed the man-servant of her discovery.

He had examined the hiding-place, with a view to robbery which might benefit his sweetheart and himself, and had found the sum secreted too small to be worth the risk of committing theft. Biding their time, he and his accomplice privately watched the additions made to their master's store. On the day when James Gray slept at the inn, they found gold enough to tempt them at last.

How to try the experiment of theft without risk of discovery, was the one difficulty that presented itself. In this emergency, Elias Morgan conceived the diabolical scheme of charging Harris with the murder of the traveller who had died in a fit. The failure of the false evidence, and the prospect of the prisoner's discharge, terrified Maria Mackling.

Elias had placed himself in a position which threatened him with indictment for perjury. The woman claimed to be heard as a witness, and deliberately sacrificed her master on the scaffold to secure the safety of her accomplice.

The two wretches were committed to prison. It is not often that poetical justice punishes crime, out of the imaginary court of appeal which claims our sympathies on the stage. But, in this case, retribution did really overtake atrocious guilt. Elias Morgan and Maria Mackling both died in prison of the disease then known as gaol fever.

**ELIZABETH GASKELL** (1810-1865) was born Elizabeth Stevenson in London, the daughter of a Unitarian minister who resigned his position on conscientious grounds. Her mother died a year after her birth, and Gaskell spent her formative years in the care of relatives in northern England. In 1832, she married William Gaskell, a well-known Unitarian minister, and joined him to work among the poor for social reform. They had four daughters, as well as a son who died in infancy. His death left Gaskell so distraught that she began writing for distraction. Her first major success was the novel *Mary Barton* (1848)—published, as were her first several works of short fiction, under the pseudonym Cotton Mather Mills. For many years, she also wrote regularly for Charles Dickens's magazine, *Household Words*, contributing stories and a serialized novel, *Cranford*. Meanwhile, the Gaskells' home in Manchester became a popular stop for writers and reformers, including Dickens, Harriet Beecher Stowe, John Ruskin, and Charlotte

Brontë, who became a close friend. After Brontë's death, her father, Patrick Brontë, asked Gaskell to write her biography. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* proved a pioneering and controversial psychological study of Brontë's family life, and remains perhaps the most important book on the writer. Gaskell died of a heart attack in 1865. A memorial to her lies at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

## **Plot**

*The Poor Clare* is narrated by an unnamed young lawyer from London, reflecting on the "extraordinary incidents" which he experienced in his youth.

The story proper begins several decades before. Squire Starkey, a recusant Jacobite, returns to Starkey Manor with his Irish wife and their son Patrick. Accompanying them is their Irish Catholic servant, Madam Starkey's former nurse, Bridget FitzGerald and her daughter Mary, who take up a small cottage in the grounds of the manor. Bridget comes to exercise great control over the household. Some years later, due in part to an increasingly fractious relationship with her mother, Mary FitzGerald leaves Starkey Manor to take up a position on the Continent. Racked with grief at her daughter's departure, Bridget keeps to her cottage until Madam Starkey brings her a young spaniel, Mignon, who becomes her constant companion. She receives occasional letters from Mary, the last informing her that she was going to marry a gentleman.

Upon the deaths of Squire and Madam Starkey, Bridget is left alone at the cottage. After a long period without word from Mary, Bridget leaves the cottage for the Continent in search of her daughter, accompanied by Mignon. Years of unsuccessful searching later, she returns suddenly. Not long after her return, a hunting party goes shooting on the manor. One of the party, Mr Gisborne, is in a foul mood, and shoots Mignon for fun when it crosses his path. Distraught that the only remaining creature she loved is now dead, Bridget calls on the saints to curse Mignon's killer, vowing that the creature he loves best will become a terror loathed by all.

It is at this point that the Narrator, who lives with his uncle in London to be trained in his legal practice, enters the story. Taking up a complicated inheritance case involving some property in Ireland, he makes enquiries in Ireland and on the Continent and discovers that the heir to the

properties is a Bridget FitzGerald. Visiting her at her cottage, the Narrator is struck by Bridget's grief at the loss of her daughter, and promises to help discover her whereabouts.

During a holiday in Harrogate, the Narrator becomes interested in a striking young woman and her older companion Mrs Clarke, whom he sees on his walks across the moors. Eventually, he becomes acquainted with the couple, and he falls in love with the young woman. His eventual marriage proposal is rejected by Mrs Clarke, who tells him that there is a terrible secret which would prevent him from marrying her ward. When he presses the matter, Lucy recounts how two years before, she had become afflicted by the constant presence of a trouble-making demonic doppelganger. Her father sent her to live in the moors with Mrs Clarke to lead a pious life in order to free herself from the curse. Initially sceptical at Lucy's tale, the Narrator's incredulity disappears after he witnesses her demonic double firsthand.

