



# **English Poetry**

## **from Romantics to Moderns**

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# Lecture 1

## ROMANTIC POETRY

### William Blake (1757-1827) The Little Black Boy

#### ❖ ROMANTIC POETRY

♥ The Romantic Movement in literature is one of the most influential literary movements. It covered the first half of the nineteenth century, but its influence can still be felt everywhere in literature. The French Revolution with its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity gave spark to the Romantic Movement.

#### ❖ The main characteristics of Romantic Poetry

1. Romantic poetry shows a new faith in man with all his feelings, senses and all the sides of his experiences.
2. It rejected rational intellect as the only source of poetry and stressed imagination and intuition as the supreme faculties of the poet.
3. The poet of the Romantics was a man speaking to men, but he was endowed with some special insight into the nature of things.
4. Poetry to the Romantics is an expression of emotions inspired by the feelings of the individual poet. The Romantic poet is gifted with a strong “ organic sensibility.
5. All Romantic literature is subjective. It is an expression of the inner urges of the soul of the artist. It reflects the poet’s own thoughts and feelings more than anything else.
6. Nature to the Romantics is regarded as something divine. It is something really living, something that has a soul and purpose; it can even share with the poet his joys and sorrows.
7. A common and recurrent theme in Romantic poetry is man in solitude or man with nature. They believed that the nature of man is best revealed when he is in solitude or in communion with nature.
8. The Romantic poetry is anti- heroic in the sense that the subject of this poetry is common man, not heroes or men of high ranks. It also uses the language of ordinary people.
9. The Romantic is extraordinarily alive to the wonder , mystery and beauty of the universe. He feels the presence of unseen powers in nature. The supernatural has a special charm for him; he is attracted by the stories of fairies, ghosts and witchcraft.
10. Romantic poetry is individualistic; it stresses man’s individuality. Man is usually presented alone. Every poet has his own individual personality which is rather different from the others.
11. Another predominant feature of the Romantic poetry is the sense of nostalgia for the past.
12. To a Romantic poet, the period of childhood was very important. The child is nearer to nature than the grown- up man and he gains wisdom from nature. Thus he loses his Natural wisdom. “ The child is father of the man”, wordsworth says.

13. The Romantic poet sees the world through the eyes of a child. This is why Romantic poetry was described as poetry of wonder.

14. The Romantic poets were greatly affected by:

A. The Industrial Revolution which caused changes in society that the Romantic poet could not cope with. So, he turned to nature for escape and that is why Romantic poets are sometimes described as escapists or dreamers.

B. The French Revolution with its principles of freedom, equality and fraternity.

English Romanticism is thus both a revolt and a revival: it is a revolt against 18<sup>th</sup> century traditions and conventions: it is a revival of old English masters of poetry.

### ❖ **Literary Terms**

1. Personification is giving inanimate objects or abstract ideas human qualities or actions; making non-human things appear as human.
2. Metaphor: a comparison between two objects for the purpose of describing one of them; a metaphor states that the one object is the other.
3. Alliteration: close repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.
4. Diction: an author's choice and use of words; his vocabulary.
5. Epic: an extended narrative poem, with heroic subject matter and theme, and exalted tone.
6. Rhyme: the use of words with similar sounds in poetry, usually but not always at the ends of lines.
7. Stanza: a group of lines in a poem divided off from the others. Each stanza is usually the same number of lines in length.

### ❖ **William Blake (1757-1827) The Little Black Boy**

- 1 My mother bore me in the southern wild,
- 2 And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
- 3 White as an angel is the English child,
- 4 But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.
  
- 5 My mother taught me underneath a tree,
- 6 And sitting down before the heat of day,
- 7 She took me on her lap and kissed me,
- 8 And pointing to the east, began to say:
  
- 9 "Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
- 10 And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
- 11 And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
- 12 Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

13 And we are put on earth a little space,  
14 That we may learn to bear the beams of love;  
15 And these black bodies and this sunburnt face  
16 Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

17 For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,  
18 The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice,  
19 Saying: 'Come out from the grove, my love and care,  
20 And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.' "

21 Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;  
22 And thus I say to little English boy,  
23 When I from black and he from white cloud free,  
24 And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

25 I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear  
26 To lean in joy upon our father's knee;  
27 And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,  
28 And be like him, and he will then love me.

