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Semester-II : CC4

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Preface

Dear students,

This book contains Self-instructional Materials on the Poetry in English : Modern and Postmodern for Semester II[nd]. You are advised to read the syllabus prescribed for these paper carefully. The syllabus includes Four Topics as well as different texts. As it is not possible to print entire texts in this book, each unit contains a very detailed summary of the text prescribed for your study. You are advised to read each text prescribed in the syllabus.

Each unit is interspersed with 'Check Your Progress' exercises, which are simple questions requiring answers in a word, a phrase or a sentence each. The purpose of these Self-check exercises is to make you go back to the main unit and get your answers for these questions on your own. The model answers are, of course, given at the end of each unit. But you should not look them up before you have tried to write your own answers.

Each unit gives you a list of reference books. You should find time to visit a library of your centre/college to have a look at the original books as well as books on appreciation of Poetry.

There are exercises given at the end of each unit, which contain broad-answer type questions which you have to face in the final examination. Try to write answers to these questions with the help of the study material in the units. Write answers in your own English, and try to refer to the original and reference books.

We wish you best luck for your final examination.

■ **Editors** ■

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INDEX

Each Unit begins with the section objectives -

Objectives are directive and indicative of :

1. what has been presented in the unit and
2. what is expected from you
3. what you are expected to know pertaining to the specific unit, once you have completed working on the unit.

The self-check exercises with possible answers will help you understand the unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answers only after you write your answers. These exercises are not to be submitted to us for evaluation. They have been provided to you as study tools to keep you on the right track as you study the unit.

Dear Students,

The SLM is simply a supporting material for the study of this course. It is also advised to see the new syllabus 2023-24 and study the reference books & other related material for the detailed study of the course.

Unit-1
Modern African Poetry : Christopher Okigbo and Léopold Sédar Senghor

Contents:

1.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- Understand literary history of modern African poetry.
- Know the characteristics of African poetry.
- Explain the theme, form, language and structure of poetry.
- Find various aspects in the selected African poems.

1.1 Introduction:

Africa has had a rich history of literary output. Being a continent containing 55 countries, each with a wealth of cultures and particular histories, Africa encompasses a wide variety of traditions and evolving trends, within the different literary genres. The nature of poetry in Africa is large and complex. The continent' wealthy cultures and vast languages and dialects attested to this nature. Poetry in Africa is a large and complex subject. Modern African poetry is the poetry of commitment, so it has utilitarian values. It began as an intellectual response to the denigration of Africa and Africans. The emergency of modern African poetry represents a vital chapter in the continent's literary history, capturing the diverse experiences, struggles, and aspirations of African people during a period of profound change and transformation. In modern African poetry works that focus on the healing and purging the country and families have dominated African poetry. Poets in Africa have faced issues in ways that not only explain how indigenous cultures are absorbed by western standards but also how limiting in vision their leaders have been. The collective experience of slavery and colonialism shaped the nature of modern African poetry. These collective experiences have led to the modernization of African poetry.

1.2 Modern African Poetry:

Modern African poetry has a rich and diverse history that spans the 20th and 21st centuries. It is a dynamic and diverse literary tradition that reflects the continent's complex history, cultures, and the ongoing process of redefining African identities, cultures and experiences. It continues to be a powerful tool for self-expression, cultural preservation, and social commentary. It has been shaped by various cultural, social, and political influences across the African continent and the African Diasporas. African poetry in the colonial and pre-independence era was often influenced by the struggle against colonial rule, the quest for cultural identity, and

the desire for self-expression. After many African nations gained independence in the mid-20th century, poetry continued to play a vital role in articulating the national and Pan-Africanist movements. The Negritude movement, with its roots in the 1930s and 1940s, was an influential literary and ideological movement led by African and Afro-Caribbean poets. It aimed to celebrate African cultural heritage and promote a sense of pride in black identity. Many African poets have drawn inspiration from the rich oral traditions of their cultures. But Poets like Okot p'Bitek from Uganda and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o from Kenya have incorporated elements of oral storytelling, folklore, and song into their written poetry. African women poets, such as Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana and Buchi Emecheta from Nigeria, have addressed issues of gender, feminism, and the experiences of African women in their works. Their poetry explores the complexities of African women's lives and challenges patriarchal norms. Modern African poetry is a medium through which African poets like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Ama Ata Aidoo, Kofi Awoonor, Warsan Shire and others have expressed their thoughts, emotions, and social commentary, addressing a wide range of themes such colonialism, post-colonialism, identity, love, spirituality, and the complexities of contemporary life on the continent. The poets like Gladys May Casely-Hayford, Raphael Ernest Grail Armattoe, Dennis Chukude Osadebay and Michael Die-Anang were considered as the pioneers of modern African poetry. They played significant role in the fight for independence.

Modern African poetry was born from the experience of slavery and colonialism. Poets shifted from the influences of colonialism, nature, lyricism and used their voices to create an awareness of the prevailing conditions of the masses who suffered neglect at the hands of the ruling government in the continent. They also ensured their poems reflected the African rhythms, the beats and lyrics of our belief system. African poetry was also influenced by different factors which impacted the growth and development of modern African poetry. They are Cultural Nationalism, Language. Oral Tradition, Colonialism, Negritude, Gender Issues. etc,.

According to Encyclopedia; “Cultural Nationalism can be defined as movements of group allegiance based on a shared heritage as in language, history, literature, songs, religion, ideology, symbols, lands or monuments. Poets were able to convey their vision of a better community through this movement and also retrieve their lost cultural identity. They were able to inspire people to build a new image of themselves one not stained by colonialism. Language also impacted the growth of

modern African poetry. Due to colonialism, African poets inherited English language and some learnt it as a second language. It was even accepted as an official language in Africa because it was more easily to understand and read about. So, it was accepted as a tool of communication by the literary circle and they used it well to portray their views, observations and thoughts.

Oral traditions also impacted the works of modern African poets. Oral traditional poets and storytellers were known to infuse cultures, beliefs, values and norms in their works. The modern poets were able to interact with that fact and use it effectively in their works Colonialism which made the great influence of African poetry. It influenced our beliefs, traditions, cultures, norms, standards and languages. Africans were forced to adopt the western traditions, cultures, languages and this affected our thoughts and belief system. So, poets used it effectively to convey their frustration, plights, emotion on how they felt about colonialism and slavery. It also influenced their visions, dreams and they were able to infuse that pain, hurt into motivating the society to create a valued identity for them.

There was great the impact of Negritude on modern African poetry. According to Leopold Sedar Senghor, "Negritude is the sum of the cultural values of the black world as they expressed in the life, the institutions and the works of black men". It was a literary movement born out of the Paris intellectual environment of 1930's and 1940's. It was a product of black writers joining together through the French language to assert their cultural identity and also an aspect to rejection of colonialism. This movement influenced the ideology of modern writers to be able to create an identity and how they viewed themselves. Gender issues also influenced the works of modern African poetry and it is an obvious theme in many poets' works these days. They created a medium to express their displeasures about problems that dealt with gender and also praise the victories or wins by genders.

Modern African poetry reflects the impact of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and the quest for cultural identity and autonomy. Poets expressed nationalist sentiments, advocating for social change and addressing issues of colonial oppression, racial discrimination, and cultural heritage. They often used English or other European languages as a medium for their expressions while incorporating indigenous themes, languages, and cultural elements into their works. Nationalism, cultural identity, resistance against colonization, celebration of African heritage, social and political activism, and the struggle for independence were prevalent themes in modern African poetry. Notable modern African poets include Leopold

Sedar Senghor (Senegal), Christopher Okigbo (Nigeria), Dennis Brutus (South Africa), and Aime Cesaire (Martinique), among others.

Postmodern African poetry is marked by experimentation, diversity, and a departure from traditional forms and narrative structures. Poets embraced fragmentation, intertextuality, metafiction, and linguistic experimentation. They challenged established norms, offering multiple perspectives, and often explored themes of globalization, hybridity, diaspora, and cultural diversity. Hybrid identities, globalization, cultural fluidity, intertextuality, multiple voices, and a critical exploration of power structures and social constructs are common themes in postmodern African poetry. Contemporary African poets like Warsan Shire (Somalia), Safia Elhillo (Sudan), Tsitsi Ella Jaji (Zimbabwe), and Clifton Gachagua (Kenya) are among those contributing to the postmodern African poetic landscape.

Modern and postmodern African poetry in English exhibit distinct characteristics that reflect the evolving socio-cultural, political, and artistic landscapes of the continent. Some characteristics of both are as follows:

Characteristics of Modern African Poetry:

Nationalism and Identity: Modern African poetry often reflects themes of nationalism and identity, exploring the struggle for independence, the impact of colonization, and the quest for cultural identity and autonomy.

Resistance and Protest: Poets in this era often used their works to resist colonial oppression and advocate for social and political change. They articulated the struggles and aspirations of African people, addressing issues such as racism, inequality, and cultural displacement.

Cultural Heritage: There's a strong emphasis on celebrating African culture, traditions, folklore, and spirituality. Poets often incorporate indigenous languages, myths, and oral traditions into their works to reclaim and preserve African heritage.

Language and Style: While English is the primary language of expression in modern African poetry, poets often experiment with language, blending English with indigenous languages, dialects, and unique linguistic expressions. Poetic styles range from traditional forms to free verse, with a focus on imagery, symbolism, and vivid descriptions.

Social Realism: Poets in the modern era often employ social realism, depicting the harsh realities of African life, societal issues, poverty, and the struggles of everyday people.

Characteristics of Postmodern African Poetry:

Fragmentation and Experimentation: Postmodern African poets often experiment with fragmented narratives, non-linear structures, and unconventional forms of storytelling. They challenge traditional narrative techniques and embrace ambiguity and complexity.

Intertextuality and Metafiction: Postmodern African poetry frequently employs intertextuality, referencing other texts, cultures, or historical events within their works. There's self-awareness about the act of writing and the relationship between author, text, and reader.

Hybridity and Globalization: There's a reflection of the complexities of globalization and multiculturalism in postmodern African poetry. Poets explore themes of displacement, hybrid identities, and the intermingling of cultures in a rapidly changing world.

Diversity of Voices: Postmodern African poetry embraces diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences. Poets may incorporate multiple viewpoints, including marginalized voices and identities, challenging conventional power structures and norms.

Meta-commentary and Irony: Postmodern poets often engage in meta-commentary, using irony, satire, and self-reflexivity to comment on societal constructs, politics, or the creative process itself.

Thus, both modern and postmodern African poetry in English showcase a rich tapestry of themes, styles, and voices, contributing to a multifaceted portrayal of the African experience and its place in the global literary landscape.

1.3 Christopher Okigbo:

Christopher Okigbo (1932-1967) was a highly influential Nigerian poet and one of the most significant African poets of the 20th century. He was widely regarded as one of the most significant figures in African literature. He was born in Ojoto, Nigeria, in what is now Anambra State. He received his early education at Govt. College Umuahia, a prestigious secondary school in Nigeria, where his love for

literature and poetry began to develop. He pursued a degree in Classics at the University of Ibadan, where he continued to nurture his passion for literature and poetry. Christopher Okigbo's was actively engaged in Nigerian politics and the struggle for independence. He was a strong advocate for African unity and the Pan-African movement. During the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), he became deeply involved in the Biafran secessionist movement, serving as an officer and fighting on the side of Biafra. Okigbo's life was tragically cut short during the Nigerian Civil War. He died in September 1967 while serving in the Biafran army. His death, at the age of 35, was a great loss to the world of literatures and to the African intellectual community.

As an undergraduate at Ibadan, Okigbo edited the University Weekly, joined the Mbari Club, the literary society that published Black Orpheus, played jazz clarinet, and demonstrated talent as an athlete. In the ten years following graduation in 1956, he held brief appointments with the Nigerian Tobacco Company, the United African Company, and the federal Ministry of Research and Information in Lagos; was Vice-Principal at Fiditi Grammar School; was appointed acting registrar of the new University of Nigeria at Nsukka; and represented Cambridge University Press in West Africa. The Nigeria-Biafra war (1967–70) forced him back to Eastern Nigeria, where he died at Nsukka while fighting as a major in the Biafran army. Although his life was brief, he exerted a profound influence on the African literary canon. For example, as Cambridge University Press representative in West Africa, he traveled widely in Africa and Europe, and he was an editor of Transition. In 1962 he attended the First African Writers Conference at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, where he made a controversial presentation entitled "What Is African Literature?" In 1965 he read his poetry at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in Edinburgh and in 1966 he declined to accept the Negro Festival Arts Prize for his poem *Limits* on the grounds that the award had "colour" or negritude connotations. In 1966, he co-founded with Chinua Achebe, the short-lived Citadel Publishing Company. Okigbo's major accomplishment as an artist is his poetry, which he described as "a necessary part of my being alive." His poetic works are *Heavensgate* (1962), which is organized into five sections that highlight the protagonist's religious experience; *Limits* (1964), which consists of two lyrics ("Siren Limits" and "Fragments out of the Deluge," both organized into twelve segments) that deal with the themes of art, religion, and culture; *Silences* (1965), which is composed of two protest poems ("Lament of the Silent Sisters," first published in Transition, 1963, and "Lament of

the Drums") that treat national and international issues including the death of Patrice Lumumba and the imprisonment of Chief Awolowo; *Distances* (first published in Transition, 1964), which continues the themes of personal concerns—religion, art, and nature—explored in his earlier poetry; and the posthumous volumes Labyrinths, with *Path of Thunder* (1971) and Collected Poems (1986). The influences on his work of Igbo mythology and folklore and classical and modernist aesthetic practices, including those of Dante, Stéphane Mallarmé, G. M. Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, lead some readers to describe it as impenetrable. Despite his reputation as a difficult poet, he remains widely popular with other poets and critics as well as readers, and *Labyrinths* was voted one of Africa's Best Books of the Twentieth Century.

Okigbo's poetry is characterized by its rich imagery, deep symbolism, and exploration of themes related to African identity, spirituality, and the impact of colonialism. He is known for his role in the 'Negritude' movement, which celebrated African identity, culture and heritage. His poetry often celebrated the essence of being African. There are some aspects of Okigbo's poetry.

Aspects of Okigbo's Poetry:

Symbolism and Imagery: Okigbo's poetry is laden with vivid imagery and potent symbolism drawn from Igbo cosmology and folklore. He uses powerful metaphors and symbolic language to express deeper philosophical and cultural themes.

Spirituality and Mythology: His poetry often intertwines traditional African spirituality and mythology with contemporary concerns, creating a distinct blend of the sacred and the secular.

Social and Political Awareness: Okigbo's work reflects the socio-political climate of his time, addressing themes of colonialism, independence, and the struggles faced by post-colonial African nations in asserting their identity.

Innovative Language and Form: He experiments with language, form, and structure, incorporating oral traditions, Igbo proverbs, and rhythms into his verse while also employing modernist techniques and allusions.

Sense of Loss and Transience: A recurring theme in Okigbo's poetry is a sense of loss, impermanence, and the struggle for cultural identity in a rapidly changing world, reflecting the tensions between tradition and modernity.

Elegiac Tone: His poems often carry an elegiac tone, reflecting a deep emotional connection to his homeland, as well as a lament for the tragedies of war and the loss of cultural heritage.

Christopher Okigbo's impact on African literature is profound, especially in the development of modern African poetry. His exploration of African themes in a modernist framework has inspired subsequent generations of poets. His work has received critical acclaim for its intellectual depth, artistic innovation, and its ability to convey complex themes in a lyrical and profound manner. His poetry stands as a testament to the richness of African literary expression. His fusion of traditional African elements with modernist techniques and his exploration of universal human experiences have earned him a place as a significant figure in African literature, leaving behind a legacy that continues to influence and inspire poets and readers globally.

Christopher Okigbo's poetry and his contribution to African literature have left a lasting legacy. He is celebrated for his ability to blend African and Western literary traditions, creating a unique and influential poetic voice. He is often referred to as one of Africa's most significant modernist poets. His work has inspired subsequent generations of African poets. His poetry and activism make him an important figure in the development of African literature. Okigbo's poetry is known for its depth, complexity, and engagement with a wide range of themes, including the complexities of African identity, the impact of colonialism, and the quest for a meaningful existence.

1.3.1 Overture:

Before you, mother Idoto,
naked I stand,
before your watery presence,
a prodigal,

leaning on an oilbean,
lost in your legend…

Under your power wait I
        on barefoot,
watchman for the watchword
        at heavensgate;

out of the depths my cry
give ear and hearken.

The Poem "Overture" by Christopher Okigbo invokes a sense of reverence and submission to the entity addressed as "mother Idoto," likely a representation of a deity or a powerful, maternal figure. It is a symbolic and complex poem. It is published in his poetry collection *Limits*, in 1964. The setting of the poem is a ceremonial space.

The speaker begins by confessing his vulnerable and exposed state—standing naked before Idoto, suggesting a state of openness and humility. This act symbolizes a form of surrender or seeking guidance from a higher power. The reference to leaning on an oil bean and being lost in Idoto's legend implies a sense of reliance and immersion in the powerful presence and teachings of this maternal figure. The oil bean might symbolize support found in the teachings or essence of Idoto.

The speaker portrays himself as a watchman or guardian. His waiting barefoot under Idoto's power implies a role of obedience and vigilance in service to this deity. The request for the "watchword" at the "heavengate" suggests seeking guidance or permission for entry or understanding of higher truths. The final lines, "out of the depths my cry gives ear and heartken," could signify a plea or prayer for attention and understanding from Idoto. It portrays a yearning for a response or acknowledgment from the deity, asking for a receptive ear and attention to their supplication.

The Poem "Overture" is a compelling poem that showcases the poet's mastery in conveying complex themes through vivid imagery, metaphorical language, and rhythmic structure. Okigbo often explores themes related to cultural identity, tradition, and the preservation of heritage. The poem might symbolize the struggle to maintain one's cultural identity amidst changing times and influences. The poem delves into existential questions and spiritual quests. It may depict a journey towards enlightenment or a search for deeper meaning in life, symbolized by the quest for knowledge and understanding. Okigbo employs rich metaphorical imagery, such as references to the sea, stars, and celestial elements. These symbols may represent the vastness of human experience, the pursuit of knowledge, or the mysteries of existence. The poem's rhythmic and lyrical qualities contribute to its musicality, enhancing the emotional impact and inviting readers into a reflective and introspective mood. The poem's tone is contemplative, inviting readers to reflect on

profound questions about identity, existence, and the human condition. Okigbo's poetry often reflects the socio-political landscape of post-colonial Africa. "Overture" may symbolize the broader socio-cultural challenges faced by African societies during that time. The poem is a thought-provoking poem that encapsulates Okigbo's artistic brilliance, blending metaphorical depth with introspective themes. Through its evocative imagery and lyrical language, the poem navigates complex concepts of cultural identity, spiritual exploration, and the human quest for meaning in a changing world.

1.3.2 Eyes Watch the Stars:

Eyes open on the beach,
eyes open, of the prodigal;
upward to heaven shoot
where stars will fall from.

Which secret I have told into no ear;
into a dughole to hold,
not to drown with –

Which secret I have planted into beachsand;
now breaks
salt-white surf on the stones and me,
and lobsters and shells in
iodine smell —
maid of the salt-emptiness,
sophisticreamy, native,
whose secret I have covered up with beachsand.
Shadow of rain
over sunbeaten beach,
shadow of rain
over man with woman.

The Poem "Eyes Watch the Stars" by Christopher Okigbo presents a vivid scene and a contemplation of secrets, nature, and human existence. The poem begins with the image of someone, possibly the speaker, standing on a beach, his eyes open, watching the sky and stars. The line ‘eyes open on the beach’ indicates vigilance and observation.

The reference to the prodigal often associated with someone who wanders or returns after wandering, implies a sense of longing or seeking. The poet's watching towards the stars suggests a fascination with the celestial realm and a search for higher meaning or revelation. The speaker mentions a secret that they have kept hidden and unspoken, burying it metaphorically in the beach sand. This secret remains concealed, not shared with anyone, as indicated by the phrase "into a dughole to hold, not to drown with." This secret is symbolically represented as something planted in the sand, now surfacing with the breaking of the salt-white surf, creating an image of revelation or emergence.

The poem then shifts to a sensory description of the beach scene, with the salt-white surf, the smell of iodine, and the presence of lobsters and shells. The imagery captures the essence of the beach environment, highlighting its beauty, complexity, and natural elements. The phrase like 'salt-white surf' and 'maid to the salt-emptiness' evokes a sense of purity and the mystique of the ocean. The juxtaposition of the open eyes watching stares with the salt-white surf and the maid to the salt-emptiness presents contrasting elements of nature and human presence. The land and sea are the contrasting elements also.

The final lines introduce the juxtaposition of shadow and rain over the sun beaten beach, and the mention of a man with a woman. This imagery might symbolize the interplay between nature's elements and human interactions or relationships. The shadow of rain over the beach and the couple suggests a blend of light and darkness, possibly signifying the complexities and contrasts inherent in human existence.

The Poem "Eyes Watch the Stars" reflects the belief of Okigbo in the spiritual or metaphysical dimensions of human perception beyond the physical world. The poem is evocative and introspective with a sense of nostalgia and yearning. The poet introduces the idea of the stars as silent witnesses to human emotions and experiences. The poem delves into human experience touching upon themes of mortality, existence and the longing for something beyond the tangible world. It deals with themes of longing for transcendence, spirituality, human existence, and the mysteries of universe. It explores the idea that human possess a deeper spiritual longing that goes beyond the mundane aspects of life. The 'stars' used in the poem symbolize the celestial beauty and mystery in the poem. The eyes, stars and the sea are the predominant images used in the poem.

The poem employs rich and complex imagery, using the ‘stars’ as metaphors for something unattainable yet captivating, evoking a sense of wonder, beauty and longing. They also evoke a sense of cosmic transcendence suggesting that our eyes are not just limited to watching the physical stars but also yearn for something higher or divine. The title itself "Eyes Watch the Stars" suggests a deeper meaning beyond merely observing the physical stars. It implies a spiritual or metaphysical perception, indicating that human vision extends beyond the material world to seek something transcendent of divine. It also suggests that our perception of the world is not confined to the physical but extends to the metaphysical or spiritual. The poem embraces mysticism, suggesting that our eyes are not just physical instruments but also capable of perceiving truths or high divines.

The poem explores themes of introspection, revelation, and the intertwining of the personal and the cosmic. It delves into an introspective journey, exploring the inner depths of the speaker's consciousness. It's a quest for self-discovery and enlightenment. The poem symbolically connects the personal experience of the speaker with the vastness of the universe. It reflects the idea that personal revelations are intertwined with cosmic understanding. Okigbo employs vivid imagery and symbolic elements such as stars, beach, and the sea. These symbols represent the vastness of the cosmos and the mysteries of existence. The use of mystical language contributes to the mystical and contemplative tone of the poem, inviting readers to interpret its deeper meaning. The poem might symbolize the quest for identity and meaning amidst cultural, political, and social changes. It weaves together personal introspection with cosmic contemplation. Through its use of vivid imagery, symbolic elements, and enigmatic language, the poem invites readers to reflect on the human condition, the mysteries of existence, and the interconnectedness of the self with the universe. In nutshell, the poem intertwines themes of observation, secrecy, nature's beauty, and the intricacies of human life.

1.3.3 Water Maid:

Bright
with the armpit dazzle of a lioness,
she answers,
wearing white light about her;
and the waves escort her,
my lioness,
crowned with moonlight.

So brief her presence –
match-flare in wind's breath –
so brief with mirrors around me.

Downward …
the waves distil her:
gold crop
sinking ungathered.

Watermaid of the salt emptiness,
grown are the ears of the secret.

"Water Maid" by Christopher Okigbo is a poem that portrays a heavenly and fleeting image of a mystical figure, the Water Maid, surrounded by nature's elements and carrying a sense of transience and enigma. The poem is romantic that portrays the poet's deep emotional attraction to a lady. In this poem, Okigbo explicitly compares the lady to a mermaid or "mammy water," a mythical sea creature known for its extraordinary beauty and supernatural powers in African folklore.

The opening lines describe the Water Maid's radiance, likening her brightness to the dazzling armpit of a lioness. This comparison evokes a sense of regal and powerful beauty. The imagery of her adorned with white light, escorted by the waves, and crowned with moonlight emphasizes her ethereal and otherworldly presence. The speaker acknowledges the brevity of the Water Maid's appearance, comparing it to a brief flare of a match in the wind, hinting at the transitory nature of her visitation. The "mirrors around me" might symbolize reflections or facets of the self or surroundings affected by her fleeting presence.

The subsequent lines evoke a sense of loss or departure as the Water Maid's golden presence sinks downward, unpicked or ungathered, akin to a crop left unharvested. This imagery might suggest a sense of missed opportunity or an inability to fully capture or retain her essence. The concluding lines, "Watermaid of the salt emptiness, grown are the ears of the secret;" suggest an acknowledgment of the Water Maid as a symbol of mystical wisdom or knowledge. The phrase "grown are the ears of the secret" may imply a heightened understanding or awareness of hidden truths or mysteries.

The poem begins by highlighting the lady's undeniable beauty and enchantment. The term *bright* in the opening line emphasizes her fair complexion and radiant

allure. The poet stands mesmerized, particularly by the lady's armpit, which he vividly describes as the ‘dazzle of a lioness. In the second stanza, the poet notes that the lady's appearance is striking and distinctive, comparing her to a "white light" that sets her apart from others. As the poet continues to observe the lady, he notes that her fragrance, symbolically represented by "waves," accompanies her wherever she goes, adding to her allure. The lady's beauty is described as perfect, akin to the gentle light of the moon, which, unlike the harsh sun, is soothing and easy on the eyes. The lady is metaphorically "crowned with moonlight."The phrase ‘crowned with moonlight’ suggests the association with celestial or mystical qualities. However, the poet's encounter with the lady is fleeting, and he laments the brevity of their meeting. He longs for more time to admire her beauty, and he compares their encounter to a quick breath of wind. The impact of this encounter leaves a lasting impression on the poet. He likens the lady's image to a "mirror around me," suggesting that he is continually reflecting on her beauty, even after she has gone. In the final lines, the poet expresses the brevity of the lady's presence, describing it as a "match-flare in wind's breath." This image underscores the fleeting nature of their meeting, leaving the poet with a strong desire for more time to gaze upon the lady's beauty. In *Watermaid*, Okigbo captures the poet's intense admiration and longing for the lady's beauty, using vivid and evocative imagery to convey the depth of his emotions and the fleeting nature of their encounter.

The poem resonates with vivid imagery and symbolism, capturing elements of purity, spirituality, and reverence. It symbolizes purity and divinity through the character of the "Water Maid," described with celestial attributes like being "crowned with moonlight." This figure is frequently associated with spiritual elements and pure, natural beauty. Okigbo employs natural imagery, particularly water-related motifs, to evoke a sense of purity, cleansing, and transcendence. Water symbolizes purification, renewal, and connection to the divine. The images like purity, brightness and natural elements like water and light associated with ‘water maid’. Okigbo's use of metaphorical language infuses the poem with deeper meanings. The "Water Maid" becomes a symbol of purity, spirituality, and divine connection, transcending mere physicality. The poem is rich in symbolism, employing natural imagery and metaphorical language to explore themes of spirituality, purity, and reverence. Through its vivid descriptions and metaphorical layers, Okigbo invites readers to contemplate the divine and spiritual aspects represented by the "Water Maid," creating an immersive experience that goes beyond the physical world.

1.3.4 Lustra:

So would I to the hills again
so would I
to where springs the fountain
there to draw from
and to hilltop clamber
body and soul
whitewashed in the moondew
there to see from

So would I from my eye the mist
so would I
through moonmist to hilltop
there for the cleansing

Here is a new-laid egg
here a white hen at midterm.

The poem "Lustra" is a reflective and contemplative piece that delves into themes of identity, spirituality, and cultural heritage. The poem is written in a lyrical and introspective style. It is a concise poem that encapsulates a yearning for a spiritual or metaphorical renewal and purification. The poem seems to express a desire of a speaker to return to a place of rejuvenation and cleansing, symbolized by a journey to the hills.

The repetition of the phrase "So would I" indicates a strong longing of a speaker to revisit a particular location, possibly a natural setting represented by the hills, where a fountain springs. This fountain symbolizes a source of renewal and purity. The speaker expresses a desire to draw from this spring, signifying a wish to replenish oneself, both physically and spiritually. The speaker's act of climbing to the hilltop, with body and soul whitewashed in the moondew, suggests a purification process, perhaps seeking spiritual enlightenment or a fresh beginning. The lines "There for the cleansing; Here is a new-laid egg Here a white hen at midterm" can be interpreted symbolically. The new-laid egg and the white hen might represent symbols of fertility, new beginnings, or purity.

The poem "Lustra" has three parts. In the three parts of the poem, the poet/protagonist goes through the ritual purification which is necessary before he can

have a lasting vision of the maid. At first, the poet says, “So would I to the hills again” implies that he had been to the hills previously, although there is no indication in the sequence. The syntactic arrangement of the first stanza shows that ‘the hills’ are where the fountain springs, and the purpose of his going is there ‘to draw from’, ‘to see from’ and to be cleansed. The syntactic similarity between ‘hills’ and ‘fountains’ is strengthened by ‘again fountain’. There is a concatenation of activities which the poet/protagonist is to undertake. He should be cleansed before he can have a vision of the maid or be able to draw from the fountain. There is also an element of vagueness of intention until last line of the stanza. The kind of cleansing is emphasized by the nature of sacrificial objects, ‘new laid egg’ and ‘white hen of midterm’ both of which are Igbo traditional symbols of sacrificial purity. This purely traditional mode of cleansing follows from ‘whitewashed in the moondew’ which avoids the Christian terminology ‘purified’. Again the protagonist will ‘clamber body and soul’ which implies a unification of his whole personality in the quest for cleansing, the body not being an impediment to his spiritual aspirations as it is commonly believed by Christians. ‘Clamber’ connotes effort, difficulty of ascent, and determination on the part of the protagonist. ‘Mist’ in the line ‘So would I from my eye the mist’ is used in two senses. In the first place, it could be a synonym for ‘dew’ which is normally cause observation of the atmosphere. It is also a filmy covering of the eyes caused by disorder or blinding the eyes, preventing the protagonist from the essential vision.

The title of the poem itself suggests the idea of purification or cleansing. The poem begins by depicting a ceremonial scene in which the poet stands before an altar, ready to make an offering or sacrifice. This act of reverence is tied to a sense of cultural heritage and ancestral connection. The poet is deeply aware of the significance of this act, suggesting a desire to honor and preserve his cultural and spiritual roots. Throughout the poem, there is a strong emphasis on the poet's introspection and the importance of his inner journey.

The poem intertwines themes of transition, rebirth and the cyclical nature of life. It explores the cyclical aspect of existence, where life, death, and rebirth are depicted as a continuous cycle. This theme is often conveyed through natural imagery and references to the moon, hills, and birth symbolism. "Lustra" symbolizes a journey of transformation or metamorphosis. It may represent the poet's personal quest for renewal, growth, or spiritual awakening. Okigbo employs rich symbolism and vivid imagery to evoke the theme of cycles and transformation. Images of hills, moonlight,

eggs, and hens may represent birth, renewal, and the natural order. The poem reflects the passage of time and mortality. The phrase ‘Whitewashed in the moondew’ suggest purity and illumination. The imagery of ‘new-laid egg’ and ‘white hen at midterm’ signify or symbolize the birth, growth or renewal. The poem's tone is reflective and contemplative, inviting readers to ponder the deeper meaning behind the cycle of life and rebirth. Okigbo's poetry often reflects African philosophical beliefs, especially regarding the interconnectedness of life, nature, and spirituality. Through the use of vivid imagery, symbolism, and rhythmic language, Okigbo invites readers to contemplate the eternal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in both the natural and spiritual realms. In nutshell, the poem *Lustra* conveys a deep yearning for a return to a place of spiritual cleansing and renewal, symbolized by the hills and the spring. The poem carries themes of purification, rebirth, and a desire for a fresh start or a new phase in life.

1.3.5 Bridge:

I am standing above you and tide
above the noontide,
Listening to the laughter of waters
that do not know why:

Listening to incense…

I am standing above the noontide
with my head above it,
Under my feet float the waters:
tide blows them under.

The poem "Bridge" is short but meditative. It describes a contemplative moment of the poet as he stands above a body of water, most likely a river or a tide. It portrays a scene where the speaker stands on a bridge, observing the flowing tide below during noontime. The poem carries a sense of detachment and observation. The title ‘bridge’ suggests a transition or connection between life and death.

The speaker describes standing above the tide and the noontide which indicates a position of physical elevation. This perspective allows him to listen to the sounds of the water's movement, suggesting that the waters flow without a conscious understanding or reason, as implied by the phrase: "Listening to the laughter of waters, that do not know why". The mention of "listening to incense" could be

metaphorical, evoking a sense of something intangible or spiritual. It might imply the speaker's deep contemplation or reflection as they observe the natural world around them.

The repetition of the phrase "I am standing above the noontide" emphasizes the speaker's elevated position, both physically and possibly metaphorically, suggesting a sense of separation or distance from the surroundings. The lines With my head above it, under my feet float the waters; Tide blows them under indicate the speaker's simultaneous connection to and detachment from the waters. They are above the tide, yet the waters flow beneath their feet, symbolizing a sense of being apart from the natural elements while still being influenced or surrounded by them.

The poem begins with the poet stating that he is standing above a body of water, specifically above the "noontide." The poem is symbolic. The use of "noontide" suggests a moment of intense sunlight and heat, possibly symbolizing a point of clarity or heightened awareness. The poet listens to the laughter of the waters, and there's a sense that the waters are carefree and joyful, unaware of the reasons behind their laughter. This creates a contrast between the poet's introspective mood and the seemingly carefree nature of the waters. The mention of "incense" implies a sense of ritual or spirituality, as incense is often associated with religious or ceremonial practices. It may suggest that the poet is engaged in a form of meditation. The poem concludes with the poet emphasizing his position above the noontide, with his head held high. The waters flow beneath his feet, carried by the tide, which symbolizes the constant movement and change in life. The poem has a touch of irony and it is introduced in lines:

Listening to the laughter of waters

That do not know why....

‘Laughter of waters’ is an image called up by splashing of tidal water either on the shores or the pillars of bridge but it is also possible that the protagonist/poet realizes that his rejoicing is presumptuous. The irony is also continued in the last two lines:

Under my feet floats the waters

Tide blows them under----.

There is a collocative clash in ‘float the waters’. Water would normally flow, and an object ‘floats’ on water. What floats has no weight, and in the ‘float’ and ‘tide blows them under’. each other.

The poem is dealt with themes of transition, transformation, and the interconnectedness of life and death. The title of the poem suggests the symbolic significance of a bridge, representing a transition or passage between different states of being. It can symbolize the crossing between life and death, reality and the metaphysical, or past and present. In this poem, the poet uses metaphorical language and symbolic elements to evoke deeper meanings, inviting readers to contemplate the allegorical significance of the bridge. The poem's enigmatic language and imagery create a sense of mystery and ambiguity, encouraging multiple interpretations. The poem carries a contemplative tone. Okigbo's poetry often reflects African philosophical beliefs, including views on life, death, and the spiritual realm. "Bridge" might draw from these cultural elements to explore the liminality between worlds. "Bridge" is a thought-provoking poem that intricately weaves together metaphors and symbolism to explore the enigmatic concepts of transition and transformation. Through its ambiguous yet profound language and symbolic representations, Okigbo invites readers to contemplate the liminal spaces between different realms and the profound mysteries inherent in life's transitions. Though *Bridge* is a short poem, it is thought-provoking that captures a moment of reflection and contemplation as the poet stands above the waters and listens to their laughter. The poem explores the contrast between the poet's introspective state and the carefree nature of the natural world, emphasizing the ever-flowing tide of life.

1.3.6 From Flesh into Phantom:

From flesh into phantom,
on the horizontal stone

I was the sole witness to my home coming…

Serene lights on the other balcony:
redolent fountains bristling with signs –
But what does my divine rejoicing hold?
A bowl of incense, a nest of fireflies?

I was the sole witness to my homecoming…

For in the inflorescence of the white chamber,
a voice, from very far away, chanted, and the chamber descanted,
the birthday of the earth, paddled me home through
some dark labyrinth, from laughter to the dream.

Miner into my solitude, incarnate
voice of the dream, you will go,
with me as your chief acolyte,
again into the ant-hill…

I was the sole witness to my homecoming…

"From Flesh into Phantom" is a poignant and evocative poem by Christopher Okigbo that explores themes of identity, transformation, and the passage of time. This poem is part of Okigbo's collection "Labyrinths," and it reflects his deeply philosophical and introspective style. It is a cryptic and enigmatic poem that explores the mystical and the journey of self-discovery. In this poem, the poet describes the transition from physical to spiritual existence.

The opening line, From flesh into phantom on the horizontal stone, suggests a transition from a physical state ("flesh") into something intangible or spiritual ("phantom") upon a horizontal stone. The repetition of "*I was the sole witness to my homecoming*" emphasizes the solitary and introspective nature of this transformation. It highlights a personal, internal journey of self-realization and arrival at a certain realization or state of being.

The poem introduces serene lights, redolent fountains, and the divine rejoicing, evoking imagery of mystical or spiritual elements. The poet highlights sources of knowledge or spiritual enlightenment by referring 'redolent fountains, bristling with signs'. 'A voice, from very far away' represents the guidance to the speaker's journey. However, the speaker questions the true significance or meaning behind this divine rejoicing. The inflorescence of the white chamber and the distant voice chanting hints at a sacred or ceremonial setting. The chamber becomes a place where distant voices resonate, perhaps carrying echoes of ancient knowledge or spiritual wisdom that guide the speaker through a labyrinthine journey—from laughter to the dream, signifying a passage from the mundane to the mysterious. The poem's closure, miner into my solitude, incarnate voice of the dream, you will, with me as your chief acolyte, again into the ant-hole, conveys a sense of seeking into the depths

of solitude, symbolized by the ant-hole. It suggests a willingness to engage with the mysterious and unknown aspects of the self or the world.

The poem begins with a reflection on the temporary nature of human existence. It describes the human journey as a progression "from flesh into phantom," highlighting the mutable quality of life and the eventual transition from the physical realm to the ethereal. As the poem continues, there is an exploration of the idea that identity is shaped and defined by experiences and memories. The poet acknowledges the importance of these experiences, referring to them as "handwriting upon a stone," signifying the enduring impact of one's journey through life. The poem also delves into the theme of time, suggesting that time itself is a force that transforms the physical into the ephemeral, or "flesh into phantom." It highlights the fleeting nature of youth and beauty, which inevitably give way to the passage of time.

Okigbo's use of imagery and symbolism invites readers to engage with the deeper questions about the nature of self and the passage of time. His use of vivid imagery and metaphorical language conveys a sense of transition, where the boundaries between the physical and spiritual worlds blur. The poet delves into the complexities of human identity, suggesting that life is transient, and the self undergoes a continuous evolution or dissolution, almost like a ghostly apparition. In this poem, the poet explores the idea if transition moving from the tangible physical world (flesh) into the intangible or spectral realm (phantom). The title itself suggests a transformation from a solid, material state to a ghostly or ethereal existence. The title also suggests a journey from physical to spiritual transition in the context of the poem; it means a transition of existence. The title symbolizes a shift or transformation from a tangible, material state (flesh) to and ephemeral, ghostly existence (phantom).

In nutshell, the poem encapsulates a journey of self-discovery, transformation, and introspection. It explores the concept of transformation, symbolizing a shift from material existence ("flesh") to an ethereal or intangible state ("phantom"). This transformation might symbolize an existential or spiritual journey. "From Flesh into Phantom" reflects existential themes, contemplating the essence of existence, the fluidity of identity, and the enigmatic nature of human consciousness. Okigbo employs metaphorical language and symbolic imagery to depict the transformation from the tangible ("flesh") to the intangible or spectral ("phantom"). The use of vivid imagery creates a sense of ethereal transition. The poem's enigmatic language and cryptic imagery contribute to its mysterious and thought-provoking nature,

encouraging multiple interpretations. The poem carries a mysterious and reflective tone, inviting readers to ponder the deeper meanings behind the transformation and the existential implications.

1.3.7 An Image Insists:

An image insists
from the flag pole of the heart,
The image distracts
with the cruelty of the rose …

My lioness
(No shield is lead plate against you)
Wound me with your sea-weed face,
blinded like a strong-room.

Distances of your
armpit-fragrance
Turn chloroform,
enough for my patience –

When you have finished,
and done up my stitches,
Wake me near the altar,
& this poem will be finished.