That afternoon, the Narrator is informed by a letter from Sir Phillip that Mary Fitzgerald had a child with Mr Gisborne. Piecing together the clues, he realises that Lucy is the child and therefore the granddaughter of Bridget and heir to the Irish estates. Furthermore, he and Mrs Clarke realise that Bridget had unwittingly caused Lucy's condition when she cursed Mr Gisborne, not knowing that he was the father of her own granddaughter. Still in love with Lucy, the Narrator and his uncle throw all their energy into attempting to undo the curse. Revisiting Bridget's cottage in an attempt to get to the root of the curse, the Narrator informs her of the unintended consequences of her words, sending her into a paroxysm of guilt and grief. By the next morning, Bridget has vanished from the cottage, with the curse still not lifted.

With Bridget gone, the Narrator settles into despondency in his uncle's chambers in London. One night some months later, they are visited by Father Bernard, a Catholic priest from Lancashire, who explains that he brings information about Bridget Fitzgerald. When on a recent visit to Antwerp in the Austrian Netherlands, he happened upon her outside a church and took her confession. After hearing of her curse, he instructed her to undertake acts of charity as penance, and as a result, Bridget joined the Antwerp convent of Poor Clares, taking the name Sister Magdalen.

The Narrator travels to Antwerp, and stays there even as active rebellion breaks out amongst the Flemish against their Austrian rulers. Caught up in a skirmish, the Narrator sees Poor Clare nuns rushing to assist the wounded despite the heavy gunfire. By coincidence, Mr Gisborne, leader of

the Austrian garrison, is set upon by the rebels, but is saved by Sister Magdalen, who recognises him and takes him to her cell to tend to his wounds. Days after the battle, the sound of a bell tolling can be heard coming from the convent; a bell that will only be rung when a nun is starving to death. Despite the war-induced famine, the people of Antwerp, including the Narrator, rush to the convent to assist. On reaching Sister Magdalen's cell, they find Mr Gisborne, having been nursed back to health by his curser. Rushing onwards, the crowd comes to the convent's chapel, and sees Sister Magdalen lying on a bier having just received absolution. With her dying breath, she whispers, "The curse is lifted." [3]

### **The Poor Clare (1856), A Novella by Elizabeth Gaskell**

I don't usually include spoilers in my reviews, but *The Poor Clare* is obscure enough that in today's post I'll be throwing caution to the wind.

The work is a long short story/short novella by Elizabeth Gaskell, who's better known for novel-length works including *North and South* (1854) and *Mary Barton* (1848), and for her biography of Charlotte Brontë (1857), which inspired my own forthcoming novel, *Brontë's Mistress*.

*The Poor Clare* first appeared in serialised form in *Household Words*, a publication edited by Charles Dickens. Perhaps as a result of this, it alternates between feeling rushed and sorely in need of editing. There are no paragraph breaks, for instance, except in dialogue, and the development of the plot is uneven.

The story is narrated by an unnamed lawyer, who finds himself involved in 'extraordinary events' of a decidedly uncanny flavour. Employed to track down the rightful heir to a sizeable estate, he tracks down a strange old Irish woman, Bridget Fitzgerald, whose fervour for Catholicism is matched with a proclivity for meddling with magic. Bridget's beautiful daughter, Mary, has disappeared years before, leading to her mother's unhappiness and isolation. But now her child—if she had one—is next in line for this windfall inheritance.

What starts out like a mystery soon turns to a ghost story. Our lawyer tracks down the child, Lucy, more through luck than strategy, and promptly falls in love with her. But there's a hitch. Lucy is suffering under a peculiar curse. She has a demonic double, which is hell bent on dogging her steps, ruining her reputation and driving men from her life. What's more, it transpires that it was her own grandmother, Bridget, who unwittingly cursed her.

Gaskell writes Gothic well. Examples:

‘I was sitting with my back to the window, but I felt a shadow pass between the sun’s warmth and me, and a strange shudder ran through my frame.’

‘In the great mirror opposite I saw myself, and right behind, another wicked, fearful self, so like me that my soul seemed to quiver within me, as though not knowing to which similitude of a body it belonged.’

The tone felt most similar to *Behind a Mask*, an 1866 story by Louisa May Alcott, writing as A.M. Barnard, which I reviewed back in 2013. And the doubling motif is suggestive of earlier (e.g. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818)) and later (e.g. Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)) Gothic, as well as sensation fiction tropes. Notably, Laura, the heroine of Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*, which appeared three years later, also suffers due to her near resemblance with another.

*The Poor Clare* takes an unexpected turn when our characters end up in war-torn Antwerp (only Bridget’s service to strict religious order, the Poor Clares, will be enough, it seems, to undo the curse). It’s tempting to imagine that Gaskell was inspired by the Brontës to depict a Belgian setting.

All in, although set earlier, Gaskell’s *The Poor Clare* is delightfully Victorian, with lots to recommend it despite its flaws. Short enough to read in one sitting, it could also serve as a great introduction for teens to Gothic fiction or as a quick-to-digest comparison text for students focusing on some of the more canonical novels in the genre.

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