#### ❖ **Commentary**

♥ This is one of the “ Songs of Innocence”. It was written by Blake as an attempt on his part to help in abolishing slave- trade. It is a plea against “ racial discrimination”. He believes that people are equal regardless of their color. Despite of its political subject, Blake here makes use of two major ideas which are intermingled:

- A. The Idea that to be good needs an effort, and those who suffer more are thought to be religiously better.
- B. The Neo- Platonic idea that the soul is the essential of man; the essence(soul) of mankind is the same, but what differs is their bodies in which their souls are imprisoned. Once it is set free( by the death of the body) it goes back to its divine origin which is God. The body, whether black or white, is a colored cloud that will disappear one day, while the soul goes back to its creator.

## Lecture 2

### William Blake-The Little Black Boy

#### ❖ Summary

- ♥ A black child tells the story of how he came to know his own identity and to know God. The boy, who was born in “the southern wild” of Africa, first explains that though his skin is black his soul is as white as that of an English child. He relates how his loving mother taught him about God who lives in the East, who gives light and life to all creation and comfort and joy to men. “We are put on earth,” his mother says, to learn to accept God’s love.
- ♥ He is told that his black skin “is but a cloud” that will be dissipated when his soul meets God in heaven. The black boy passes on this lesson to an English child, explaining that his white skin is likewise a cloud. He vows that when they are both free of their bodies and delighting in the presence of God, he will shade his white friend until he, too, learns to bear the heat of God’s love. Then, the black boy says, he will be like the English boy, and the English boy will love him.
- ♥ A black boy compares himself to a white English boy, and at first finds himself wanting. He claims his soul is as white as the English boy’s, but also sees himself as “black as if bereav’d of light.” He then remembers that his loving mother taught him that his black skin is a result of constant exposure to the sun. The mother explains the sun as God’s gift to mankind, sharing both His light and his heat, both of which are forms of His love.
- ♥ His color, she explains, is a temporary “cloud” to be borne until he can fully learn to dwell in the presence of God’s love. The speaker ends by saying he will tell the English boy this truth and look forward to the day when both of them have put off this cloud and can love one another truly.

#### ❖ Analysis

- ♥ "The Little Black Boy" consists of seven heroic stanzas, which are quatrains following the ABAB rhyme scheme. The first two stanzas describe the boy's mother and the influence she has had on his life. The third, fourth, and fifth stanzas recall the mother's exact words in her lessons to her son. The final two stanzas describe how the black boy communicates his lesson to the white English boy for whom he has a great affection.
- ♥ Stanzas one and two describe the past; stanzas three, four, and five recall the mother's words as if they were being spoken in the present; the sixth and seventh stanzas include the black boy's words, which he “will say” to the English boy in the future. Thus, the poem itself progresses in time from a past (learning), to the present (the lesson itself) and to the future (the implementation or practical outworking of the lesson).
- ♥ Hints of anti-slavery sentiment and an opposition to racism occur in this poem, but they are not the main message. The equality of human beings is, however, emphasized by the poem in its depiction of God creating the world as an act of divine mercy, giving the sun to shine upon and warm all people everywhere as a preparation for the light and heat of His love.

## ❖ Form

- ♥ The poem is in heroic quatrains, which are stanzas of pentameter lines rhyming ABAB. The form is a variation on the ballad stanza, and the slightly longer lines are well suited to the pedagogical tone of this poem

## ❖ Commentary

- ♥ This poem centres on a spiritual awakening to a divine love that transcends race. The speaker is an African child who has to come to terms with his own blackness. Blake builds the poem on clear imagery of light and dark. The contrast in the first stanza between the child's black skin and his belief in the whiteness of his soul lends poignancy to his particular problem of self-understanding.
- ♥ The child's mother symbolizes a natural and selfless love that becomes the poem's ideal. She shows a tender concern for her child's self-esteem, as well as a strong desire that he knows the comfort of God. She persuades him, according to conventional Christian doctrine, that earthly life is but a preparation for the rewards of heaven. In this context, their dark skin is similarly but a temporary appearance, with no bearing on their eternal essence: skin, which is a factor only in this earthly life, becomes irrelevant from the perspective of heaven.
- ♥ The black boy internalizes his mother's lesson and applies it in his relations with the outer world; specifically, Blake shows us what happens when the boy applies it to his relationship with a white child. The results are ambivalent. The boy explains to his white friend that they are equals, but that neither will be truly free until they are released from the constraints of the physical world. He imagines himself shading his friend from the brightness of God's love until he can become accustomed to it. This statement implies that the black boy is better prepared for heaven than the white boy, perhaps because of the greater burden of his dark skin has posed during earthly life.