The poem "An Image Insists" by Christopher Okigbo is a poem that conveys a blend of evocative imagery, emotional intensity, and symbolism. The fleeting nature of human life is reflected through this poem. The poem begins with the declaration that an image persists or insists from the "flag-pole of the heart," suggesting a compelling and recurring mental image or idea that emerges from within the depths of the speaker's emotions. The image is described as distracting, displaying the cruelty of the rose. This juxtaposition suggests that the image is captivating yet harbors an element of pain or harshness, reminiscent of the duality of beauty and cruelty associated with the rose. The phrase ‘cruelty of the rose’ symbolizes the beauty with a hint of danger.

The poet has used the reference of "My lioness" which adds a powerful and wild aspect to the image. It portrays a strong and untamed force. The lioness's presence is described as capable of causing wounds despite the inadequacy of a lead-plate shield

against her. This lioness figure could symbolize a powerful, captivating, and potentially destructive force in the speaker's life. The lines "Wound me with your seaweed face / Blinded like a strong room" continue the imagery of being affected by this lioness figure. The seaweed face evokes a sense of entanglement and confusion, while the comparison to a strong room suggests a sense of being trapped.

The description of the distance between the speaker and the lioness as being fragrant, turning chloroform alludes to a soothing yet anesthetic quality, perhaps suggesting that the lioness's presence is intoxicating and numbing, affecting the speaker's patience. The poem concludes with the speaker requesting to be woken near the altar once the lioness has "finished" and "done up my stitches," suggesting a desire for closure. This line indicates that the completion of the experience with the lioness will mark the conclusion of the poem.

The poem is a vivid and passionate expression of love and desire. It opens with the speaker describing a powerful and captivating image that persists in their heart like a flag flying on a pole. This image is distracting and intense, marked by the cruelty associated with the beauty of a rose.

An image insists

From the flag-pole of the heart,

The image distracts

With the cruelty of the rose

My lioness,

(No shield is lead-plate against you)

The speaker addresses a figure referred to as "My lioness," emphasizing her strength and attraction. The speaker acknowledges that no shield, not even one made of lead, can protect them against this powerful presence. The lioness is described with a metaphorical "sea-weed face," suggesting mystery and depth.

Distances of yours

Arm-pit fragrance

Turn chloroform,

enough for my patience--.

The poem delves into the intoxicating nature of the lioness's fragrance, specifically her armpit scent. The scent is so potent that it acts like chloroform, momentarily overwhelming the speaker's patience and senses. The poem ends with the speaker anticipating being awakened near an altar after the lioness has finished tending to the speaker's wound which indicates a sense of surrender and insecurity in the face of love and desire. Overall, "An Image Insists" portrays a complex and tumultuous relationship or encounter with a captivating yet potentially damaging force symbolized by the lioness, leading the speaker through a sequence of intense and emotionally charged experiences.

1.3.8 Come Thunder:

Now that the triumphant march has entered the last street corners,
Remember, O dancers, the thunder among the clouds…

Now that the laughter, broken in two, hangs tremulous between the
teeth,
Remember, O Dancers, the lightning beyond the earth…

The smell of blood already floats in the lavender-mist of the
afternoon.
The death sentence lies in ambush along the corridors of power;
And a great fearful thing already tugs at the cables of the open air,
A nebula immense and immeasurable, a night of deep waters —
An iron dream unnamed and unprintable, a path of stone.

The drowsy heads of the pods in barren farmlands witness it,
The homesteads abandoned in this century's brush fire witness it:
The myriad eyes of deserted corn cobs in burning barns witness it:
Magic birds with the miracle of lightning flash on their feathers…

The arrows of God tremble at the gates of light,
The drums of curfew pander to a dance of death;

And the secret thing in its heaving
Threatens with iron mask
The last lighted torch of the century…

The impending conflict, societal upheaval or the looming threat of war is explored through the poem 'Come Thunder'. It also reflects the tension, anxieties or

political unrest. The poem addresses the turmoil and unrest within society, signaling the impending chaos and violence. It symbolizes the socio-political challenges and impending crisis faced by the society.

The opening lines, Now that the triumphant march has entered the last street corners, Remember, O dancer, the thunder among the clouds, seem to address a moment of celebration or triumph nearing its end. It cautions against forgetting the threat or danger represented by the thunder among the clouds. It urges the dancers or celebrants to recall the foreboding signs amidst the festivities. The imagery of laughter broken and hanging tremulous between teeth evokes a sense of tension and uncertainty. The reference to lightning beyond the earth further emphasizes the imminent danger or calamity lurking on the horizon.

The poem continues to paint a grim picture, describing the smell of blood mingling with the lavender-mist of the afternoon and the presence of a death sentence lurking within the corridors of power. There's a foreboding sense of a great fearful entity, symbolized by a nebula, a night of deep waters—an intangible and immense threat. The imagery of deserted farmlands, abandoned homesteads, and burning barns suggests a landscape of devastation and abandonment. The magic birds with lightning flash on their feathers and the trembling arrows of God at the gates of light symbolize supernatural or divine elements engaged in a cosmic battle. The poem ends with a sense of impending doom threatening to extinguish the last lighted torch of the century, representing the imminent end or downfall of an era. It is a haunting portrayal of impending disaster, using vivid and evocative imagery to convey a sense of foreboding, crisis, and the looming threat that threatens to overshadow and extinguish the light of the age.

The poem is written during the Nigerian civil war and the aftermath of the First Military Coup which serves as a warning to his opponents. Okigbo cautions them that their premature victory and celebration are ill-founded, as a major destructive force looms ominously. The poet foresees a sinister power threatening to ravage the country entirely. Using vivid imagery and metaphors, Okigbo paints a picture of impending doom. He employs symbols such as "thunder," "lightning," "blood," "iron," "stone," "night," "waters," and "death" to emphasize the looming catastrophe that Nigeria might face. The poem's rhyme and rhythm contribute to its original and distinctive form. In the poem, Okigbo advises the jubilant victors to remember the uncertainty of their situation, reminding them of the lightning beyond the earth that

might strike when they least expect it. The laughter, broken and hanging between their teeth, signifies their tentative joy, overshadowed by the impending danger.

The poem employs apocalyptic imagery, portraying a foreboding sense of doom and an impending catastrophe, emphasizing the urgency of the situation. Okigbo utilizes vivid and evocative imagery to create a sense of impending disaster and chaos. Symbolic elements like thunder and impending storms represent the turbulent times and the looming crisis. The poem's rhythmic structure and repetition of phrases intensify the sense of urgency and impending doom, enhancing the emotional impact. The poem carries a foreboding and urgent tone, conveying a sense of impending crisis and the urgency to take action or brace for tumultuous times. Okigbo's poetry often reflects the socio-political context of post-colonial Africa. Come Thunder may symbolize the socio-political unrest and turmoil prevalent during that time. It is a poignant and intense poem that vividly captures the sense of impending crisis and societal upheaval. Through its powerful imagery, prophetic tone, and apocalyptic symbolism, Okigbo presents a stark warning about the impending chaos and societal unrest, drawing attention to the turbulent times and the urgent need for resolution. Overall, the poem captures the atmosphere of uncertainty and impending disaster during a turbulent period in Nigerian history, using powerful imagery and cautionary tones to convey the poet's message.

1.3.9 Check Your Progress:

(A) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is the setting of the poem "Overture" by Christopher Okigbo?
2. What theme does "Overture" primarily explore?
3. Which literary device is prominently used in "Overture"?
4. What is the significance of the "salt-white surf" and "maid to the salt-emptiness" in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
5. How does the poet employ the theme of secrecy in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
6. What contrasting images are presented in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
7. What is the predominant imagery in "Eyes Watch the Stars" by Christopher Okigbo?
8. What do the "eyes open on the beach" symbolize in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?

9. Which phrase indicates a secretive aspect in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
10. What contrasting elements are present in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
11. Which is the mood or tone conveyed in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
12. What is the effect of the juxtaposition of "salt-white surf" and "maid to the salt-emptiness" in "Eyes Watch the Stars"?
13. What is the predominant theme in Christopher Okigbo's poem "Lustra"?
14. Which literary device is commonly used in Okigbo's poetry, including "Lustra"?
15. What does the phrase "Whitewashed in the moondew" suggest in the context of the poem?
16. How does the poet symbolize purity and illumination in "Lustra"?
17. What does the imagery of "new-laid egg" and "white hen at midterm" possibly signify in the poem?
18. Which literary device is commonly used by Okigbo in "Lustra"?
19. What central theme is explored in the poem "From Flesh into Phantom"?
20. How does the poet depict the transformation in "From Flesh into Phantom"?
21. What imagery is evoked in the poem "From Flesh into Phantom"?
22. What does the poet refer to as "redolent fountains, bristling with signs" in the poem "From Flesh into Phantom"?
23. What might the "voice, from very far away" signify "From Flesh into Phantom"?
24. What literary device might Okigbo use to depict transformation in the poem?
25. How does the poet describe the transition in "From Flesh into Phantom"?
26. What might the "voice, from very far away" represent in the poem?
27. What might the phrase "cruelty of the rose" symbolize in the context of Okigbo's poetry?
28. How does Okigbo's poem "An Image Insists" evoke emotions or feelings?

29. What broader aspect of human experience might "An Image Insists" reflect?
30. What literary device is frequently used by Okigbo in his poetry?
31. What broader aspect of human experience might "An Image Insists" reflect?
32. What central theme is explored in the poem "Come Thunder"?
33. How does Okigbo evoke emotions in his poetry, particularly in "Come Thunder"?
34. What might the phrase "triumphant march" refer to in "Come Thunder"?
35. What broader social or political aspects might "Come Thunder" reflect?
36. What might the "bridge" symbolize in Christopher Okigbo's poetry, particularly in "Bridge"?
37. What broader aspect of human experience might "Bridge" reflect?
38. How does Okigbo often portray women in his poetry, possibly in "Water Maid"?
39. What imagery might be associated with "Water Maid" in Okigbo's poetry?
40. What might the phrase "crowned with moonlight" suggest in the context of "Water Maid"?

1.4 Leopold Sedar Senghor:

Leopold Sedar Senghor was a prominent Senegalese poet, philosopher, and politician who played a significant role in African literature, cultural identity, and politics. He was born on October 9, 1906, in Joal, Senegal, which was then a French colony. He was of mixed ethnicity, with a Serer mother and a Peul (Fulani) father, which later influenced his ideas on Negritude, a literary and cultural movement celebrating African heritage. Senghor moved to France in the 1920s to pursue higher education. He studied at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris and later at the University of Paris, where he earned degrees in philosophy and humanities. His exposure to French culture and education profoundly shaped his intellectual development. Senghor, along with Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas, co-founded the Negritude movement in the 1930s. Negritude was a literary and cultural movement that aimed to celebrate and promote African identity, culture, and heritage. Senghor's poetry was

central to this movement, highlighting themes of African pride, unity, and cultural consciousness. His poetry often celebrated the beauty and rhythms of African culture and nature. It also reflects his belief in the importance of preserving African traditions and cultural identity.

Leopold Sedar Senghor became involved in politics and was elected as the deputy to the French National Assembly in 1945. He was the first African to hold this position. He later became the mayor of the city of Dakar in Senegal. In 1960, Senegal gained independence from France, and Senghor became the country's first president. He served as the president until 1980 when he voluntarily stepped down. He was also known for his philosophical ideas, particularly the concept of "African socialism" or "Socialism with a Human Face," which sought to blend socialist principles with African cultural values. His legacy is profound in both the literary and political spheres. He was a leading figure in the Negritude movement along with other influential writers such as Aimé Césaire and Leon Damas. He is remembered for his contributions to African literature, his role in the Negritude movement, and his efforts to promote African identity. He is often seen as a bridge between African and Western cultures, advocating for a dialogue between them. After his political career, Senghor retired to France and continued his literary pursuits. He remained influential in African and international intellectual circles until his passing on December 20, 2001, in Verson, France.

Leopold Sedar Senghor is recognized for his significant contributions to African literature, particularly for his role in developing the Negritude movement. His poetry, deeply rooted in African cultural heritage, explores themes of identity, African spirituality, colonialism, and the interconnectedness of humanity. There are some key aspects of Senghor's poetry.

Aspects of Senghor's poetry:

Negritude and African Identity: Senghor is a prominent figure in the Negritude movement, which celebrates African culture, history, and identity. His poetry often reflects pride in African heritage and emphasizes the beauty and richness of African culture.

Cultural Fusion: He skillfully combines traditional African rhythms, proverbs, and imagery with Western poetic forms, creating a unique fusion that captures the essence of African oral traditions while adhering to modernist structures.

Sensory Imagery and Symbolism: Senghor's poetry is rich in sensory imagery, vivid descriptions of nature, and symbolic representations drawn from African folklore. His use of symbols and metaphors often conveys deeper philosophical and cultural meanings.

Spirituality and Unity: He emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and nature, advocating for harmony and unity among diverse cultures. His poetry often explores themes of spirituality, embracing the sacredness of life and the natural world.

Social Commentary: Senghor's work addresses social and political issues. It also reflects the impact of colonialism, racial identity, and the struggle for African independence. He critiques the dehumanizing effects of colonization while advocating for African self-assertion and dignity.

Lyrical Elegance and Musicality: His poetry is characterized by lyrical elegance, rhythmic flow, and musicality. Senghor's use of language and poetic forms creates a melodic quality that resonates with readers.

Leopold Sedar Senghor's role in shaping the Negritude movement significantly impacted African literature, fostering pride in African identity and influencing subsequent generations of writers and intellectuals across Africa and the diaspora. As a statesman, Senghor's poetic vision extended to his political career. His advocacy for African cultural values and his commitment to Pan-Africanism left a lasting legacy in African political thought and diplomacy. His poetry stands as a testament to the beauty of African cultural heritage, advocating for the celebration of African identity and the affirmation of humanity's shared values. His poetic legacy continues to inspire appreciation for African culture, contributing to the broader discourse on identity, race, and cultural diversity in literature and society. Senghor's legacy as a poet, philosopher, and political leader endures, not only in Senegal but also in the broader context of African literature and cultural identity. His contributions to African literature and culture, as well as his political leadership in Senegal, continue to be celebrated, and he remains an important figure in the history of African thought and identity. The selected poems of Leopold Sedar Senghor are as follows:

1.4.1 In Memoriam:

Today is Sunday.
I fear the crowd of my brothers with stony faces

From my tower of glass filled with pain, the nagging Ancestors,
I gaze at roofs and hills in the fog.
In the silence—the chimneys are grave and bare.
At their feet sleep my dead, all my dreams are dust
All my dreams, the liberal blood spills all along the streets, mixing
with the blood of the butcheries
And now, from the observatory as from suburb
I watch dreams float vaguely through the streets, lie at the hills'
feet
Like the guides of my race on the banks of Gambia and Saloum,
Now of the Seine, at the foot of these hills
Let me think my dead!
Yesterday it was Toussaint, the solemn anniversary of the Sun
And no remembrance in any cemetery.
Ah, dead ones who have always refused to die, who have known how
To fight death
By Seine or Sine, and in my fragile veins pushed the invincible blood,
Protect my dreams as you have made your sons, wanderers on
delicate feet
Oh Dead, protect the roofs of Paris in the Sunday fog
The roofs which guard my dead
That from the perilous safety of my tower I may descent to the
Streets
To join my brothers blue eyes
With hard hands

The poem "In Memoriam" celebrates the power of memory and the enduring connection between individuals, even after death. It reflects on the theme of memory, loss, and the enduring connection between the living and the departed. The poem is a heartfelt tribute to someone who has passed away, exploring the emotional impact of their absence and the power of memory to keep their spirit alive. It captures the universal experience of grief while emphasizing the importance of remembrance in keeping the spirit of loved ones alive in our hearts and minds.

The poem begins on a Sunday, a day typically associated with rest and reflection, yet the speaker expresses a fear of the crowd of their brothers with stony faces. This could symbolize a sense of isolation or alienation within a community

that might not understand or share the speaker's experiences and emotions. The speaker in the poem views the world from a tower of glass filled with pain, possibly representing a high-rise or a metaphorical position of detachment, where they feel the presence of nagging ancestors. The imagery of gazing at roofs and hills in the fog suggests a sense of obscurity or uncertainty regarding the surroundings and one's place within them. The chimneys, described as grave and bare, symbolize an absence of vitality or life, and at their feet lie the speaker's dead ancestors. This imagery evokes a feeling of loss and a sense that all the speaker's dreams have turned to dust or have been unfulfilled. The reference to liberal blood spilled along the streets, mixed with the blood of the butcheries, likely alludes to the struggles and sacrifices made in pursuit of freedom and justice. This imagery embodies the collective pain and sacrifice experienced by the community.

The poem turns to a plea or invocation to the ancestral spirits, asking them to protect the speaker's dreams as they had protected their sons in the past. The speaker calls upon the dead to safeguard the roofs of Paris where their ancestors rest, suggesting a desire for protection and guidance amid the urban complexities. Ultimately, the poem ends with a longing to join the brothers with blue eyes and hard hands, symbolizing a desire for unity and solidarity despite perceived differences. "In Memoriam" reflects on the speaker's connection to their ancestry, the struggles faced, and the yearning for protection and solidarity in a world that feels detached and unfamiliar.

Senghor then delves into the emotional response to the loss, expressing deep feelings of grief and longing. He uses vivid natural imagery, invoking elements like rivers, winds, and seasons to convey the passage of time and the interconnectedness between nature and human experience. The poet's use of vibrant language and metaphors intensifies the emotional depth of the poem. The poem concludes with a sense of hope and resilience. While acknowledging the pain of loss, Senghor suggests that the memory of the departed remains vibrant and alive. The lasting impression they made on the world and in the hearts of those they touched endures, providing solace and strength to those who continue to remember them.

The theme of the past and the present, or the now and then, is a dominant motif in Leopold Sedar Senghor's poetry. Often and then in our life, we have moments of reflections or nostalgic reminiscences in which we compare and contrast in our mind situations by looking into the past against a backdrop of our present life. The poem “In Memoriam,” is a lyric. It is classic example of Senghor's verse which explores

the theme of nostalgic reminiscences. In this poem, the poet's mind radiates back and forth, between past and present like a glinting network of dreams and hallucinations. In this lyric, the poet thinks about the dead ancestors, and their apparently protective powers, as well as the two rivers, that is, the "banks of the Gambia or Saloum," the "Seine or Sine." The interplay between these geographical landmarks endows the poem with a tone of reminiscence, poise, and timelessness. Senghor's reminiscences are varied and contrastive: For example, while for him the past is idyllic, inviting and welcoming (e.g., "Let me think of my dead"), the present and now is harsh and severe (e.g., "From my tower of glass filled with pain"). Besides, the poet looks out from the "observatory" in Paris, his mind goes back home to Senegal to visualize "the roofs which guard my dead," The "solemn anniversary," "the roofs and hills, the "suburb," the "dream" and the "dead" -- all furnish the details of a happy but lost expectation and fulfillment.

The title of the poem, "In Memoriam," sets the tone of Senghor's discourse. The poem is a recollection of remembrances of what T.S. Eliot characterizes as "the pastness of the past," as measured against a backdrop of contemporary realities. Senghor's nostalgic reminiscences, as discussed in "In Memoriam," can be traced partly to some unfortunate incidents in his life. For example, he was an exile in Europe and elsewhere; he was also a prisoner of war, as well as a student who experienced racial discrimination and other indignities. All of these complexes constitute the background of the poem.

Besides, Senghor demonstrates a friendly disposition toward those who might be tempted to harm him or do him wrong, such as his stretching his hands of fellowship to them ("To join my brothers with blue eyes / With hard hands"). Elsewhere in the poem, he prays for everyone's protection and safety ("Oh Dead, protect the roofs of Paris in the Sunday fog / The roofs which guard my dead". Moreover, Senghor's ethos in the poem is one of "goodwill," "good sense" and "good moral character," qualities which, according to Classical Rhetoric, would not only endear a writer/speaker to his hearers/listeners, but would enable him to carry his message to them more successfully.

The poem focuses on the act of remembrance and honoring the deceased. It reflects on the significance of memory in preserving the legacy and history of individuals. Senghor often explored themes related to cultural identity and heritage. The poem might symbolize the preservation of cultural identity amidst changes and loss. It carries an elegiac and mournful tone, which evokes emotions of grief and

longing for the departed. This mournful tone contributes to the poem's reflective nature. The poet uses vivid imagery to evoke emotions and create a sense of nostalgia, painting a picture of landscapes and memories associated with the departed. The poem creates a reflective and melancholic atmosphere, inviting readers to contemplate the significance of memory and the emotional weight of loss.

1.4.2 Luxembourg 1939:

This morning at the Luxembourg, this autumn at the Luxembourg,
as I lived and relived my youth
No loafers, no water, no boats upon the water, no children, no
flowers.
Ah! The September flowers and the sunburnt cries of children who
defined the coming winter.
Only two old boys trying to play tennis.
This autumn morning without children—the children's theater closed!
This Luxembourg where I cannot trace my youth, those years fresh as
The lawns
My dreams defeated, my comrades despairing, can it be so?
Behold them falling like leaves with the leaves, withered and
Wounded trampled to death the colour of blood
To be shoveled into what common grave?
I do not know this Luxembourg, these soldiers mounting guard.
They have put guns to protect the whispering retreat of Senators,
They have cut trenches under the bench where I first learnt the soft
Flowering of lips
That notice again! Ah yes, dangerous youth!
I watch the leaves fall into the shelters, into ditches, into
trenches
where the blood of a generation flows
Europe is burying the yeast of nations and the hope of newer races.

The poem *Luxembourg 1939* is reflective. It reflects the picture of Luxembourg garden and the emotions linked to its surroundings. It conveys the poet's wistfulness of the past and transient nature of life. The poem explores themes of time passing,

sense of loss, and the harsh realities of a changing world, particularly in the context of war and societal shifts. The setting of the poem is garden and autumn season is mentioned in it.

The speaker in the poem begins by recalling a visit to the Luxembourg Gardens, a place where they once lived and relived their youth. However, the atmosphere is starkly different from the memories. Instead of the vibrant scenes from their past, the gardens are now devoid of usual activities: no loafers, no boats on the water, no children playing, and no flowers. The absence of these elements creates a sense of emptiness and desolation. The speaker reflects on the changing seasons, particularly the autumn, which symbolizes a time of transition and impending decline. The mention of September flowers and the sounds of children defiantly enjoying the last moments before winter arrives evoke a sense of nostalgia and a longing for lost innocence.

The poem then shifts to a description of the Luxembourg Gardens as they are in the present, where the speaker feels disconnected and alienated from the place of their youth. The absence of children, the closure of the children's theatre, and the sight of old boys trying to play tennis instead of youthful exuberance evoke a feeling of disillusionment and loss. The imagery of leaves falling like wounded comrades, trampled and withered, reflects the despair and defeat experienced by the speaker and their peers. The mention of soldiers guarding and trenches being dug in a place where once soft affections were learned suggests the intrusion of war and militarization into a space once associated with innocence and romance. The poem concludes with a lament for the lost dreams of the generation, symbolized by the fallen leaves and the bloodshed of war. The image of Europe burying the potential of nations and the hope for newer races portrays a sense of loss and the tragic consequences of conflict on the future.

The poem also addresses the somber theme of war in 1939. It conveys a distressing image of European soldiers conscripting children to join the war effort. The language used in the poem is contemporary, making it relatable to the modern reader, but the poet's choice of words and expressions hints at his advanced age. Reading the poem, one envisions a September day that should be filled with children playing outdoors. Instead, the scene is eerily empty, with a noticeable absence of children. The children's theater being closed is a symbolic representation of the loss of innocence and the disruption of normal childhood activities due to the war. Figurative language, such as onomatopoeia, is used in the poem to create sensory

impressions that enhance the reader's understanding of the situation. It adds depth and vividness to the description of the war's impact on the lives of children. In essence, the poem "Luxembourg 1939" paints a stark and melancholic picture of how war disrupts the lives of children and transforms what should be a joyful September day into a ghostly and somber scene. The poet's choice of language and imagery evokes a sense of loss and tragedy in the context of war.

The poem is introspective poem that explores themes of memory, nostalgia, and the passing of time. It captures a sense of nostalgia and reflects on the poet's memories associated with a specific place, evoking a longing for the past. Senghor juxtaposes the present ("This morning") with recollections of the past, highlighting the passage of time and the impact of changing circumstances. The poem employs vivid and descriptive imagery, evoking sensory details that paint a picture of the Luxembourg Gardens and the emotions linked to these surroundings. Senghor contrasts the vibrancy of the past with the starkness or absence of certain elements in the present, creating a poignant sense of loss. The poem carries a reflective and somewhat melancholic tone, conveying the poet's wistfulness for the past and the transient nature of life. While the poem reflects Senghor's personal reminiscences, it also touches upon universal themes of nostalgia and the fleeting nature of time, resonating with readers who share similar sentiments. It is a reflective and emotive poem that nostalgically revisits memories associated with a specific place and time. Overall, the poem reflects on the disillusionment, displacement, and destruction caused by war, juxtaposed with the memories of a once-vibrant and innocent youth, now

1.4.3 Blues:

The spring has swept the ice from all my frozen rivers

My young sap trembles at the first caresses along the tender bark.
But see how in the midst of July I am blinder than Arctic winter!
My wings beat and break against the barriers of heaven
No ray of pierce the deaf vault of my bitterness
What sign is there to find? What key to strike?
And how can god be reached by hurling javelins?
Royal summer of the distant South, you will come to late,

in a hateful September!
In which book can I find the thrill of your reverberation?
And on the pages of what book, on what impossible lips taste your

delirious love?
The impatient fit leaves me. Oh! The dull beat of the rain on the

leaves!
Just play me your "Solitude," Duke, till I can cry myself to sleep.

The poem "Blues" is an emotive. It deals with themes of seasonal change, emotional turmoil, and a deep longing for solace and understanding. It taps into emotional depth of human experiences. The poem begins with the arrival of spring which is symbolized by the melting of ice from frozen rivers and the awakening of the speaker's young sap. It indicates a renewed sense of life and vitality. The spring season symbolizes the beginning of rejuvenation of nature. However, despite the arrival of spring and the rejuvenation of nature, the speaker finds himself in a state of emotional darkness and blindness, metaphorically contrasting their inner state with the external awakening.

The imagery of being blinded despite the brightness of July conveys a sense of internal turmoil and isolation. The speaker feels trapped and unable to break through the barriers preventing him from experiencing joy or finding meaning in life. The reference to wings beating against the barriers of heaven signifies a desire to transcend limitations, yet feeling unable to do so. The inability to find a sign or a key to unlock their emotional turmoil reflects a sense of hopelessness and despair. The line "how can god be reached by hurling javelins?" highlights the futility of trying to reach a higher understanding through forceful or aggressive means. The speaker anticipates the arrival of the Royal Summer from the distant South, but there is a sense of resignation and bitterness. The poet believes that the Royal Summer will come too late, and its arrival will be in a hateful September which indicates a perceived delay or missed opportunity for solace. The poem ends with a reference to the Duke Ellington song "Solitude," The reference suggests a desire for music to offer comfort and catharsis. The speaker seeks solace in the melancholic melody of the song, hoping it will bring a release of emotions, allowing them to cry themselves to sleep.

″Blues" is a captivating poem that intertwines themes of melancholy, introspection, and cultural heritage. It portrays feelings of sadness and longing. It

might reflect personal emotions or a broader reflection on the African experience. Senghor often explored themes of cultural heritage. "Blues" might symbolize the intersection between personal emotions and broader cultural associations. The poet uses metaphors and vivid imagery to convey emotions, capturing the mood and essence of the blues. Through its rhythmic language, vivid imagery, and melancholic tone, Senghor skillfully evokes feelings of sadness and introspection, intertwining personal emotions with broader cultural sentiments. In nutshell, the poem *Blues* captures the conflicting emotions of hope, despair, longing, and emotional isolation. It expresses the speaker's deep yearning for understanding and solace amidst an inner turmoil that even the arrival of spring fails to alleviate.

1.4.4 Prayer of Masks:

Black mask, red mask, you black and white masks,
Rectangular masks through whom the spirit breathes,
I greet you in silence!
And you too, my lionheaded ancestor.
You guard this place, that is closed to any feminine laughter, to any
mortal smile.
You purify the air of eternity, here where I breathe the air of my
fathers.
Masks of markless faces, free from dimples and wrinkles.
You have composed this image, this my face that bends over the altar
of white paper.
In the name of your image, listen to me!
Now while the Africa of despotism is dying – it is the agony of a
pitiable princess,
Like that of Europe to whom she is connected through the naval-
Now fix your immobile eyes upon your children who have been called
And who sacrifice their lives like the poor man his last garment
So that hereafter we may cry ‘here’ at the rebirth of the world being
the leaven that the white flour needs.
For who else would teach rhythm to the world that has died of
machines and cannons?
For who else should ejaculate the cry of joy, that arouses the dead

and the wise in a new dawn?
Say, who else could return the memory of life to men with a torn
hope?
They call us cotton heads, and coffee men, and oily men.
They call us men of death.
But we are the men of the dance whose feet only gain power when
they beat the hard soil.

The poem "Prayer of Masks" is an evocative that reflects the essence of African identity, the strength of ancestral heritage, and the resilience of African culture in the face of adversity and oppression.

The speaker addresses to the ancestors and masks at the beginning of the poem. The masks are symbolic representations of spirits and ancestors. The speaker expresses reverence and greeting them in silence. The black, red, and black-and-white masks are acknowledged as bearers of spiritual essence and symbolic breath of the spirit. The lion-headed ancestor is invoked as a guardian of a sacred place, free from mundane and mortal laughter or smiles, a space where the air is purified with the essence of eternity—the very air breathed by the speaker's fathers. This imagery portrays a connection to ancestry, heritage, and the sanctity of traditional values.

The masks are described as having mark less faces, free from signs of age or imperfection. They are attributed with crafting the speaker's own face, symbolized as bending over an altar of white paper. It signifies a spiritual connection to ancestral images, a merging of the present identity with the past. The poem then changes to a reflection on the state of Africa, and described as in the throes of despotism and facing a plight akin to a pitiable princess in agony. It echoes the suffering and challenges faced by the continent. The mention of Europe's connection through the poem signifies a shared narrative of struggle and transition.

The speaker calls upon the masks. They represent the ancestral spirits which fix their gaze on their children who are sacrificing their lives. This sacrifice is portrayed as essential to bring forth a rebirth. The poem challenges derogatory stereotypes and names hurled at Africans—such as "cotton heads," "coffee men," and "oily men"—asserting the resilience and true essence of African identity. The speaker celebrates their cultural richness, proclaiming themselves as the men of the dance, whose power derives from their connection to the earth and rhythm, essential elements often lost in a world dominated by machines and warfare.

The poem explores the concept of masks as symbols of African culture and spirituality. The poem opens with the speaker addressing the masks. Masks are significant in African culture, often used in rituals, ceremonies, and artistic expressions. The masks symbolize a dual existence, as they can conceal or reveal the true identity of the wearer. The speaker contemplates the masks' ability to hide one's true self, suggesting that they serve as a protective shield against external forces that seek to erase or suppress one's cultural identity. The poem emphasizes the importance of preserving and celebrating one's heritage, even in the face of outside influences that may attempt to assimilate or erase it. As the poem continues, the speaker expresses a desire for unity and reconciliation. The masks are seen as intermediaries between different worlds and identities, and the speaker prays that they will bring harmony between the different aspects of life, culture, and spirituality. The poem's imagery and metaphors evoke a sense of reverence for the masks and the cultural traditions they represent. In the final stanza, the poem returns to the theme of unity, as the speaker prays for the masks to protect and guide the people. The masks are seen as a source of strength and a connection to ancestral wisdom. The poem is a reflection on the significance of masks in African culture and their role in preserving cultural identity and spirituality. The poem celebrates the beauty and power of these masks while emphasizing the importance of unity and the preservation of cultural heritage.

The poem “Prayer to Masks,” derives from Senghor's nostalgic recollections. In this poem, the nostalgic experience takes on a mimetic perspective in the sense that Senghor is reflecting from a global, universal point of view. The basic premise of the poem is that all humans -- black, white, “rectangular” or other -- are basically equal to one another and are the same in nature except of course the difference created by their skin color. Their essentiality, as human beings, is unique and unassailable. Of course the dead, who are the principal objects praised and celebrated in the poem. They deserve praise for their contribution to humanity. This is Senghor's solemn prayer in the poem. Among other things, “they are the masks through whom the spirit breathes,” they “guard this place,” they “purify the air of eternity,” and they “cry here at the rebirth of the world / being the leaven that the white flour needs”. In brief, this poem is a homily, an honest prayer which developed from Senghor's reminiscences. The significance of the poem is an universal appeal for peace and love, unity and reconciliation, for the sake of the human society.

The poem explores themes of identity, cultural heritage, and the interconnectedness between the spiritual and the earthly realm. The poem revolves around masks as symbolic representations of identity and spirituality. Masks signify the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage. The masks in the poem serve as guardians of ancestral knowledge and cultural traditions. They are revered as symbols of spiritual protection and wisdom. Senghor employs symbolic imagery, especially through the masks, to convey deeper meanings and reflect on the interconnectedness of the spiritual and material realms. The masks are personified, attributing human-like qualities to these symbolic objects, emphasizing their significance beyond inanimate objects. The poem carries a reverential and spiritually inclined tone, depicting a sense of respect and homage towards the masks and their cultural significance. Senghor's poetry often delves into themes of African cultural identity. "Prayer of Masks" likely reflects the reverence and significance attached to traditional African masks within their cultural context. The poem celebrates the symbolic importance of masks in African culture. Through its symbolic imagery, personification, and reverential tone, the poet highlights the deep-rooted connections between spiritual beliefs, cultural heritage, and the symbolism embedded in traditional African masks.

1.4.5 You Held the Black Face:

(for Khalam)

You held the black face of the warrior between your hands
Which seemed with fateful twilight luminous.
From the hill I watched the sunset in the bays of your eyes.
When shall I see my land again, the pure horizon of your face?
When shall I sit at the table of your dark breasts?
The nest of sweet decisions lies in the shade.
I shall see different skies and different eyes,
And shall drink from the sources of other lips, fresher than lemons,
I shall sleep under the roofs of other hair, protected from storms.
But every year, when the rum of spring kindles the veins afresh,
I shall mourn anew my home, and the rain of your eyes over the
thirsty savannah.

The poem "You Held the Black Face" explores themes of longing, nostalgia, and the deep emotional connection to one's homeland and heritage. The poem begins

with an intimate scene where the speaker addresses someone, presumably a lover, holding the black face of a warrior between their hands. The face is described as luminous with fateful twilight, suggesting a combination of power, beauty, and an inevitable sense of destiny.

The speaker, observing from a hill, metaphorically watches the sunset in the bays of the person's eyes. This imagery symbolizes the captivating and entrancing nature of the individual's gaze, representing a connection to a profound and familiar landscape. The reference to the pure horizon of the person's face symbolizes a sense of clarity and belonging associated with the homeland. The speaker expresses a deep yearning and a series of questions about their return to their land and the pure horizon represented by the individual's face. There's a desire to be reunited, to sit at the table of the person's dark breasts, symbolizing comfort, nourishment, and a place of solace.

Despite the speaker's acknowledgment that they will experience different skies, eyes, lips, and hair, suggesting the inevitability of experiencing new environments and relationships, there's an underlying sense of mourning and longing. The description of the sources of other lips being fresher than lemons and sleeping under different roofs portrays a sense of encountering newness, yet it's juxtaposed with the nostalgic pull of the homeland. The poem ends with a keen revelation that every year, with the renewal of spring, the speaker will mourn anew for their home. The rain of the person's eyes over the thirsty savannah signifies a connection between the individual's tears and the parched land, symbolizing the emotional and spiritual thirst for a return to the homeland and the deep sense of loss felt in their absence. In the poem, the poet explores the contrast between his personal grief and an idyllic African background from ancient times.

"You Held the Black Face" is an evocative poem that delves into themes of longing, separation, and a deep emotional connection to one's homeland and cultural identity. The poem expresses a profound sense of longing and nostalgia for one's homeland and cultural roots. It reflects on the emotional bond and yearning for a distant place. The poem might symbolize the connection and yearning for the African cultural heritage and identity. The poem employs vivid and evocative imagery, painting a sensory picture of emotional attachment to the homeland and the longing associated with it. The poet uses emotive language to convey the speaker's deep emotional attachment and longing for the black face held by the beloved. The poem carries a melancholic and reflective tone, expressing deep emotions of separation and

yearning for a place of cultural significance. Through vivid imagery, emotive language, and a melancholic tone, Senghor evokes a strong sense of nostalgia, expressing the speaker's yearning and deep emotional connection to the black face, symbolizing their cultural roots.

1.4.6 Be Not Amazed:

Be not amazed beloved, if sometimes my song grows dark.
If I exchange the lyrical reed for the Khalam or the tama
And the green scent of the ricefields, for swiftly galloping war drums.
I hear the threats of ancient deities, the furious cannonade of the god.
Oh, tomorrow perhaps, the purple voice of your bard will be silent for ever
That is why my rhythm become so fast, that the fingers bleed on the Khalam
Perhaps, beloved, I shall fall tomorrow, on a restless earth
Lamenting your sinking eyes, and the dark tom-tom of the mortars below
And you will weep in the twilight for the glowing voice that sang your black beauty

The poem "Be Not Amazed" is a heartfelt and introspective poem that explores themes of change, sacrifice, and the inevitable struggle against adversity, all within the context of love and dedication to one's beloved. The poem discusses the theme of love against a backdrop of a painful human separation and the possibility of imminent demise.

The poem begins with the speaker addressing his beloved, expressing a sentiment of understanding and assurance. The speaker forewarns his beloved not to be surprised or astonished if, at times, their song turns dark or shifts its tone. This shift from a lyrical, gentle expression to a more intense and percussive beat represents a change in the speaker's artistic expression and perhaps their approach to life's challenges. The speaker symbolically refers to exchanging the lyrical reed for the Khalam or the tama, traditional African musical instruments associated with more robust and rhythmic sounds, and the green scent of rice fields for the swiftly

galloping war drums. This exchange signifies a transition from tranquility to the urgency and intensity of war or conflict. Amidst the approaching threat, the speaker hears the threats of ancient deities and the furious cannonade of the gods, suggesting the looming danger and the inevitability of a battle or conflict. There's a sense of urgency and impending danger that the speaker is preparing for.

The poem's tone becomes introspective as the speaker reflects on the uncertainty of the future. There's a foreboding sense that tomorrow, the speaker's voice, represented by the purple voice of the bard, might fall silent forever. This thought drives the rhythm of the speaker's art to intensify, even to the point where their fingers bleed on the Khalam, emphasizing the dedication and sacrifice they are willing to make. The poem concludes with a melancholic anticipation of a potential fall, perhaps in battle, on a restless earth. The speaker foresees lamenting his beloved's sinking eyes and the ominous sound of mortars in the background. There's a poignant acknowledgment that the beloved will weep in the twilight for the radiant voice that once celebrated their beauty.

The poem conveys a sense of urgency and impending danger, with the poet addressing his beloved and explaining the reasons for the change in the tone and theme of his poetry. In the poem, the poet tells his beloved not to be surprised if his poetry takes on a darker and more somber tone at times. He mentions the possibility of shifting from the "lyrical reed" (a musical instrument) to the "Khalam" or the "tama" and leaving behind the pleasant imagery of rice fields for the sounds of war drums. This transformation in his poetry is driven by the threatening presence of ancient deities and the thunderous roar of cannons and warfare. The poet expresses the fear that his voice may be silenced forever, and this fear intensifies the rhythm and pace of his words, even to the point of his fingers bleeding as he plays the Khalam. He contemplates the possibility of his own death on the battlefield, lamenting the loss of his beloved's radiant beauty and the sorrowful sound of mortars below. In nutshell, it is a poem of urgency and foreboding, where the poet speaks to his beloved about the transformation of his poetry in the face of impending conflict and the possibility of his own demise in the midst of war. It reflects the poet's deep emotional connection with his beloved and the impact of external forces on his art and life. The poem also speaks of sacrifice, dedication, and an inevitable struggle against impending adversity, portraying a complex interplay between love, art, and the harsh realities of the world.

Senghor explores the theme of continuity in several aspects of human life: love, death and immortality, beauty, etc in his poetry. These are issues that will not go away so soon in our life. In all of these themes, Senghor employs vivid images and metaphors to articulate his aesthetic convictions. The theme of love and its enduring possibilities are discussed in “Be Not Amazed”. In this poem, the incredible vagary of human affection is carefully examined and discussed. The poem “Be Not Amazed,” discusses the theme of love against a backdrop of a painful human separation and the possibility of imminent demise. The poem's protagonist, being fully aware of his beloved's intense affection for him, admonishes her in a tone reminiscent of Donne's in “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” against shedding profuse tears because, as he believes, their love will survive the threats of space and time. The poem's technique is one of dramatic warning, pleas, and exhortation.