## ❖ Model Questions

1- The Little Black Boy was written by.....

- A. Wordsworth
- B. Byron
- C. Blake
- D. Shelly

The correct answer is (B) Blake

2- Blake believes that people are.....

- A. equal
- B. unequal
- C. C-lazy
- D. brave

The correct answer is (a)

## Lecture 3

### William Blake - The Tyger

#### ❖ William Blake (1757-1827)-The Tyger

- 1 Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
- 2 In the forests of the night,
- 3 What immortal hand or eye
- 4 Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
  
- 5 In what distant deeps or skies
- 6 Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
- 7 On what wings dare he aspire?
- 8 What the hand, dare sieze the fire?
  
- 9 And what shoulder, & what art,
- 10 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
- 11 And when thy heart began to beat,
- 12 What dread hand? & what dread feet?
  
- 13 What the hammer? what the chain?
- 14 In what furnace was thy brain?
- 15 What the anvil? what dread grasp
- 16 Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
  
- 17 When the stars threw down their spears,
- 18 And water'd heaven with their tears,
- 19 Did he smile his work to see?
- 20 Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
  
- 21 Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
- 22 In the forests of the night,
- 23 What immortal hand or eye
- 24 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

#### ❖ William Blake (1757-1827)

- ♥ William Blake, English poet, printmaker, and painter, is known now as one of the most prominent figures of the Romantic Age for his poetry and visual arts. Fairly unknown during his lifetime, Blake has now become an iconic figure.
  
- ♥ The Tiger is one of Blake's best known and rich songs. This poem is included in Blake's " Songs of Experiences".

❖ **It has two levels of understanding:**

1. **On the surface**, it portrays an image of a tiger which is compared to a fire burning at night.
2. But on a **deeper level**, the tiger here is an embodiment of God's creative ability.

- ♥ The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than it is about the tiger itself.
- ♥ In contemplating the terrible ferocity and awesome symmetry of the tiger, the speaker is at a loss to explain how the same God who made the lamb could make the tiger. Hence, this theme: humans are incapable of fully understanding the mind of God and the mystery of his handiwork.
- ♥ .....**"The Tiger"** presents a question that embodies the central theme: Who created the tiger? Was it the kind and loving God who made the lamb? Or was it Satan? Blake presents his question in Lines 3 and 4:

**What immortal hand or eye**

**Could frame thy fearful symmetry?**

Blake realizes, of course, that God made all the creatures on earth.

- ♥ However, to express his bewilderment that the God who created the gentle lamb also created the terrifying tiger, he includes Satan as a possible creator while raising his rhetorical questions, notably the one he asks in Lines 5 and 6:

**In what distant deeps or skies**

**Burnt the fire of thy eyes?**

*Deeps* appears to refer to hell and *skies* to heaven. In either case, there would be fire--the fire of hell or the fire of the stars.

- ♥ The tiger is the exact opposite of the "little lamb" . The lamb is a young and innocent creature; where the tiger is full of experience. Those two animals are polar opposites; however, both are animals that Blake felt could reflect human history and thought. Blake's belief in the Christian God is seemingly unarguable.
- ♥ The tyger is an image of the wrath of life and God. The tyger kills for food and is untamable; where the lamb is gentle and innocent, however if it is led astray or let walk alone, it will be left to wander alone until it's Shepherd comes to call on it. The creator, God in this case, created both the Lamb and the Tiger. This creation allowed the natural order of balance in the world that the romantics came to know and worship.
- ♥ "The Tyger" contains only six stanzas, and each stanza is four lines long. The first and last stanzas are the same, except for one word change: "could" becomes "dare."
- ♥ "The Tyger" is a poem made of questions. There are no less than thirteen question marks and only one full sentence that ends with a period instead of a question mark.
- ♥ Addressing "The Tyger," the speaker questions it as to its creation – essentially: "Who made you Mr. Tyger?" "How were you made? Where? Why? What was the person or thing like that made you
- ♥ **The first stanza** opens the central question: "What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" Blake wonders who had made the immaculate symmetry of the tiger's body. The creation of the tiger's eyes is described next. The poet questions where deep below the earth or high in the heavens did the wild fire which is now contained in the tiger's eyes used to burn.