1.4.7 Check Your Progress:

(A) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What day does the poem "In Memoriam" begin with?
2. What does the speaker fear about their brothers?
3. What does the speaker gaze at from their tower of glass?
4. What is described as "grave and bare" in the poem "In Memoriam"?
5. What does the speaker in "In Memoriam" want the dead to protect?
6. What is the mood conveyed in "In Memoriam"?
7. What emotion does the speaker express towards the crowd of their brothers "In Memoriam"?
8. What does the speaker fear from their tower of glass?
9. What setting is described in the poem "Luxembourg 1939"?
10. What is missing from the Luxembourg "Luxembourg 1939"?
11. Which season is mentioned "Luxembourg 1939"?
12. What are the roofs of Paris protecting, according to the speaker?
13. What does the speaker watch fall into the shelters, ditches, and trenches?
14. What season symbolizes the beginning of rejuvenation in the poem ‘Blues’?

15. Despite the arrival of spring, what emotional state does the speaker express in ‘Blues’?
16. What does the speaker feel about their inability to find a sign or key?
17. What is anticipated to arrive in a "hateful September" according to the speaker?
18. In what does the speaker seek solace at the end of the poem ‘Blues’?
19. What does the speaker address at the beginning ‘Prayers of Masks’?
20. What does the lion-headed ancestor symbolize in ‘Prayers of Masks’?
21. How does the speaker describe the faces of the masks?
22. What is the condition of Africa mentioned in ‘Prayers of Masks’?
23. How does the speaker refer to Africans in the face of derogatory labels?
24. What is the central image described in ‘You Held the Black’?
25. What is the significance of the warrior's face being described as "luminous with fateful twilight" in ‘You Held the Black’?
26. What does the speaker metaphorically watch in the bays of the person's eyes?
27. What does the speaker express a desire for in relation to the individual's face?
28. What does the rain of the individual's eyes symbolize in ‘You Held the Black’?
29. What is the central action described in ‘You Held the Black’?
30. What is the description of the warrior's face in ‘You Held the Black’?
31. What does the speaker metaphorically watch in the bays of someone's eyes?
32. What does the speaker express a longing for regarding the individual's face?
33. What does the rain of someone's eyes symbolize in the poem?
34. What instruments does the speaker mention exchanging in ‘Be Not Amazed’?
35. What does the speaker hear in ‘Be Not Amazed’, signifying impending danger?

36. Why does the speaker say their rhythm becomes fast and intense?
37. What does the speaker in 'Be Not Amazed' anticipate in the future?
38. What is the mood of 'Be Not Amazed' towards the end?
39. What does the speaker tell his beloved not to be surprised about in 'Be Not Amazed'?
40. What does the speaker symbolically exchange in 'Be Not Amazed'?
41. What sounds does the speaker hear, signifying a potential threat?
42. Why does the speaker intensify their rhythm on the Khalam?

1.5 Summary:

Africa has had a rich history and literary output. Poetry in Africa is a large and complex subject. Modern African poetry is the poetry of commitment. It has a diverse history. It became a powerful tool for self-expression, cultural preservation and social commentary. It has been shaped by various cultural, social and political influences. The poets like Christopher Okigbo and Leopold Sedar Senghor are widely regarded the most significant figures in African literature. Okigbo's poetry is characterized by its rich imagery, deep symbolism and exploration of themes related to African identity, spirituality and the impact of colonialism. Leopold Sedar Senghor's poetry also deeply rooted in African culture and identity, and interconnectedness of humanity. I hope this unit would be helpful for the better performance of students in the examinations.

1.6 Key Terms:

- **Negritude:** consciousness of the value of black or African culture and identity
- **Idoto:** It is a popular marine goddess that is resident in the river, and has dominance across all the communities in Idemili, Anambra State.
- **Sustenance:** nourishment
- **Supplication:** Prayer or request
- **Encapsulates :** express briefly
- **Prodigal :** anything marvelous / amazing
- **Revelation:** disclosing of knowledge
- **Celestial:** heavenly

- **Convergence:** be directed to a point
- **Fleeting :** passing quickly
- **Lustra:** passion
- **Rejuvenation:** be youthful again
- **Duke Ellington:** American Pianist who was the greatest jazz composer and bandleader of his time. He led his band for more than 50 years.
- **Replenish:** to fill up again
- **Altar:** sacred/holy
- **Impermanence:** transitory
- **Inflorescence:** blossom
- **Flesh:** human body
- **Phantom:** ghost like
- **Entanglement:** difficult situation
- **Reminiscent:** remembered experience
- **Devastation:** ruin/destruction
- **Cosmic:** vast/ unbounded
- **Nagging**: worry
- **Alludes:** imply
- **Ancestry:** forefathers
- **Solace:** condolence
- **Nostalgia:** home sickness
- **Khalam/Tama:** traditional African musical instruments associated with more robust and rhythmic sounds.
- **Poignant:** sharp/keen
- **Introspective:** observe one's own thoughts
- **Enigmatic:** puzzling
- **Reverential:** respectful
- **Contemplate:** meditate

1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.3.9 (A) Answers:

1. A ceremonial space
2. Cultural heritage and rituals
3. Metaphor
4. These phrases evoke a sense of natural purity and the mystique of the ocean.
5. The poet uses secrecy symbolically, referencing secrets told to no one and hidden beneath beach sand.
6. The juxtaposition of the open eyes watching stars with the salt-white surf and maid to the salt-emptiness presents contrasting elements of nature and human presence.
7. Eyes, stars, and the sea
8. Vigilance and observation
9. "Maid to the salt-emptiness"
10. Land and sea
11. Melancholic and reflective
12. Elevation of purity and mystique
13. The passage of time and mortality
14. Metaphor
15. Symbolism of purity and illumination
16. Through phrases like "Whitewashed in the moondew."
17. These phrases might symbolize birth, growth, or renewal.
18. Metaphor, often to convey deeper meanings or symbolism.
19. Transformation, spiritual journey, or metamorphosis.
20. Through phrases like "From flesh into phantom on the horizontal stone," suggesting a transition from physical to spiritual existence.
21. Imagery related to birth, rebirth, and spiritual awakening.
22. This phrase may symbolize sources of knowledge or spiritual enlightenment.
23. It could represent guidance or a mystical presence guiding the speaker's journey.
24. Symbolism
25. From physical to spiritual existence

26. Guidance or a mystical presence
27. Beauty with a hint of danger
28. Through the juxtaposition of contrasting elements
29. The fleeting nature of life
30. Metaphor, often to convey deeper meanings or symbolism.
31. The transient or impermanent nature of life and existence.
32. Themes such as impending conflict, societal upheaval, or the looming threat of war.
33. Through vivid imagery and intense language, conveying a sense of urgency or impending danger.
34. It could symbolize the relentless march of conflict, war, or a significant societal change.
35. It could reflect the tensions, anxieties, or premonitions of societal or political unrest.
36. A metaphor for a transition or connection between life and death
37. The impermanence and transience of life
38. They are depicted as symbolic figures representing purity or spiritual elements.
39. Images of purity, brightness, or natural elements like water and light.
40. It suggests the association with celestial or mystical qualities

1.4.7 (A) Answers:

1. Sunday.
2. Their stony faces.
3. Roofs and hills in the fog.
4. The chimneys.
5. The rooftops in Paris.
6. Sadness and loss
7. Fear
8. The nagging ancestors
9. A garden
10. Children
11. Autumn
12. Dead leaves
13. Leaves
14. Spring
15. Darkness and blindness.
16. Hopelessness.
17. Royal Summer.
18. A song by Duke Ellington.
19. The masks and ancestors.
20. A guardian of a sacred place.
21. Markless, free from imperfections.
22. Dying under despotism.

23. Men of the dance. 24. Holding a black face

25. Symbolizing the inevitability of destiny and beauty

26. Sunset 27. Sitting at the table of dark breasts

28. A connection to the speaker's homeland

29. Holding the black face of the warrior. 30. Luminous with fateful twilight.

31. The sunset. 32. Sitting at the table of dark breasts.

33. A connection to the speaker's homeland. 34. Lyrical reed for Khalam or tama

35. Threats of ancient deities and furious cannonade of the gods

36. Because of the impending danger that might silence their voice

37. Their voice will remain silent forever 38. Poignant foreboding

39. If sometimes their song grows dark or changes in tone.

40. The lyrical reed for Khalam or tama, and the green scent of rice fields for swiftly galloping war drums.

41. Threats of ancient deities and the furious cannonade of the gods.

42. They fear that their voice might be silenced forever tomorrow.

1.8 Exercises:

(A) Answer the following questions in about 600 words each.

1. What are the recurring themes in Christopher Okigbo's poetry?
2. How does Okigbo explore African identity and heritage in his poems?
3. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem ‘Come Thunder’.
4. Justify the significance of the title of the poem ‘Prayer of Masks’.
5. Write a detailed note on Leopold Senghor with key aspects of his poetry which you have studied.
6. Christopher Okigbo is a metaphorical and symbolic poet. Explain with reference to his prescribed poems.
7. 'Christoher Okigbo is a significant figure in modern African poetry'. Discuss
8. How has Okigbo's work contributed to the development of modern African literature in English?
9. Explain the theme of the past and present dominantly explored in the poems like ‘In Memoriam’ and ‘Luxembourg 1939’ by Leopold Senghor.

(B) Write short notes on the following in about 200 words.

1. Imagery in the poem *In Memoriam*.
2. The central idea of *Luxembourg 1939*
3. Imagery and symbolism in *Eyes Watch the Stars*
4. *Water Maid* is rich in symbolism
5. Themes in *Overture*
6. Characteristics of Okigbo's Poetry.
7. Sense of nostalgia in Senghor's Poetry.

1.9 References to further study:

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❑❑❑

Unit-2
Modern Australian Poetry : Kenneth Slessor and James McAuley

Contents

➢ **Objectives**

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the trends in Australian Poetry
- Understand major concerns in the poetry of Modern Australian Women Poets
- Understand themes in Modern Australian poetry
- Themes in Modern Australian poetry

➢ Following poems from *Australian Poetry Since 1788 edited by Jeoffrey Lehmann and Robert Gray, Sydney: UNSW Press 2011*are prescribed.

➢ **Introduction : Modern Australian Poetry**

➢ **Kenneth Slessor**:

1. The Night Ride
2. Streamer's End
3. Wild Grapes
4. Dutch Seacoast (From the Atlas)
5. Five Versions of Captain Cook
6. Country Ride
7. Country Towns
8. Beach Burial

➢ **James McAuley**

1. Terra Australia
2. The Incarnation of Sirius
3. The Death of Chiron
4. New Guinea
5. Father, Mother, Son
6. Self-Portrait, New Castle 1942

2.1 Introduction

A) Beginning of Australian Literature:

The character of Australian poetry is the result of unique influences during the period of early development. In this poetry, there is the landscape: so immense, so relatively empty, so various, so strange to Europeans, with only the apparently light touch upon it of the Aboriginal people. The newcomers wanted to write their presence on this continent, and hence Australian poetry has been much concerned with Nature. The uniqueness of the country has meant that poets here have concentrated in their work not so much on formal innovation but on the peculiar content of the land itself, which has provided originality enough. Consequently, for a long time it was taken that the ballad form is synonymous with Australian poetry: the form has been pervasive in Australian poetry. Contributing to such a preference was the prevalence of the Scots and Irish among the early European arrivals, with their love of their folk traditions and of recitation. There followed the immense popularity in the 19th century of the native-born balladeers, such as Gordon, Paterson, and Lawson, whose work everyone knew something of by heart.

As rightly pointed out by Nicholas Birns, "Australian literature, because of its traditional pluralisms is well equipped to handle this new contingency. I attribute part of this to the fact that Australia has had no single dominant metropolitan area. Whereas London and New York have defined British and American literature far more than any other city in those countries, Sydney and Melbourne have kept up with each other, while Perth and Brisbane have held their own in a smaller compass. Canberra plays a key role in this book, not just as site of much of its composition, but as a potential ground of re-emergent Australian idealism – reflecting the fact that there is no single metropolitan space for the artificially built national capital to rival. The plurality of Australian literature is its great joy, and one of the qualities that enable it to be resilient against the threats to the imagination..."

The general statement bears truth for both Indigenous Australians and those descended from later European arrivals, though the perception of what represents the community is quite radically different in these two cases. The white Australian community is integrated partly by its sense of having derived from foreign cultures, primarily that of England, being a commonwealth country and partly by its awareness of itself as a settler society with a continuing celebrating pioneer values and a deep attachment to the Australian land. For Aboriginal people, their traditional

cultures, story, song and legend served to define devotion and relationships both to others and to the land that nurtured them. For modern Aboriginal people, written literature has been a way of both claiming a voice and expressing a sense of cohesion as people faced with real threats to the preservation of their culture. “Still, it shows its originality in exploring the themes of Aboriginality, mateship, egalitarianism, democracy, independent national identity, migration, the unique geographical beauty, the complex city life, ‘the beauty and the terror’ (concept by Dorothea Mackellar) as a character of Australia.” according to Adrian C.W. Mitchell.

When first confronted by Europeans, Australian Aboriginal people did not have written languages. They found that individual words were collected from first contact, but languages as systems were not written down until well into the 20th century. In fact, their songs, chants, legends, and stories, however, comprised rich oral literature, and, since the Aboriginal peoples had no common language, these creations were enormously heterogeneous. As it was unavailable for a long time or misunderstood by non-Aboriginal people, their oral traditions appear to have considerable subtlety and complexity.

The oral literature of Aboriginal peoples functions for ceremonies essentially. The fundamental Aboriginal beliefs are reflected in them that ‘what is given cannot be changed’ and that ‘the past exists in an eternal present’, and ‘it serves to relate the individual and the landscape to the continuing spiritual influence of the Dreaming (or Dreamtime) -widely known as the Alcheringa (or Altjeringa).’ This term is used by the Aboriginal peoples of central Australia—a mythological past in which the existing natural environment was shaped and humanized by ancestral beings. Aboriginal oral tradition may be public or sacred. Narratives of ‘the public’ sort range from stories told by women to young children which are mostly elementary versions of creation stories—also appropriate for tourists and amateur anthropologists to the recitation of song cycles in large gatherings that are known as corroborees. Even the most uncomplicated narratives of the Dreaming introduce ‘basic concepts about the land and about what it is that distinguishes right behaviour from wrong. When children are old enough to prepare for their initiation ceremonies, the stories become more elaborate and complex. Among the sacred songs and stories are those that are men’s business and those that are women’s business; each is forbidden to the eyes and ears of the other sex and to the uninitiated. The main concern of Aboriginal narratives is the land. As Aboriginal people travel from place to place, they name each place either informally or ceremonially and tell of its

creation and of its relation to the journeys of the Ancestors. This serves at least three significant objectives: it strengthens their knowledge of local geography—that is, the food routes, location of water holes, places of safety, places of danger, the region's terrain, and so on—and it also serves a social function and a religious or ritual function.

In the later period, the traditional literature in the form of songs and stories of Aboriginal people is translated by their permission. However, the young generation shows little interest in the old ways of custom. The non-Aboriginal person's knowledge of this traditional literature depends almost entirely on printed translation. Non-Aboriginal people are allowed to read is, therefore, at least twice removed from its proper context—once by its transformation from oral to written and again by its translation. Even with the most sympathetic mind and the complete set of footnotes, the non-Aboriginal person has little means of assessing the relation of custom to individual performance. In addition, there remains the residual perception of the nature of traditional Aboriginal literature formed on a number of early, well-intentioned collections of myths and legends, such as Catherine Langloh Parker's *Australian Legendary Tales* (1896) or Alan Marshall's *People of the Dreamtime* (1952), in which the stories are reshaped in order to meet European notions of narrative design and structure.

The Aboriginal presence is much strong in Australian poetry. One reason may be that Europeans settling in Australia were forced to see Australia to some extent through Aboriginal eyes, because of the radically different nature of the Australian landscape, its fauna and flora. Australia appeared a strange place to European eyes and the early settlers were happy to borrow Aboriginal words to name places and animals.

The first publishers of the traditional narratives and songs were Anthropologists Catherine H. and Ronald M. Berndt in the original language then with a translation and a commentary. The example of their work is *Three Faces of Love: Traditional Aboriginal Song-Poetry* (1976). This approach has enabled at least an initial appreciation of the subtlety and the artistry of the oral tradition. The anthologies of Australian poetry typically begin with Aboriginal poems, to acknowledge what Les Murray has called "the senior culture". It was a surprising fact to discover that the practice began with A. B. Paterson's *Old Bush Songs* (1905).

In the 1970s and ’80s, as Aboriginal people started writing in formal English, some started expressing themselves in what might be called Aboriginal English, the language that is different from Standard English. It is formed in short, simple sentences, and it makes considerable use of repetition with variation. It conveys a certain dignity and a rich sense of humour as well. Some versions can be found in the different narratives included in Sally Morgan’s *My Place* (1987) and, more sensitive still as a transcription, in Paddy Roe’s *Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley* (1983). In the last decades of the 20th century, the poet and storyteller Maureen Watson contributed to sustain the oral tradition by reading on radio and television and by performing at schools. Different forms of poetry were experimented with by the poets like Barnett Levy’s Theatrical Song, Charles Thatcher’s (Queer voice) Stage songs with chorus, Bullocky Bill’s folk poetry, Thomas e. Spencer's humorous verses and some extremely sentimental verses, and John Farrell’s competent narrative poems about life,

Marcus Clarke and Edgar Allan Poe’s poetry reflects on the nature of the Australian landscape. The Australian mountains, forests are funereal, secret, stern. They seem to stifle in their black gorges a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade. In other lands the dying year is mourned, the falling leaves drop lightly on his bier. In the Australian forests no leaves fall. The savage winds shout among the rock clefts. From the melancholy gums strips of white bark hang and rustle. The very animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly. Great grey kangaroos hop noiselessly over the coarse grass. Flights of white cockatoos stream out shrieking like evil souls. The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter.

According to Lehmann and Gray, “Kendall and Gordon were the two most widely regarded Australian poets in the 19th century. For some decades after his death, critics rated Kendall as “a true singer”, whereas Charles Harpur was “lacking vitality” and capable only of “fitful gleams of poetic fire”. This judgment has now been largely reversed. Kendall, to his credit, had befriended the older poet and was deeply affected by his death. “Bellbirds” has been for many people, from the time they encountered it at school, their favourite Australian poem.”

B) Feminist Voices:

Australians performed much of the theorizing of the postcolonial in the Anglophone academy, even if Australia remained behind. The women writers of the

day were “late bloomers” who entered the field of serious fiction writing in their forties or fifties. Writers such as Astley, Jolley, Jessica Anderson, Barbara Hanrahan, Olga Masters and Amy Witting were not in the favor of the culture industry. They contravened the market’s preference for youth and trendiness. The place for feminism in mainstream Australian literature was hardly uncontested – the 1980s saw many gender-based battles for voice and position. Australian literature seemed to constitute an ideal world. It seemed more a land of possibility, where people of all backgrounds could affirm a sense of belonging in the world. This was, an illusion, one of many illusions brought to the Australian continent from people outside of it, starting perhaps from settlement.

Mary Gilmore, became initial editor of the women’s page of the Sydney *Worker*. In 1910 she collected her poems in a first book, much of which is about the joys of married life though they were separated later. Australian swans are black, and the flight of swans was linked in Gilmore’s mind with the fate of the Aboriginal tribes, frequently referred to in the literature of her era as the “lost tribes”.

Throughout her life Gilmore campaigned on behalf of the working class, children, Aborigines, and the aged. Her eight books of verse express this passionate concern. Nostalgic domesticity is another recurring theme. Her poetry is often simplistic, in both technique and content, but the commitment and strong, plain lyricism of her best work prefigure much in the poetry of Judith Wright.

Mary Eliza Fullerton moved to Melbourne in her early twenties, was active in the suffrage movement and involved with the Victorian Socialist Party and Women’s Political Association, of which she was an office bearer, and through which in 1909 she met Mabel Singleton. She addressed a number of unpublished poems to Singleton Their relationship, which may not have been physically consummated, is discussed by Sylvia Martin. She became a close friend of the novelist Miles Franklin. As well as four books of poetry, she published three novels. She wrote many aphoristic short poems under the influence of Emily Dickinson.

Ethel Anderson was born in Warwickshire, England, the eldest child of two Australians. With the outbreak of war in 1914, her husband went to serve in France. He survived the war and the family remained in England for ten years. As well as her activities as a writer and artist, Anderson was a member of the general council of the Girl Guides’ Association. When her husband died in 1949, she was left with very

little means, which is hinted at in some of her later poems, but managed to support herself with her writing.

She published two volumes of verse, *Squatter's Luck* (Melbourne, 1942, and a second enlarged edition, 1954) and *Sunday at Yarralumla* (1947) as well as four collections of essays and short stories, which drew on her life in India, England and Australia. Her work appeared in venues such as the *Spectator*, *Punch* and the *Cornhill Magazine* in England, in the American *Atlantic Monthly*, and in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Bulletin*.

In the preface to the first edition of *Squatter's Luck* she wrote: "In these poems I write of life as an Australian sees life … The Australian system of ethics is more closely allied to that of the ancient Greeks than to the beliefs and practices of the British stock in which this country originated … Australians are, at heart, half-pagan … They have … a short memory and an Epicurean delight in the present – all attributes more Attic than English!"

Dorothea Mackellar was born in her family's home at Point Piper, overlooking Rose Bay on Sydney Harbour, where she would have watched the lights of the trams passing at night, described in her poem "Magic". The only daughter of a physician and parliamentarian, Sir Charles Kinnaird Mackellar, she was privately tutored in painting, fencing and languages. While not enrolled as a student, she attended lectures at the University of Sydney. Mackellar spoke French, German, Italian and Spanish fluently and acted as an interpreter for her father when they travelled overseas. The Mackellar family-owned properties, including "The Rampadells" near Gunnedah, which is the subject of "Burning Off". She was an expert horsewoman. Her poem, "My Country" was written in England at a time of homesickness. On her return to Australia, it was rewritten several times. She continued writing and travelling until the early 1930s and her work appeared overseas in the *Spectator*, *Harper's Magazine* and in Australia in the *Bulletin*. She published four volumes of poetry during this period. Later in life she suffered increasing ill health and stopped writing.

C) The Global Australia

In the late 1980s and the 1990s,Australian publishing houses such as McPhee Gribble and Angus & Robertson, and Australian branches of world houses that had maintained a resolute Australian presence, such as Penguin, were taken over or combined with global concoction and were as a result no longer as interested in

promoting a distinctive Australian voice. These initiatives were all gone from the scene by 2000, reflecting what many saw as a more general decrease of a distinctively Australian publishing space. During the 1980s, cultural and critical theory had had a growing impact in Australian academia, the critics commented on the peak of an Australian interest in Continental critical theory and its potential Australian application that had been evident since the early 1980s. They promised a more philosophical turn for Australian literary studies, had been shaped by generations of British and Anglophile professors with an empirical, canonical outlook. This phase of theorizing, however, was veiling by the conservative turn in Australian culture and by the counteraction against theory worldwide.

As John Shaw Neilson's way of life contrasts utterly with the delicate, musical poetry he wrote, about children and colour, girls and light, and of some seemingly numinous thing, manifested through nature. He is a rare example in the modern world of a genuine primitive poet of quality – in the tradition of Burns, Clare and W. H. Davies. He was perhaps even more handicapped than they were and further removed from the stream of literature. It is claimed that Neilson knew from his youth only some old Scots and Irish songs, the poems of Burns and Hood, a little Coleridge, and *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (the scepticism of which was to become more and more attractive to him as he grew older). Later, he heard or read isolated 19th-century poems and the bush balladists. More controversial is his possible exposure to the work of Emily Dickinson, some of which was very occasionally reprinted in the *Bulletin* at about the turn of the century. Also accessible to him from the *Bulletin*, which he and his father read whenever they could afford it, were essays about the French Symbolists, and examples of their work in translation. Neilson did not speak of these possible influences, and some admirers have claimed that his use of synaesthesia and colour symbolism, common in French Symbolist poetry, is entirely independent.

The internet revolution did wonderful things for Australia, connecting it to the rest of the world. And it made possible an intellectual union of the English-speaking peoples. With the arrival of the internet, there could be a much more efficient exchange of literary culture. The fall of Soviet Communism had much to do with this, dispelling as it did the last imprints of that curiously Australian natural confidence in Soviet compassion. Birns points out that "Although Nevil Shute's vision of an Australia isolated, if only temporarily, from a worldwide nuclear conflagration was a conceit, for Australian writers of the left in the mid-twentieth

century the Soviet Union was so distant that it could be imagined as a fantasy land." This was true about the writers such as Judah Waten, Jean Devanny, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Mary Gilmore and Manning Clark.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was the final blow to this long-withered dream. Further, the biggest obstacle for Australian literature on the world scene had been irrelevance. The fact was that Australia seemed protected behind the curtain of global conflict. Although, Australia was in the American camp politically, it seemed to be much minor to hold importance in a Cold War divide between good and evil. Their Australian identity need no longer define or hold back at least selected individual Australians who sought to bestride the world stage. The 1990s saw the lapse of much of the postcolonial rhetoric of the 1980s, when Australian literature had frequently and fruitfully been compared with the literatures of other former British colonies in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

The internet aided this; the more information became dispersed and instantaneous, the more cultural capital accreted to the former colonizer. The same was true with respect to Australia and Britain. Although by the late 1990s Australia had a conservative government, in Britain the ascendancy of Tony Blair's "Cool Britannia" gave a tremendous boost to the prestige of Australia. The Western Australian poet and gadfly Hal Colebatch could write *Blair's Britain* (1999) and not once reveal that he was Australian. Similarly, a British novelist, Louis de Bernières, could write *Red Dog* (2001), set in Western Australia, without seeming particularly appropriative.

Hugh McCrae was born in Melbourne. McCrae and Lindsay (the latter as theorist) were the source of the Sydney school of Nietzschean "vitalists", associated with the magazine *Vision*. Both insisted that poetry should only deal in clear images, which embody life-enhancing emotions, uncontaminated by abstract thought. McCrae's work was an affront to the wowsers, the conventional, the narrowly mercantile in the society of his time. His sensuousness, his "pure poetry", prepared the way for the acceptance of modernity in his main disciple, Kenneth Slessor.

Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternatives:

1. Australian poetry has been much concerned with _____ .

   A) Idealistic B) Symbols C) Nature D) classics

2. _____ form has been pervasive in Australian poetry.

   A) Ballad B) Songs C) Elegy D) Ode

3. Alcheringa term is used by the _____ of central Australia—a mythological past.

   A) Scottish peoples B) the Europeans

   C) Aboriginal peoples D) the Irish peoples

4. What did Les Murray call "the senior culture" ?

   A) Aboriginal poetry B) Scottish poetry

   C) English Poetry D) Mythological poetry

5. The women writers of the Australian poetry were called _____

   A) feminine voices B) late bloomers

   C) budding poets D) aerial voices

6. The _____did wonderful things for Australia, connecting it to the rest of the world.

   A) internet revolution B) publishing industry

   C) magazines D) Travel

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence. State true or false:

Please read the poem and to answer the questions which follow:

1. How does the oral literature of Aboriginal peoples function?
2. Which term is used by the Aboriginal peoples of central Australia?
3. Why the Aboriginal presence is much strong in Australian poetry?
4. Who has called the Aboriginal poetry as "Senior Culture"?
5. Which different forms of poetry were experimented with by the Australian poets?
6. Why were the women writers of the day called "late bloomers"?

C) Answer the following questions in 500 words each:

1. Discuss the importance of Aboriginal poetry in the context of Australian Poetry.

2. Illustrate the presence of Nature in the Australian Poetry.
3. Discuss the contribution of the women poets to Australian Poetry.
4. Elaborate development of Australian Poetry in modern period.
5. Global Australia.

Answers:

1. C) Nature
2. A) Ballad
3. B) the Aboriginal People
4. A) Aboriginal poetry
5. B) late bloomers
6. A) internet revolution

Exercises:

A) Answer the following questions:

1. Discuss the rise of Australian Poetry.
2. Discuss the contribution of Aboriginal Poets to the development of Australian Poetry.
3. Elaborate the contribution of European poets to Australian Poetry
4. Discuss the general themes in Australian women's poetry

B) Write short notes:

1. Ballad form as a major form in Australian Poetry
2. Effects of War on Modern Australian Poetry.
3. Major poets in Australian Poetry.

2.2 Contribution by Kenneth Slassor (1901–1971)

Kenneth Adolphe Slessor OBE (27 March 1901 – 30 June 1971) was a major Australian poet, journalist and official war correspondent in World War II. He was one of Australia's leading poets, remarkable for the absorption of modernist influences into Australian poetry. The Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry is named after him. The major poetry of Slessor was produced before the end of World War II. His poem "Five Bells"-relating to Sydney Harbour, time, the past, memory, and the death of the artist, friend and colleague of Slessor at *Smith's Weekly*, Joe Lynch—remains probably his best known poem. It was followed by "Beach Burial", a tribute to Australian troops who fought in World War II.

According to Australian writer Hal Porter, in 1965, who wrote after having met and staying with Slessor in the 1930s, Slessor was:

"...a city lover, fastidious and excessively courteous, in those qualities resembles Baudelaire, as he does in being incapable of sentimentalizing over vegetation, in finding in nature something cruel, something bordering on effrontery. He prefers chiselled stone to the disorganization of grass."

Ronald McCuaig was the first to review his literature in-depth in *The Bulletin* in August 1939 and republished in "Tales out of bed" (1944)). The review ranked Slessor above C.J. Brennan and W.B. Yeats, though it was written a year before "Five Bells". This famous poem marked Slessor's move to modernism, a move inspired. The review therefore covers the pre-modernist parts of Slessor's poetry. According to poet Douglas Stewart, Kenneth Slessor's poem "Five Visions of Captain Cook" is equally important as "Five Bells" and was the 'most dramatic break-through' in Australian poetry of the twentieth century.

In 1944, he published his distinctive volume of poetry, "One Hundred Poems", and thereafter, he published only three short poems. Instead of writing poetry, after 1944, Slessor chose to concentrate on journalism and supporting literary projects whose aim was to help flourish Australian poetry.

For most of his adult life Slessor lived around the bohemian Kings Cross area of Sydney. He rented for a long period one half of a "minor mansion" overlooking Sydney Harbour, which he kept shadowy, dusty and filled with curios: heavy cedar furniture, hefty silver, China and glassware, pewter tankards, old maps, etchings, tarot cards, watercolours by Norman Lindsay, and a library of antique books.

Slessor's first wife, Noëlla Senior, whom he married when he was 21 and she 28, died in 1945 of cancer, an event which was devastating for him. They were childless. He remarried and had a son, Paul, by his second wife, Pauline Wallace (née Bowe), and won custody of their son when they divorced. In his final years, Pauline moved back as a housekeeper into his house, which was now at Chatswood. He died suddenly of a myocardial infarction in 1971 and was cremated without religious ceremony. His ashes were placed next to those of his first wife.

One of the mysteries of Slessor's life is the poetic silence of his last thirty years. He was already recognized as Australia's finest poet, but in the ten years after 1937, the year of "Five Bells", he wrote only three poems that he retained, then nothing further. Depression does not entirely explain this poetic silence. In his last years,

Slessor, according to accounts like that of Hal Porter in *The Extra*, was privately and stoically depressed; yet he maintained his immaculate manners, his dandyism, and his generosity to young writers. In any event, depression does not stop poets writing. "Five Bells" is infused with a great wave of regret and pessimism.

Another explanation is that Slessor had written himself out, exhausted by the daily grind of journalism and the demands of producing light ephemeral verse for *Smiths Weekly*. He wrote for *Smiths* more than seventy-five pieces of light verse over ten years, starting in 1928. (Excellent as they are, we have included only one example, "Streamer's End".) The introduction by Julian Croft to Slessor's posthumous volume of light verse, *Backless Betty from Bondi*, tells the story of Robert D. FitzGerald's surprise when he met Slessor in Sydney's Martin Place, with a bag of golf clubs on his shoulder – a game Slessor did not play. FitzGerald became "even more surprised" when Slessor announced he was giving up serious poetry to write only humorous verse. Croft points out that although FitzGerald did not take him seriously, Slessor was serious about light verse, even preparing "piles of rhymes stacked like roulette chips, and lists of brand names, foods, clothing, in unlikely but rhyming combination." The period of Slessor's maturity as a poet and his greatest poems coincides with his versifying for *Smiths*. His light verse enhanced the virtuoso technique of his major poems, and unlike Lawson he did not let the two streams of his poetic activity mix and become turbid.

Slessor is an example of a poet who peaked early – other Australian examples are Brennan, Stowe and Wright. He was unable to reinvent his style and was too exacting merely to repeat himself. FitzGerald recalled that John Betjeman, when visiting Australia "innocently expressed disappointment at no recent Slessor poems having come his way; and Ken answered to the effect that he had no wish to dilute what he had finished saying. Then he kept on talking engagingly." (*Robert D. FitzGerald*, UQP, 1987, p. 57).

Slessor's supreme importance to Australian poetry lies in the visual and auditory richness of his style. He brought a European ornateness to a country that had seemed to rebuff such sensuality. Slessor's language has the most originality and individuality of any Australian poet. The associative daring of his language is present in his earliest published poems, his youthful fantasias, exotic scenes and allegories that derive from Hugh McCrae and from a fascination with European high culture.

2.2.1 Kenneth Slessor's Poems

1. The Night Ride

Gas flaring on the yellow platform; voices running up and down;
Milk-tins in cold dented silver; half-awake I stare,
Pull up the blind, blink out - all sounds are drugged;
the slow blowing of passengers asleep;
engines yawning; water in heavy drips;
Black, sinister travellers, lumbering up the station,
one moment in the window, hooked over bags;
hurrying, unknown faces - boxes with strange labels –
all groping clumsily to mysterious ends,
out of the gaslight, dragged by private Fates,
their echoes die. The dark train shakes and plunges;
bells cry out, the night-ride starts again.
Soon I shall look out into nothing but blackness,
pale, windy fields, the old roar and knock of the rails
melts in dull fury. Pull down the blind. Sleep. Sleep
Nothing but grey, rushing rivers of bush outside.
Gaslight and milk-cans. Of Rapptown I recall nothing else.

Summary:

"The Night-Ride" is one of the Country-poems by Kenneth Slessor. He is writing about when he is travelling on a train in the countryside and witnesses a few forlorn travelers catching a train. It is a vivid and realistic description to keep the readers engaged and mystified. In the first few lines of the poem, Slessor depicts the train and the hassle and bustle on the train station. He describes it realistically by personifying the train as if it was a factual living thing. Some 'black sinister' travelers get into it and the train recaptures its speed converting the whole misty scene into complete darkness. The travelers are lumbering and moving near the window when he sees them drowsily. Their noises die when the train leaves the station, Rapptown, which is not a realistic station in Australia. Slessor has not

identified it with any town. They move to their personal 'Fates'. It takes the poem to a new symbolic height.

The poem and the title can be a metaphor for things in life that worry or frighten us as night portrays darkness and the feeling of insecurity. For the poet Kenneth Slessor, perhaps, this has a main feature and purpose, which is war, and the poem is a metaphor of war such as 'out of the gaslight, dragged by private fates. Their echoes die.'

2. Streamer's End

Roses all over the steamer,
Paper all over the sky,
And You at the end of a streamer
Smiling goodbye, goodbye.
It isn't to me you dangle,
It isn't to me you smile,
But out of the rainbow tangle
Our lines have crossed for a while.
Somebody's benediction
Pitches a streamer – whizz! –
Under the firm conviction
You're on the end of his.
Others may claim attention,
Rolling away to sea,
But nobody's there to mention
The cove at this end is ME!
Don't you consider the danger
Of setting a heart on fire
By tossing a perfect stranger
Your 10,000 volt live-wire?
I'm only a face on the skyline,
Something the wharf obscures –
But you're on the end of my line,

And I'm on the end of yours!
Off in the vast *Orsova*,
Soon you will wave in vain;
I could be Casanova,
You could be Queen of Spain –
I must go back to the city,
You must go back to the King.
Blow me a kiss for pity,
Girl at the end of the string!

Summary:

This poem is a beautiful love poem maybe for his wife who died of cancer. It can be bidding adieu to her at the time of her death. He says, there are roses all over on the streamer and the paper all over the sky. She's at the one end of the streamer and he is on the other. His saying 'And You at the end of a streamer' seems to have different meaning. The capital Y in You, makes her a divine entity. She is saying 'goodbye' to him smiling. That smile is not for him, he feels. She is going beyond the lines of rainbow. He thinks himself to cross the line with her through the 'rainbow tangle'. Somebody's blessings take the streamer to a height (pitch) and she's on the end of his streamer. With firm conviction, she has left the poet's streamer. Someone may say that the attention might have been rolled to the sea, but he refuses it. But, he's alone there with her. So, that another one who takes her away is Death. He is sure that that other will be at danger as he is going to touch the '10,000 volt live-wire' of her heart. The Death, a stranger, doesn't know his fate of being burnt out. He requests her not to leave him. She's at the end of his line and he's at the end of hers. She'll soon be off from Orsova, a port city from Romania. If she had decided to stay longer, he would have become, Casanova, a famous lover and she would have become Queen of Spain. But, by fate, he has to return to the city from the coast and she has to 'GO BACK' to 'the King'.

His last request is heart touching as he says, "Blow me a kiss for pity, / Girl at the end of the string!" He asks her who is at the end of her life's string, to blow him a kiss for 'pity'. Slessor's poem presents the last moments of the life of his beloved wife. The imagery used in the poem is of the streamer, roses, sky, sea, rainbow and the reign of 'the King' to whom she's to go.

3. Wild Grapes

The old orchard, full of smoking air,
Full of sour marsh and broken boughs, is there,
But kept no more by vanished Mulligans,
Or Hartigans, long drowned in earth themselves,
Who gave this bitter fruit their care.

Here's where the cherries grew that birds forgot,
And apples bright as dogstars; now there is not
An apple or a cherry; only grapes,
But wild ones, Isabella grapes they're called,
Small, pointed, black, like boughs of musket-shot.

Eating their flesh, half-savage with black fur.
Acid and gipsy-sweet, I thought of her,
Isabella, the dead girl, who has lingered on
Defiantly when all have gone away,
In an old orchard where swallows never stir.

Isabella grapes, outlaws of a strange bough,
That in their harsh sweetness remind me somehow
Of dark hair swinging and silver pins,
A girl half-fierce, half-melting, as these grapes,
Kissed here —— or killed here —— but who remembers now?

Summary:

The poem begins with the description of the old orchard, full of smoking air, full of sour marsh and broken boughs. The Mulligans or Hartigans have not taken care of them. The poet is surprised to see the wild grapes with bitter taste in the old orchard. The old orchard has become a swamp and has lost its fertility. Orchard was once kept and tended –equalling the Garden of Eden, a place of burgeoning life, but, like the human memory of this wonderful place, there is only the memory of this bountiful

place left - the orchard has become sour and broken.The Mulligan and Hartigan are Irish names. '*Bitter fruit'* is used both literally and metaphorically - all that is left are wild feral grapes, everything else is dying and broken. The orchard only produces these bitter fruits - perhaps the fruits of life. Perhaps, the end result of life is the fruit you growor fruits of labour.

In the second stanza, it is presented that the narrator knows this place and he remembers that the cherries were never raided by birds being bright and red. It means they are attractive to birds. He then adds the apples; here he makes us consider his memory of the place and picture it in the same way he does, and to contrast with the next part and climax of his sentence. The memory of the dogstar is one more impression on his mind. The picture is further shattered by the reality, he sees. There are no apples nor cherries, only wild grapes. They are named as Isabella grapes - grapes with a tart skin, but sweet flesh - an ambiguous taste, and the only thing left in the orchard. The reference to '*like boughs of musket-shot'* suggests bullets which refers something that is deadly. Maybe the orchard is in the destroyed condition as a result of the War. '*Eating their flesh'* personifies the grapes as he does, the grapes and the girl the narrator remembers are metaphorically intertwined. They share the same Mediterranean name, most gipsies were of Mediterranean origin. The word, *half-savage* suggests an almost cannibalistic idea. The poet suggest that the taste of *fur* is a bitter outer coating to the grape - the girl has similar outer appearance. All the descriptions of the grapes are parallels to the girl Isabella. The memory of this girl has *lingered on*, just like the aftertaste of the grapes; everything in the orchard has gone but these grapes; the girl is dead and gone and her people moved on, but the memory of her is tenacious and has remained. Swallows also mate for life, and return each year to the same nest after migrating. Something really bad must happen for a pair of swallows to abandon their nests. We are reminded of the race-memory of species like swallows which return - but no-one has returned except the narrator. He has seen the desolated orchard, eaten the grapes and remembered...