- ♥ **The next two stanzas** describe the creation of the heart and then the brain of the tiger. Blake is intimidated by the strength and art which must have been required to build the muscles of the tiger's hard heart. It is now that the tiger comes to life after its heart is placed within its frame and the poet feels awe at the agile hands and feet of the tiger.
- ♥ **The fourth stanza** compares god to a blacksmith, who used a hammer, a chain and an anvil to furnish the brain of the tiger. After the brain was given shape the poet imagines that it was cooked in a blasting furnace which counts for the ferocity and ruthlessness of the tiger.
- ♥ **The last two lines of the fifth stanza** are enough to summarize the entire central idea of the poem. The poet wonders whether the same creator who created the meek and docile lamb, was the one to create the ferocious and deadly tiger.
- ♥ **The sixth and last stanza** is a repetition of the first, with the exception of one crucial word. Where before Blake had been wondering who could create such a being, he now questions who dares to do so. . In addition, ending the poem this way leaves the reader in astonishment, wondering and speculating.
- ♥ **Another interpretation of the poem** could be the focus on the balance in the universe. If there is good, there is also bad; if there is life, there is also death; if there is light, there is also darkness. This is the dichotomy of creation; God has created the world in such a way that it balances itself, as can be gleaned from his creation of the tiger to balance the docile lamb.

#### ❖ Form

- ♥ The poem is comprised of six quatrains (stanzas), each of four lines. The rhyme scheme is aabb. The repeated use of questions throughout the poem stresses the poet's surprise and wonder at the amazingly skilful creation of the tiger.

#### ❖ Examples of Figures of Speech and Allusions

##### ♥ Alliteration:

- Tiger, tiger, burning bright (line 1);
- frame thy fearful symmetry? (line 4)



##### Metaphor:

Comparison of the tiger and his eyes to fire.

##### ♥ Anaphora:

Repetition of *what* at the beginning of sentences or clauses.

- *What dread hand and what dread feet?*
- *What the hammer? what the chain?*

##### ♥ Allusion:

- *Immortal hand or eye*: God or Satan

##### ♥ Allusion:

- *Distant deeps or skies*: hell or heaven

## ❖ Model Questions

1-The poem “The Tyger” consists of .....

- A. two stanzas
- B. three stanzas
- C. four stanzas
- D. six stanzas

The correct answer is (D)

2- The Tiger” presents a question that embodies the central theme:

- A. who killed the tiger?
- B. who bought the tiger?
- C. who created the tiger?
- D. who hunted the tiger?

The correct answer is (c).

## Lecture 4

### William Wordsworth - "Daffodils"

#### ❖ William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850)

- ♥ Was a Romantic poet and a major influence in bringing about the 18th centuries' Romantic Age of Literature. An original poet for many different artistic qualities, his personality and emotional intelligence had made him the perfect forefather for a literary movement that would resound philosophically and poetically to this day.
- ♥ **Romanticism**, defined by its predisposition towards nature and its deep emotional connection with the feelings of the poet, is what makes William Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" such a perfect example of Romantic poetry.

#### ❖ Title and Theme of the Poem 'Daffodils'

- ♥ The title, 'Daffodils' is a simple word that reminds us about the arrival of the spring season, when the field is full of daffodils. Daffodils are yellow flowers, having an amazing shape and beautiful fragrance. A bunch of daffodils symbolize the joys and happiness of life.
- ♥ The theme of the poem 'Daffodils' is a collection of human emotions inspired by nature that we may have neglected due to our busy lives. The daffodils imply beginning or rebirth for human beings, blessed with the grace of nature.
- ♥ The poem 'Daffodils' is also known by the title 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud', a lyrical poem written by William Wordsworth in **1804**. It was published in **1815** in 'Collected Poems' with four stanzas. William Wordsworth is a well-known romantic poet who believed in conveying simple and creative expressions through his poems.
- ♥ He had quoted, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility". Thus, Daffodils is one of the most popular poems of the Romantic Age, unfolding the poet's excitement, love and praise for a field blossoming with daffodils.