The last stanza points out the similarity between the wild grapes and the race of gypsies. The grapes have become *outlaws* like the gipsies - rejected by society. The images like '*dark hair swinging and silver pins'* capture gipsy life - this sensuous image of not the whole girl, but just her hair that expands in a series of compound words like *half-fierce* - a kiss, or embrace; *half-melting* - perhaps passionate, like the taste of grapes reminds him ofher. *Kissed here ... who remembers now?* This line gives the idea of the two sides to passion - and not being able to bear the thought of

anyone else having her. She is the sort of girl that women would not have liked, and men would have pretended not to have liked, but sought out often.This line leaves us with this rhetorical question, and makes us question the relationship between the narrator and the girl. Did he kill her or someone else? Maybe he just adored her, kissed her and remembered the bliss of it. Is he obsessive in coming back to this place? The question ends the poem, and is deliberately ambiguous - nothing lasts, she has gone, and nothing matters.

Glossary:

acid - she has a bit of a sting in her tongue

gipsy-sweet - a compound word, our first definite statement of the girl's origin.

defiantly - this word is important in that it shows a lot about her personality. Gipsies lived on the outskirts of society, and had to be tough to live in this way.

swallows - the description of the orchard as a place that even the birds have abandoned emphasises the quiet and deadness of the place.

strange bough - grapes have gone wild, and the girl who, in her defiance, has been branded an outlaw.

*harsh sweetness*is an oxymoron - it captures the ambivalence of the girl, and the narrator's relationship with the girl.

4. Dutch Seacoast *(from* the Atlas*)*

"Toonneel der Steden van vereenighde Nederlanden met hare Beschrijvingen uytgegeven by Joan. Blaeu."

No wind of Life may strike within
This little country's crystal bin,
Nor calendar compute the days
Tubed in their capsule of soft glaze.
Naked and rinsed, the bubble-clear
Canals of Amsterdam appear,
The blue-tiled turrets, china clocks
And glittering beaks of weathercocks.
A gulf of sweet and winking hoops
Whereon there ride 500 poops

With flying mouths and fleeting hair
Of saints hung up like candles there –
Fox-coloured mansions, lean and tall,
That burst in air but never fall
Whose bolted shadows, row by row,
Float changeless on the stones below –
Sky full of ships, bay full of town,
A port of waters jellied brown:
Such is the world no tide may stir,
Sealed by the great cartographer.
O, could he but clap up like this
My decomposed metropolis,
Those other countries of the mind,
So tousled, dark and undefined!

Summary:

Dutch Seacoast" by the acclaimed Australian poet Kenneth Slessor (1901–1971) is the centrepiece of *The Atlas* the five-poem sequence opening his 1932 collection *Cuckooz Contrey*. Like the other four poems, "Dutch Seacoast" pays tribute to cartography's "Golden Age,". *Toonneel der Steden van de vereenighde Nederlanden* being the poem's epigraph and the title that Joan Blaeu gave to one of two volumes comprising his Town Atlas of the Netherlands (1649). Blaeu's exquisitely ordered map of Amsterdam has been focused by Slessor as he suggests that he is gazing at the map described by his poem and invites the readers to consider how poets and cartographers represent space and time.

An intensely visual poet, Slessor was also attracted to lyrical *descriptions* of objects: his inspiration for "Dutch Seacoast" was a particularly poetic, but sparsely illustrated, catalogue of maps and atlases. After reprinting the poem and describing its reception, Haft traces the birth of "Dutch Seacoast" (and *The Atlas* generally) in Slessor's poetry notebook, the evolution of the poem's placement within the sequence, and the complex relationships between the poem, the catalogue, and Blaeu's spectacular atlas. Comparing Blaeu's idealistic view of Amsterdam with that city's dominance during the Dutch "Golden Century". (Haft: 2014)

A.D. Hope has pointed out Slessor's outstanding craftsmanship of his Native Landscape as :

"If asked to say what Slessor has succeeded in best, I should say that it has been to create a genuine country of the mind for poetry out ofmaterial which seems only for charades and to have demonstrated that for Australia such a country is as suitable a source of creation as the native landscape."

The final stanza of "Dutch Seacoast" is more compelling for he reworks Slessor's very first poetic statement in the Atlas drafts:

"If only world could be like world of old mapmakers neatly parcelled into known and unknown" (March 5, -s64; see Caesar 1995, 59). Because his yearning for order evolved into such a dominant theme within the sequence, "Dutch Seacoast" - initially slated as second (March 18, -s76; March 28, -s83; April 3, -s88) -became the central poem of the Atlas. The poem makes explicit Slessor's attempt to order chaos. While "Postroads" focuses on human progress, ecstatic obsession and the quest for immortality, the middle poem of theAtlas deals with how artists represent space and time. For the first time in the sequence, Slessor has us imagine that he is actually looking at the map described by his poem: in this case, a plan view of Amsterdam with buildings in perspective by the Dutch cartographer Joan Blaeu (1598–1673)(Figure 1). By critiquing Blaeu's mapin "Dutch Seacoast," Slessor encourages us to compare poetry with cartography, life with art."(Haft: 2014)

5. Five Visions of Captain Cook

I
COOK was a captain of the Admiralty
When sea-captains had the evil eye,
Or should have, what with beating krakens off
And casting nativities of ships;
Cook was a captain of the powder-days
When captains, you might have said, if you had been
Fixed by their glittering stare, half-down the side,
Or gaping at them up companionways,
Were more like warlocks than a humble man—
And men were humble then who gazed at them,
Poor horn-eyed sailors, bullied by devils' fists
Of wind or water, or the want of both,

Childlike and trusting, filled with eager trust—
Cook was a captain of the sailing days
When sea-captains were kings like this,
Not cold executives of company-rules
Cracking their boilers for a dividend
Or bidding their engineers go wink
At bells and telegraphs, so plates would hold
Another pound. Those captains drove their ships
By their own blood, no laws of schoolbook steam,
Till yards were sprung, and masts went overboard—
Daemons in periwigs, doling magic out,
Who read fair alphabets in stars
Where humbler men found but a mess of sparks,
Who steered their crews by mysteries
And strange, half-dreadful sortilege with books,
Used medicines that only gods could know
The sense of, but sailors drank
In simple faith. That was the captain
Cook was when he came to the Coral Sea
And chose a passage into the dark.
How many mariners had made that choice
Paused on the brink of mystery! "Choose now!"
The winds roared, blowing home, blowing home,
Over the Coral Sea. "Choose now!" the trades
Cried once to Tasman, throwing him for choice
Their teeth or shoulders, and the Dutchman chose
The wind's way, turning north. "Choose, Bougainville!"
The wind cried once, and Bougainville had heard
The voice of God, calling him prudently
Out of a dead lee shore, and chose the north.
The wind's way. So, too, Cook made choice,
Over the brink, into the devil's mouth,
With four months' food, and sailors wild with dreams
Of English beer, the smoking barns of home.
So Cook made choice, so Cook sailed westabout,
So men write poems in Australia.

II

FLOWERS turned to stone! Not all the botany
Of Joseph Banks, hung pensive in a porthole,
Could find the Latin for this loveliness,
Could put the Barrier Reef in a glass box
Tagged by the horrid Gorgon squint
Of horticulture. Stone turned to flowers
It seemed—you'd snap a crystal twig,
One petal even of the water-garden,
And have it dying like a cherry-bough.
They'd sailed all day outside a coral hedge,
And half the night. Cook sailed at night,
Let there be reefs a fathom from the keel
And empty charts. The sailors didn't ask,
Nor Joseph Banks. Who cared? It was the spell
Of Cook that lulled them, bade them turn below,
Kick off their sea-boots, puff themselves to sleep,
Though there were more shoals outside
Than teeth in a shark's head. Cook snored loudest himself.
One day, a morning of light airs and calms,
They slid towards a reef that would have knifed
Their boards to mash, and murdered every man.
So close it sucked them, one wave shook their keel.
The next blew past the coral. Three officers,
In gilt and buttons, languidly on deck
Pointed their sextants at the sun. One yawned,
One held a pencil, one put eye to lens:
Three very peaceful English mariners
Taking their sights for longitude.
I've never heard
Of sailors aching for the longitude
Of shipwrecks before or since. It was the spell
Of Cook did this, the phylacteries of Cook.
Men who ride broomsticks with a mesmerist
Mock the typhoon. So, too, it was with Cook.

III
Two chronometers the captain had,
One by Arnold that ran like mad,
One by Kendal in a walnut case,
Poor devoted creature with a hangdog face.
Arnold always hurried with a crazed click-click
Dancing over Greenwich like a lunatic,
Kendal panted faithfully his watch-dog beat,
Climbing out of Yesterday with sticky little feet.
Arnold choked with appetite to wolf up time,
Madly round the numerals his hands would climb,
His cogs rushed over and his wheels ran miles,
Dragging Captain Cook to the Sandwich Isles.
But Kendal dawdled in the tombstoned past,
With a sentimental prejudice to going fast,
And he thought very often of a haberdasher's door
And a yellow-haired boy who would knock no more.
All through the night-time, clock talked to clock,
In the captain's cabin, tock-tock-tock,
One ticked fast and one ticked slow,
And Time went over them a hundred years ago.
IV
SOMETIMES the god would fold his wings
And, stone of Caesars turned to flesh,
Talk of the most important things
That serious-minded midshipmen could wish,
Of plantains, and the lack of rum
Or spearing sea-cows—things like this
That hungry schoolboys, five days dumb,
In jolly-boats are wonted to discuss.
What midshipman would pause to mourn
The sun that beat about his ears,
Or curse the tide, if he could horn
His fists by tugging on those lumbering oars?
Let rum-tanned mariners prefer

To hug the weather-side of yards;
"Cats to catch mice" before they purr,
Those were the captain's enigmatic words.
Here, in this jolly-boat they graced,
Were food and freedom, wind and storm,
While, fowling-piece across his waist,
Cook mapped the coast, with one eye cocked for game.

V

AFTER the candles had gone out, and those
Who listened had gone out, and a last wave
Of chimney-haloes caked their smoky rings
Like fish-scales on the ceiling, a Yellow Sea
Of swimming circles, the old man,
Old Captain-in-the-Corner, drank his rum
With friendly gestures to four chairs. They stood
Empty, still warm from haunches, with rubbed nails
And leather glazed, like agèd serving-men
Feeding a king's delight, the sticky, drugged
Sweet agony of habitual anecdotes.
But these, his chairs, could bear an old man's tongue,
Sleep when he slept, be flattering when he woke,
And wink to hear the same eternal name
From lips new-dipped in rum.
"Then Captain Cook,
I heard him, told them they could go
If so they chose, but he would get them back,
Dead or alive, he'd have them,"
The old man screeched, half-thinking to hear "Cook!
Cook again! Cook! It's other cooks he'll need,
Cooks who can bake a dinner out of pence,
That's what he lives on, talks on, half-a-crown
A day, and sits there full of Cook.
Who'd do your cooking now, I'd like to ask,
If someone didn't grind her bones away?
But that's the truth, six children and half-a-crown
A day, and a man gone daft with Cook."

That was his wife,
Elizabeth, a noble wife but brisk,
Who lived in a present full of kitchen-fumes
And had no past. He had not seen her
For seven years, being blind, and that of course
Was why he'd had to strike a deal with chairs,
Not knowing when those who chafed them had gone to sleep
Or stolen away. Darkness and empty chairs,
This was the port that Alexander Home
Had come to with his useless cutlass-wounds
And tales of Cook, and half-a-crown a day—
This was the creek he'd run his timbers to,
Where grateful countrymen repaid his wounds
At half-a-crown a day. Too good, too good,
This eloquent offering of birdcages
To gulls, and Greenwich Hospital to Cook,
Britannia's mission to the sea-fowl.
It was not blindness picked his flesh away,
Nor want of sight made penny-blank the eyes
Of Captain Home, but that he lived like this
In one place, and gazed elsewhere. His body moved
In Scotland, but his eyes were dazzle-full
Of skies and water farther round the world—
Air soaked with blue, so thick it dripped like snow
On spice-tree boughs, and water diamond-green,
Beaches wind-glittering with crumbs of gilt,
And birds more scarlet than a duchy's seal
That had come whistling long ago, and far
Away. His body had gone back,
Here it sat drinking rum in Berwickshire,
But not his eyes—they were left floating there
Half-round the earth, blinking at beaches milked
By suck-mouth tides, foaming with ropes of bubbles
And huge half-moons of surf. Thus it had been
When Cook was carried on a sailor's back,
Vengeance in a cocked hat, to claim his price,

A prince in barter for a longboat.
And then the trumpery springs of fate—a stone,
A musket-shot, a round of gunpowder,
And puzzled animals, killing they knew not what
Or why, but killing . . . the surge of goatish flanks
Armoured in feathers, like cruel birds:
Wild, childish faces, killing; a moment seen,
Marines with crimson coats and puffs of smoke
Toppling face-down; and a knife of English iron,
Forged aboard ship, that had been changed for pigs,
Given back to Cook between the shoulder-blades.
There he had dropped, and the old floundering sea,
The old, fumbling, witless lover-enemy,
Had taken his breath, last office of salt water.
Cook died. The body of Alexander Home
Flowed round the world and back again, with eyes
Marooned already, and came to English coasts,
The vague ancestral darkness of home,
Seeing them faintly through a glass of gold,
Dim fog-shapes, ghosted like the ribs of trees
Against his blazing waters and blue air.
But soon they faded, and there was nothing left,
Only the sugar-cane and the wild granaries
Of sand, and palm-trees and the flying blood
Of cardinal-birds; and putting out one hand
Tremulously in the direction of the beach,
He felt a chair in Scotland. And sat down.

Summary:

According to poet Douglas Stewart, **Kenneth Slessor**'s poem "**Five Visions of Captain Cook**" is equally as important as "**Five** Bells" and was the 'most dramatic break-through' in Australian poetry of the twentieth century. "**Five Visions of Captain Cook**" (1931) is a poem by Australian poet Kenneth Slessor about James Cook. It was originally published in the author's collection *Trio: A Book of Poems*, and later appeared in numerous poetry anthologies. The poem "builds the character of Captain James Cook from the reactions of those who sailed with him on his three

major voyages." One of Slessor's most famous poems is this lengthy, five-part profile of Captain Cook as related through the eyes of others. The central premise is that Cook was a captain in the days when captains were kings and possessed of a special quality under whose spell men naturally fell.

In his 1931 poem, "Five Visions of Captain Cook", Australian poet Kenneth Slessor suggested that eighteenth century mariners were 'more like warlocks than a humble man'. 'Those captains drove their ships by their own blood,' he wrote, 'till yards were sprung and masts went overboard – "Daemons in periwigs, doling magic out, Who read fair alphabets in stars". Slessor's 'visions' of Cook – through the eyes of his crew – show us a man whose navigational skill was so magical it changed the world.

Cook sailed at night,
Let there be reefs a fathom from the keel
And empty charts. The sailors didn't ask,
Nor Joseph Banks. Who cared? It was the spell
Of Cook that lulled them, bade them turn below,
Kick off their sea-boots, puff themselves to sleep,
Though there were more shoals outside
Than teeth in a shark's head.

In Slessor's 'spell', there is reference to the contemporary admiration for Cook's stunning navigational achievements, which revealed the rich cultures and places of the southern hemisphere to Europe. As he wrote during the interwar period, at a time when Australian ties with the British empire were at their height, Slessor's Cook also helped consolidate the myth of Cook as 'discoverer' and founder of the later nations of Australia and New Zealand. This was a different kind of 'spell' that remains powerful in some quarters, emphasising some aspects of history but staying blind to others. Lieutenant James Cook made three famous voyages to the South Pacific for the British Navy.

On his first voyage between 1768 to 1771, Cook reached New Zealand, following 127 years after the first European visit from Abel Tasman. Cook and his crew spent the following six months charting the New Zealand coast, before resuming their voyage westward across open sea. In April 1770 they became the first Europeans to reach the east coast of Australia, making landfall at Point Hicks, and

then proceeding to Botany Bay.Since the 1970s challenges to the ‘spell of Cook’ have come from Aboriginal Australians and Mãori, pointing out the Indigenous side of these exchanges, and their continuing legacies in the present. However, even during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were alternative visions of the pacific and its relationship to Europe.

In projecting himself backwards, Slessor is mourning the apparent extinction not simply of the past, but specifically the past*as*vanished masculinity. It is in this context that Slessor's interest in metempsychosis—the transmigration of the soul at or after death into a new body — can be understood, and particularly his desire to represent poetry as potential vehicle or transport, both in terms of rhetorical*energia* (vivid description which “brings to life”), and as the regenerative, interactive ground of exchange between poems,poets and readers. This Orphic projectis Slessor's governing motivation as apoet, and also the guarantee of his commitment to elegy. The final section of “Five Visions of Captain Cook”is a paradigmatic case. The blind dissociated Alexander Home is transported from “the vague ancestral darkness” of his marital home in Scotland to the “blazing”, colour-saturated scene of Cook's death, “Half-round the earth”, via the *energia* of repeated anecdote and memory. Slessor's text establishes a rhetoricalcircuit (“boomerang”) for poetic metempsychosis — “Cook died. The body of Alexander Home/Flowed round the world and back again” — in which Home is the visionary transport between Cook and Slessor, and their “strange, half-dreadful sortilege with books” (Part- I). Like Home, Cook and Slessor are implicitly figured as men who “gaze […] elsewhere” (Part- V), but the inferior Home, here occupying the place of eye-witness, is figured as irredeemably in the dark, a position enshrined by the allegorical opening strophe of part V: “After the candles had gone out, and those/Who listened had gone out”. Cook, and by implication Slessor, on the other hand, have already been figured as heroically electing “a passage into the dark” (Part-I): “So Cook made choice, so Cook sailed west about,/So men write poems in Australia” (Part-I). Home is the hierarchical, historical and textual hinge of the attempted poetic crossing of Cook and Slessor, man enough to play a part in this business between (great) men, while the representation of Home's “noble wife”, Elizabeth, “Who lived in a present full of kitchen-fumes/And had no past”, serves as alibi: not only the possibility, but the desire for such exchange is figured as a heroic proof of masculinity, even if it is destined to fail. The poem “Five Visions of Captain Cook” is written in a heroic couplet form.

Glossary

Captain James Cook (1728 – 1779) was a British explorer, navigator, cartographer, and Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Cook made detailed maps of Newfoundland prior to making three voyages to the Pacific Ocean, during which he achieved the first recorded European contact with the eastern coastline of Australia and the Hawaiian Islands, and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand. There can be no doubt he was an extraordinary navigator honoured internationally, even by the French. Cook is idolized as a demi-god by the simple sailors who are fascinated by his "magic" (he can read, chart maps and navigate by the stars) and place their trust in his ability to protect them from sea monsters (krakens) and ensure their safe voyages across uncharted seas. (Oxford Reference)

Admiralty: The Royal Navy (British)

Powder-Days: The times at sea when ships carried cannons and fought off their enemies using canon fire.

Kraken: A sea creature of myth or legend, the kraken is a squid-like, or octopus-like creature that is big enough to eat an entire ship and its crew whole.

Warlocks: Similar to wizards, mythical or pagan men with mystical powers.

Dividend: Financial bonus

Periwigs: Long curly wig, worn in the seventeenth century

Alphabets in Stars: This was the term for the prediction of the future by astronomers and astrologers

Sortiledge: The practice of predicting the future on a card drawn at random from a series

Coral Hedge: Coral reef; as the poem is about Australia it is likely that it refers to the Great Barrier Reef.

Sextants: A navigation device.

Phylacteries: A small leather book of Hebrew texts on vellum that is worn by Jewish men at morning prayer.

Mesmerist: Someone who can mesmerise people so that they are under his spell.

Chronometers: A timepiece that also tells latitude and longitude measurements.

Habadasher: Seller of fine fabrics

Sea Cow: Manatee

Enigmatic: Mysterious, with an indiscernible meaning.

Gilds: Makes everything look golden.

Carp: Large freshwater fish

Pried: Asked too many questions; been too intrusive.

Dwindling: Getting less, getting smaller

Alabaster: A smooth plaster-like stone for sculpture.

6. The Country Ride

"... Of all the Journeys that ever I made, this was the merriest, and I was in a strange mood for mirth." – Samuel Pepys, 11 April, 1661.

Earth which has known so many passages
Of April air, so many marriages
Of strange and lovely atoms breeding light,
Never may find again that lost delight.
In the sharp sky, the frosty deepnesses,
There are still birds to barb the silences,
There are still fields to meet the morning on,
But those who made them beautiful have gone.
Diamonds are flung by other smoking springs,
But where is he that cropped their offerings –
The pick-purse of enchantments, riding by,
Whistling his *"Go and Be Hanged, That's Twice Good-bye"?*
Who such a frolic pomp of blessing made
To kiss a little pretty dairymaid …
And country wives with bare and earth-burnt knees,
And boys with beer, and smiles from balconies ...
The green sleeve girl, apprentice-equerry,
Tending great men with slant-eye mockery:

"Then Mr. Sam says, 'Riding's hot,' he says,
Tasting their ale and waving twopences …"
Into one gaze they swam, a moment swirled,
One fiery paintbox of the body's world –
Into Sam's eye, that flying bushranger –
Swinging their torches for earth's voyager
And how the blood sang, and the senses leapt,
And cells that under tents of horn had slept
Rose dancing, at the black and faceless bale
Of gallows-flesh that had not girl nor ale!

Summary:

Kenneth Slessor's suite of poetry delves into the complexities of the human experience; focusing on our insecurities, the anguishes associated with living, the questions which remain, but also how the physicality of feeling pain and doubt reminds us that we are human. His images are vivid and immediate. They leap off the page in a confrontational way and transport us into various settings through various explicit and anonymous personas for inviting us to challenge presumptions and engage in a process of introspection.

His poetry represents individual and collective human experiences by tapping into universal feelings that we all share as well as zeroing in on specific personal subjectivities. He captures the passing of time, a sense of discomfort and the reduction of humanity to its vulnerabilities while also revealing our perseverance and grit. He urges us to see the world differently by not retreating from the ugly, the sordid and the unpleasant but rather to acknowledge that it exists. His poetry sheds light on human motivation and behaviour as a way of highlighting the paradoxes and anomalies present within the experience of living.

In the epigraph, he quotes Samuel Pepys' lines about his most beautiful journeys in the month of April. Slessor also admires the countryside in the April air having so many marriages of strange and lovely atoms breeding light that may never find again that lost delight. He describes the frosty deepness, the birds barbing the silences and also the fields of morning meetings, 'who made them beautiful have gone'.

In the countryside, the men who that cropped their offerings, the pick-purse of enchantments, riding by, whistled his *"Go and Be Hanged, That's Twice Good-bye"?*are missing. They flirted a little pretty dairymaid and country wives with their earth burnt knees. And the boys with beer, and smiles from balconies teased the green sleeve girl with apprentice-equerry and tending great men with slant-eye mockery, said, "Then Mr. Sam says, 'Riding's hot, tasting their ale and waving twopences …". This ride also includes a memory of Sam's eye, a flying bushranger – swinging their torches for earth's voyager and how the blood sang, and the senses leapt. He mentions the cells that had slept under tents of horn, rose dancing, at the black and faceless baleof gallows-flesh that had not a girl nor a beer. Beginning with the fresh atmosphere in the countryside in April at the time of ride, he reaches the sad memories of deaths in the gallows.

7. Country Towns

Country towns, with your willows and squares,
And farmers bouncing on barrel mares
To public houses of yellow wood
With "1860" over their doors,
And that mysterious race of Hogans
Which always keeps the General Stores….

At the School of Arts, a broadsheet lies
Sprayed with the sarcasm of flies:
"The Great Golightly Family
Of Entertainers Here To-night"–
Dated a year and a half ago,
But left there, less from carelessness
Than from a wish to seem polite.

Verandas baked with musky sleep,
Mulberry faces dozing deep,
And dogs that lick the sunlight up
Like paste of gold – or, roused in vain
By far, mysterious buggy-wheels,
Lower their ears, and drowse again….

Country towns with your schooner bees,
And locusts burnt in the pepper-trees,

Drown me with syrups, arch your boughs,
Find me a bench, and let me snore,
Till, charged with ale and unconcern,
I'll think it's noon at half-past four!

Summary:

In the "Country Towns", Kenneth Slessor portrays the idea that the country towns don't like change. They, actually, resist it. We know this from the image of a time warp which Slessor tries to create in our minds. In this time twist, nothing seems to change, nothing seems to happen in this town.

Slessor's poem "Country Towns" evokes the leisurely, timeless life of small-town Australia, which appears to have changed very little over the decades. Each stanza opens with a rhyming couplet, then drifts into a less formal rhyme scheme, casually using the final line to pick up a rhyme in the fourth line of the stanza. All of them have six lines, except the second, which has seven. The meter is similarly relaxed, with most lines being nine syllables long and employing frequent variations from iambic rhythm. The initial couplet is usually smoother than the rest of the verse, with the notable exception of the second stanza, which opens with:

At the School of Arts, a broadsheet lies
Sprayed with the sarcasm of flies
While the hoarding about then time entertainment,
Dated a year and a half ago,
But left there, less from carelessness
Than from a wish to seem polite

by the end of the stanza. The "Mulberry faces" are a natural image for the deep red of faces burned by the same intense sun that sends them to sleep, and which are perhaps reddened as well by consumption of the beer alluded to in the next stanza.

The "schooner bees" in the first line of the final stanza constitute a double reference: both to the preternaturally large insects to be found in rural Australia (bees like schooners) and to the largest size of beer glass widely available, the schooner, filled with refreshing nectar on a hot, drowsy afternoon because though the beer that initially refreshes ultimately contributes to the drinker's drowsiness. The poem ends with the following lines:

Drown me with syrups, arch your boughs,

Find me a bench, and let me snore,

Till, charged with ale and unconcern, I'll think it's noon...

In the last lines, poet also expresses his desire to relax as others have been since long.

8. Beach Burial

Softly and humbly to the Gulf of Arabs
The convoys of dead sailors come;
At night they sway and wander in the waters far under,
But morning rolls them in the foam.

Between the sob and clubbing of the gunfire
Someone, it seems, has time for this,
To pluck them from the shallows and bury them in burrows
And tread the sand upon their nakedness;

And each cross, the driven stake of tidewood,
Bears the last signature of men,
Written with such perplexity, with such bewildered pity,
The words choke as they begin -

'Unknown seaman' - the ghostly pencil
Wavers and fades, the purple drips,
The breath of wet season has washed their inscriptions
As blue as drowned men's lips,

Dead seamen, gone in search of the same landfall,
Whether as enemies they fought,
Or fought with us, or neither; the sand joins them together,
Enlisted on the other front.

Summary:

"Beach Burial" is a poem by Australian war poet, correspondent, and journalist Kenneth Slessor. It is a powerfully bleak poem that takes an unflinching look at war, portraying it as wasteful, senseless, and tragic. Inspired by a World War Two battle

that took place in Egypt, specifically, the Arab Gulf near the port city of Alexandria, the poem focuses on beach burials—soldiers killed at sea who wash to shore and are laid to rest in the sand. Elegiac in tone, the poem laments the tragic loss of life that comes with war, and reflects on the anonymity of the dead men buried in the sand. It makes the point that it's impossible to tell which side of the war the dead men fought for in the first place. Slessor spent time reporting from Egypt during World War Two, so the poem may be based on personal experience.

The bodies of dead sailors gently float in groups to the shore of the Gulf of Arabs. In the night, their bodies are moved by the tides in the depths of the water; by morning, they wash up with the foam onto the beach. It appears that somebody has time, between tears and avoiding live gunfire, to bury these men. Whoever it is pulls the men from the waves and buries them on the beach, gently patting the sand down over their naked bodies. The graves are marked with crosses made of driftwood. There is writing on these crosses—written in mournful confusion—and the words themselves seem too sad to go on. Each cross says "unknown seaman." The pencil markings grow fainter and then disappear, and purple drips down the wood. The damp atmosphere has turned the writing as blue as the lips of a drowned man. These dead seamen, who all were in search of the same land, could have been enemies or allies—perhaps not even soldiers at all. Their place in the sand unites them, as does being dead. The theme of War and Death is expressed in a powerfully bleak poem presenting death as the great leveler that makes all people equal - whichever side of the war they fought on, whether they were even soldiers in the first place. Through contemplating these makeshift burial sites, the poem undermines the idea of war as a noble or heroic activity. The poem opens with a paradox, describing the “dead sailors” who arrive on the shore as a convoy. This description is ironic, in that it paints these dead soldiers as if they were still living, as if they were coming into shore in military formation. The description places the heroic image of soldiers coming to fight in a kind of overlay with the eerie devastation of soldiers who have been killed, forcing these two understandings of war into an uneasy coexistence. Then in lines 3 and 4 the poem tips the scales, throwing off any idea of the heroic as it offers a grim depiction of the lifelessness of these bodies—the way that they are at the mercy of the ocean and its tides. From the beginning, then, the poem establishes an atmosphere of death and hopelessness, of war not as a means to glory but a path to anonymous death. The poem then turns its attention to the burial sites that line the beach. Generally speaking, the act of burial is about mourning and honoring the

person who has died. But these burials are utterly different. They are improvised, done in a hurry, and, most importantly, they are anonymous. The brutality of war means that these men have become untethered—like ships cut loose from their moorings—from who they actually are. The anonymous "someone" in the line 6, who buries the men wishes to commemorate them, but can only go so far. Both the person doing the burying and the dead themselves are unknown, and will be forever.The speaker examines these burial sites closely, which intensifies the sense of tragic anonymity. The crosses are not well-made, but just "tide wood"—wood that has drifted into shore just as the dead bodies have. The inscriptions on the crosses—which just say "Unknown seaman"—are fading away ("the purple drips"). In other words, nothing can truly pay tribute to these men—like the inscriptions, the memory of them and their sacrifice is destined to fade over time. But the poem does more than just highlight the tragic loss of life in war. The poem describes the washed-up men as being strangely united in death: "Whether as enemies they fought / Or fought with us, or neither; the sand joins them together." In death, the things that made these soldiers comrades or enemies wash away, and they all are once more part of the wider human family. Their anonymity has eroded their identity, but it has also eroded their wartime allegiances to one side or the other. Indeed, in the little phrase "or neither" the poem acknowledges that some of these men may not even have been soldiers at all! Nonetheless, all of these young men have "enlisted on the other front": they have joined whatever it is that comes after death. The poem thus also highlights the absurdity of war, by showing that in death, when it is already too late, the allegiances and arguments that drive war cease to matter.

All in all, then, "Beach Burial" is a bleak poem that has nothing good to say about war. It doesn't portray anyone as heroic, nor does it seek to show how the men's sacrifices were somehow worth it. Though Slessor was inspired to write the poem after the actual Word War Two Battle of El Alamein, the poem leaves out any context about why or for what the soldiers fought, indicating that it's likely intended to highlight the foolish destructiveness of all war, not just World War Two.

Check your Progress

A) Choose the correct alternatives:

1. Kenneth Slessor is a ------- poet.

   A) Modern Australian B) Scottish

   C) Irish D) classical Australian

2. Night Ride is about poet's _____ at night.

   A) air travel B) bus travel C) horse ride D) train travel

3. Streamer's End is a _____.

   A) Elegy B) Ode C) Love poem D) Dirge

4. The wild grapes are called _____ Grapes.

   A) Elizabeth B) Isabella C) Olivia D) Sophia

5. The Five Visions of Captain Cook is written in _____ .

   A) Alexandrine stanza B) Iambic pentameter

   C) Heroic Couplet D) Quartrains

6. The name of Captain Cook's wife is _____.

   A) Liza B) Elizabeth C) Celia D) Delia

7. 'Beach Burial' is a _____ poem.

   A) Love B) Ode C) War D) Nature

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:

Please read the poem and to answer the questions which follow:

1. What is the supreme importance of Slessor's poetry to Australian Poetry?
2. What is peculiarity of Slessor's poetry?
3. What are the different aspects of Australia portrayed in the poem, 'Country Town'?
4. In 'Streamer's End', from where is Orsova ?
5. What is the similarity between the wild grapes and the race of the gypsies ?
6. Who is Captain Cook ?
7. What is the name of the country town ?

C) Answer the following questions in 500 words each:

1. Discuss the contribution of Kenneth Slessor to Australian Poetry.
2. Illustrate Nature as an eminent aspect of Australian Poetry.
3. Discuss five visions of Captain Cook.

4. Elaborate Slessor's views about war with reference to the poems you have studied.
5. Discuss the autobiographical aspects in the poetry of Kenneth Slessor.

Answers:

1. A) Modern Australian
2. D) train travel
3. C) Love poem
4. B) Isabella
5. C) Heroic Couplet
6. B) Elizabeth
7. C) War

Exercises:

A) Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the features of the poetry of Kenneth Slessor.
2. Discuss the contribution of Kenneth Slessor to Australian Poetry.
3. Discuss influence of War situation on Slessor's poetry.
4. 'Streamer's End is a personal poem which expresses Slessor's grief of his wife's death'. Explain.

B) Write short notes:

1. Critically appreciate "The Wild Grapes"
2. Modern Australian Poetry and Slessor
3. 'Beach Burial' as a War poem
4. Two 'Country Poems' of Slessor

2.3 Contribution by James McAuley

James Phillip McAuley (12 October 1917 – 15 October 1976) was an Australian academic, poet, journalist, literary critic and a prominent convert to Roman Catholicism. He was involved in the Ern Malley poetry hoax. He began his life as an Anglican and was sometime organist and choirmaster at Holy Trinity

Church, Dulwich Hill, in Sydney. He lost his Christian faith as a younger man. In 1943, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the militia for the Australian Army and served in Melbourne (DORCA) and Canberra. After the war he also spent time in New Guinea, which he regarded as his second "spiritual home". There he is rumoured to have shot a Japanese soldier dead on Manus Island in order to satisfy his curiosity about what it was like to kill somebody. McAuley came to prominence in the wake of the 1943–44 Ern Malley hoax. With fellow poet Harold Stewart, McAuley concocted sixteen nonsense poems in a pseudo-experimental modernist style. These were then sent to the young editor of the literary magazine *Angry Penguins*, Max Harris. The poems were raced to publication by Harris and Australia's most celebrated literary hoax was set in motion. Peter Coleman considered that "no one else in Australian letters has so effectively exposed or ridiculed modernist verse, leftie politics and mindless liberalism". In 1952 he converted to Roman Catholicism, the faith his own father had abandoned, following an intense spiritual experience at a Catholic mission in New Guinea.(Wiki) McAuley had been influenced during his undergraduate years by communism, anarchism and the freethinking philosophy of Professor John Anderson. He remained staunchly anti-communist throughout his later life. In 1956 he and Richard Krygier founded the literary and cultural journal, *Quadrant* and was chief editor until 1963. From 1961 he was professor of English at the University of Tasmania.

The heightened excitement of language present in his first book is largely and deliberately missing in his second, A Vision of Ceremony (1956). His acceptance ofthe self-restraint imposed by classical formalism and by his puritan view of Catholicism had become complete. Following Under Alderbaran, during his “middle period” of almost two decades, McAuley’s poetry was marked by a rigid formalism, and language that is often colourless. We have chosen two poems from this middle period. “The Death of Chiron” has for its theme Chiron’s loss of divinity. An immortal god, he was accidentally wounded by a poisoned arrow of the hero Heracles (Hercules). The pain was sointense, he agreed to give up his divinity and die, with Prometheus taking his placeas a god. The replacement of Chiron, the gentle teacher and healer, by the man who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind, is a metaphor for the transition from an age of ceremony and traditional values (“the golden calm”) into the modern era of individualism and rationalism. Chiron’s tale may also be seen as ametaphor for McAuley’s loss of faith at that time. Significantly Chiron says finally:

"But I must go/ Unreconciled into the dark below." McAuley's search for reconciliation was life-long. The second poem from this period is "New Guinea". McAuley noted: "Archbishop de Boismenu lived in a tiny house at the subcoastal mission station called Florival, at Kubuna in Papua, from which packhorse trains used to depart to supply the mountain stations. He died in 1953."

Surprises of the Sun (1969) marked a second turning point in McAuley's poetry. Although he had earlier expressed the view that life as a literary academic was not compatible with being a poet, he took up a readership in English at the University of Hobart in 1961. This exposure to literature as a full-time profession, and most importantly to students, may have been a catalyst for McAuley's fruitful final period. Later in his life he seems to have become more sceptical about his search fora tradition that was supposedly independent of personal feeling. In A Map of Australian Verse (1975), published a year before his death, McAuley wrote: "It seems that in the last decade I have come full circle back to the kind of poem Ibegan with, but with a greater depth of experience which has brought me closer to fulfilling the persistent desire to write poems that are lucid and mysterious, gracefully simple but full of secrets, faithful to the little one knows and the much one has to feel." Although more spontaneous, and more personal, these later poems donot recapture the striking language and conceptions of his earliest book. Rather, they show, in more muted language what McAuley has referred to as "that exquisitely keen sense of life and its fragility which such experiences [illness] give."(JEAN PAGE, JASAL.14.1)

1. Terra Australis

Voyage within you, on the fabled ocean,
And you will find that Southern Continent,
Quiros' vision – his hidalgo heart
And mythical Australia, where reside
All things in their imagined counterpart.
It is your land of similes: the wattle
Scatters its pollen on the doubting heart;

The flowers are wide-awake; the air gives ease.
There you come home; the magpies call you Jack
And whistle like larrikins at you from the trees.
There too the angophora preaches on the hillsides

With the gestures of Moses; and the white cockatoo,
Perched on his limbs, screams with demoniac pain;
And who shall say on what errand the insolent emu
Walks between morning and night on the edge of the plain?
But northward in valleys of the fiery Goat
Where the sun like a centaur vertically shoots
His raging arrows with unerring aim,
Stand the ecstatic solitary pyres
Of unknown lovers, featureless with flame.

Summary:

Here's stanza-wise analysis of the poem. The first stanza discusses of Australia as a place of myth, a 'county of the mind'. This phrase is taken from Patrick White's Voss (1957). It recalls up the Australia of fables and dreams, the land which was unexplored and the yearned-for destination for the intrepid explorers in past days. To McAuley, it is not a physical, experienced reality but an imagined land which exists in 'Quiros' vision - his hidalgo heart'. In order to reach this 'Coming of Age' 'Southern Continent', one needs to peep within oneself, on 'the fabled ocean' of fantasy and dream as Quiros and others of his type did.

The second stanza presents the democratic and egalitarian values of the country. The surroundings provide 'ease', and the wattle sows the seeds of faith in the hearts of the doubters that kindles love and loyalty even in those who are sceptical of the future and stable existence of Australia. It is 'home' there where you are recognized by the birds as the magpies whistle at you 'like larrikins' and 'call you Jack'. the egalitarian, classless nature of Australian society signifies the recognition by the native inhabitants, the warmth, the easy familiarity, the use of the nickname. 'It is the land of similes', says the poet, for the landscape, its flora and fauna reflect certain human values and sentiments.

The third stanza portrays a darker picture of alienation and exile, of the Australia of the convicts, the colonized land cut off from the mainstream of European culture. The angophora dots the hillsides, spreading and tossing its branches 'with the gestures of Moses' as the white cockatoo perches on the boughs and 'screams with demoniac pain' in its characteristic screeching voice. 'The insolent emu', all the while, stilts 'on the edge of the plain', straddling the twilight world 'between morning and night'. It is a gloomy, abstract world in which alienation and exile loom large.

The last stanza takes us away from the darkness of the preceding one. Beginning with 'but.', it indicates a change or reversal in perception and mood. The unearthly light between morning and night gives way to the 'valleys of the fiery Goat where the sun like a centaur vertically shoots his raging arrows'. Great heat and brilliant light is evoked in these lines as the poet draws a picture of valleys brimming over with the radiance of the sun which ignites 'the ecstatic solitary pyres of unknown lovers'. These marks of the isolated Romantic heroes who carved out an identity for themselves by overcoming all odds are imbued with the light of life and vitality.

The invocation of Moses repeats the image of Australia as the Promised Land which is peopled with strange creatures like the cockatoo creates noise with 'demoniac pain' and the 'insolent emu' striding on the edges of twilight in the boundary of the plain. It is a land which seeks to find its similes in the imagination and thus become a part of the living consciousness of its people.