#### ❖ Wordsworth - "Daffodils" (1804)

- 1 I WANDER'D lonely as a cloud
- 2 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
- 3 When all at once I saw a crowd,
- 4 A host, of golden daffodils;
- 5 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
- 6 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

- ♥ **In the first stanza**, the poet tells us about a beautiful experience that took place in his life, and still has its positive effect on him. Once he was wandering alone like an aimless cloud flying over the valleys and the hills. Suddenly, he saw a group of beautiful yellow flowers beside a lake, under the trees. These golden flowers were tossing their heads as if they were dancing in the breeze.

♥ By comparing himself to a cloud in the first line of the poem, the speaker signifies his close identification with the nature that surrounds him. He also demonstrates this connection by personifying the daffodils several times, even calling them a "crowd" as if they were a group of people.

7 Continuous as the stars that shine  
8 And twinkle on the Milky Way,  
9 They stretch'd in never-ending line  
10 Along the margin of a bay:  
11 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
12 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

♥ **In the second stanza**, the poet stresses the great number of these golden daffodils. They were as numerous and shining as the stars that twinkled in the sky. They were too many to be counted. They stretched in an endless line along the edge of bay. He saw ten thousands of them at one glance. They were dancing happily and lively.

13 The waves beside them danced; but they  
14 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
15 A poet could not but be gay,  
16 In such a jocund company:  
17 I gazed -- and gazed -- but little thought  
18 What wealth the show to me had brought:

♥ **In the third stanza**, the poet is comparing the daffodils with the waves flowing in the lake/ bay beside them. The waves shared the daffodils their happiness, but the latter were much happier. In such a happy company, the poet could not but be as happy as they were. The poet looked carefully, but he did not realize at that time how much happiness this beautiful sight would bring to him.

19 For oft, when on my couch I lie  
20 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
21 They flash upon that inward eye  
22 Which is the bliss of solitude;  
23 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
24 And dances with the daffodils.

♥ **In the fourth stanza**, the poet stresses the theme of the poem which is the everlasting effect of Nature, represented here by the golden daffodils, on man. He says: when I lie on my bed, obsessed or care-free, I always remember the beautiful sight of the daffodils, lived in the same situation, and my heart filled with happiness.

### ❖ Commentary

- ♥ The poem is about the everlasting effect of nature on man: the influence of nature exceeds the limits of a situation and goes far beyond that. In this poem, the poet saw a group of beautiful, yellow flowers, and he was attracted by their beauty. After leaving the scene and returning back to his ordinary life, he recollected the beautiful sight of the flowers and lived in the same situation again, which filled him with happiness.

### ❖ Form

- ♥ The 'Daffodils' has a rhyming scheme throughout the poem. The four six-line stanzas of this poem follow a quatrain-couplet rhyme scheme: ABABCC. The rhyming scheme of the above stanza is ABAB (A - cloud and crowd; B - hills and daffodils) and ending with a rhyming couplet CC (C - trees and breeze).

### ❖ Model Questions

1. The rhyme scheme of "Daffodils" is \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. AABBDD
  - B. AABBC
  - C. AABCBC
  - D. ABABCC

The correct answer is (D)

2. After leaving the scene and returning back to his ordinary life, Wordsworth \_\_\_\_\_ the beautiful sight of the flowers.
  - A. recollected
  - B. forgot
  - C. disregard
  - D. overlooked

The correct answer is (A)

### ❖ Wordsworth's theory of poetic creation

- ♥ The daffodils also illustrates Wordsworth's theory of poetic creation. Wordsworth did not write poetry about the emotion being felt at the time of writing. According to him, a poem is the expression of an emotion 'recollected in tranquility'.
- ♥ He saw the daffodils in **1802** and must have often sought solace in recollecting them in his imagination in hour of weariness. But he wrote this poem only in **1804**. Wordsworth perhaps felt that the elapse of a certain span of time was necessary for an emotion to get purged of undesirable frills and trappings and be fit for poetic creation

### ❖ Figures of Speech Used in Daffodils

- ♥ *I wander'd lonely as a cloud* - The first line makes nice use of personification and simile. The poet assumes himself to be a cloud (simile) floating in the sky. When Wordsworth says in the second line 'I' (poet as a cloud) look down at the valleys and mountains and appreciate the daffodils; it's the personification, where an inanimate object (cloud) possesses the quality of a human enabling it to see the daffodils.
- ♥ The line "Ten thousand saw I at a glance" is an exaggeration and a hyperbole, describing the scene of ten thousand daffodils, all together. Alliteration is the repetition of similar sounds, is applied for the word 'h', in the words - **high** and **hills**.