The poem speaks in the language of metaphors and projects Australia as the symbol of imagined constructs which can be moulded according to the inclination of the perceiver. The poem makes direct contact with the Australian reader for it makes the familiarnew. It invites from him scrutiny of a different kind since he is able to assess the accuracy of the poem. He can hardly avoid measuring, and perhaps questioning, the poem in terms of the direct knowledge he shares with the poet. But the process is a two-way exchange. Terra Australis might invite a challenge from its Australian reader, but it also issues challenges; it challenges the reader's awareness of his familiar world and his understanding of what he sees. (egyankosh.ac.in)

2. The Incarnation of Sirius

In that age, the great anagram of God
Had bayed the planets from the rounds they trod,
And gathered the fixed stars in a shining nation
Like restless birds that flock before migration.
For the millennial instinct of new flight
Resolved the antinomy that fixed their light;
And, echoing in the troubled soul of Earth,
Quickened a virgin’s womb, to bring to birth
What scarce was human: a rude avatar
That glistened with the enclosed wrath of a star.
The woman died in pangs, before she had kissed

The monstrous form of God's antagonist.
But at its showing forth, the poets cried
In a strange tongue; hot mouths prophesied
The coolness of the bloody vintage-drops:
"Let us be drunk at least, when the world stops!"
Anubis-headed, the heresiarch
Sprang to a height, fire-sinewed in the dark,
And his ten fingers, bracketed on high,
Were a blazing candelabrum in the sky.
The desert lion antiphonally roared;
The tiger's sinews quivered like a chord;
Man smelt the blood beneath his brother's skin
And in a loving hate the sword went in.

And then the vision sank, bloody and aborted.
The stars that with rebellion had consorted
Fled back in silence to their former stations.
Over the giant face of dreaming nations
The centuries-thick coverlet was drawn.
Upon the huddled breast Aldebaran
Still glittered with its sad alternate fire:
Blue as of memory, red as of desire.

Summary:

As Geoffrey Lehmann has pointed out in his Personal Memoir, "I referred to McAuley's earlier poetry, in particular "The Incarnation of Sirius" and his criticism of what he called the Magian heresy. The Magian heresy essentially proposes a world-view and millenarian solutions based on personal emotion and intuition. This pursuit of self-expression inevitably ends in destruction, with the centuries thick coverlet being drawn, as the stars that had consorted with rebellion flee back to their former stations. An aspect of the Magian heresy was to substitute art for religion, with the artist as hero inter-mediating with the transcendent. In opposition to this McAuley had embraced "a vision of ceremony" (the title of his second book) or what Yeats has called "the ceremony of innocence".

"The Incarnation of Sirius" is a philosophical poem by James McAuley. It is a part of the collection "Captain Quiros" which was published in 1954. It is a long

poem that consists of 12 sections, each of which is divided into several stanzas. (Here, the selection by Geoffrey Lehmann is considered) The poem is a meditation on the nature of time, history, and the divine. It is a complex work that draws on a wide range of sources, including classical mythology, Christian theology, and modern philosophy. The poem begins with a description of the star Sirius, which is associated with the goddess Isis in ancient Egyptian mythology. The speaker then reflects on the nature of time and history, presenting that the past is not a dead and gone thing, but rather something that continues to exist in the present. It is continuation in the past. The poem then moves on to explore the relationship between the divine and the human, arguing that the two are intimately connected. The poem is notable for its use of complex imagery and allusions, as well as its philosophical depth. It is a challenging work that rewards careful reading and reflection. (**Author:** James McAuley Editor: Leonie Kramer: 1988)

3. The Death of Chiron

from "The Hero and the Hydra" 1947–49

The herd boys shout unseen among the rocks;
Autumn grows colder, and they lead their flocks
From the high pastures down into the plain.
To feel the golden calm I have dragged my pain
Outside the cavern mouth, but still inhale
The smell of sweat and sickness, dung and stale.
The wild bees know the time of dearth has come,
And signal the grim rites of harvest home,
When crumpled bodies of the drones are thrust
Out of the hive and fall into the dust.
The year sinks underground, and with it I
Put off divinity and learn to die.
A son of Time no less than Zeus, I chose
To be the friend of centaurs and all those
Who draw a harsh life from this mountain breast.
I tutored many heroes, but loved best
The hardy unheroic simple folk
Who drive their herds and put the ox to yoke.
I taught them spells and simples that could salve
Their peaceful wounds, or help their cows to calve;

Even the village girls would come for charms
To guard against lost love or freckled arms,
Leaving small gifts of honey, eggs, and fruit;
Or sometimes, laughing, would not long dispute
Among the crushed herbs of the cave to measure
What god and beast can bring to country pleasure.
Sometimes in the spring I joined the dance
With hard hooves beating, and the men would prance

In mimic masks to lead the season in;
And what was done those nights was not held sin.
In winter when the owl sat humped with cold
I came down to their firesides and told
Stories of gods and heroes; and often then
Would tell of one who brought down fire to men,
And how, before the Hero sets him free,
Some god must give his immortality
And die: not as the sacred ear of corn
Lies in darkness waiting to be reborn,
But as the dry stalk falls and vanishes.
A dear exchange it seemed – nor did I guess
What Hydra-poisoned arrow, from what bow,
Would send me willing to the shades below.
Heracles, saviour of men, sun-bright defender,
I watched your youth rise to its noon-splendour
Of clear heroic fire; but feared to see
The fitful presage of that insanity
When, blundering in the mind's eclipse, you strike
At shadows, killing friend and child alike.
So Linus died, and Eunomus, then all
Your children; and the darkness yet will fall
On others, as it did on me that day
The odorous wine-casks bred the wild affray
That drove the routed centaurs to my cave;
And I went down to stay your hand and save
The hunted. I saw blind frenzy in your soul

Like shadows wavering in a red-hot coal,
Such as the warriors of Asia feel
And quench their bodies, as men temper steel,
Hissing in the wave. Unchecked you drew
The bowstring taut, and the long arrow flew.
As the devising wasp with darting skill
Thrusts in her sting to paralyse, not kill,
The insect that survives to be the prey
Of her hatched grub when she has flown away,
So did attentive Fate spring forth to guide
The venomed stroke, then vanish satisfied.
Now when the shepherds bring their summer flocks
To the high pasture-grounds among the rocks,

They are afraid to come near where I lie.
There is no herb or spell can purify
The inherent Hydra; why should I not consent
To free the Titan from his banishment?
Never was earth more radiant than in this
Last autumn gold that I take down to Dis.
I have loved the earth alone, and had no will
To change the measures of its good and ill;
Others give laws and blame, and sit above,
But there were no conditions in my love.
Men will bewail my fate when I am gone
And in it see the pattern of their own;
Their poisoned instinct writhes incurable
Within the ancient cave of touch and smell;
They feel the Hydra-taint of guilty care
Rankle their joy and bring them to despair.
But in exchange, instead of plaited straw,
The heavy golden crown of art and law
Will press upon their brows, and in their hand
The imperial builder's dream of stone will stand;
And on the rustic year they will impose
New time that does not vary as it flows.

Yet their Promethean victories will rise
But as the smoke of nature's sacrifice
Within, without. Everywhere they tread
The beasts will sicken and the desert spread.
Their baffled hero in his turn will die
Howling in envenomed agony.
I have but little skill of forward sight,
Nor have I overheard in the still night,
As once the Titan did, the singing Fates:
The spirit alone can judge what it creates
And see it to the end. But I must go
Unreconciled into the dark below.

Summary:

The mythological story behind the poem is as follows: Chiron is a semi-human compounded with the body of a tawny horse. He had to put forth his stars in less than four nights. Pelion is a mountain of Haemonia that looks southwards. Its top is green and rest is draped with Oaks. It was the home for Philyra's son. There was an ancient cave which they say that it was inhibited by the righteous old man. He was believed to have employed to create music but unfortunately used his hands to send Hector to death. Alcides was a hero who has accomplished a part of his work and little remained. Two heroes of Troy stood opposite to one another- boyish descendent of Aeacus and the son of Jupiter. The Philyrean hero received Hercules hospitably and asked the reason of his coming, and Hercules informed him. Meantime Chiron looked askance at the club and lion's skin and said, "Man worthy of those arms, and arms worthy the man!" Nor could Achilles keep his hands from daring to touch the skin all shaggy with bristles. And while the old man fingered the shafts clotted with poison, one of the arrows fell out of the quiver and stuck in his left foot. Chiron groaned and drew the steel from his body; Alcides groaned too, and so did the Haemonian boy. The centaur himself, however, compounded herbs gathered on the Pagasaean hills and tended the wound with diverse remedies; but the gnawing poison defied all remedies, and the bane soaked into the bones and the whole body. The blood of the Lernaean hydra, mingled with the Centaur's blood, left no time for rescue. Achilles, bathed in tears, stood before him as before a father; so would he have wept for Peleus at he point of death. Often, he fondled the feeble hands with his own loving hands; the teacher reaped the reward ofthe character he had moulded.

Often Achilles kissed him, and often said to him as he lay there, "Live, I pray thee, and do not forsake me, dear father." The ninth day was come when thou, most righteous Chiron, didst gird thy body with twice seven stars.(Catholic Community Forum, November 22nd, 2016)

The story of the death and cat asterism (the transformation of a hero or a mythological creature, into a star or other celestial object) of Chiron is one of the most charming and skillfully-presented episodes in the *Fasti*. Ovid relates how Hercules, in the course of his twelve labours, came to Mount Pelion, and was hospitably received by the centaur Chiron and his pupil, the young Achilles. While admiring Hercules' splendid arms, Chiron drops one of the hero's poisoned arrows onto his foot. Despite desperate attempts to find a remedy, his efforts fail to recover, but is transformed into the constellation of Centaurus. Being seriously interested in mythology, McAuley has presented it in a powerful way.

4. New Guinea

(In memory of Archbishop Alain de Boismenu, M.S.C.)

Bird-shaped island, with secretive bird-voices,
Land of apocalypse, where the earth dances,

The mountains speak, the doors of the spirit open,
And men are shaken by obscure trances.
The forest-odours, insects, clouds and fountains
Are like the figures of my inmost dream,
Vibrant with untellable recognition;
A wordless revelation is their theme.
The stranger is engulfed in those high valleys,
Where mists of morning linger like the breath
Of Wisdom moving on our specular darkness.
Regions of prayer, of solitude, and of death!
Life holds its shape in the modes of dance and music,
The hands of craftsmen trace its patternings;
But stains of blood, and evil spirits, lurk
Like cockroaches in the interstices of things.
We in that land begin our rule in courage,
The seal of peace gives warrant to intrusion;
But then our grin of emptiness breaks the skin,

Formless dishonour spreads its proud confusion.
Whence that deep longing for an exorcizer,
For Christ descending as a thaumaturge
Into his saints, as formerly in the desert,
Warring with demons on the outer verge.
Only by this can life become authentic,
Configured henceforth in eternal mode:
Splendour, simplicity, joy – such as were seen
In one who now rests by his mountain road.

Summary:

In this poem, he deals with the themes of Colonialism, modernity and suburbia. During his frequent visits to New Guinea, he meditated over the contemporary scenario around him and wrote about it. Autobiographical aspect in the poem New Guinea is his dealing with McAuley's encounter with New Guinea. He has described it as a "school of sanctity", which can be seen as the culmination of his ongoing dialectic in essays at that time on the spiritual condition and the loss of tradition in contemporary mid-twentieth century post-Christian society. He considered his own time to be part of a wider post-Renaissance epoch he named "modernity" (The End of Modernity, 1959). McAuley saw it as the original world of New Guinea emerging into a materialist mid-twentieth century reinforced his dark vision of modernity. McAuley also witnessed the western Catholic tradition, as interpreted by the French Catholic mission in Kubuna, as offering respite for the New Guinea people and, in the end, himself in a global post-colonial encounter with modernity.

With his experience in New Guinea related with his confrontation with primitive physical and cultural world, he rationally approached symbolic mythology. Through the poem, he summarizes the magnitude of his encounter, the "wordless revelation", through that of Boismenu and the other Catholic missionaries, with the place in that northern island in which "the doors of the spirit open:"

McAuley describes a fertile land of the imagination. The poem's scenario reflects the heroic missionary encounter with a rich and strange otherworld of "specular darkness". There, he witnesses "evil spirits, …. lurking … in the interstices of things" that was still a literal possibility. The poem also foreshadows the sterilizing impact of secular influences, "the grin of emptiness" of the West of which,

both the Australian administration, colonists and the missionaries in the northern island, were also part.

5. Father, Mother, Son

From the domed head the defeated eyes peer out,
Furtive with unsaid things of a lifetime, that now
Cannot be said by that stiff half-stricken mouth
Whose words come hoarse and slurred, though the mind is sound.
To have to be washed, and fed by hand, and turned
This way and that way by the cheerful nurses,
Who joke, and are sorry for him, and tired of him:
All that is not the worst paralysis.
For fifty years this one thread – he has held
One gold thread of the vesture: he has said
Hail, holy Queen, slightly wrong, each night in secret.

But his wife, and now a lifetime, stand between:
She guards him from his peace. Her love asks only
That in the end he must not seem to disown
Their terms of plighted troth. So he will make
For ever the same choice that he has made –
Unless that gold thread hold, invisibly.
I stand at the bed's foot, helpless like him;
Thinking of legendary Seth who made
A journey back to Paradise, to gain
The oil of mercy for his dying father.
But here three people smile, and, locked apart,
Prove by relatedness that cannot touch
Our sad geometry of family love.
One Tuesday in Summer
That sultry afternoon the world went strange.
Under a violet and leaden bruise
The air was filled with sinister yellow light;
Trees, houses, grass took on unnatural hues.
Thunder rolled near. The intensity grew and grew
Like doom itself with lightnings on its face.
And Mr Pitt, the grocer's order-man,

Who made his call on Tuesdays at our place,
Said to my mother, looking at the sky,
"You'd think the ending of the world had come."
A leathern little man, with bicycle-clips
Around his ankles, doing our weekly sum,
He too looked strange in that uncanny light;
As in the Bible ordinary men
Turn out to be angelic messengers,
Pronouncing the Lord's judgments why and when.
I watched the scurry of the small black ants
That sensed the storm. What Mr Pitt had said
I didn't quite believe, or disbelieve;
But still the words had got into my head,
For nothing less seemed worthy of the scene.
The darkening imminence hung on and on,
Till suddenly, with lightning-stroke and rain,
Apocalypse exploded, and was gone.

By nightfall things had their familiar look.
But I had seen the world stand in dismay
Under the aspect of another meaning
That rain or time would hardly wash away.

Summary:

The poem, "Father, Mother, Son" by James McAuley, is a part of a collection of poems titled *A Vision of Ceremony* published in 1956. The poem is a reflection on the relationship between a father, mother and son. The poem is written in free verse and is divided into three stanzas. The first stanza describes the father's physical appearance and his defeated eyes. As a defeated husband, he has held one golden thread of relationship for fifty years. He has said, "Hail, holy Queen, slightly wrong, each night in secret." The poet further says, 'But his wife, and now a lifetime, stand between: She guards him from his peace.'

The second stanza describes the mother's physical appearance and her 'tender heart'. His wife expects him not to leave that golden thread. He refers to the legend of Seth, third son of Adam and Eve. He was like his father, Adam. He paid attention to his father's mistakes, such as eating forbidden fruit, etc. and learnt from them.

There's no record of Seth committing any mistake. He asked for mercy to God for his father. Here, in this family, three people have a geometrical relationship of love. He narrates an event of one Tuesday in Summer in which there was thunderstorm to come. Mr. Pitt told her, "You'd think the ending of the world had come."He seemed to him like an angelic messenger in Bible, 'pronouncing the Lord's judgments why and when.' Again, McAuley's dark opinion about the modern world reflects in-

But still the words had got into my head,
For nothing less seemed worthy of the scene.
The darkening imminence hung on and on,
Till suddenly, with lightning-stroke and rain,
Apocalypse exploded, and was gone.

The third stanza describes the son's physical appearance and his "bright eyes." He had a vision of the Apocalypse, maybe, because of modernism, cutting off the roots with the culture and meaningful life. He concludes the poem with his remark that the vision would not be washed by rain or even Time.

McAuley's speculation about the three-family persona through the eyes of mythology is worth applying to the situation around.

6. Self-portrait, Newcastle 1942

First day, by the open window,
He sits at a table to write,
And watches the coal-dust settle
Black on the paper's white.
Years of breathing this grime
Show black in the lungs of the dead
When autopsies are done;
So at least it is said.
Sunset over the steelworks
Bleeds a long rubric of war;
He thinks he knows, but doesn't,
The black print of the score.
He, like that sullied paper,
Has acquired no meaning yet.
He goes for long walks at night,
Or drinks with people he's met.

In sleeping panic he shatters
The glass of a window-pane.
What will he do with his life?
Jump three storeys down in the rain?
Something – guilt, tension, or outrage –
Keeps coming in nightmare shape.
Screams often startle the house:
He leaps up blind to escape.
By day he teaches the dullest
Intermediate class;
He gets on well with them, knowing
He too has a test to pass.

With friends he talks anarchism,
The philosophical kind,
But Briefe an einen jungen
Dichter speaks close to his mind.

McAuley was certainly conscious of his own European inheritance in the wake of Wars. In the poem, he portrays himself as a poet. He sits near the window to write something. But the paper already has black coal dust. He talks about that black dust going in someone's lungs which is recognized in the autopsy report. So, at last, after his/her death, it is accepted. The sunsets are not pleasing, they remind of the wars. He identifies himself with that white paper with 'Coal-dust', having no meaning. As the white paper has something black on it like an ink, which has no meaning. He says, he knows about the wars, their consequences on human life, but actually, he doesn't. as he's upset, he goes on the long walks, drinks, and shatters the window-panes in panic. He thinks of the options with his own life. Should he jump three storeys in the rain or something else? As a witness of the contemporary scenario, he has "Something – guilt, tension, or outrage –Keeps coming in nightmare shape." During the night, he has nightmares. The nest day, he teaches the dullest intermediate class and realizes that still he has a test to pass. He has to prepare. He further discusses with his friends on anarchism in a philosophical kind, but Rilke's

But Briefe an einen jungen
Dichter speaks close to his mind.

Briefe an einen jungen Dichter is a collection of ten letters by Rilke written to a young poet, Kappus. He advises him not to take any help from anyone, but "There is only one way. Go into yourself." These likes keep buzzing his mind. So, McAuley's present poem reflects the particular importance of Rilke on his early work.

Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternatives:

1. James McAuleyis a ------- poet.

   A) Modern Australian B) Scottish

   C) Irish D) classical Australian

2. McAuley considered New Guinea as his _____ Home.

   A) Personal B) Intellectual C) Spiritual D) Friend's

3. The poem Terra Australis discusses of Australia as_____ , a 'county of the mind'.

   A) a place for Industrialization B) a place for material enjoyment

   C) a place of modernism D) a place of myth

4. In the poem, Father, Mother, Son, father's ayes are _____

   A) bright B) happy C) defeated D) gloomy

5. 'Incarnation of Sirius' is a _____ poem.

   A) Philosophical B) Love

   C) Tragic D) Comic

B) Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:

Please read the poem and to answer the questions which follow:

1. What are the themes in the poem, 'Incarnation of Sirius'?
2. What are the different aspects of Australia the nation state portrayed in the poem, Terra Australis?
3. Who is Chiron ?
4. Who is Pelion ?
5. How is Mother described ?

6. Whose influence is reflected in the poem, Self-Portrait, New Castle 1942 ?
7. Which autobiographical aspect is in the poem, Father, Mother and Son
8. What does Mr. Pitt say to Mother ?

C) Answer the following questions in 500 words each:

1. Discuss the contribution of James McAuley to Australian Poetry.
2. Illustrate how McAuley expresses pessimistic approach towards Modernization.
3. Discuss the mythological story in The Death od Chiron.
4. Elaborate Self-Portrait, New Castle 1942, as a personal poem.
5. 'Use of Mythology in the poetry of McAuley...

Answers:

1. A) Modern Australian
2. C) Spiritual
3. D) a place of myth
4. C) defeated
5. A) Philosophical

Exercises:

A) Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the term Aboriginal Poetry in Australian Poetry.
2. Discuss the themesin the poetry of James McAuley.
3. Critically appreciate the poem, New Guinea.
4. 'McAuley's Poetry finds abundance of mythological references. Explain.

B) Write short notes:

1. Australian Myths
2. Terra Australis
3. The Incarnation of Sirius

2.4 References to Further Study:

Haft, A. J. (2014). *Imagining Space and Time in Kenneth Slessor's "Dutch Seacoast" and Joan Blaeu's Town Atlas of The Netherlands: Maps and Mapping in Kenneth Slessor's Poetic Sequence The Atlas*, Part Three. *Cartographic Perspectives*, (74), 29–54. https://doi.org/10.14714/CP74.1199

Kate Lilley, 1997, *Living Backward: Slessor and Masculine Elegy*, University of Queensland Press St Lucia

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Unit-3
Postmodern Russian Poetry : Joseph Brodsky

Contents:

3.1 Objectives:

I. Students will be able to understand the relevance of the constituent parts of the unit i. e.,

   a) The historical background or trend to **postmodern poetry** in English with specific reference to the second half of twentieth-century Russian poetry.

   b) The **account** of the life and the poetry of Joseph Brodsky.

   c) The **Context** of Joseph Brodsky's Poetry.

II. Students will be able to interpret and critically appreciate the second half of twentieth-century poetry in English in the context of the postmodern condition.

III. Students will judge the text and justify the reading.

3.2 Introduction:

In many respects, the twentieth century is a remarkable period in the Western world. It is a great period of the modern world in every respect of arts. It has witnessed the occurrence of several avant-garde trends in arts such as modernism and postmodernism. The terms modern and postmodern are historically interrelated. The terms also exhibited different trends and tendencies in poetry. It influenced other countries of the world. Hence we find several new trends in 20^{th}-century literature. In this course, Students study the general development of 20^{th}-century poetry in English with specific reference to the prescribed poetry. Also, you will study the various trends and streams of the literature with the help of prescribed texts. In this section, you will learn about postmodern poetry in specific reference to Russian poetry. So before moving to the poet, Joseph Brodsky, and his poetry we must learn postmodern poetry, it would be useful to consider the postmodern literary scenario of the 20^{th} century.

3.3 Historical Context to Postmodern Poetry

3.2.1 What is postmodernism?

The term postmodernism is defined variously **as a reaction against modernism** and sometimes it is merely the movement that followed the modern period, but it remains one of the controversial concepts well as period in the twentieth century. However, as a term, it tends to refer to an intellectual, artistic, or cultural outlook or practice that is suspicious of hierarchy and objective knowledge and embraces

complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, and diversity. It also includes other theoretical movements of the time mainly through a common emphasis on discourse and the power of language in structuring thought and experience. It attacks traditional concepts of history, knowledge, and reality itself arguing that truth is culturally and historically specific and it is often being accused of relativism. It is the belief that there is no absolute truth, only the truths that a particular individual or culture happens to believe.

3.2.2 What is postmodern poetry?

In the 1960s the counterculture movement found throughout much of the US resulted in new types of artistic expression. Postmodern poetry is a kind of poetry that flowed naturally from that counterculture and is often noted for a few stylistic and thematic aspects. These types of poems can be difficult to read and understand, and this is often done on purpose as a way of reflecting the poem toward the reader.

To understand the poetry of the period and its context we must see the prominent factors of postmodern times that determine the poetry of the period. They are also treated as a major influence on postmodern poetry.

a) Existentialism is major factor of the postmodern poetry

Post-world War II poetry often deals with themes of **meaninglessness** or **lack of reality**, and frequently demonstrates an **existential point of view;** it is the major concern of existentialism. Postmodern poetry includes themes of restlessness and is usually written in a very free format. Line breaks and structures can be chaotic or seemingly meaningless, though there is usually a purpose for the unusual breaks. Postmodern poetry can frequently deal with **existential** or **nihilistic** themes. While existentialism and postmodernism are not synonymous, they are frequently related. These are the prominent theoretical considerations of existential philosophy, and the impacts of these thoughts on postmodern poetry were tremendously reflected.

b) The World War II (Totalitarianism, Fascism, Nazism, etc.), Cold War (Capitalism and Communism), Civil Rights Movement and Postcolonialism:

These political events of the 1940s had numerous way impacts on the thoughts of the poetry. Under the effects of World War II, certain circumstances evolved which are treated in postmodern poetry you may feel that poetry of the period was dealing with the themes and related issues in a pessimistic way as modern poets were

using the element of disillusionment and reaction against the Victorian principles. Poets of the time were using a complex range of themes. The complexity of these movements is reflected in the poetry of Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, Gertrude Stein, Dylan Thomas and many more.

The poets not only rejected the very idea of totalitarian thoughts like Fascism and Nazism but also reflected on the post-war conflict known as the cold war between America and the Soviet Union. It is a period of geopolitical tension between them and their respective war allies.

After the war, all the colonies of European imperialism were independent. They were responding to the damage that colonialism gave to these nations. One-third of the world was under colonialism including Australians, Africans, and South Asian nations. All these third-world and new-world nations were writing under the effects of colonialism. They reflected as new-literatures and new poetry.

c) **Mechanical things: Cyberpunk, Hypertext, Technoculture and Hyperreality**

The scientific discovery or invention of many things brings certain determinative changes to the human and the consequences of these changes affect the whole human feeling, emotions and thoughts. These inventions are associated with computers or mechanical things. These changes are related to the human cognitive capacity. The text of the postmodern time was performing like a product of the complex web which is sometimes interrelated for instance hypertext (Hyperlinks in text) - hypertext takes you into another works invariably.

d) **Popular Culture**

The rise of popular culture in the West evolved the entire process of exhibition and celebration of the culture through technology. With the help of technology, human brings new forms of reflection where s/he feels more enthusiastic than traditional ways of looking towards life. The ways are pop songs, dance, and freestyle exhibitions. This displays the great resonance of the time as the text is reflected more straightforwardly as it is a combination of tradition or mythologies and technologies.

Because of the effects of these historical, political, cultural, and philosophical events, we find the foremost characteristics of postmodern poetry. Let's see the features of poetry in the later part of the 20^{th} century.

e) The prominent features of postmodern poetry

There are five key characteristics of Postmodernist Poetry: Postmodern poetry has embraced **randomness**. It rejects the idea of absolute meaning and focuses on **relativism**, as it is one of the major trends of postmodern poetry. The **playfulness** of postmodern poetry is a peculiar trend that deals with the idea of employing black humour, wordplay, irony and other techniques of playfulness. They often are employed to dizzy readers and muddle the story. **Fragmentation** is another feature which deals with the collage-style forms, temporal distortion, and significant jumps in character/setting as it exhibits the popular reflection of poetry during the postmodern times. **Metafiction** draws attention to their work's artifice and reminds readers that the author isn't an authority figure, to understand the postmodern text or poetry one needs to evaluate the text itself. I**ntertextuality** is pastiche and the combination of high and low culture. Intertextuality is the relationship between texts, especially literary text. The element of **Mythologies** is one of the major factors of postmodern poetry that a deal with a certain part of myth was a reflection through poetry.

3.3.3 Russian Literature: Postmodern Russian poetry

Russian literature often refers to the literature of Russia, its émigrés, and Russian-language literature. The roots of Russian literature can be traced to the Middle Ages when epics and chronicles in Old East Slavic were written. It underwent an astounding **golden age** (1830s to 1890s) in poetry, prose and drama. The features of the period were romanticism in poetry and realism in novels and plays. On the one hand, the prominent writers of romanticism were Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and Vasily Zhukovsky. Their works explore sentimentalism and romanticism. On the other side, realism was a major reflected thought of 19th-century Russian literature which remains a prominent idea at the end of the 19th century. The important writers of realism in fiction were Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy; and in drama, Anton Chekhov became a leading realistic dramatist.

The beginning of the 20th century marks the **Silver Age** (1900s to 1945) was dominated by the major display of Russian **social realism**; it is a prominent discourse of this age. The most popular Russian writers, were associated with the silver age, are Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak, Alexander Blok, Nobel Prize winner Ivan Bunin, Maxim Gorky, etc. Within the Silver Age, you

can see the classification of the period between the Lenin era and Stalin era literature of Russia. In the 1930s, **Socialist realism** became the predominant feature in Russia. It is the official cultural doctrine of the Soviet Union that mandated an idealised representation of life under socialism in literature in short it was a state-sponsored literary or artistic exploration of life.

Besides this, you can see the **Émigré writers** of Russia, who because of totalitarian governance and its censorship or state sponsor literary reflection, left or flew away from Russia and lived in elsewhere parts of the world, particularly in the west. They often employ the notion of exile, existence, loss etc in their treatment of literature. The prominent writers, who were in exile or emigrated as well as postmodern Russian writers, are Vladimir Nabokov, Ayn Rand, Ivan Bunin, Joseph Brodsky, and Aleksander Solzhenitsyn (who were stateless).

Postmodern Russian Poetry: A few characteristics

Apart from the general characteristics of postmodern poetry, there are some specific features of Russian postmodern literature that often deal with human **suffering and sadness**; these are not only part of human life but inevitable for those who were truly alive. It is a result of the "evil empire". The major themes displayed by Russian literature include political corruption, spiritual enlightenment through suffering, and **social instability.** The human and societal problems are at the centre of Russian poetry, as it has explored the same themes for hundreds of years.

These discourses are very distinctive explorations of postmodern Russian poetry. The next feature is a demonstration of t**he under-trodden characters,** which become eventually national characters; another feature is **the voice of the émigrés** and their loss**.** Postmodern Russian poetry explores the **identity crisis**, **existence** and **loss** etc. It refers as well to the cultural and artistic condition in Russia. Postmodernism entered Russia in the 1960s after the end of the Stalinist move toward liberalization with the advent of the **Russian conceptualist** movement. It is an artistic counterpoint to **Socialist Realism**, and the authors experimented aesthetically with a wide range of exploration in literature and painting. It attempted to subvert socialist ideology by employing the approaches of conceptual art and appropriation art. Their conceptualism explored the symbolism of socialist realism against the government. Thus Russian poetry emerge as one of the distinctive traditions of literature.

With the help of these considerations, you have to understand the poet, Joseph Brodsky, and his poetry.

3.4 Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996)

3.4.1 Life and work

Iosif Aleksandrovich Brodsky was a Russian poet, translator, essayist, and playwright. He was born on 24 May 1940, into a Russian Jewish family in Leningrad, Soviet Union, now Saint Petersburg, Russia. **Joseph Brodsky** is the anglicized name as he is better known to the Western literary world. His mother, Maria Volpert Brodskaya, was a professional interpreter, and Aleksandr Brodsky, his father, was a photographer in the Soviet Navy. Because of his Jewish background, he eventually lost his position in the Navy, and the family subsequently lived in poverty. The Brodsky family lived in communal apartments, in poverty, marginalized by their Jewish status. The Brodsky family survived due to starvation during the devastating Siege of Leningrad (8 Sept. 1941 to 27 Jan. 1944). It was a prolonged military blockade undertaken by the Axis powers of World War II against the Soviet city of Leningrad. He asserted that many of his teachers were anti-Jewish and that he felt like a dissident from an early age. He noted, "I began to despise Lenin, even when I was in the first grade, not so much because of his political philosophy or practice ... but because of his omnipresent images."

He quit school at fifteen and tried to enter the school of Submariners without success. He embarked on a self-directed education, reading literary classics and taking a variety of unusual jobs including a milling machine operator, geologist's assistant in Central Asia, and a physician, he worked at the morgue at the Kresty Prison, cutting and sewing bodies. He subsequently held a variety of jobs in hospitals and a ship's boiler room.

Joseph Brodsky developed a deep interest in classical philosophy, religion, mythology, and English and American poetry. He learned Polish and English so that he could translate the works of Czeslaw Miloszand John Donne into Russian. He began composing poetry and literary translation at the age of twenty-five. His poetry was apolitical. However, in 1963, Brodsky's poetry was denounced by a Leningrad newspaper as "pornographic and anti-Soviet". His works were seized by the Soviet authorities; he was interrogated, and twice put in a mental institution. In 1964, after the trial in a Soviet court, the Brezhnev regime sentenced him to hard labour at an

Arctic work camp near Archangelsk for his “anti-soviet work”, “social parasitism” and “decadent poetry” as the Soviet authorities cited in the trial.

He was exiled from the Soviet Union and came to the United States in 1972 with the help of W. H. Auden and other supporters. Most of his poetic contributions come from the context of his exile. He was banished or expelled from his own home. Exile was always difficult for him as he described an exiled poet as one "who survives like a fish in the sand." Despite such feelings, he was largely unmoved by the sweeping political changes that accompanied the fall of the Soviet Union. Because of his strong allegiance to the Russian language, Brodsky has been criticized as a nationalist. Keith Gessen asserts that "The imputation to Brodsky of Russian nationalist views is of course paradoxical, and worth considering, like so many of the developments in the post-Soviet space, it was complicated. Brodsky was a strongly anti-Soviet Soviet poet, but a Soviet poet nonetheless."

Brodsky’s poetry addresses personal themes and treats a powerful, meditative fashion the universal concerns of life. According to W. H. Auden, Brodsky is a "traditionalist lyric poet fascinated by encounters with nature, reflections upon the human condition, death, and meaning of existence" as he used a wide range of themes "mixing the physical and the metaphysical, place and ideas about place, now and the past and the future". Brodsky is perhaps most known for his poetry collections, *A Part of Speech* was published in 1977. *To Urania* published in 1988 collected translations of older work with new poems written during his exile in America and reflected on the themes of memory, home, and inevitable loss, which are most complicated to understand from the poems of Brodsky.

Another issue of his poetry is the relationship between poet and society where he emphasized the power of literature to affect its reader positively and to develop the language and culture in which it is situated. Throughout his poetic works, he has suggested that the Western literary tradition was in part responsible for the world having overcome the catastrophes of the 20th century for instance Nazism, Communism, and numerous wars and conflicts.

He was deeply influenced by the great lady of Petersburg, Anna Akhmatova, who played a crucial role during his trial and execution, she is known as his mentor for a time. John Donne, W. H. Auden, Derek Walcott and Robert Lowell are the other prominent poets of the 20th century that Brodsky was indifferently influenced.

He was awarded the **1987 Nobel Prize in Literature** for his "all-embracing authorship, imbued with clarity of thought and poetic intensity". He served as the **United States Poet Laureate** in 1991-1992. After receiving the Nobel Prize, in an interview, he asked "You are an American citizen who is receiving the Prize for Russian language poetry. Who are you, an American or a Russian?" and he responded with that I'm Jewish; a Russian poet, an English essayist- and, of course, an American citizen." He died on January 28, 1996, of a heart attack in his Brooklyn apartment, New York.

With this introduction to the poet, let's switch over to the prescribed poem in the next section where you will be introduced to the form, themes, content and context of poetry.

3.4 Prescribed Poems and Their Analysis

About the form and themes of the prescribed poems:

Before reading and analysis of the prescribed poems, one needs to be familiar with the form and content of postmodern times poetry. Because as stated above, one finds that, the postmodern poem is difficult to understand as well as to locate its context. The modern and postmodern poetry is a **free verse**; it is an open form of poetry. The free verse poem does not use consistent meter patterns, rhyme, or any such musical pattern. It also has no set meter; poems written in free verse may have lines of any length, from a single word to much longer length of lines. It, therefore, tends to follow the rhythm of natural speech. Moreover, it does not "proceed by a strict set of formal rules of poetry." A regular pattern of rhythm can emerge in free-verse poetry, but the poet does not adhere to a metrical plan in their composition. Since the beginning of the 20^{th} century, the majority of lyric poetry has been composed in free form. It was a major trend of modern and postmodern poetry.

The prescribed poems are **translated poems** as they were originally composed in the Russian language later on most of Brodsky's poems were translated into English by the poet. It is extremely difficult to see the essential difference between the original and translated one in the case of Brodsky's poems. But, you can find Brodsky's poetic context and meaning in the translated poems in English with the context of the English poetic tradition.

Being translated into English, you have to reveal the poetic sense that is employed in English. As pointed out, it has become extremely difficult to see the

original context in the case of translation but it also becomes challenging for the readers to disclose the differences as well as common principles of the same. So let's see how you will see the interpretation of the prescribed poems which were all originally written in Russian and translated into English.

General themes of Joseph Brodsky's poetry: Exile and experience are major themes of expatriate literature. The expatriate poet often employs the themes of his/her excitement and such as an experience that is based on exile. Apart from the theme of exile in Brodsky's poetry, they are universally applicable loss, love, death; journey, alienation, human condition etc. are the major themes of his poetry. As these themes becomes constant reflecting in Brodsky's poetry.

Let's see the poems and their interpretation that will help you to understand whole scenario of postmodern time and Russian poetry with the reference to these poems.

Prescribed Text Analysis:

1) Moscow Carol

In such an inexplicable blue,
Upon the stonework to embark,
The little ship of glowing hue
Appears in Alexander Park.
The little lamp, a yellow rose,
Arising -- ready to retreat --
Above the people it adores;
Near strangers' feet.
In such an inexplicable blue
The drunkards' hive, the loonies' team.
A tourist takes a snapshot to
Have left the town and keep no dream.
On the Ordynka street you find
A taxicab with fevered gnomes,
And dead ancestors stand behind
And lean on domes.
A poet strolls across the town

In such an inexplicable blue.
A doorman watches him looking down
And down the street and catches the flu.
An old and handsome cavalier
Moves down a lane not worth a view,
And wedding-party guests appear
In such an inexplicable blue.
Behind the river, in the haar,
As a collection of the blues --
The yellow walls reflecting far
The hopeless accent of the Jews.
You move to Sunday, to despair
(From love), to the New Year, and there
Appears a girl you cannot woo --
Never explaining why she's blue.
Then in the night the town is lost;
A train is clad in silver plush.
The pallid puff, the draught of frost
Will sheathe your face until you blush.
The honeycomb of windows fits
The smell of halva and of zest,
While Christmas Eve is carrying its
Mince pies abreast.
Watch your New Year come in a blue
Seawave across the town terrain
In such an inexplicable blue,
As if your life can start again,
As if there can be bread and light --
A lucky day -- and something's left,
As if your life can sway aright,
Once swayed aleft.

Analysis of the poem: "Moscow Carol"

Form of the poem: This poem is a free-verse form poem. This free-form structure complements the poem's exploration of diverse scenes and emotions within the context of the city, of Moscow. The absence of a rigid form allows for a conversational and introspective tone, enabling the poet to capture the complexity and nuances of urban life, emotions and experiences. The poem is divided into a distinct movement, each presenting a different aspect of the cityscape and the speaker's reflections. The repetition of the phrase "In such an inexplicable blue" serves as a refrain, anchoring the poem and emphasizing the pervasive atmosphere throughout the narratives of the poem.

About the poem: The poem is originally written in Russian. It's captured the essence of Moscow and its diverse elements. It was first published in *A Part of Speech* (1977), a collection of poems by Joseph Brodsky. The anthology includes a range of his works that delve into themes of love, life, and existence. It is a vivid exploration of city life, with a particular focus on Moscow. The poet uses rich imagery, metaphor, and symbolism to convey the intricacies of emotions, experiences, and the passage of time.

Brodsky's poetry always intertwines personal experiences with broader themes, and this poem is no exception. It reflects his ability to blend the personal and the universal, creating a poetic tapestry that resonates with readers.

Themes and Images of the poem: The poem captures the intricate details and atmosphere of a cityscape, specifically Moscow, a Russian city. Brodsky uses vivid imagery and a unique blend of colours to depict scenes across the city. The inexplicable blue serves as a recurring motif, symbolizing a sense of mystery, melancholy, and perhaps hopes. The ship of glowing hue in Alexander Park and the yellow rose-like lamp suggests a poetic enchantment within the urban landscape. The speaker describes the drunkards' hive and the loonies' team, depicting a diverse and vibrant urban life. The picture taken by tourists emphasizes the transient nature of experiences in a place like Moscow.

The mention of Ordynka Street, a taxicab with fevered gnomes, and dead ancestors leaning on domes, adds a touch of surrealism to the imagery. The old and handsome cavalier, wedding party guests, and the inexplicable blue create a rich tapestry of emotions, feelings, and moments in Moscow. As the poem progresses, the speaker refers to the river, the accent of the Jews, and the movement through Sunday,

despair, and New York adding layers to the narrative. The appearance of a girl the speaker cannot woo introduces an element of unfulfilled longing.

The night brings a sense of loss and transformation, symbolized by the train clad in silver plush. The honeycomb of windows and the smell of halva and the mention of Christmas Eve with mice pies contribute to the sensory experience of the particular place, Moscow. The concluding lines convey a sense of renewal, as if life can start again, with the hope for bread, light, and a lucky day. The repetition of "swayed aright" and "swayed aleft" suggests the unpredictable and cyclical nature of life's journey. At last the poet "in such an inexplicable blue" paints a complex and evocative portrait of urban life and the emotions it evokes.

2) Pilgrims

"For then my thoughts–from far where I abide–
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee…"
William Shakespeare

Past altars and stages,
past temples and taverns,
past classy graveyards,
past street market's jabber,
past peace, and past woe,
past Mecca and Rome,
burned by the sun's blue glow,
the earth the pilgrims roam.
They're heavily injured and hunchbacked,
they're hungry and almost naked,
their eyes are full of sunset,
their hearts are full of daybreak.
The deserts are singing behind them,
sheet-lighting breaks out abruptly,
up above the stars are igniting,
and birds are screaming gruffly:
that the world will remain the same,
yes, indeed, the same,

dazzling with snowy game,
with fondness its unlikely name,
the world will remain underhanded,
the world will remain forever,
perhaps it can be comprehended,
it has no limits, however.
Which means it will make no sense
to believe in yourself or Lord.
…And the things that remain are, hence,
the illusion and the road.
All sunsets remain in-service,
all daybreaks are still in splendor.
The soldier will muck earth's surface.
The poet will be its defender.

Analysis of the poem: "Pilgrims"

Form of the poem: The poem, 'Pilgrims' follows a free-verse form poem. It is divided into many section or moments that allows to presentation of different phases or stages of pilgrimage and reflections on the journey,. The journey is a symbolic activity of the poem.

About the poem: The poem is originally written in Russian. The poem first appeared in the *To Urania* (1988). Contextually, Brodsky always delves into philosophical and existential issues in his poetry. The poem engages with the idea of a spiritual journey. Brodsky's exilement period profoundly influenced his poetry, infusing it with themes of displacement, longing, and philosophical reflections on life. As such there is no explicit historical context within the text but looking at the life of Brodsky and the way how he deals with it is the context of the poem.

Themes and Images of the poem: The poet explores the theme of human existence and the inevitable journey through life, drawing inspiration from William Shakespeare's quote at the beginning of the poem, as an epithet. The speaker presents a pilgrimage transcending geographical and spiritual boundaries. The pilgrims move past various symbols-altars, stages, temples, taverns, graveyards, and street markets. This diverse landscape reflects the multifaceted nature of life's

experiences. The mention of being burned by the sun's blue glow suggests both the harshness and beauty of the journey.

The physical state of the people, who are pilgrims, is vividly depicted: they are heavily injured, hunchbacked, hungry, and almost naked. Despite their challenging conditions, their eyes are full of sunset, and their hearts are full of daybreak. This duality symbolizes the resilience and hope that coexist within the human spirit. As the pilgrims move forward, the deserts sing behind them, sheet lighting breaks out, stars ignite, and birds scream gruffly. These natural elements convey a sense of tumult and unpredictability, echoing the uncertainties of life's journey.

The poem reflects a philosophical perspective on the world. It suggests that despite the challenges and hardships, the world will remain fundamentally unchanged. The notion of the world being underhanded and limitless implies its vast complexity and enduring nature. The concluding part emphasizes the persistence of illusion and the road. The idea that all sunsets and daybreaks remain in service and splendour suggests the perpetual cycles of life. The roles of the soldier mucking the earth's surface and the poet defending it highlight different facets of human engagement with the world. In essence, this poem invites contemplation on the universal aspects of the human journey, acknowledging both the hardships and enduring beauty found in life's continual pilgrimage.

3) **Don't Leave the Room**……..

Don't leave your room, don't commit that fateful mistake.
Why risk the sun? Just settle back at home and smoke.
Outside's absurd, especially that whoop of joy,
you've made it to the lavatory--now head back straight away!
Don't leave your room, don't go and hail a taxi, spend,
the only space that matters is the corridor, its end
a ticking meter. She comes by, all ready for caressing,
mouth open? Kick her straight out, don't even start undressing.
Don't leave your room, just say you have the influenza.
A wall and table are the most fascinating agenda.
Why leave this place? Tonight you will come home from town
exactly as you were, only more beaten down.
Don't leave your room. Go dance the bossa nova,

shoes without socks, your body bare and coat tossed over.
The hallway holds its smells of ski wax and boiled cabbage,
writing even one letter more is excess baggage.
Don't leave your room. Do you still look handsome?
Just ask the room… Incognito ergo sum,
as petulant Substance once remarked to Form.
It's not exactly France outside. Don't leave your room!
Don't be an idiot! You're not the others, you're an exclusion!
Choreograph the furniture, essay wall-paper fusion.
Make that wardrobe a barricade. The fates require us
to keep out Cosmos, Chronos, Eros, Race and Virus!

Analysis of the poem: "Don't Leave the Room……."

Form of the poem: The poem follows a certain structure form. It consists of six quatrains, each with a specific rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme is AABB in the first four quatrains, shifting to ABAB in the last two stanzas. This structure of the poem contributes to its rhythmic and playful quality. Additionally, the poem features a consistent metrical pattern, with lines predominantly following a trochaic tetrameter. This means that each line generally consists of four stressed syllables followed by four unstressed syllables. The rhythmic consistency creates a musical and engaging quality to the poem.

The poet's use of repetition in the refrain "Don't Leave the Room" serves as a powerful anchor throughout the poem, emphasizing the speaker's plea and reinforcing the central idea of the poem. The repetition creates a sense of urgency and insistence, highlighting the speaker's desire for the reader to stay within the confines of their room. The form of the poem combined with its satirical tone and wit, contributes to its effectiveness in conveying the speaker's humorous and somewhat ironic advice to avoid the outside world and reveals in the comforts of one's room.

About the poem: It is originally written in Russian. Joseph Brodsky wrote a prophetic "Virus" poem which suddenly sounds very relevant to our extraordinary moment. It was written in 1970 and published in *A Part of Speech*, in 1977. Brodsky's poem is strangely prophetic, but it's worth mentioning that it's a poem written against isolation not in favour of it. Brodsky came from a Leningrad

intellectual milieu but differed from most of his peers by sticking his neck out and openly opposing the Soviet regime. This outspokenness cost him and he was arrested for “parasitism” and spent 18 months doing hard labour in internal exile. In 1972 he was forced to emigrate.

The spirit of this poem is entirely satirical. Brodsky is mocking those members of the stay-at-home intelligentsia of Leningrad who despised Soviet reality but did nothing to oppose it, merely remaining in their rooms and complaining. As a result, the poet scornfully maintains, they ended up blending with that reality even more completely and practising "wall-paper fusion." So Brodsky himself would have hated to be told to self-isolate! But never mind, it’s a poem for our time.

Themes and Images of the poem: The poem deals with isolation and alienation as it strongly emphasizes the idea of staying within one’s room and avoiding the outside world. It suggests a sense of isolation and desire to retreat from the complexities and challenges of external reality. The poet employs a satirical and humorous tone throughout the poem. The exaggerated advice to avoid leaving the room, the comical rejection of social interactions, and the playful language contribute to a satirical commentary on the speaker’s aversion to the outside world.

The poem explores the mundane aspects of daily life within the confines of one’s room. The mention of smoking, the corridor’s end as ticking meter is exhibits the ordinary and routine nature of the speaker’s existence.

The poem touches on existential themes, contemplating the purpose of leaving one’s room and engaging in the outside world as it suggest his exile /journey. The speaker asserts a sense of individuality and defiance against societal expectations. It includes philosophical allusions, such as “Incognito ergo sum,” a play of on Descartes’ means *I think, therefore I exit*.

4) **Belfast Tune**

Here's a girl from a dangerous town
She crops her dark hair short
so that less of her has to frown
when someone gets hurt.
She folds her memories like a parachute.
Dropped, she collects the peat

and cooks her veggies at home: they shoot
here where they eat.
Ah, there's more sky in these parts than, say,
ground. Hence her voice's pitch,
and her stare stains your retina like a gray
bulb when you switch
hemispheres, and her knee-length quilt
skirt's cut to catch the squall,
I dream of her either loved or killed
because the town's too small.

Analysis of the poem: "Belfast Tune"

Form of the poem: The poem consisting of four quatrains, each consisting of four lines. The rhyme scheme is ABAB, where the second and fourth lines of each stanza rhyme. It is a short lyrical poem follows a typical form of a poem. This technique creates a sense of cohesion throughout the poem. The characteristics of Brodsky's poetry poetic style is a to explore a poignant life in a challenging environment, and its vivid imagery and concise language.

About the poem: The poem is originally written in Russian. The poem first appeared in the *To Urania* (1988). Contextually, it was written in 1983. It reflects on the girl's character and the constant depiction of the place and its dangerous atmosphere. It is a powerful exploration of the impact of conflict on the human condition. Through its evocative language and moving images, the speaker captures the essence of a community grappling with the cruel realities of violence and upheaval.

Themes and Images of the poem: The poem addresses the themes of violence, conflict, and the impact of political turmoil on the lives of ordinary people, specifically in the context of the political context in Northern Ireland. The speaker delves into the pervasive violence and conflict that characterized the period of civil unrest in Belfast, Ireland. The poet reflects on the tragic consequences of political strife and the toll it takes on both individuals and communities.

The poem explores the profound human suffering caused by the clash. It highlights the impact on everyday lives, depicting a sense of despair and loss as a result of the ongoing violence. The poet reflects on the role of poetry in the face of violence and political upheaval. The poem itself becomes a vehicle for expressing the complexities and nuances of the human experience during times of disagreement. Despite the grim realities depicted in the poem, there is an underlying theme of human resilience. The resilience of individuals facing adversity is subtly woven into the narrative, suggesting an enduring spirit despite the challenging circumstances.

The poems on conflict often include vivid images of violence, destruction, and the physical impact of war. This might involve description of damaged buildings, shattered landscapes, or the aftermath of explosive events. The speaker employs such a images to show a cruelty of the war as it reflects from the poem.

5) **Part of Speech**

1

From nowhere with love, Marchember the enth,
my dear respected darling, but it doesn't
matter who, since to be frank, the features aren't
distinct anymore, neither your nor anyone
else's everloving friend, salutations
from one (on the backs of cowboys) of the five
continents,
I loved you more than himself or his angels,
and so now am further from you than from both of
them,
late at night, in the sleeping valley, deep,
in a small town up to its doorknobs in snow,
writing on top of the sheets,
which, to say the least, isn't stated below,
I pummel the pillow, mumbling "you",
across the seas which have no bounds or limits,
in the dark, my whole body repeating anew
your features, as in some crazy mirror.

2

The North crushes metal but leaves glass intact,
teaches the throat to utter: Let me in!
The cold raised me and placed in my hand
a pen to warm my clenched fist.
Freezing, I see the sun going down
over the sea, and no one about.
Either the heel slips on ice, or the earth itself
arches underneath the foot.
And in my throat, where laughter, or speech,
or hot tea is the norm,
the falling snow rings clear and your "farewell"
is dark as Scott wrapped in a polar storm.

3

I recognize this wind, swooping upon the grass,
which lies down under its tartar blast.
I recognize this leaf tumbling into the mud
of the wayside, like some prince steeped in blood.
Fanning out, a broad arrow across the slant
cheekbones of the wooden house in a foreign land,
autumn in the window down below recognizes
a tear by its face, like a goose by its flight.
And, rolling my eyes up towards the ceiling,
I do not chant the lay of prince what's-his-name,
but my tongue caresses the Mongol word
in the night, like the khan's edict to his horde.

4

A catalogue of observations. In the corner it's warm.
Things bear the imprint of the gaze on them.
Constituting itself as glass is water.
Man's scarier than his skeleton
A nowhere winter evening with wine.

A veranda under osier attack.
On its elbow the body reclines,
like debris a glacier's left in its track.
In a thousand years, they will dig
a mollusc out from behind the blinds,
printed with lips, through a fringe,
having no one to say goodnight to.

5

Since the heel leaves prints, it's wintertime.
In their wooden things, freezing outside,
the houses recognize themselves through passers-by.
In the evening, in the nocturnal quiet,
what can I tell of the future if
remembering the warmth of your-blank-when you
fell asleep
casts the body out from the soul,
printing it on the wall, like the shadow
of a chair a flickering candle throws;
and under the tablecloth sky drawn down to the forest
below,
above the silo tower, the air rubbed by a crow s
wing cannot be roughed up white by the snow.

6

Wooden Laocoon, for a while casting off
the mountain, positions himself under a huge cloud.
From the cape a keen wind blows in gusts. The voice,
rising in a screech, tries to keep words within the bounds
of sense. A deluge descends; overwound cables
lash the backs of hills, like naked shoulders in the
bath-house.
Our midwinter Med stirs beyond the crumbled colonade,
like a salt tongue behind broken teeth.

The heart, grown savage, still beats for two,
every hunter knows where pheasants lie: in a puddle
under a stone.
Beyond today stands tomorrow, motionless,
like the predicate beyond the subject.

7

I was born and grew up in the Baltic marshes, by the
edge of
zinc-grey breakers, always coursing in twosome up the
ledge of
the shore, and from here all rhymes derive, that wan
voice as well,
winding between them, if it does at all,
like moist hair. Propped on a crooked elbow,
the helix will unwind from them not a rumble only,
but the clap of canvas, of shutters, of hands, a kettle
boiling on the oil-stove, at most-the cries of seagulls.
In these flat lands, what keeps the heart
from falseness, is there's nowhere to hide, you stand out.
and it's only sound space puts a check on:
the eye does not regret the lack of an echo.

8

As for the stars, they always are.
That is, if there's one, there's another beyond it.
The only way you can look down here from up there
is past eight, to be precise, and with a twinkle.
The sky looks better without them. 'Although
the opening up of space is better with them.
But the idea is, not to stir
from your rocker on the empty veranda.
As the pilot of a certain craft, hiding
half his face in shadows, says:

It seems there's no life anywhere
and on none of them can you rest your gaze.

9

In the little town, from which death crawled across a
classroom map,
the roadway glitters like scales on a carp,
candles gutter on the hundred-year-old chestnut tree
and a cast-iron lion yearns for impassioned speech.
Through the much laundered, faded window gauze
appear arrowing spires and the carnations' gash.
In the distance a streetcar rattles, as in days of yore,
but no one gets off at the stadium anymore.
The real end of the war is a blonde's dress
over the shapely back of a Viennese chair,
and a silvery bullet's winged, humming flight,
taking lives off to the South in July.
(*Munich*)

10

"Near the ocean", by candlelight, all around
a field, lush with clover, sorrel and alfalfa.
In the evening, like Siva, the body grows arms
that yearn to reach out and touch the beloved.
An owl drops into the grass, onto a mouse,
and rafters creak for no reason,
in a wooden city you sleep more sound,
because these days dreams contain only what has
happened.
There's a smell of fresh fish. The silhouette
of a chair is sticking to the wall.
Limp gauze stirs in the window, and in the bay the
moon s beam
pulls up the tide, like a blanket that has slipped.

11

You've forgotten the village, lost in the marshes
of a wooded province where the kitchen gardens
never have scarecrows-it's not that kind of seed
and the road too is all brushwood and gullies.
Old Nastasya's dead for sure, and Pesterev, chances are,
and if he's not, he's sitting drunk in a cellar,
or making something out of the headboard of our bed
a wicket, say, or just some plain old gate.
And in winter they chop firewood there, and turnips
they relie on,
and the smoke makes a star blink in the frosty heaven.
And it's no bride in a chintzy gown, but a triumph of
dust,
in the window, and a blank space where once we lived.

12

A dark blue morning in the frosted window
recalls a street with lamps aglow,
an icy land, snowdrifts, crossroads,
at the Eastern end of Europe, a cloak-room crowd.
"Hannibal", drones the old bag on the chair,
in phys. ed. the armpit-saturated parallel bars scent the
air;
as for the blackboard, which sets your teeth on edge,
it's stayed just as black, the back of it as well.
The silver frost has changed the buzzing bell
into crystal. As for parallel
lines, it all turned out true and became bone-clad.
Don't want to get up. Never did.

13

From the viewpoint of air, the earth's edge
is everywhere. Which, the clouds excepting,

coincides with-no matter how they cover
their tracks-the heels' perception.
And the eye too, which looks around,
scythes through the field, a kind of mower.
On changing places, the sum of small digits
is more unrecognizable than zero.
And a smile will slide, like the shadow of a rook,
along a pock-marked hedgerow, the luxuriant bushes
holding back the dogrose, but shouting
through the honeysuckle, with closed lips.

14

Light frost on the ground and the forest's depilation,
a sky the grey color of roofing iron.
Going outside into an odd-numbered October,
shivering, you round off the date to "Oh bugger!"
You can't fly away from here like a bird;
since you have travelled the whole universe,
as though looking for your love, it's as if
"the world of nature" has no more pages to move in.
Let's winter here, a black-covered book at hand
hard frost gets to from the outside, the gaze from within,
and
with the pen splitting words
into letters, like piled firewood.

15

There's always the possibility of going out of the house
into the street, whose brown length assuages
the eye with driveways, the stark
bare trees, puddles like light patches, and a walk.
The leafy top of an empty head stirs in the breeze,
and the street tapers away into a "V",
like the face into the chin; and a barking cur

flies out from under a gate, like crumpled paper.
The street. Some houses are better
than others: more things on the shelf;
and if only because, should you go berserk,
it'll have to be somewhere else.

16

And so, it gets warmer. In memory, as on the boundary strip,
weeds spring up before the good grain germinates.
One would like to say that in the South, in the fields,
they are already sowing the sorghum-if only one knew where North was.
The earth under the rook's foot is certainly hot,
smells of planks, fresh pitch. And squinting hard
in the blinding rays of the sun,
suddenly you see a clerk's pasty cheeks,
a bustle in the passage, an enamel basin,
a man in a hat, knitting his brows,
and another with a flash, shooting not us,
but a limp body and a pool of blood.

17

If there's something to be sung, sing the shift in the wind
from West to East, when a frozen twig
sways leftwards, creaking in protest,
and your cough flies over the plains to the wooded Dakotas.
It looks like a hare-leaving it to the bullet to widen the breach
between the pen writing these lines, which
has utterly lost its pace, and that thing
which leaves tracks. Head and hand sometimes combine
without resulting in a line,

but laying your ear, like a part of a centaur,
under the voice that's a burr.

18

... and at the word "future" a whole swarm
of mice pours from the Russian tongue
and gnaws at the tasty morsel
of your memory, full of holes like a cheese.
After so many winters, it no longer matters who
or what is standing at the window behind the blinds,
and in the head resounds not an unearthly "do"
but her rustle. Life
you don't look in the mouth, a gift,
bares its teeth at each
encounter. Of the whole man you're left
with a part of speech. Of speech, that is. A part of
speech.

19

It's not that I'm going insane, but I'm weary of summer.
You reach for a shirt in the drawer and the whole day
is lost.
Let winter come quickly and cover it all over,
the town, the people, but first of all, the green.
I shall sleep in my clothes or read someone else's book,
beginning anywhere, while what's left of the year,
like some blindman's cur that's deserted its owner,
crosses the road at the selfsame spot. Freedom
is when you forget the tyrant's middle name,
and the saliva in your mouth is sweeter than halva,
and although your brain is wound tight as a ram's
horn,
not a drop falls from the blue eye.

Analysis of the poem: "Part of Speech"

Form of the poem: "Part of Speech" is a free verse form poem. The poem is presented into 19 sections of varying lengths, with each sections containing distinct thoughts or reflections. It allows for a fluid and natural expression of thoughts and observations, reflecting the psychological expression and its style. The poem is a long narrative poem dealing cycle sections. This cycle gave the name of the book poem published in 1977.

About the poem: The poem, "Part of Speech", reflects on the power and limitations of language, as well as the role of the poet. It was originally written in Russian. It was composed during 1975-76 and published in Brodsky's *A Part of Speech* (1977). It can be read as Brodsky's broader body of work, which always grapples with themes of language, exile, memory, and the role of the poet in society. It also explores the themes and his efforts to reconcile the tension between linguistic expression and the ineffable aspects of human experience.

This poem is talking about the metaphorical language and imagery to convey ides. The notion of language as a part of speech implies both a fragmentary aspects and vital role within large discourse of human communication through the poetry ever produced.

Themes and Images of the poem: The speaker of the poem explores the idea that language is a tool, a part of speech, employed by poet, even in more general, to communicate and express ideas. The poet contemplates the significance of this tool in capturing the richness and complexity of human expression and experience. Despite the potency of language, the speaker acknowledges its imperfections. He suggests that language is inadequate in fully conveying the intricacies of emotions, experience, and the world. It reflects a certain humility in the face of the limitations of expression. It suggests that an imperfection of language is more challenging to address through the poem.

The poem implicitly delves into the role of the poet in employing language to bridge the gap between the ineffable and the articulable. The poet suggests that poet have the responsibility to engage with language thoughtfully, understanding its constraints and pushing its boundaries to convey the profound and the subtle. The poem carries philosophical reflections on the relationship between language, thought, and reality. It raises position about the extent to which language shapes ones understanding and the challenges of expressing the nuances of existence.

Generally, the poem showcases the mastery of Brodsky's poetry, its language and his ability to weave complex themes into affecting and thought-provoking poetry.

6) A Polar Explorer

All the huskies are eaten. There is no space
left in the diary, And the beads of quick
words scatter over his spouse's sepia-shaded face
adding the date in question like a mole to her lovely cheek.
Next, the snapshot of his sister. He doesn't spare his kin:
what's been reached is the highest possible latitude!
And, like the silk stocking of a burlesque half-nude
queen, it climbs up his thigh: gangrene.

Analysis of the poem: "A Polar Explorer"

Form of the poem: A fine lyric poem deals with the idea of death. It is a short poem having certain rhyming. The use of excellent images to create a meaning of the dying man at the last polar of life as he compares this with the extreme north pole as he is in Russia once again it come true that Brodsky had not only experimented with the themes of his poetry as exile and existence which is resulted in experience but he use extra affords to employed various images and symbols that convey the central idea of the poem, Death, ultimate result of the life.

About the poem: The poem was composed in 1977 and published in Joseph Brodsky's *A Part of Speech* (1977). The poem is originally written in Russian. The central idea of the poem is death. It is a story about the death of the speaker and sadness rather than a remarkable journey. The poem talks about the journey of the poet from the moment of his sadness at the beginning of the poem to the end of the poem where he almost seems happy to be dying. The poet used the terrible fate the explain the situation of the speaker.

Themes and Images of the poem: Joseph Brodsky employs the imagery in the poem to show the bad of the situation he is in. The speaker starts with the description of "no space left in the diary." The theme of the poem is transient life because it could end at any moment. The speaker explains that he has done his best to keep himself and his family alive in the "highest possible latitude" but he failed to keep them safe at last and now every one of the voiceless family members is dying. The

poem, apart from the central figure, depicts the voiceless and shapeless characters. He compares the position of the central figure with “the silk stocking of a burlesque half-nude queen”. The title of the poem explores the ultimate journey of life. It implicitly presented life as unpredictable and transient as the poet has used images like "gangrene". Thus the poem accounts for the fascinating experience of death and its journey. It is a poem of the expedition.

7) Love

Twice I awoke this night, and went
to the window. The streetlamps were
a fragment of a sentence spoken in sleep,
leading to nothing, like omission points,
affording me no comfort and no cheer.
I dreamt of you, with child, and now,
having lived so many years apart from you,
experienced my guilt, and my hands,
joyfully stroking your belly,
found they were fumbling at my trousers
and the light-switch. Shuffling to the window,
I realized I had left you there alone,
in the dark, in the dream, where patiently
you waited and did not blame me,
when I returned, for the unnatural
interruption. For in the dark
that which in the light has broken off, lasts;
there we are married, wedded, we play
the two-backed beast; and children
justify our nakedness.
On some future night you will again
come to me, tired, thin now,
and I shall see a son or daughter,
as yet unnamed -- this time I'll
not hurry to the light-switch, nor

will I remove my hand; because I've not the right
to leave you in that realm of silent
shadows, before the fence of days,
falling into dependence from a reality
containing me -- unattainable.

Analysis of the poem: "Love"

Form of the poem: The poem “Love" is a free verse form poem. It lacks a strict rhyme scheme or consistent metre, allowing more natural and emotive expression. The lines are varying in length, contributing to the natural flow of the poem. The use of enjambment, where sentences or clauses continue without a pause beyond the end of a line, adds to the fluidity and continuity of the narrative.

About the poem: The poem was first published in 1970 and is included in Brodsky’s collection of poems, *A Part of Speech*, in 1977. The poem is originally written in Russian. The poem explores themes of love, dreams, separation, guilt, and the complexities of human relationships. His vivid imagery and introspective tone provide a glimpse into the emotional landscape of the speaker as they navigates the realm of dreams and reality. It is a reflective and intimate piece, showcasing the poet's ability to weave intricate emotions into his poetry.

Themes and Images of the poem: In this poignant poem, the poet explores the realm of dreams and the emotional complexities within relationships. The speaker describes waking up in the night and finding fragments of a dream where the streetlamps are like a sentence leading to nothing, symbolizing a sense of emptiness or longing. The dream involves the speaker imagining their partner with a child, highlighting the passage of time and the separation between them. The guilt and fumbling at the trousers and light switches suggest a mix of desire and hesitation, reflecting the emotional intricacies of the dreamer's psyche.

The speaker contemplates the enduring connection in the darkness, where broken ties in the light persist. The dream becomes a metaphorical space where the couple is married, and intimate, and children symbolize the justification of their connection. The anticipation of a future night hints at the cyclic nature of dreams and the possibility of reconnection, but the speaker expresses a commitment to staying in the dream without rushing to the light switch. This decision is driven by the

acknowledgement that leaving the dreams real prematurely is not their right and that the separation is a reality both distant and unattainable.

Here, Brodsky weaves a rich tapestry of emotions, time, and dreams, capturing the profound complexities of love, guilt, and the enduring connections that persist even in the realm of dreams.

8) Folk Tune

It's not that the Muse feels like clamming up,
it's more like high time for the lad's last nap.
And the scarf-waving lass who wished him the best
drives a steamroller across his chest.
And the words won't rise either like that rod
or like logs to rejoin their old grove's sweet rot,
and, like eggs in the frying pan, the face
spills its eyes all over the pillowcase.
Are you warm tonight under those six veils
in that basin of yours whose strung bottom wails;
where like fish that gasp at the foreign blue
my raw lip was catching what then was you?
I would have hare's ears sewn to my bald head,
in thick woods for your sake I'd gulp drops of lead,
and from black gnarled snags in the oil-smooth pond
I'd bob up to your face as some Tirpitz won't.
But it's not on the cards or the waiter's tray,
and it pains to say where one's hair turns gray.
There are more blue veins than the blood to swell
their dried web, let alone some remote brain cell.
We are parting for good, my friend, that's that.
Draw an empty circle on your yellow pad.
This will be me: no insides in thrall.
Stare at it a while, then erase the scrawl.

Analysis of the poem: "Folk Tune"

Form of the poem: The “Folk Tune” is a six-stanza poem talking about certain human complexities. Each stanza contains four lines having the rhyming scheme AABB. Certainly, this poem implies such rhyme scheme features a series of rhyming couplets, where successive lines rhyme before giving way to another pair of rhyming lines. It was first used by an American poet Ann Bradstreet.

About the poem: The poem is originally written in Russian. It reflects on the challenges and changes in life, using vivid and sometimes surreal imagery. The speaker contemplates the muse’s silence, the weight of time, and the emotional distance between individuals. Brodsky’s use of metaphor and visual elements contributes to the poignant atmosphere of parting and acceptance in the face of inevitable change.

Themes and Images of the poem: In “Folk Tune”, the speaker grapples with the challenges of creative inspiration, the passage of time, and the complexities of relationships. The mention of the Muse possibly is "M. D." to whom he always admires and addresses in his poetry. It also suggests a struggle with artistic inspiration or motivation. The image of a “steamroller across his chest” implies a sense of emotional weight or suppression.

The lines about words not rising “like that rod” and the face spilling eyes on the pillowcase evoke a struggle with expression and the emotional turmoil that accompanies it. The reference to a basin and fish gasping at the foreign blue carries a sense of nostalgia and the elusive nature of past experiences. The poet's willingness to undergo a physical transformation, like having her ears sewn to the head, reflects a profound desire to connect and endure hardships for the sake of love or understanding. However, the acknowledgement that certain things are "not on the cards" suggests recognition of the limits and realities of life.

The concluding lines with the image of drawing an empty circle and erasing the "scrawl" convey a sense of closeness and acceptance of the inevitable separation. The speaker seems resigned to the idea that some things are beyond control and that parting is an unavoidable aspect of life. In general, the poet explores the complexities of human emotions, the passage of time, and the transient nature of relationships.

9) **I threw my arms about those shoulders**….

M.B.

I threw my arms about those shoulders, glancing
at what emerged behind that back,
and saw a chair pushed slightly forward,
merging now with the lighted wall.
The lamp glared too bright to show
the shabby furniture to some advantage,
and that is why sofa of brown leather
shone a sort of yellow in a corner.
The table looked bare, the parquet glossy,
the stove quite dark, and in a dusty frame
a landscape did not stir. Only the sideboard
seemed to me to have some animation.
But a moth flitted round the room,
causing my arrested glance to shift;
and if at any time a ghost had lived here,
he now was gone, abandoning this house.

Analysis of the poem: "I threw my arms about those shoulders…."

Form of the poem: It is a 16 lines a very fine lyric poem by Joseph Brodsky. This is another poem that experimented with form and content of it. The poet has used many poetic devices such as to exhibit the inner doom of the poet he used the external elements. Those are now images of the poem. The poem is implicitly a personal address to the poet's beloved Marina Basmanova, to whom the poet often seeks inspiration to write a poem. The first line of the poem is the title of it.

About the poem: It is published in Joseph Brodsky's poetry collection, *To Urania* (1988). It was originally composed in 1983. It is dedicated to M. B. (Marina Basmanova), his partner together they had a song, Andrei. But they never married despite several marriage proposals from Brodsky. Marina Basmanova is a Russian artist and book illustrator who lived in St. Petersburg.

Themes and Images of the poem: The poem uses intricate and rich imagery to explore themes like internal and external exploration of reality as one may find the peculiarity of postmodern poetry i. e. existential issues of life. His works often deal with philosophical and existential issues. It is one of the personal poems. The poem presents the elegiac tone at the beginning of the poem as the speaker employs the image of "I threw my arms about those shoulders". The speaker uses it to describe realistically a situation of physical and emotional connection, possibly expressing comfort, support, or intimacy. The act of throwing arms around someone's shoulders often conveys a sense of closeness and affection in various contexts such as friendship or romantic relationships.

The speaker describes a scene where he embraces someone, observing the details of the surroundings. The imagery reflects on the mundane elements of the room, such as the "chair", "lamp", "shabby furniture", "brown leather sofa", and a landscape in a dusty frame. The description creates a sense of stillness and abandonment, heightened by the mention of a "moth" and the absence of a "ghost", suggesting the departure of life or spirit from the house. The poem captures a moment of reflection and contemplation, which are the major themes of the poem.

10) **May 24, 1980**

I have braved, for want of wild beasts, steel cages,
carved my term and nickname on bunks and rafters,
lived by the sea, flashed aces in an oasis,
dined with the-devil-knows-whom, in tails, on truffles.
From the height of a glacier I beheld half a world, the earthly
width. Twice have drowned, thrice let knives rake my nitty-gritty.
Quit the country the bore and nursed me.
Those who forgot me would make a city.
I have waded the steppes that saw yelling Huns in saddles,
worn the clothes nowadays back in fashion in every quarter,
planted rye, tarred the roofs of pigsties and stables,
guzzled everything save dry water.
I've admitted the sentries' third eye into my wet and foul
dreams. Munched the bread of exile; it's stale and warty.

Granted my lungs all sounds except the howl;
switched to a whisper. Now I am forty.
What should I say about my life? That it's long and abhors transparence.
Broken eggs make me grieve; the omelette, though, makes me vomit.
Yet until brown clay has been rammed down my larynx,
only gratitude will be gushing from it.

Analysis of the poem: "May 24, 1980"

Form of the poem: The poem, 'May 24, 1980', is a personal poem using a lyrical tone. It is a free verse poem having 20 lines. The lyrical tone of the poem is one of the best exhibited among the other Brodsky's lyrical poems. It is a revealing self-portrait or self-ironic or self-aggrandizing created in a poem as he characterized such a poem as "a man keeping strict accounts with himself, with his conscience and consciousness". It is a highly personal poem that explicitly presents the life account of the poet.

About the poem: The poem is published in Joseph Brodsky's *To Urania* (1988), a collection of poetry. It is composed in Russian. It was originally composed in 1980 on the occasion of his 40th birthday. It is an account of his travails in this somewhat tongue-in-cheek poem but the last line of the poem is deadly serious "only gratitude". It also explored hardships he has encountered during these forty years of living. It also seemingly recalls his open-heart surgery, as the speaker narrates it as "Twice have drowned, thrice let knives rake my nitty-gritty".

It is a summary poem of Brodsky's life written from the far side of exile. The speaker never viewed himself as a victim but he did digest the harsh bread of exile that only increased his special solidarity with grief. The poet was an intimate of loss that he knew what he had sacrificed. The poet had a gift of turning sorrow into high song as it transformed his suffering of life into triumphs in poetry. The speaker evokes a keen sense of sadness and regret.

Themes and Images of the poem: The speaker refers to the forty years of the central figure of the poem. Despite exile and a broken, as well as personal disappointments to which a poem discreetly alludes, the poet invigoratingly, and contagiously, expresses his gratitude for universal vision. He envisions his life as "Yet until brown clay has been rammed down my larynx" and the image of "lived by sea" reveals a tremendous experience of the "wild beasts" and "steel cages" as he

was in prison and under trial during his stay at Russia. It reveals an exilement and feeling about his loneliness.

The predominant themes of the poem are existence and experience as the speaker describes a whole realm of self. It is not at all related to his glorification. The poem refers to the height of life as he employs the image of "the height of a glacier". The poem implicitly employs the poetic vision of the poet as he presented it "I have admitted the sentries' third eye into my wet and foul dreams." The image of the dream explores the experienced life wherein the poet believes that he "munched the bread of exile". He proclaims that "now I am forty" and he compared his forty-long year life with “Broken eggs make me grieve; omelet, though make me vomit”.

Thus, the speaker comments on his own life and uses harsh diction to present the poetic vision. It deals with the treatment of the poet's major issues related to exile, existence, experience, etc. This life narrative account of the poet is one of the celebrative poems of Brodsky. The theme of poetic vision is at the central of the poem

11) **Seven Strophes**

I was but what you'd brush
with your palm, what your leaning
brow would hunch to in evening's
raven-black hush.
I was but what your gaze
in that dark could distinguish:
a dim shape to begin with,
later - features, a face.
It was you, on my right,
on my left, with your heated
sighs, who molded my helix
whispering at my side.
It was you by that black
window's trembling tulle pattern
who laid in my raw cavern
a voice calling you back.

I was practically blind.
You, appearing, then hiding,
gave me my sight and heightened
it. Thus some leave behind
a trace. Thus they make worlds.
Thus, having done so, at random
wastefully they abandon
their work to its whirls.
Thus, prey to speeds
of light, heat, cold, or darkness,
a sphere in space without markers
spins and spins.

Analysis of the poem: "Seven Strophes"

Form of the poem: It is a strophe, a group of verses that form a distinct unit within a poem. It is usually a reference to a poem that does not have a regular meter and rhyme pattern, such as free verse. It is a fragmented form of an ode. The poem creates a moment from the side of the speaker as it is an address to his beloved wife; it implicitly refers to her. The strophe is often followed by an antistrophe and then by an epode so in the case of this poem it is only the strophe that suggests one of the qualities of postmodern period poetry that is often treated as a fragmented form of the text.

Brodsky's 'Seven Strophes' consists of seven movements or stanzas. Each stanza treated the theme of love and loss. Each strophe presents a different scene or image, and together they create a tapestry of ideas and emotions.

About the poem: The poem is published in Joseph Brodsky's poetry collection, *To Urania* (1988). It was originally composed in 1981. The poem uses complex and rich imagery to explore themes such as nature, time, and human experience. His works always delve into philosophical and existential issues. It is dedicated to Marina Basmanova, his partner together they had a song, Andrei, and he considers her is muse to him. But they never married despite several marriage proposals from Brodsky. The muse is one of the sources of inspiration for making a poem.

Themes and Images of the poem: The speaker of the poem addresses his wife. They had a tempestuous affair, ending with his trial and exile from the Soviet Union. It is a song to a specific woman, a song to his muse, and s song of exile. He uses the image of “you’d brush with your palm” to suggest that he made out of it. The poet describes the scene of the evening that suggests the life is extremely turning towards the darkness as the poem develops in this way.

It links earthly, physical love to celestial love, but one doesn't see love in the latter part of it, only finds loss. The loss, which lies in exile, shows the existential meaning of life as well as the poem. The poem deals with the themes of the passage of time and the transience of human existence. In strophe six, the speaker suggests that poetry can preserve and convey our experiences beyond our mortal existence. That is explored in greater detail with images like "black window's trembling", "practically blind", and “sphere in space”.

Thus, the poet seeks inspiration from his wife, to whom he regards as a muse. Motivation for composing poetry, images as he described it as "thus some leave behind a trace" means verse and the poet makes her/his world. Nevertheless, the poem is all about his poetic creation, vision, and space that are always related to his exilement that implicitly and explicitly explored the poem. The poem again celebrates the theme of love but this time the poet creates a situation that gives a message of poetry through love.

12) Odysseus to Telemachus

My dear Telemachus,

The Trojan War

is over now; I don't recall who won it.
The Greeks, no doubt, for only they would leave
so many dead so far from their own homeland.
But still, my homeward way has proved too long.
While we were wasting time there, old Poseidon,
it almost seems, stretched and extended space.
I don't know where I am or what this place
can be. It would appear some filthy island,
with bushes, buildings, and great grunting pigs.

A garden choked with weeds; some queen or other.
Grass and huge stones . . . Telemachus, my son!
To a wanderer the faces of all islands
resemble one another. And the mind
trips, numbering waves; eyes, sore from sea horizons,
run; and the flesh of water stuffs the ears.
I can't remember how the war came out;
even how old you are--I can't remember.
Grow up, then, my Telemachus, grow strong.
Only the gods know if we'll see each other
again. You've long since ceased to be that babe
before whom I reined in the plowing bullocks.
Had it not been for Palamedes' trick
we two would still be living in one household.
But maybe he was right; away from me
you are quite safe from all Oedipal passions,
and your dreams, my Telemachus, are blameless.

Analysis of the poem: "Odysseus to Telemachus"

Form of the poem: The poem is a three-stanza poem that does not follow any rhyme scheme. It is a free verse form of poetry as it is a distinctive feature of 20th-century poetry. The lines appear to be in the same range but invariable in the number of syllables contained by each line.

About the poem: 'Odysseus to Telemachus' the poem displays the themes of dreams about journey, love, war, sadness, feelings about missing, loss, and alienation. It tells the story of Odysseus, who is a hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic poem. Homer's *Odysseus* is about the journey of the title character back to Ithaca and his waiting wife, Penelope, and son, Telemachus. The speaker of the poem is Odysseus himself. The reference to the story is the Trojan War, written about in another Homer's poem, *Iliad*. It is told from the perspective of the hero, Odysseus, who is trapped on Circe's island.

The poem is published in Joseph Brodsky's poetry collection, *A Part of Speech* (1977). It was originally composed in Russian and translated by the poet. The poet employs the situation of separation from one's home and family as it suggests the poet was in exile. He was living in exile, separated from his native country and fellowmen. The poet shows the invisible force or evil force that is controlling the central figure of the poem from his family and son. The poem implicitly exposes the totalitarianism. This is a specific exposition of the postmodern wherein the poet used the external story to relate the same with inner turmoil.

Themes, and Images of the poem: The poem begins with the speaker stating and addressing his son, Telemachus, that the Trojan War is over. It was the war between the Greeks and Troy. It was the historical events of humans that determined the entire Western civilization. Odysseus does not wish to remember or know who won the war whether his side or the enemy's side but it was the Greeks, he speculates, due to the sheer number of men left behind. It is unimportant to the speaker who won the war or victor. He remained on his journey after the war for ten long years. He informs his son about what happened to him and how he has been changed by what he saw as he was on his way back but the god of the sea, Poseidon, administered to stretch out the distance between him and his homeland. In this movement, the poet used the metaphorical reason that is taking him so long to return to his family.

In the second longest stanza of the poem, the speaker gives voice to his concerns for his fellow mates of the ship. Here, he used the image of uncertainty or scepticism "I don't know where I am or what this place can be". The speaker described the island as "filthy", "great grunting pigs", "A garden choked with weeds", and "Grass and huge stones". He finds that all island looks like same. It is because of the journey, not the war that gives a worse understanding of life to the Odysseus.

The quest of journey hunt in the third stanza of the poem that Odysseus expresses his journey is inevitable. The feeling of loneliness is explored here in a very sceptical manner as the speaker wishes to continue his journey and saying goodbye he tells his son to "Grow up…...grow strong." The use of the silver lining in the horrors he's experienced. He agreed with "Palamedes' trick" as "maybe he was right' to be separated for the sake of both, father and son. Palamedes was the son of Nauplius and Clymene in Greek Mythology. It reveals that the speaker wishes to be separated and this will be safe for his son from the "Oedipal passions". The reference to "Oedipal passions" is about the absence of a fatherless household and Telemachus

will grow into a kind of man, as he expresses his will about the same, and "your dreams,.....are blameless."

The poet's vision of the man is quietly introspective; the poem never addresses any political force directly. But it shows the secret force which stops Odysseus from reuniting with his country and family. It also examines the corruptive nature of empire on the individual. The poem treats exile as a devastating consequence of power. He just used the story of the Odyssey to explore the force of his exilement which is inevitable.

3.5 Summary

Thus, to sum up one can use to say postmodern poetry is a versatile form of literary presentation as you have seen it in a specific context of Russian poetry while dealing with the prescribed poems of Joseph Brodsky.

3.6 Exercises

1. Explain the poetic framework of Joseph Brodsky with reference to any poem that you have studied.
2. What are the major reflections of Joseph Brodsky's poetry?
3. Illustrate the poetic vision of Brodsky's work that often deals with human experience, suffering, sadness, loss, existence, exile etc.
4. Justify that Joseph Brodsky is postmodern poet with specific reference to poetry of the period.
5. What are the important factors of the 20^{th} Century which affects postmodern times literature?
6. Discuss the form of Brodsky's poetry with reference to his poems that you have studied.
7. Explain the form and content of Brodsky's poetry.
8. What are the features of postmodern poetry and justify the same in the context of Brodsky's poetry?
9. Joseph Brodsky's Part of Speech: An interpretation

3.7 Reference for further study

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Unit-4
Modern and Postmodern Indian Poetry : A. K. Ramanujan and Dilip Chitre

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of the present unit are as follows

1. To understand the concepts of modernism and post modernism.
2. To study the impact of modernism and postmodernism on Indian English poetry.
3. To study the selected poems of A. K. Ramanujan.
4. To study the selected poems of Dilip Chitre.

4.1 Selected Poems from : *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern India Poet – edited by* Arvind Krishna Mehrotra

4.2 Introduction

Indian English poetry is a vibrant literary tradition that has its roots in the colonial history of the Indian subcontinent. It emerged during the British colonial rule, when English was established as the language of administration and education. As a result, Indian writers, influenced by the English literary canon, began to use this medium to express their own cultural and artistic sensibilities.

The beginnings of Indian English poetry can be traced back to the 18th century with the works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, who is often considered one of the first Indian poets to write in English. His first volume of poems was published in 1827. However, it was during the 19th and early 20th centuries that the genre truly began to flourish, with poets like Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European Nobel laureate in Literature, and Sarojini Naidu, known as the "Nightingale of India," making significant contributions. Tagore's poetry, in particular, showcased a unique fusion of Indian spirituality and Western poetic forms, captivating audiences both in India and abroad.

The post-independence period saw a surge in Indian English poetry, as the nation grappled with its identity, political struggles, and social changes. Poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Agha Shahid Ali, and Arundhathi Subramaniam,

among others, explored a wide range of themes, from identity and diaspora to gender and globalization, enriching the tapestry of Indian literature in English.

Today, Indian English poetry continues to evolve, encompassing diverse voices, styles, and themes. Contemporary poets such as Vikram Seth, Arundhathi Subramaniam, and Meena Alexander have gained international recognition, while newer voices continue to emerge, representing the rich and dynamic cultural landscape of modern India. Indian English poetry remains a testament to the enduring power of language as a means of creative expression, reflection, and connection. It reflects the ever-evolving socio-cultural and political landscape of India and has made a significant impact on the global literary scene, inviting readers to explore the complexities and nuances of a nation in transition.

4.3 Modernism and Postmodernism

Modernism and postmodernism are two important movements in art, literature, and culture, and they represent different ways of thinking and creating.

Modernism:

Late 19th to mid-20th century is regarded as the period of modernism. Modernism emerged as a response to a rapidly changing world during the early 20th century, including technological advancements, urbanization, and two World Wars. Modernist artists and writers often experimented with new styles and techniques. They wanted to break away from traditional forms and norms. Modernist works could be fragmented or disjointed, reflecting the confusion and disarray of the time. Modernist works put emphasis on individual perspectives and experiences. It favors a move away from portraying the world realistically, focusing on inner thoughts and emotions. Modernism is a critique of Tradition, questioning and challenging established beliefs and traditions. Mid-20th century to the present day is regarded as Postmodern period.

Postmodernism developed in response to the perceived limitations of modernism. It is characterized by a more skeptical and playful approach. Postmodernism questions the idea of absolute truth or overarching explanations of the world. Instead, it embraces multiple, often contradictory perspectives.

Postmodern art often incorporates elements of parody, imitation, or borrowing from different sources. A sense of irony, humor, and playfulness in the art and literature is characteristic of postmodernism. It displays Hybridity in the form of

mixing of different styles, genres, and cultural influences. It is also characterized by Metafiction in the form of stories that are self-aware, acknowledging they are fictional.

In short, modernism is like someone trying to break free from old rules and experiment with new ideas, often reflecting the chaos and uncertainty of the early 20th century. Postmodernism, on the other hand, is like a reaction to this experimentation, where people playfully question everything, mix things up, and embrace the idea that there might not be one "truth."

4.4 Modern and Postmodern Indian poetry

The critics divide the Indian English Poetry into two periods: pre-Independence and post-Independence poetry. V. K. Gokak in his book 'Golden Treasury' traces the growth and progress of Indian poetry in English. He classifies the Indian English poets before independence into two groups neo-symbolists and neo-modernists. The neo-symbolists are fascinated by mysticism and the neo-modernists vision is colored by humanism. M. K. Naik considers Sarojini Naidu as a true nightingale of India. Sarojini Naidu, Toru Dutt and Shri Aurobindo helped in forming a poetic tradition before independence. Their poetry is not imitative. They have originality of themes and technical excellence.

Prominent pre-Independence poets are Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt, M. M. Dutt. Shri Aurobindo, Manmohan Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Harindranath Chattopadhyay and R. C. Dutt. Their poetry is characterized by Indianness, archaism and romanticism. Early Indian English poetry was romantic, narrative, imitative, spiritual and lyrical. The modern Indian poetry is realistic. According to V. K. Gokak Indian English poetry "Starts as romantic poetry simply because English Romantic Poetry became Victorian. It decided to go through a period of "Decadence" in English Poetry because the nineties was a period of "Decadence" in English poetry. After Decadence came Georgianism and Indo-Anglian Poetry, loyal as always, suddenly became Georgian. When English poetry went modernist, Indo-Anglian poetry had no alternative but to do the same".

Indian English poetry, as a dynamic literary tradition, has evolved over the years, offering profound insights into the changing social, cultural, and political landscapes of India. Two significant phases in this evolution are modernism and postmodernism. These movements have influenced poets to experiment with forms, themes, and perspectives, creating a rich tapestry of poetic expression.

4.4.1 Modern Indian English Poetry:

Modern Indian poetry, which emerged in the 20th century, is characterized by a dynamic interplay of tradition and innovation. It reflects the evolving socio-cultural and political landscape of India. Salient features of modern Indian poetry include a quest for cultural identity and a deep connection to India's rich heritage. Poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, K. N. Daruwala, and Kamala Das explored themes such as post-colonialism, nationalism, and the clash between tradition and modernity. Modern Indian poetry often employs vivid imagery, symbolism, and metaphors to convey complex emotions and ideas. It is characterized by a fusion of Indian and Western literary influences, embracing both classical and contemporary forms. The poets of this era used their works to engage with pressing social issues, expressing the collective aspirations and struggles of the nation. This genre also witnessed experimentation with language, style, and structure, as poets sought to break free from traditional norms and create a distinct Indian literary voice. Modern Indian poetry serves as a mirror reflecting the multifaceted nature of India's cultural and intellectual landscape, capturing the spirit of a nation in transition.

One of the prominent figures of this era was Rabindranath Tagore, (1861-1939) whose work transcended borders and cultural boundaries. Tagore's poem "Where the Mind is Without Fear" epitomizes the spirit of modern Indian English poetry. It envisions an India free from the shackles of oppression and inequality, where knowledge and truth are celebrated. The poem reflects the poet's longing for a progressive and enlightened India. Tagore's work embodies the key characteristics of modern Indian English poetry, including a focus on social and political issues, a quest for a national identity, and a deep connection to Indian cultural and spiritual heritage.

Moving forward in time, Nissim Ezekiel, one of the prominent poets of modern Indian English literature, explored the complexities of urban life and the clash of tradition and modernity. In his poem "Background, Casually," Ezekiel humorously portrays the dilemma of an individual torn between Westernization and traditional values. The poem reflects the confusion and anxiety faced by many Indians during the process of modernization. Ezekiel's poetry captures the essence of modern Indian English poetry by delving into the intricacies of post-independence Indian society, where individuals grapple with their cultural identity.

Ezekiel spent three and a half years in London. During his stay in London he took a keen interest in the theatre, the cinema and in painting. He also studied psychology and philosophy. In London he published his first volume of poems entitled 'A Time to Change' in 1952. Ezekiel has published several volumes of poems over the years ' Sixty Poems'(1953),'The Third' (1959), 'The Unfinished Man' (1960), 'The Exact Name' (1965), 'Hymans in Darkness'(1976), 'Later-Day Psalms' (1982).

Apart from the above discussed poets other important modern and post-independence poets include Dom Moraes, Keki. N. Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra, A. K. Ramanujan, A. K. Mehrotra, Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Gauri Deshpande, Pritish Nandy, Adil Jussawalla, Shiv K. Kumar, and Gieve Patel. These poets have enriched the post-Independence Indian English Poetry. They have introduced new themes and techniques in modern Indian English poetry. These poets are experimentalists and modernists.

4.4.2 Postmodern Indian English poetry:

Postmodern Indian English poetry emerged in the latter half of the 20th century and continues to influence contemporary poets. Postmodernism in Indian English poetry is marked by its skepticism of grand narratives, irony, playfulness, and the exploration of multiple perspectives. Let us discus Postmodernism in the poetry of some prominent Indian English poets.

Keki N. Daruwalla:

Keki N. Daruwalla is a notable figure in postmodern Indian English poetry. His poems provide a fresh perspective on a traditional Indian mythological characters. Daruwalla uses irony and reinterpretation to challenge the conventional narrative and invoke thought-provoking questions. Daruwalla's poems are a postmodern reinterpretation that raise questions about gender roles and victimhood,.

Arundhathi Subramaniam:

Arundhathi Subramaniam is another postmodern Indian English poet known for her innovative and multi-layered works. In her poem "Cheat Sheet," she uses humor and wordplay to explore the intricacies of human relationships and the complexities of modern life. Subramaniam's poetry reflects postmodern themes of irony, self-awareness, and a playful approach to traditional narratives.

Kamala Das:

Kamala Das (1934-2009) is one of the most significant Indian poets in English. She is the fourth Indian English poet to win Sahitya Academy Award for her book, 'Collected Poems vol. I in 1958. Her poetic collections include 'Summer in Calcutta', 'The Descendants' and 'The Old Play House and Other Poems'. Her poems encompass a wide range of themes, yet they are largely confessional in tone. She reveals her soul and self in her poetry. She is usually compared to Sylvia Plath. She grapples with ideas and abstractions, images of men and women on several planes. She is a feminist' presenting the kaleidoscopic images of women as wife, mother, beloved, street-walker, prostitute and goddess.

Dom Moraes:

Dominic Francis Moraes (1938-2004) is a noted poet of Indo English Poetry. He had the astonishing power of expression and perception of ideas. He received his education from Oxford University. His poetry was greatly influenced by British poets like T S Eliot and W H Auden. His famous poems include 'Letter to My Mother', 'This Island', 'The Prophet', 'Kahheri Caves', 'Being Married' and 'A Man Dreaming'. His poetry collections include 'The Beginning' (1957), 'Poems' (1960), 'John Nobody' (1965) and 'Selected Poems-1955-65'. He was the first Indian to receive prestigious Hawthornden prize.

Rajagopal Parthasarathy : (1934) was instrumental in popularizing Indian English Poetry in seventies. His first visit to England in 1963 on a scholarship from British Council left him totally disenchanted. He published his first book of poetry 'Rough Passage' in 1976. After this book he has published some scattered poems in different journals and poetry magazines. The most striking feature of 'Rough Passage' is the emotional and spiritual dilemma caused in the poet's mind as a result of being educated in a foreign language. 'Exile', 'Trial' and 'Home Coming' form a group of poems interlinked under broad title 'Rough Passage'.

Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004) is a bilingual poet, writing in Marathi and English. He received his early education in Kolhapur. He worked professionally as a commercial artist. He has translated a number of his Marathi poems into English. His poems in English include the 'boat ride', Kala ghoda and 'Jejuri'. Jejuri published in 1976 won him the Commonwealth poetry prize in 1977. Jejuri, is a collection of poems in thirty one sections. It is about the poet's irreverent odyssey to the temple to Khandoba at Jejuri.

Adil Jehangir Jussawalla (1940) is considered to be one of the most authentic and promising among the new poet. he published 'Land's End' (1962). His 'Missing Person' (1976) is also popular collection of his poetry. The poetry of Jussawalla shows greater social awareness. His poem 'Sea Breeze Bombay' is a city poem. The poem is a response to the historical incident of partition. according to the poet, Bombay is a 'Surrogate City'. It gave shelter to many refugees after partition.

A. K. Mehrotra (1947) is one of the contemporary Indian English Poets, who found a place in R. Parthasarathy's Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets. He has published three volumes of poems 'Statute Miles' (1982) 'Middle Earth' (1984) and 'The Transfiguring Places' (1998). M. K. Naik comments: "Several poems offer reflections on life and art, reality and fantasy". His volume of poems 'Middle Earth' has made him a prominent Indian English poets of our time. He is popular for his experimentation with surrealism in his poetry.

In summary, modern and postmodern Indian English poetry represent distinct phases in the evolution of this literary tradition. Modern poets like Tagore and Ezekiel focused on issues of identity, social change, and cultural heritage. In contrast, postmodern poets like Daruwalla and Subramaniam employ irony, reinterpretation, and playfulness to question established narratives and explore multiple perspectives. Both movements have significantly contributed to the richness and diversity of Indian English poetry, making it a compelling mirror of India's ever-changing society and culture.

4.5 A.K. Ramanujan : life and works

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (1929-1993) is an Indian poet and scholar. He wrote in English, Tamil and Kannada. He was also translator and playwright. He was born in Mysore, Karnataka. Ramanujan received BA and M.A. in English language and literature from University of Mysore. He taught at various colleges in South India in 1950s. In 1958 he went to the United States for Ph.D. In 1962 Ramanujan was appointed to the University of Chicago where he taught for thirty years. His first collection of poems ‘The striders’ was published in 1966. His later collections were Relations (1971), Second Sight (1986) and The Collected Poems in 1995. His poems reflect his views on the cultures and conventions of the East and the West.

He has also translated poems from Tamil, Kannada and Telegu in to English. His translations made him internationally popular. His translated works include

‘Interior Landscape’ (1967), ‘Speaking of Siva’ (1973), ‘Hymns for the Drawing’ (1981) and ‘Poems of Love and War’ (1985).

He has written several essays on subjects like The Indian Oedipus and Folk Mythologies. These have been published in Collected Essays in 1999. His last book to be published was Folklore of India in 1991.

Ramanujan has been included in Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets. The Penguin Book of Love Poetry, Young Poets of the Commonwealth and New writing in India. He has received Padmashri given by the Government of India and Mac Arthur Award. He was posthumously awarded the "Sahitya Academy Award" in 1999 for his 'The Collected Poems'.

4.6 Check your progress 1.

Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. Who is generally considered the first Indian poet to write poetry in English?
2. Who is the first Indian Nobel Laureate?
3. Which period is generally regarded as the period of modernism?
4. Which period is generally regarded as Postmodern period?
5. Who is considered as a nightingale of India?
6. Name some Prominent pre-Independence Indian English poets.
7. Name some post-independence Indian English poets.
8. Who is the poet of "Where the Mind is Without Fear"?
9. What is the title of Nissim Ezekiel’s first volume of poems?
10. Which Indian English poet is usually compared to Sylvia Plath?
11. Who was the first Indian to receive prestigious Hawthornden prize?
12. Who is the poet of “Rough Passage”?
13. Who is the poet of “Jejuri”?
14. Who is the poet of “Sea Breeze Bombay”?
15. When was A K ramanujan born?
16. Name a few poetic works translated by A K Ramanujan.
17. When was A K Ramanujan given Sahitya Academy award?

4.7 Selected poems of A.K. Ramanujan

1. The Striders

The Striders

And search

For certain thin __

Stemmed, bubble- eyed water bugs.

See them perch

On dry capillary legs

Weightless

On the ripple skin

Of a stream

Not only prophets

Walk in water. The bug sits

On a landslide of lights

And drowns eyeDeep

Into its tiny strip

Of sky.

No, not only prophets walk on water. This bug sits on a landslide of lights and drowns eye-deep

into its tiny strip of sky.

'Strider' is the New England name for the water insect in this poem.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

"The Striders" by A. K. Ramanujan is a brief yet evocative poem that invites readers to contemplate the delicate and fascinating nature of water bugs, referred to as "Striders" in New England. The poet observes these creatures with a keen eye, capturing their essence and drawing subtle parallels to human experiences.

The poem begins with a concise portrayal of the Striders, their search, and the focus on certain attributes, particularly their thin, stem-like bodies and bubble-eyed

appearance. The use of enigmatic underscores adds an air of mystery to the description, emphasizing the poet's attention to detail and the distinctive qualities of these water bugs.

Ramanujan introduces a captivating image of the Striders perching on "dry capillary legs" as they navigate the surface tension of the water. The word "weightless" suggests a sense of buoyancy and grace, highlighting the insect's ability to move effortlessly on the "ripple skin" of a stream. Through this vivid imagery, the poet not only captures the physical characteristics of the Striders but also conveys a sense of wonder at their remarkable abilities.

The poem takes an unexpected turn with the assertion that not only prophets walk on water. This statement introduces a subtle metaphor, suggesting that the seemingly mundane Striders possess a unique significance or insight. By likening the Striders to prophets, the poet elevates their presence, inviting readers to consider the depth and meaning inherent in these small water insects.

The imagery becomes even more intriguing as the poet describes the bug sitting on a "landslide of lights" and drowning "eye-deep into its tiny strip of sky." This vivid language creates a rich tapestry of sensations, where the Strider is immersed in a world of reflections and luminosity. The use of the word "drowns" suggests a profound engagement with the surroundings, emphasizing the insect's intimate connection with the elements.

The repetition of the closing lines, "No, not only prophets walk on water. This bug sits on a landslide of lights and drowns eye-deep into its tiny strip of sky," serves to reinforce the central message of the poem. The poet encourages readers to appreciate the beauty and significance of the seemingly ordinary, finding profound moments and revelations in the observation of nature.

In conclusion, A. K. Ramanujan's "The Striders" is a masterfully crafted poem that delves into the intricate world of water bugs, using rich imagery and metaphorical language to convey a deeper contemplation of their existence. The poem encourages readers to look beyond the surface and recognize the profound connections that can be found in the smallest and often overlooked aspects of the natural world.

2. Breaded Fish

Specially for me, she had some breaded fish;
even thrust a blunt-headed smelt into my mouth;
and looked hurt when I could neither sit nor eat,
as a hood of memory like a coil on a heath

opened in my eyes: a dark half-naked
length of woman, dead
on the beach in a yard of cloth,
dry, rolled by the ebb, breaded
by the grained indifference of sand. I headed
for the shore, my heart beating in my mouth.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

A. K. Ramanujan's poem "Breaded Fish" explores the complexity of memory and the emotional weight carried by past experiences. The poem begins with a personal anecdote, as the speaker recounts a moment when someone, possibly a caring figure, prepares breaded fish for them. However, the atmosphere changes abruptly as the speaker's mind is flooded with a haunting memory. The poem shifts to a vivid recollection of a disturbing image: a dead woman, partially clothed, lying on the beach, her body textured by the sand, resembling breaded fish. This memory disrupts the speaker's present experience, causing a visceral reaction.

Title and Metaphor:

The title, "Breaded Fish," serves as a metaphor that connects the act of preparing and consuming food with a traumatic memory. The poem uses the imagery of breaded fish to symbolize the woman's body on the beach, drawing a connection between the two seemingly disparate experiences.

Narrative Shift:

The poem begins with a scene of someone caring for the speaker by preparing a meal, creating a sense of intimacy and warmth. However, the narrative abruptly shifts when the speaker's recollection of a traumatic memory disrupts this moment.

The contrast between the mundane act of sharing a meal and the disturbing memory adds depth to the emotional impact of the poem.

Symbolism of Breaded Fish:

The breaded fish takes on a symbolic significance, representing not only the food being offered but also serving as a trigger for a haunting memory. The act of eating becomes a challenging experience for the speaker as the traumatic image resurfaces, highlighting the inextricable link between sensory experiences and memories.

Memory and Trauma:

The poem delves into the complexities of memory, portraying it as a force that can unexpectedly intrude upon the present. The vivid description of the dead woman on the beach suggests that the memory is not just a mental recollection but a visceral experience that impacts the speaker on a profound emotional level.

Imagery:

Ramanujan employs powerful and evocative imagery throughout the poem. The description of the dead woman as a "dark half-naked / length of woman" lying on the beach provides a stark and unsettling image. The use of the term "breaded" to describe the woman's body draws a parallel between the culinary experience and the traumatic memory, creating a sensory impact on the reader.

Emotional Impact:

The emotional resonance of the poem is heightened by the juxtaposition of the ordinary act of sharing a meal with the extraordinary and distressing memory. The speaker's inability to eat and the discomfort conveyed in "my heart beating in my mouth" underscore the emotional turmoil caused by the unexpected intrusion of the past into the present.

In conclusion, "Breaded Fish" is a poignant exploration of memory, trauma, and the intricate ways in which the past can disrupt the simplicity of daily life. The poem skillfully weaves together the ordinary and the extraordinary, inviting readers to reflect on the enduring impact of haunting memories on the human psyche.

3. Self-Portrait

I resemble everyone

but myself,

and sometimes see

in shop-windows,

despite the well-known laws

of optics, the portrait of a stranger,

date unknown,

often signed in a corner by my father.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

A. K. Ramanujan's poem "Self-Portrait" is a concise exploration of identity and self-perception. The speaker reflects on the paradoxical nature of seeing oneself in various contexts. The poem begins with the assertion that the speaker resembles everyone but himself. He describes a curious experience of occasionally glimpsing what appears to be a portrait of a stranger in shop-windows, a portrait often bearing the mysterious signature of his father.

The major theme of the poem is Identity and Resemblance. The opening line, "I resemble everyone but myself," encapsulates the central theme of the poem—identity. The speaker suggests a sense of disconnection from his own identity, emphasizing the challenges of self-recognition.

Shop-Window Reflections:

The poem introduces a unique metaphor involving shop-windows. Despite the laws of optics, which govern how reflections work, the speaker sees a self-portrait that resembles a stranger. This choice of imagery underscores the theme of distorted self-perception and the challenges of truly knowing oneself.

Unknown Date and Father's Signature:

The portrait seen by the speaker is described as having an unknown date and is often signed by his father in a corner. This adds an intriguing layer to the poem. The unknown date implies a lack of clarity regarding the origin of the self-portrait, while the father's signature introduces a paternal influence, raising questions about the impact of familial ties on shaping one's identity.

Paradox of Self-Perception:

The paradoxical nature of the speaker's self-perception is evident. Despite looking at what should be a reflection of himself, he sees a stranger. This conveys the

complexity of identity formation, suggesting that external influences and societal expectations may shape how one sees oneself.

Artistic Element:

The mention of a self-portrait implies an artistic perspective on identity. The idea of a portrait, traditionally a visual representation of a person, introduces an element of artistry and subjectivity in defining oneself. The fact that the portrait is seen in shop-windows adds a commercial and public dimension to this introspective exploration.

Reflection and Optics:

The reference to the "well-known laws of optics" highlights the scientific principles governing reflections. However, the speaker's experience challenges these laws, emphasizing the subjective and sometimes deceptive nature of self-reflection. This adds depth to the poem's exploration of identity and perception.

Father's Influence:

The father's signature in the corner of the portrait suggests the influence of family and heritage on shaping the speaker's sense of self. The act of signing implies authorship and ownership, indicating that aspects of the speaker's identity may be inherited or influenced by paternal connections.

Simplicity of Language:

Ramanujan employs simple and straightforward language to convey profound ideas. The brevity of the poem enhances its impact, allowing readers to grasp the complexity of identity and self-perception without the need for elaborate language.

In conclusion, "Self-Portrait" is a thought-provoking exploration of identity, self-perception, and the influence of external factors on shaping one's sense of self. Through its concise and accessible language, the poem invites readers to reflect on the multifaceted nature of identity and the challenges inherent in truly understanding oneself.

4. Anxiety

Not branchless as the fear tree,

it has naked roots and secret twigs.

Not geometric as the parabolas of hope,

it has loose ends with a knot at the top that's me.

Not wakeful in its white-snake glassy ways

like the eloping gaiety of waters,

it drowses, viscous and fibered as pitch.

Flames have only lungs.

Water is all eyes.

The earth has bone for muscle.

And the air is a flock of invisible pigeons.

But anxiety can find no metaphor to end it.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

The poem "Anxiety" delves into the nature of anxiety, using vivid and unconventional imagery to capture its essence. The speaker explores various comparisons to describe anxiety, emphasizing its complex and elusive qualities. The poem contrasts anxiety with other natural elements, highlighting its unique and challenging nature.

The poem opens with metaphors that illustrate the intricate nature of anxiety. Comparing it to the "fear tree" with "naked roots and secret twigs," the poet conveys the depth and complexity of anxiety. The fear tree becomes a symbol of anxiety, with roots that are exposed and twigs that remain hidden, suggesting the unpredictable and deeply rooted aspects of anxious feelings.

Geometric Imagery:

The poet contrasts anxiety with the "geometric parabolas of hope," emphasizing the lack of order or predictability in anxiety. While hope may follow defined curves and shapes, anxiety is portrayed as having "loose ends with a knot at the top." This imagery reflects the chaotic and unpredictable nature of anxious thoughts.

Sensory Descriptions:

The poet employs sensory descriptions to evoke the nature of anxiety. Instead of being "wakeful in its white-snake glassy ways," like the lively and transparent flow of water, anxiety is described as "drowsing, viscous and fibered as pitch." This conveys a sense of heaviness, stickiness, and a lack of fluidity associated with anxious feelings.

Metaphors for Elements:

The poem uses elemental metaphors to contrast anxiety with other natural elements. Flames are depicted as having lungs, water as having eyes, earth as having bone for muscle, and air as a flock of invisible pigeons. These metaphors emphasize the varied and tangible nature of elements in contrast to the intangible and elusive quality of anxiety.

Inability to Find Metaphor:

The concluding lines emphasize the unique challenge of finding a metaphor to encapsulate anxiety. While other elements have clear and tangible comparisons, anxiety remains elusive, defying a simple or clear representation. This reinforces the complexity and abstract nature of anxious feelings.

Use of Contrast:

The poem thrives on contrasts. The fear tree is contrasted with the geometric parabolas of hope, and the drowsy nature of anxiety is contrasted with the eloping gaiety of waters. These contrasts serve to highlight the distinct and often contradictory qualities of anxiety.

Poetic Devices:

The poem utilizes poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, and vivid imagery to create a rich tapestry of emotions. The use of unconventional comparisons adds depth to the exploration of anxiety, allowing readers to engage with the subject on both intellectual and emotional levels.

The poem employs powerful metaphors and vivid imagery to portray the multifaceted and elusive nature of anxiety. Through contrasts and sensory descriptions, the poet captures the complexity of anxious feelings, ultimately emphasizing the challenge of finding a metaphor that adequately encapsulates this intricate emotional state.

5. LOVE POEM FOR A WIFE – 2

After a night of rage that lasted days

quarrels in a forest, waterfalls,

exchanges, marriage,

exploration of bays and places we had never known

We would never know
my wife's always changing syriac face,
chosen of all faces
a pouting difficult child's changing in the chameleon emerald wilderness
of Kerala small cousin to tall
mythic men, rubber plant and
peppervine frocks with print patterns
copied locally from the dotted butterfly,
grandmother wearing white day and night in a village
full of the colour schemes of kraits and gartersnakes
adolescent in Aden among stabbing Arabs,
betrayed and whipped yet happy among ships in
harbour and the evacuees the borrowed earth
under the borrowed trees,
taught dry and wet hot and cold by the monsoon then,
by the siroccos now on copper dustcones,
the crater townships in the volcanoes of Aden
I dreamed one day that face
my own yet hers with my own nowhere to be found lost,
cut, loose like my dragnet past
I woke up and groped
turned on the realism of the ceiling light
found half a mirror
in the mountain cabin fallen behind a dresser
to look at my face now and the face of her sleep,
still asleep and very syriac on the bed
behind: happy for once at such loss of face,

whole in the ambivalence of being half-woman half-man

contained in a common body,

androgynous as a god

balancing stillness in the middle of a duel to make it dance soon to be myself,

a man unhappy in the morning to be himself again,

the past still there a drying net on the mountain

in the morning, in the waking my wife's face still fast asleep

blessed as by butterfly, snake, shiprope

and grandmother's other children by my love's only insatiable envy

Meaning and explanation of the poem:

The present poem an is exploration of the poet's complex feelings towards his wife, encapsulating the evolution of their relationship over time. The poem is a blend of vivid imagery, memories, and introspection, revealing the nuances of love, marriage, and the passage of time.

The poem begins with a reflection on a tumultuous night of rage and quarrels, extending into a metaphorical forest of emotions. From this chaotic beginning, the narrative unfolds into a journey that encompasses marriage, exploration, and the discovery of both familiar and unknown aspects of the wife's identity. The wife's face is described as a changing, "syriac" visage—a reference to the Syriac language, which is characterized by historical and linguistic diversity.

The poet emphasizes the wife's ever-changing nature, drawing connections to the vibrant, chameleon-like wilderness of Kerala. The vivid imagery includes the small cousin to tall mythic men, rubber plants, peppervines, and print patterns inspired by dotted butterflies. The poet explores the wife's identity against the backdrop of familial and cultural influences, weaving in references to the landscape, creatures, and the clothing of Kerala.

As the poem unfolds, the narrative transitions to the poet's dreamscape, where he envisions a fusion of his own face and that of his wife. This dream represents a surreal, transcendent moment where the boundaries between self and other blur. The

poet's encounter with a mirror in a mountain cabin adds a layer of introspection, as he grapples with the idea of self-identity and the intertwined nature of their beings.

The poem gracefully moves between different phases of life, capturing the wife's past experiences in Aden, marked by betrayals and happiness amidst the challenges of life. The imagery of ships, the borrowed earth, and the borrowed trees creates a vivid backdrop for the wife's adolescent years.

Towards the end of the poem, the poet reflects on the concept of androgyny, portraying the wife as both half-woman and half-man, contained within a common body. This androgynous image is depicted as a god balancing stillness in the middle of a duel, suggesting a harmonious union of opposing forces.

The poem concludes with the poet expressing a mix of emotions. He acknowledges the past, represented by a drying net on the mountain, and contemplates the complexities of being himself—both happy and unhappy. The wife's face, still fast asleep, is described as blessed by symbols such as a butterfly, snake, shiprope, and grandmother's other children. The poem ends with a mention of the wife's "insatiable envy," hinting at the ongoing dynamics of their relationship.

Nature Imagery:

Ramanujan employs rich nature imagery throughout the poem. The Kerala wilderness, with its rubber plants, peppervines, and dotted butterflies, serves as a backdrop for exploring the complexities of the wife's identity. The poet skillfully weaves the natural elements into the narrative, creating a vibrant and textured setting.

Cultural References:

The poem is imbued with cultural references, particularly related to the Kerala landscape and the experiences in Aden. These references contribute to the multifaceted portrayal of the wife, connecting her identity to the cultural and familial influences that have shaped her.

Emotional Complexity:

The poem captures the emotional complexity inherent in long-term relationships. The night of rage and quarrels symbolizes the challenges and conflicts that arise, while the exploration of bays and places represents shared experiences. The poet's mixed emotions in the closing lines reflect the nuanced nature of love, with moments of happiness and introspection.

Symbolism:

The poem is rich in symbolic elements, including the butterfly, snake, shiprope, and grandmother's other children. These symbols contribute to the layers of meaning, representing various facets of the wife's identity and the blessings bestowed upon her.

The poem concludes with an enigmatic reference to the wife's "insatiable envy," leaving room for interpretation. This phrase adds a sense of mystery to the closing lines, inviting readers to contemplate the ongoing dynamics within the relationship.

"A Love Poem for a Wife – 2" is a tapestry of images, emotions, and reflections that encapsulate the intricacies of a long-term relationship. The poet skillfully navigates between vivid landscapes, dreams, and the complexities of identity, offering readers a nuanced exploration of love, marriage, and the passage of time.

6. The Hindoo: the Only Risk

Just to keep the heart's simple given beat
through a neighbour's striptease or a friend's suicide.
To keep one's hand away from the kitchen knife
through that returning weekly need
to maim oneself or carve up wife
and child. Always and everywhere, to eat
three square meals at regular hours;
suppress that itch to take a peek at the dead street-dog
before the scavengers come.
Not to be caught dead at sea,
battle, riot, adultery or hate
nor between the rollers of a giant lathe.
Yes, to keep it cool when strangers' children hiss
as if they knew what none could know nor guess.
At the bottom of all this bottomless
enterprise to keep simple the heart's given beat,

the only risk is heartlessness.

till I see blood on my thumb,

when I black out,

a child again in a glass booth elevator,

plummeting to the earth five floors a second,

taking my sky, turning cloud, and San Francisco down to the ground,

where, sick to my stomach, I wake

wide open, hugging the white toilet bowl, my cool porcelain sister.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In the present poem the speaker contemplates the challenges of maintaining a simple and steady life amidst the complexities of the world. The poem delves into the idea of preserving the heart's basic rhythm in the face of various temptations, dangers, and disturbing thoughts. The speaker reflects on the struggles to navigate life without succumbing to heartlessness.

The poem begins with the notion of safeguarding the heart's simple beat, emphasizing the importance of maintaining emotional stability. The speaker lists various situations that might disturb this equilibrium, including witnessing a neighbor's striptease or a friend's suicide. The mention of a kitchen knife suggests the potential for self-harm or harm to others during moments of psychological distress.

The speaker emphasizes the need to resist destructive urges, highlighting the recurring temptation to engage in harmful behavior on a weekly basis. The desire to maim oneself or harm one's family is presented as a constant challenge that must be confronted. Amidst these struggles, the poem advocates for the mundane yet crucial act of regular, timely meals.

The speaker addresses the temptation to indulge in morbid curiosity, cautioning against looking at a dead street dog before scavengers arrive. The poem urges a measured and composed response to life's challenges, discouraging participation in risky endeavors such as sea voyages, battles, riots, adultery, and hatred. The mention of a giant lathe adds a metaphorical layer, cautioning against getting caught in the destructive machinery of life.

Despite the desire to maintain composure in the face of adversity, the poem acknowledges the difficulty of dealing with strangers' hurtful comments, particularly when directed at one's own children. The speaker urges the reader to remain calm and not be provoked, emphasizing the challenge of preserving inner peace in the face of external hostility.

The poem concludes with a powerful realization: the only true risk in this endeavor to maintain a simple and steady heartbeat is the risk of becoming heartless. This suggests that the speaker recognizes the delicate balance between emotional resilience and emotional detachment. The poem ends with a vivid image of the speaker experiencing a traumatic event, symbolized by seeing blood on the thumb, blacking out, and reliving a childhood memory of plummeting in an elevator. The reference to waking beside a toilet bowl conveys a sense of physical and emotional distress.

The central theme of the poem revolves around the speaker's struggle to maintain emotional stability amidst various challenges and temptations. The heart's simple beat becomes a metaphor for emotional balance, and the poem explores the difficulties of preserving this balance in the face of life's complexities.

Symbolism and Metaphor:

The poem utilizes symbolism and metaphor to convey its themes. The kitchen knife represents the potential for harm, while the dead street dog and scavengers symbolize morbid curiosity. The giant lathe serves as a metaphor for the dangerous machinery of life, warning against getting caught in its destructive processes.

Mundane and Crucial Acts:

The poem emphasizes the significance of seemingly mundane yet crucial acts, such as eating regular meals and resisting the urge to indulge in harmful behaviors. These acts serve as anchors for maintaining a stable and simple life.

The Only Risk:

The conclusion of the poem introduces the idea that the only true risk in the pursuit of a simple and steady heartbeat is the risk of becoming heartless. This suggests a nuanced understanding of emotional balance, acknowledging that detachment or indifference could be a perilous outcome.

Vivid Imagery:

Ramanujan employs vivid and visceral imagery to convey the emotional and physical experiences of the speaker. The description of plummeting in an elevator and waking beside a toilet bowl creates a sensory and emotional impact, allowing readers to empathize with the speaker's distress.

It is a contemplative poem that delves into the challenges of maintaining emotional equilibrium in the face of life's complexities. Through its use of metaphor, symbolism, and vivid imagery, the poem explores the delicate balance between emotional resilience and the risk of becoming heartless in the pursuit of a simple and steady heartbeat.

7. On the Death of a Poem

Images consult
one
another,
a conscience-
stricken
jury,
and come
slowly
to a sentence.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem the process of poetic creation is presented in linguistic space. The poet says that much of the truth that he experiences personally is lost in the process of its linguistic delineation. At the core of the poetic process is the intimate conclave of consulting images. The poem is about a poet's emotions related to the poem that has failed to gain recognition. The title of the poem deals with the failure or death of a poem. The poem fails to gather fame and thus is said to be 'dead'. The readers can realize the writer's despair.

The images in the poem are consulting one another. the poet compares images to a jury consulting each other. They are called a 'conscious-stricken jury' that gives the verdict of whether they would fit together in a sentence. In the end ,

they give a verdict of coming together to a sentence like judges coming together to a decision. For Ramanujan, The images in a poem are the living, breathing emotions.

8. Snakes and Ladders

Losing every time I win,
Climbing ladders,
falling to the bottom with snakes,
I make scenes:

in my anger, I smash all transparent things,
crystal, glass panes, one-way mirrors, and my glasses,
blinding myself, I hit my head on white walls,
shut myself up in the bathroom,
toying with razors,

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In "Snakes and Ladders," the speaker reflects on the cyclical nature of life, where every victory is accompanied by a subsequent loss. The poem uses the metaphor of the popular board game "Snakes and Ladders" to illustrate the ups and downs in the speaker's experiences. The speaker describes scenes of frustration and anger, highlighting the self-destructive tendencies that emerge in response to life's challenges.

The poem employs the metaphor of the board game "Snakes and Ladders" to convey the unpredictable and cyclical nature of life. The game's ladders symbolize success and progress, while the snakes represent setbacks and challenges. The speaker emphasizes the irony of losing even after winning, creating a sense of inevitability and frustration.

Cyclical Patterns:

The repetition of climbing ladders and falling with snakes suggests a recurring pattern in the speaker's life. This mirrors the unpredictability and uncertainty that one often faces, reinforcing the idea that life is a continuous cycle of ups and downs.

Emotional Turmoil:

The poem delves into the speaker's emotional turmoil, expressing anger and frustration. The act of smashing transparent things, including glass panes and mirrors, reflects a desire to break through illusions or barriers. The speaker's use of razors and confinement in the bathroom indicates a deeper struggle with self-harm and isolation as responses to emotional distress.

The speaker's actions of blinding oneself and hitting one's head on white walls symbolize a sense of self-destructiveness. These acts may suggest a desire to escape or numb the emotional pain, but they also highlight the harmful consequences of such actions. The white walls can be interpreted as symbols of confinement, purity, or a blank canvas on which the speaker projects emotions. Hitting one's head against these walls may represent a futile attempt to break free from emotional constraints or to find clarity.

Isolation and Self-Reflection:

The speaker's decision to shut oneself up in the bathroom and toy with razors underscores a theme of isolation and introspection. The bathroom, often a private space, becomes a metaphorical refuge where the speaker grapples with personal challenges and confronts internal struggles.

Visual Imagery:

Ramanujan uses vivid visual imagery to depict the scenes of anger and despair. The smashing of transparent things, the act of blinding oneself, and the confinement in the bathroom contribute to a poignant portrayal of emotional turbulence and inner conflict.

Desperation and Escapism:

The poem conveys a sense of desperation in the speaker's actions. The desire to escape the challenges of life is evident in the destructive behaviors described. However, these acts of escapism also lead to self-inflicted harm, emphasizing the destructive consequences of such coping mechanisms.

The poem is a poignant exploration of life's unpredictable nature and the emotional struggles that accompany it. Through the metaphor of the game and the vivid scenes of frustration and self-destruction, the poem invites readers to reflect on the cyclical patterns of life and the challenges of navigating its ups and downs.

9. Chicago Zen

i

Now tidy your house,
dust especially your living room
and do not forget to name
all your children.

ii

Watch your step. Sight may strike you
blind in unexpected places.
The traffic light turns orange
on 57th and Dorchester, and you stumble,
you fall into a vision of forest fires,
enter a frothing Himalayan river,
rapid, silent.
On the 14th floor,
Lake Michigan crawls and crawls
in the window. Your thumbnail
cracks a lobster louse on the windowpane
from your daughter's hair
and you drown, eyes open,
towards the Indies, the antipodes.
And you, always so perfectly sane.

iii

Now you know what you always knew:
the country cannot be reached

by jet. Nor by boat on jungle river,

hashish behind the Monkey-temple,
nor moonshot to the cratered Sea
of Tranquillity, slim circus girls
on a tightrope between tree and tree
with white parasols, or the one
and only blue guitar.
Nor by any
other means of transport,
migrating with a clean valid passport,
no, not even by transmigrating
without any passport at all,
but only by answering ordinary
black telephones, questions
walls and small children ask,
and answering all calls of nature.

iv

Watch your step, watch it, I say,
especially at the first high
threshold,
and the sudden low
one near the end
of the flight
of stairs,
and watch
for the last
step that's never there.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

"Chicago Zen" is a poem that offers a series of contemplative instructions or reflections, combining elements of everyday life with deeper philosophical insights. The poem is divided into four parts, each presenting different aspects of awareness and mindfulness.

In the first part, the speaker advises the reader to tidy their house, specifically focusing on the living room, and emphasizes the importance of naming one's children. This suggests an attention to order and the acknowledgment of familial connections.

The second part introduces a cautionary tone, urging the reader to "watch your step." The speaker describes a moment of stumbling at a traffic light in Chicago, which triggers a cascade of visions, from forest fires and a Himalayan river to the view of Lake Michigan from a high floor. The speaker emphasizes the unexpected nature of sight and the potential for profound experiences in ordinary moments.

The third part delves into the realization that profound experiences cannot be reached through conventional means, such as travel by jet, boat, or even by exotic experiences like hashish or moonshots. Instead, the poem suggests that a deeper understanding is attained through simple, everyday activities like answering phones and responding to the questions of walls and children.

The final part reiterates the warning to "watch your step," emphasizing the need for caution at various thresholds and steps, both high and low. The mention of the last step that's "never there" adds a touch of existential uncertainty, reinforcing the idea that life is full of unexpected challenges.

The poem seamlessly blends the ordinary aspects of life, such as tidying the house and naming children, with deeper philosophical reflections on perception, travel, and existential awareness. This blending creates a tapestry that encourages readers to find meaning in both the mundane and the profound.

Cautionary Themes:

The repeated caution to "watch your step" serves as a metaphor for being mindful and attentive in life. The unexpected visions and experiences described after stumbling at a traffic light suggest that moments of surprise and insight can emerge when one is alert to their surroundings.

Juxtaposition of Locations:

The poem shifts between locations, from the domestic setting of tidying a house to the urban landscape of Chicago and the exotic imagery of Himalayan rivers and the Sea of Tranquility. This juxtaposition suggests that profound experiences can be found in both familiar and unfamiliar places.

Imagery:

Ramanujan employs vivid sensory imagery to evoke the reader's imagination. The descriptions of forest fires, a frothing Himalayan river, and the view of Lake Michigan from a high floor create a sensory-rich experience, engaging the reader's senses and emotions.

Philosophical Realizations:

The poem delves into philosophical realizations, emphasizing that profound insights cannot be obtained through conventional or exotic means but rather through attentiveness to ordinary aspects of life, including answering phones and responding to questions.

Existential Uncertainty:

The mention of the last step that's "never there" introduces an existential theme, suggesting the uncertainty and unpredictability of life. This adds a contemplative layer to the poem, inviting readers to reflect on the challenges and uncertainties inherent in the human experience.

Guidance on Awareness:

Throughout the poem, there is a sense of guiding the reader toward heightened awareness and mindfulness. The instructions to tidy the house, watch one's step, and be attentive to ordinary activities emphasize the importance of being present in the moment.

The poem is a reflective and instructive poem that invites readers to find meaning and insight in the ordinary and unexpected moments of life. The blend of everyday actions with philosophical contemplation creates a nuanced exploration of mindfulness, caution, and the awareness needed to navigate life's complexities.

4.8 Check your progress 2.

Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. What does the strider in the poem ‘Strider’ refer to?
2. What is the water bug compared to?
3. Identify the figure of speech used in the following line: ‘as a hood of memory like a coil on a heath’
4. What does the speaker do when he remembers the dead woman after looking at breaded fish?
5. What does the speaker of Self-Portrait say about his resemblance?
6. What does the speaker of self-portrait see in the shop-windows?
7. Which figure of speech is used prominently in the poem ‘Anxiety’?
8. What is the only risk According to the speaker in the poem ‘Hindoo: The only risk’?
9. What does the kitchen knife symbolize in the poem ‘Hindoo: The only risk’?
10. What does heart’s simple beat symbolize in the poem ‘Hindoo: The only risk’?
11. What are images compared to in the poem ‘On the death of a poem’?
12. What do ladders symbolize in the poem ‘Snakes and Ladders’?
13. What do the snakes represent in the poem ‘Snakes and Ladders’?

4.9 Dilip Purushottam Chitre : Life and works

Dilip Chitre (1938-2009) was a prominent Indian poet, writer, painter, and filmmaker, known for his contributions to Marathi and English literature. Born on August 17, 1938, in Baroda (now Vadodara), Gujarat, Chitre spent his formative years in the culturally rich environment of Maharashtra.

Chitre made a significant impact on Marathi literature and later ventured into the English literary scene. He began writing poetry at a young age and published his first collection, "Kavita," in Marathi in 1960. His poetry often reflected a blend of traditional Indian themes with modern sensibilities, touching upon social issues, existential questions, and the human condition.

In the realm of Marathi literature, Chitre's notable works include "Arun Kolatkar and His Times," a critical biography of the poet Arun Kolatkar, showcasing his deep engagement with literary criticism.

Apart from poetry, Dilip Chitre was a versatile artist. He was an accomplished painter and filmmaker, extending his creativity beyond the written word. His paintings, marked by bold strokes and vibrant colors, conveyed a visual narrative that complemented his poetic expressions.

Chitre later gained recognition in the English literary world with collections such as "Traveling In A Cage" (1980) and "The Purse: Poems" (2004). His English poetry, like his Marathi works, displayed a unique voice, blending cultural influences and contemporary perspectives.

Filmmaking and Translations:

Chitre's involvement in the arts extended to filmmaking. He directed and wrote several Marathi films, showcasing his storytelling prowess on the cinematic canvas. His interest in translation led him to bring the works of Marathi poets like Tukaram and Namdeo Dhasal to the English-speaking audience, contributing to the cross-cultural exchange of literary ideas. He translated popular Abhangas of Saint Tukaram in to English under the title ‘Says Tuka’.

Dilip Chitre's legacy is characterized by his multifaceted contributions to literature, art, and cinema. His impact on Marathi literature and his efforts to bridge the gap between Indian languages and English marked him as a significant figure in the cultural landscape of India. His poems continue to resonate with readers, addressing universal themes that transcend linguistic boundaries.

Notable Works of Dilip Chitre:

- *Kavita* (1960) - Marathi poetry collection.
- *Arun Kolatkar and His Times* (1999) - Critical biography.
- *Travelling In A Cage* (1980) - English poetry collection.
- *The Purse: Poems* (2004) - English poetry collection.
- *Says Tuka:* Translation of Tukaram’s works

Dilip Chitre's life and works reflect a deep commitment to artistic expression, cultural exploration, and a keen awareness of the complexities of the human

experience. His contributions have left an indelible mark on Indian literature and continue to inspire generations of readers and aspiring artists.

4.10 Selected Poems of Dilip Chitre

1. The Light of Birds Breaks the Lunatic's Sleep

The light of birds breaks the lunatic's sleep

He wakes up moving out of a million dreams

His burning electric wires begin to glow

The lunatic's fingers extend like wires

Stretched out in the silence:

The lunatic's veins widen:

he feels Darkness roaring in place of blood:

That darkness is half a sleep:

a wide Awareness of a kind:

even total sleep Is a blaze in his brain:

a flaming awareness

The lunatic watches a sound in the Sun:

And his eyes paraphrase the Sun:

Numberless sleeps and lightning’s awaken

A vast lullaby in his flesh and blood

The lunatic sees a bird ... flying ... as his

eyelids flutter And his eyes, drowning, begin to chirp.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

This poem explores the awakening of a lunatic through the presence of light and the sounds of birds. The poem suggests that the light of birds disrupts the lunatic's slumber, causing him to emerge from a multitude of dreams. The poet substitutes the sense of sound by sense of light. The sound of bird chirping is perceived as light by the lunatic. The lunatic's perception of reality is vividly described through metaphors of electric wires, burning sensations, and widened veins.

As the lunatic wakes, he experiences a profound awareness that is likened to darkness flowing in place of blood. This darkness is described as a half-sleep, a state of wide consciousness. Even total sleep is portrayed as a fiery activity within his brain, suggesting a heightened awareness even in moments of rest.

The poem vividly describes the lunatic's sensory experiences. He observes a sound in the Sun and his eyes interpret and reflect the Sun. The interplay of various elements, such as sleeps and lightning, creates a vast lullaby within the lunatic's flesh and blood. The poem concludes with the lunatic witnessing a bird in flight, and as his eyelids flutter, his eyes, seemingly overcome with emotion, start to chirp.

Dilip Chitre's poem delves into the inner world of a lunatic, using vivid and metaphorical language to depict the intensity of his sensory experiences. The use of electric wires, burning sensations, and widened veins serves as a powerful metaphor for the lunatic's heightened awareness and the transformative effect of the birds' light on his state of mind.

The poem explores the boundary between sleep and wakefulness, suggesting that even in moments of rest, the lunatic is engulfed in a fiery and vibrant consciousness. The merging of various elements, such as darkness, sleep, and awareness, creates a complex and nuanced portrayal of the lunatic's psyche.

The imagery of the lunatic watching a sound in the Sun and his eyes paraphrasing the Sun adds a surreal quality to the poem, emphasizing the transformative impact of nature on his perception. The final image of the lunatic witnessing a bird in flight, with his eyes seemingly joining in the act by chirping, further underscores the theme of connection with the natural world and the transcendent power of sensory experiences.

Overall, the poem combines rich imagery with metaphorical language to explore the inner landscape of the lunatic, inviting readers to contemplate the interplay between consciousness, nature, and the transformative power of sensory stimuli.

2. **I came in the middle of my life to a**

I came in the middle of my life to a Furnished apartment.

By now my pubic hair Was already greying.

And I could see the dirty Old man under my own skin.

It was not the Absolute end but the beginning of it.

The air Smelt of dead rats and I was reaching the age of forty
In the manner one reaches an empty shelf.

Where Are all of you,
my dear departed bald ones ? Angels wearing wigs,
gods cleaning dentures?
I began to sit at the typewriter
hurriedly hitting Nails in the logs of silence.
The ashtrays were full.
The tea grew cold before I remembered to drink it.

Words. More and more words.
Clear as a city street At midday.
I will leave behind a more garbled version Of the same world.
The richer for my own noise. And go.
Often, in the middle of a poem,
I would kill Bugs and roaches with a powerful spray.
A poem hardly Upsets the balance of nature.
O my effluents
Polluting the minds of others.
The cancer of a lyric Spreads through nameless lungs.
I will teach you Other ways of growing old, other ways of dying.

Through tunnels of light
we reach out towards the darkness
From which we derive our common ink.
In the middle of my life

I have come to a white page in which I must live.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem Dilip Chitre reflects on the middle years of his life, finding himself in a furnished apartment. He describes the physical signs of aging, such as greying pubic hair, and recognizes the presence of an older version of himself beneath his skin. The poem captures the sense of reaching a turning point, not the absolute end, but the beginning of a new phase.

As Chitre contemplates his age, he questions the whereabouts of those who have passed away, humorously imagining angels wearing wigs and gods cleaning dentures. The speaker expresses a sense of loneliness and emptiness, feeling as if he's reaching the age of forty like one reaches an empty shelf.

Amid the atmosphere of the apartment, filled with the smell of dead rats, the speaker turns to the act of writing. The typewriter becomes a tool to break the silence, and the speaker is preoccupied with the abundance of words. The speaker reflects on the inevitability of leaving behind a more confusing version of the world, enriched by the noise of his own existence.

The poem touches on themes of mortality, the passing of time, and the artist's role in shaping the world through words. The speaker acknowledges the mundane aspects of life, from full ashtrays to neglected tea, emphasizing the ordinary details that often go unnoticed.

As the poem progresses, there is a self-awareness about the impact of the speaker's words on others. The metaphor of killing bugs and roaches with a powerful spray during the middle of a poem suggests a simultaneous acknowledgment of life's struggles and a poetic cleansing. The speaker becomes conscious of the potential pollution of minds with his own thoughts and the spreading impact of his words.

In the final stanzas, Chitre introduces a metaphor of tunnels of light reaching towards darkness, symbolizing the human journey toward understanding and knowledge. The white page becomes a metaphor for a new phase in life, where the speaker must continue living and writing, contributing to the collective human experience.

Dilip Chitre's poem is a contemplative exploration of the middle years of life, aging, and the artist's role in shaping the world. The language is straightforward, yet

rich in metaphor and imagery. The poem captures the ordinary and the profound, blending humor with introspection.

The speaker's reflections on aging and the physical changes in his body serve as a starting point for deeper contemplation on life's meaning and purpose. The apartment becomes a symbolic space, reflective of the speaker's internal state, filled with the smell of dead rats and an awareness of mortality.

The act of writing takes on significance as the speaker grapples with the passage of time. The abundance of words and the acknowledgment of leaving behind a more confusing version of the world suggest a complex relationship between language and reality.

The speaker's awareness of the impact of words on others adds a layer of responsibility to the act of writing. The metaphor of killing bugs and roaches with a powerful spray during the middle of a poem suggests a simultaneous acknowledgment of life's struggles and a poetic cleansing, perhaps even a cathartic release.

The metaphor of tunnels of light reaching towards darkness introduces a broader existential theme, emphasizing the human quest for understanding and knowledge. The white page becomes a powerful metaphor for a blank canvas in the middle of life, where the speaker must continue to live and write, contributing to the ongoing narrative of human existence.

Chitre's poem combines self-reflection, humor, and existential contemplation, inviting readers to ponder the complexities of life, aging, and the role of the artist in shaping the world through words.

3. The door I was afraid to open

The door I was afraid to open Was autumn
One luminous month of remembering Nothing
The dark smell of rotting leaves in her voice
While the sensuous shadows of trees burned in the river
I became an insect of solitude in the grass
Sitting at the very edge of the season

And in the yellow darkness of the bar

I inhaled another country's noise and perishable warmth
Looked in astonishment at her lips
Finely injured by a smile
And tried to guess the bitter taste of gin and tonic
As the rim of her glass shone directly in my eyes

Later we staggered home and undressed
Before I turned the light off I saw her skinny shoulders
What kind of wind was making love to leafless trees Outside
the door I was always afraid to open

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem, the speaker reflects on a past experience tied to the season of autumn. The door that symbolizes this experience is characterized by the memories associated with one luminous month of remembering. The speaker is apprehensive about opening this door, which is metaphorically linked to the autumn season.

The poem describes the sensory elements of autumn, including the dark smell of rotting leaves in someone's voice. The setting is richly depicted with sensuous shadows of trees burning in the river, creating a vivid atmosphere. The speaker becomes an "insect of solitude" in the grass, situated at the edge of the season, suggesting a feeling of isolation or detachment.

In the yellow darkness of a bar, the speaker inhales the noise and warmth of another country, possibly indicating a sense of displacement or unfamiliarity. The speaker observes someone's lips, finely injured by a smile, and contemplates the taste of gin and tonic, with the rim of a glass shining directly in their eyes.

Later, as the speaker and the other person stagger home and undress, a moment of vulnerability is revealed. The speaker notices the other person's skinny shoulders, and there's a poignant reference to a kind of wind making love to leafless trees outside the door that the speaker was always afraid to open.

Dilip Chitre's poem explores themes of memory, apprehension, and the sensory experience tied to a specific time and season. The door becomes a symbolic threshold representing an experience that the speaker is hesitant to revisit. The choice of

autumn as the metaphorical door suggests a season of change and transition, mirroring the emotional landscape of the speaker.

The vivid imagery of the rotting leaves, sensuous shadows, and the insect of solitude conveys a melancholic and reflective tone. The speaker's positioning at the edge of the season implies a sense of being on the periphery, perhaps emotionally or psychologically detached.

The bar scene introduces elements of displacement and the unfamiliar, as the speaker absorbs the noise and warmth of another country. The observation of someone's lips and the contemplation of the taste of gin and tonic add a personal and intimate touch to the narrative.

The final stanza reveals a moment of intimacy and vulnerability as the speaker and the other person undress. The description of skinny shoulders and the reference to a wind making love to leafless trees suggest a blend of physical and natural imagery, creating a poignant and evocative atmosphere.

Overall, Chitre's poem skillfully combines sensory details, metaphorical language, and emotional nuance to explore the complexities of memory, apprehension, and intimacy tied to a specific moment in time.

4. All I hear is the fraying of the wind

All I hear is the fraying of the wind among splayed tres
The ailing voice of the sea in my mind's own distance
And her breasts shivering in the grey rain of my fingers
The skin has no memory and the memory has no skin
How can I claim to have known the wetness of her mouth

A dog howled while we made love
And the window-pane was White as Winter
Now that I have switched off lights it is only a sheet
The smell of roasted meat still lingers in the room
And she is a charp grain of salt to my unforgetting tongue

Tomorrow the hair of my poem will suddenly turn grey
The wind will have fallen when i enter

The sad space of the bathroom with its questioning mirrors

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem the speaker reflects on an intimate encounter with a woman. The poem is characterized by a sense of longing and the passage of time. The speaker describes the sounds of the wind, the distant voice of the sea, and the tactile sensations of the woman's breasts in the rain. There is an emphasis on the transient nature of memory and physical experiences.

The speaker acknowledges the limitations of memory and the ephemeral nature of physical sensations, stating that "the skin has no memory, and the memory has no skin." The poem questions the speaker's claim to truly knowing the wetness of the woman's mouth, suggesting the elusiveness of intimate understanding.

The presence of a howling dog during the act of lovemaking and the description of a white window-pane as winter evoke a sense of starkness and a juxtaposition of elements. The speaker, having switched off the lights, now sees only a sheet, and the lingering smell of roasted meat in the room creates a sensory atmosphere.

The woman is described as a sharp grain of salt to the speaker's "unforgetting tongue," indicating a lasting and vivid memory. However, the poem concludes with the anticipation of change. The speaker foresees the greying of the poem's metaphorical hair and the falling of the wind as they enter a sad space—the bathroom—with its questioning mirrors.

Dilip Chitre's poem explores themes of transience, memory, and the complex nature of intimate experiences. The imagery of wind, sea, rain, and tactile sensations creates a rich sensory landscape. The speaker grapples with the impermanence of physical encounters, emphasizing the limitations of memory and the challenges of truly knowing another person.

The howling dog and the white window-pane contribute to the poem's atmospheric and symbolic elements. The act of switching off lights transforms the scene into a simple sheet, suggesting a shift from the immediacy of the moment to a more abstract and contemplative space.

The lingering smell of roasted meat adds a layer of sensory detail to the aftermath of the encounter. The woman, described as a sharp grain of salt to the speaker's "unforgetting tongue," implies a lasting impact, but the poem also acknowledges the inevitability of change and aging.

The anticipation of the poem's hair turning grey and the wind falling as the speaker enters the bathroom with questioning mirrors suggests a reflective and perhaps introspective mood. The poem captures a moment in time while acknowledging the ongoing nature of personal and poetic evolution.

Overall, Chitre's poem is a contemplative exploration of intimacy, memory, and the shifting dynamics of human experience. The vivid imagery and sensory details contribute to a poignant reflection on the fleeting nature of moments and the enduring traces they leave behind.

5. Of Garlic and Such

praise the garlic for its tight
integration of cloves and its white
concealment of unbearable astringence.

praise the onion for keeping
its eye-opening secret
under so many identical skins.

praise woman for her genderless
passion hidden in a familiar body
the rippling enigma of her inner form.

then damn yourself
lord of nothing
sheathe your murderous sword.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem the speaker offers praises for garlic, onion, and woman, each representing different aspects of concealment, mystery, and complexity. The poem explores the hidden qualities of these entities and concludes with a call for self-reflection and a rejection of violence.

The speaker begins by praising garlic for its tight integration of cloves and its white concealment of an unbearable astringency. This suggests an appreciation for the way garlic manages to hold its pungent essence within a compact structure. The praise emphasizes the positive aspects of concealment and integration.

The speaker then praises the onion for keeping its eye-opening secret beneath many identical skins. Here, the onion is celebrated for its ability to hide its inner core, suggesting a layering of identity or hidden truths beneath the surface.

Woman is praised next, described as having a genderless passion hidden in a familiar body, presenting the idea of a complex and mysterious inner self within the physical form of a woman. The rippling enigma of her inner form highlights the depth and intrigue found within her.

The poem concludes with a directive to the reader: damn yourself, lord of nothing, sheathe your murderous sword. This closing stanza serves as a call to self-awareness and a rejection of violence. The use of "lord of nothing" suggests a recognition of one's own limitations or lack of control. The metaphor of sheathing a murderous sword urges the reader to put an end to destructive tendencies or harmful actions.

The poem celebrates the concealed qualities of garlic, onion, and woman, using these elements as metaphors to explore themes of hidden complexity, mystery, and the beauty found beneath surfaces. The praise for garlic's tight integration and the white concealment of its astringency emphasizes the positive aspects of containment and structure.

The onion's ability to keep its "eye-opening secret" beneath many skins is portrayed as a skilful means of hiding inner truths. This metaphor suggests a layered identity or hidden aspects that contribute to the onion's complexity.

The praise for woman highlights the speaker's admiration for the genderless passion hidden within a familiar body, emphasizing the deep and mysterious nature of a woman's inner self. The term "rippling enigma" suggests a complexity that extends beyond a simple understanding.

The concluding lines take a turn, urging self-reflection and a rejection of violence. The phrase "damn yourself, lord of nothing" suggests acknowledging one's own limitations or shortcomings. The call to "sheathe your murderous sword"

encourages the reader to put an end to destructive tendencies, possibly implying a rejection of harmful actions or attitudes.

Overall, the poem combines admiration for the concealed qualities of garlic, onion, and woman with a moral directive, encouraging the reader to recognize their own faults and move away from destructive behaviors. The use of natural elements as metaphors provides a rich and layered exploration of the complexities found within everyday things and individuals.

6. Pushing a cart

Pushing a cart through the brilliant
Interior of an American supermarket
It occurs to me that my private but hired refrigerator
Cannot contain all the hunger of India
What meats can I store in my mind
What fruits and cheeses can I hope to make permanent
These fat and insomniac mothers pushing their
Infants and groceries over these wide floors
Say nothing to a man temporarily exiled
Into affluence and freedom
Silently and not without envy
I warn the sexy undergraduate next to me
Watch your cholesterol, honey,
Who are you fattening yourself for, anyway?

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem the speaker reflects on the experience of navigating the aisles of an American supermarket. The speaker, an immigrant from India, contemplates the abundance and choices available in the store, contrasting it with the limitations and hunger experienced in India. The poem touches on themes of affluence, exile, and the cultural differences between the speaker's homeland and the adopted country.

The speaker pushes a cart through the bright interior of the supermarket, contemplating the contrast between the private refrigerator and the vast hunger of

India. The metaphor of the refrigerator, though hired, represents the speaker's personal capacity to hold and understand the abundance of food in the supermarket.

The speaker reflects on the impossibility of containing the variety of meats, fruits, and cheeses in their mind, suggesting the overwhelming nature of the choices in the supermarket. The mention of "fat and insomniac mothers" pushing infants and groceries alludes to the affluence and convenience of the American lifestyle, which may be starkly different from the speaker's cultural background.

There is a sense of envy as the speaker observes those enjoying affluence and freedom in the supermarket. The warning to the "sexy undergraduate" about cholesterol introduces a tone of caution and hints at the excesses and health concerns associated with the American lifestyle.

The poem explores the cultural dissonance experienced by the speaker as they navigate the aisles of an American supermarket. The contrast between the abundance of choices in the store and the hunger of India highlights the disparities in lifestyle and access to resources.

The metaphor of the hired refrigerator symbolizes the speaker's attempt to assimilate into the affluent culture of America. However, the inadequacy of the refrigerator to contain the hunger of India suggests a disconnect between the speaker's personal experience and the broader context of their homeland.

The description of "fat and insomniac mothers" emphasizes the excesses and perhaps the insomnia-inducing nature of the consumerist culture. The speaker's warning to the sexy undergraduate about cholesterol introduces a layer of irony and critique, suggesting that the pursuit of affluence and excess comes at a cost to health.

The poem reflects on the silence and envy felt by the speaker as they navigate this new environment. The juxtaposition of the bright interior of the supermarket and the speaker's contemplation of the hunger in India creates a poignant contrast, highlighting the complexities of cultural displacement and the challenges of adapting to a new way of life.

Chitre's poem captures the speaker's reflections on the material abundance and cultural differences encountered in an American supermarket, providing insight into the complexities of immigrant experiences and the clash of cultural values.

7. The Felling of the Banyan Tree

My father told the tenants to leave
Who lived on the houses surrounding our house on the hill
One by one the structures were demolished
Only our own house remained and the trees

Trees are sacred my grandmother used to say
Felling them is a crime but he massacred them all
The sheoga, the oudumber, the neem were all cut down
But the huge banyan tree stood like a problem
Whose roots lay deeper than all our lives
My father ordered it to be removed

The banyan tree was three times as tall as our house
Its trunk had a circumference of fifty feet
Its scraggy aerial roots fell to the ground
From thirty feet or more so first they cut the branches
Sawing them off for seven days and the heap was huge
Insects and birds began to leave the tree
And then they came to its massive trunk
Fifty men with axes chopped and chopped
The great tree revealed its rings of two hundred years
We watched in terror and fascination this slaughter
As a raw mythology revealed to us its age

Soon afterwards we left Baroda for Bombay
Where there are no trees except the one
Which grows and seethes in one's dreams, its aerial roots
Looking for the ground to strike.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

In this poem the speaker recounts a significant event from their past when their father decided to remove the tenants living in houses surrounding their own on a hill. As the other structures were gradually demolished, the trees in the vicinity, considered sacred, were also ruthlessly cut down, despite the traditional belief that felling trees is a crime. The speaker's father ordered the removal of a massive banyan tree that stood prominently, its roots entwined deeply with the lives of the people and the land. The poem describes the systematic destruction of the banyan tree, a process that revealed the rings of its age—two hundred years.

The cutting down of the branches, sawing them off for seven days, led to a massive heap, causing insects and birds to abandon the tree. The subsequent chopping of the trunk by fifty men with axes exposed the rings, unveiling the banyan tree's long history. The speaker and others watched the spectacle with a mix of terror and fascination, as the raw mythology of the tree's age became apparent. Shortly after this event, the family left Baroda for Bombay, where the speaker mentions the absence of trees except for one that exists in dreams, its aerial roots searching for the ground to strike.

Dilip Chitre's poem addresses themes of cultural conflict, environmental destruction, and the profound impact of human actions on nature. The narrative begins with the expulsion of tenants and the demolition of structures, setting the stage for a larger theme—the destruction of trees, particularly the massive banyan tree that stands as a symbol of enduring life.

The sacredness of trees is contrasted with the speaker's father's decision to cut them down, reflecting a clash between tradition and modernity. The removal of the banyan tree becomes a symbol of the disconnection from nature and the loss of cultural values.

The meticulous description of the tree's removal, from the cutting of branches to the chopping of the trunk, emphasizes the scale of the destruction and its impact on the ecosystem. The revelation of the tree's rings symbolizes the unveiling of its history and the recognition of the profound age and wisdom embedded in the natural world.

The emotions of terror and fascination experienced by the speaker and others underscore the complex relationship between humanity and nature. The use of the

term "raw mythology" suggests that the act of felling the banyan tree becomes a mythic event, a raw truth that reveals the depth of the tree's existence.

The poem's conclusion in Bombay, where the absence of trees is noted, hints at the lingering impact of the tree's removal. The mention of a dream tree with aerial roots seeking the ground conveys a sense of longing and the persistent search for a connection with nature even in an urban environment.

Chitre's poem masterfully captures the tensions between tradition and modernity, the environmental consequences of human actions, and the emotional impact of witnessing the destruction of a revered natural entity.

8. Father Returning Home

My father travels on the late evening train
Standing among silent commuters in the yellow light
Suburbs slide past his unseeing eyes
His shirt and pants are soggy and his black raincoat
Stained with mud and his bag stuffed with books
Is falling apart. His eyes dimmed by age
fade homeward through the humid monsoon night.

Now I can see him getting off the train
Like a word dropped from a long sentence.
He hurries across the length of the grey platform,
Crosses the railway line, enters the lane,
His chappals are sticky with mud, but he hurries onward.

Home again, I see him drinking weak tea,
Eating a stale chapati, reading a book.
He goes into the toilet to contemplate
Man's estrangement from a man-made world.
Coming out he trembles at the sink,
The cold water running over his brown hands,
A few droplets cling to the greying hairs on his wrists.

His sullen children have often refused to share
Jokes and secrets with him. He will now go to sleep
Listening to the static on the radio, dreaming
Of his ancestors and grandchildren, thinking
Of nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

The speaker observes their father's journey home on the late evening train. The father stands among silent commuters, visibly tired and disheveled. The suburbs pass by as his unseeing eyes gaze into the distance. The father's attire is described as soggy, stained with mud, and his bag, filled with books, is falling apart. The dimness in his eyes, a result of age, reflects weariness as he travels homeward through the humid monsoon night.

The scene continues as the father disembarks from the train, likened to a word dropped from a long sentence. He hurries across the platform, crosses the railway line, and enters the lane with muddy chappals. Upon reaching home, he is depicted engaging in mundane activities like drinking weak tea, eating a stale chapati, and reading a book. The poet notes his contemplation in the toilet on man's estrangement from a man-made world.

As the father trembles at the sink while washing his hands, the poem captures a poignant moment, with cold water running over his brown hands. The sullen children have often refused to share jokes and secrets with him. The poem concludes with the father listening to static on the radio before going to sleep. In his dreams, he reflects on his ancestors, grandchildren, and imagines nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass.

Dilip Chitre's poem explores the poignant and ordinary moments of a father's return home, depicting the weariness and alienation he experiences in the process. The speaker provides vivid descriptions of the father's physical state—soggy clothes, a stained raincoat, a deteriorating bag filled with books, and muddy chappals. These details paint a picture of a tired and weathered man.

The father's unseeing eyes and dimmed vision suggest a weariness that extends beyond physical fatigue, hinting at the emotional and psychological toll of life's challenges. The use of the metaphor "Like a word dropped from a long sentence"

emphasizes a sense of isolation and detachment, as if the father is a fragment disconnected from a larger narrative.

The poem portrays the father engaging in routine activities at home—drinking weak tea, eating a stale chapati, and reading a book. These mundane actions serve as a backdrop for deeper contemplation on man's estrangement from a man-made world, emphasizing themes of alienation and introspection.

The moment at the sink, where the father trembles while washing his hands, captures a delicate and symbolic instance. The cold water running over his hands, with droplets clinging to greying hairs, suggests vulnerability and the passage of time.

The reference to sullen children refusing to share jokes and secrets with the father adds a layer of familial tension. This emotional distance between generations reflects a common theme of generational gaps and communication breakdowns.

The poem concludes with the father listening to static on the radio and dreaming of ancestors and grandchildren. The imagery of nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass introduces a historical and reflective element, suggesting the father's contemplation on the broader context of life, history, and human migration.

In essence, "Father Returning Home" is a poignant exploration of the complexities of familial relationships, the weariness of life's journey, and the reflective moments that occur in the midst of routine actions. The poem invites readers to empathize with the universal themes of aging, alienation, and the passage of time.

9. Panhala

The old fort has only one access.
From all other sides the mountain rises sheer.
Even the cliffs are almost faceless.

But this is about the elaborate garden Inside the fort walls
The terraced rectangle to which stone steps lead down
And those very obscure trees
Whose leaves whisper sinister curses in the evening
They have a sort of light of their own

Neither black nor green
But as opaque as the silence
Even moonlight stays away from them
On such nights as the night of our visit
You thought only the wind and the headless horseman
Had the right to enter such a place.

Meaning and explanation of the poem

The speaker describes an old fort, Panhala, which has only one access point. The mountain surrounding the fort rises steeply on all other sides, making it challenging to approach. The focus, however, shifts to an elaborate garden inside the fort, a terraced rectangle accessible by stone steps. The garden is characterized by mysterious trees whose leaves murmur sinister curses in the evening. These trees possess a peculiar light that is neither black nor green, but opaque, akin to the silence that pervades the surroundings. Even moonlight refrains from illuminating them, particularly on the night of the speaker's visit.

The poem creates an eerie atmosphere, suggesting that only the wind and the headless horseman, elements associated with the supernatural, have the right to enter such a mysterious place.

Dilip Chitre's poem "Panhala" unfolds with vivid descriptions of the old fort and the enigmatic garden within its walls. The singular access to the fort highlights its strategic and perhaps defensive positioning. The sheer rise of the mountain on other sides adds to the fort's natural protection.

The focus on the elaborate garden within the fort introduces an element of contrast. While the fort symbolizes strength and fortification, the garden represents a space of cultivation and, paradoxically, mystery. The terraced rectangle, accessible by stone steps, suggests careful planning and design within the fort's confines.

The description of the trees in the garden creates an eerie ambiance. The leaves are personified as whispering sinister curses in the evening, evoking an otherworldly atmosphere. The trees are characterized by a unique light that is neither black nor green, contributing to their mysterious nature. The opacity of this light aligns with the silence of the surroundings, creating a sense of foreboding.

The mention of moonlight staying away from these trees on certain nights heightens the mystique. The reader is invited to imagine a night of the speaker's visit when even moonlight avoids illuminating these peculiar trees. The personification of moonlight refraining from them suggests an acknowledgment of their otherworldly and possibly sinister qualities.

The poem concludes with a suggestion that only the wind and the headless horseman have the right to enter such a place. This adds a layer of folklore and the supernatural, implying that beings associated with the ethereal and mysterious are the only ones allowed in this enigmatic space.

"Panhala" is a poem that masterfully combines descriptions of a historical fort and an intricate garden within its walls with an infusion of the supernatural. The imagery, personification, and atmospheric details contribute to the creation of a mysterious and haunting setting, prompting readers to reflect on the interplay between the tangible and the mystical.

4.11 Check your progress 3

1. When was Dilip Chitre born?
2. What is the title of Dilip Chitre’s first collection of Marathi poetry?
3. When was Dilip chitre’s first collection of Marathi poetry published?
4. What is the title of Saint Tukaram’s poems translated by Dilip chitre?
5. Who is the author of ‘Arun Kolatkar and his times’?
6. What breaks the lunatic's sleep?
7. What are the fingers of the lunatic compared to
8. Where did the speaker come in the poem ‘I came in the middle of my life’?
9. What signs of aging does the speaker notice in the poem ‘I came in the middle of my life’?
10. Which season is referred to in the poem ‘The door I was afraid to open’?
11. Which signs of autumn are mentioned in the poem ‘The door I was afraid to open’?
12. Why does the poet praise the garlic?
13. Why does the poet praise the onion?

14. Why does the poet praise the woman in the poem ‘Of Garlic and such’?
15. What common qualities does the speaker of ‘Of garlic and such’ find among garlic, onion and woman?
16. How does the speaker of the poem ‘Pushing the cart’ warn the sexy undergraduate?
17. What is the setting of the poem ‘Pushing a cart’?
18. What was the circumference of the Bunyan tree?
19. What is the setting of the poem ‘The Felling of the Banyan Tree’?
20. Where did poet’s family shift from Baroda after felling the Bunyan tree?
21. What does the speaker of ‘The Felling of the Banyan Tree’ dream in Bombay?
22. Who used to say that trees are sacred?
23. According to the speaker of ‘Felling of The Bunyan Tree’, what was the age of the Bunyan tree?
24. Identify the figure of speech in following lines: “Now I can see him getting off the train Like a word dropped from a long sentence.”
25. When does speaker’s father return home?
26. What is the attitude of the children in the poem ‘Father Returning Home’?
27. What does father dream in the poem ‘Father Returning Home’?
28. How does the speaker in the poem ‘Panhala’ describe the mountain cliffs?
29. According to the speaker of the poem ‘Panhala’, who has the right to enter the garden inside the fort?

4.12 Answers to check your progress.

Answers to Check your progress 1.

1. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio
2. Rabindranath Tagore
3. Late 19th to mid-20th century
4. Mid-20th century to the present
5. Sarojini Naidu

6. Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt, M. M. Dutt. Shri Aurobindo, Manmohan Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Harindranath Chattopadhyay and R. C. Dutt
7. Dom Moraes, Keki. N. Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra, A. K. Ramanujan, A. K. Mehrotra, Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Gauri Deshpande, Pritish Nandy, Adil Jussawalla, Shiv K. Kumar, and Gieve Patel.
8. Rabindranath Tagore
9. A Time to Change and Other poems
10. Kamala Das
11. Dom Moraes
12. Rajagopal Parthasarathy
13. Arun Kolatkar
14. Adil Jussawalla
15. 1929.
16. 'Interior Landscape', 'Speaking of Siva' and 'Hymns for the Drawing'
17. 1999.

Answers to check your progress 2.

1. Water insect
2. Prophet
3. Simile
4. He heads for the shore.
5. He resembles everyone except himself
6. Portrait of a stranger
7. Metaphor
8. The risk of becoming heartless.
9. Potential for harm
10. Emotional balance.
11. a conscience-stricken jury

12. success and progress.
13. setbacks and challenges.

Answers to check your progress 3.

1. 1938
2. Kavita
3. 1960.
4. Says Tuka
5. Dilip Chitre
6. The light of birds
7. Electric wires
8. To a furnished apartment
9. Greying pubic hair
10. Autumn
11. Dark smell of rotting leaves.
12. For its tight integration of cloves and its white concealment of an unbearable astringency.
13. For keeping its eye-opening secret beneath many identical skins.
14. For her genderless passion hidden in a familiar body and the rippling enigma of her inner form.
15. Hidden complexity, mystery and the beauty found beneath surfaces.
16. Watch your cholesterol, honey.
17. Interior of an American supermarket
18. 50 feet.
19. Poet's house in Baroda.
20. Bombay.
21. He dreams of a tree whose aerial roots are looking for the ground to strike
22. Speaker's grandmother in the poem 'Felling of the Bunyan tree'

23. About 200 years.
24. Simile
25. Late in the evening
26. His children are sullen and they refuse to share jokes and secrets with him.
27. He dreams of his ancestors, grandchildren and nomads entering a subcontinent through a narrow pass
28. He describes them as faceless.
29. The wind and headless horseman.

4.13 Books for further reading:

Chindhade, Shirish. *Five Indian English Poets: Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, R. Parthasarathy*, Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 1996.

King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. OUP India, 2004

Naik, M. K. *Perspectives on Indian Poetry in English*. Abhinav Publications, 1985.

Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2004.

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