### ❖ Symbolism in the poem

- ♥ The breeze which makes the daffodils dance and flutter is symbolic of the poet's creative activity. The joy offered by the daffodils represents the joy, the harmony that abide in Nature and that can produce a tranquillizing effect on man's mind. The poet's heart dancing with the daffodils signifies the permanence of joy offered by Nature and the participation of human being in that joy.

### ❖ Model Question

- 1- According to Wordsworth, a poem is the expression of an emotion 'recollected in \_\_\_\_\_
- A. confusion
  - B. madness
  - C. disturbance
  - D. tranquility

The correct answer is ( D)

## Lecture 5

### William Wordsworth- THE RAINBOW

#### ❖ Wordsworth - THE RAINBOW

- 1 MY heart leaps up when I behold
- 2 A rainbow in the sky:
- 3 So was it when my life began;
- 4 So is it now I am a man;
- 5 So be it when I shall grow old, Or let me die!
- 6 The Child is father of the Man;
- 7 I could wish my days to be
- 8 Bound each to each by natural piety.

♥ **My Heart Leaps Up**, also known as **The Rainbow**, is a poem by the British Romantic Poet William Wordsworth. Noted for its simplicity of structure and language, it describes the joy that he feels when he sees a rainbow and notes that he has felt this way since his childhood. He concludes the poem by noting how his childhood has shaped his current views and stating that "the child is father of the man".

#### ♥ "My heart leaps up when I behold"

In this very short poem consisting of only **9** lines, the speaker begins by declaring that he is moved by nature, and especially by nature's beauty: "My heart leaps up when I behold / A Rainbow in the sky."

♥ " He goes on to say that he has always felt the impact of nature, even when he was an infant: "So was it when my life began; / So is it now I am a man." The speaker is so certain of his connection with nature that he says it will be constant until he becomes an old man, or else he would rather die: "So be it when I shall grow old, / Or let me die!"

♥ In the next line he declares that children are superior to men because of their proximity to nature: "The Child is father of the Man." For this reason, he wishes to bind himself to his childhood self: "And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety."

#### ❖ Form

♥ Rhyme scheme     **abccabedd**

#### ❖ Analysis

♥ The speaker explains his connection to nature, stating that it has been strong throughout his life. He even goes so far as to say that if he ever loses his connection he would prefer to die.

♥ The seventh line of the poem is the key line: "The Child is father of the Man." This line is often quoted because of its ability to express a complicated idea in so few words. The speaker believes that children are closer to heaven and God, and through God, nature, because they have recently come from the arms of God.

- ♥ The speaker understands the importance of staying connected to one's own childhood, stating: "I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety."
- ♥ For Wordsworth, Nature was his main source of spiritual comfort and escape from all the cares of this world. His association with life giving and life sustaining Nature began even when he was only a child and remained with him till his death.
- ♥ In this short lyric, the 'rainbow' symbolizes the life sustaining and life nourishing goodness of Nature. The sight of the beautiful rainbow which he saw when he was only a child is deeply etched in his memory and the same joy that he experienced when he saw it as a child continues to remain with him through his adulthood.
- ♥ He desires that this same childhood joy should continue to sustain him even in his old age. Wordsworth says that he would rather die than not being able to experience the same joy that he experienced when he saw the rainbow when he was a small boy after he becomes an old man.
- ♥ The memory of the beautiful rainbow and its pleasant associations form the link between his childhood, adulthood and his old age: past, present and future. Wordsworth concludes the poem by expressing the desire that each day of his existence to be linked with the next by beautiful and simple natural sights like the rainbow.
- ♥ Although it appears simplistic, this poem details many complex ideas. Wordsworth's opening lines explain how: "My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky" (1-2). Wordsworth is overjoyed at nature, a common theme in all of his work, but what's more is that he states: "So was it when my life began; / So it is now I am a man; / So be it when I shall grow old, / Or let me die!" (3-6).
- ♥ The last three lines contain one of Wordsworth's most famous phrases: "The Child is father of the Man; / And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety" (7-10). Wordsworth is happy enough to have kept his appreciation of nature and only wishes it will last him forever, in "natural piety."
- ♥ " It is remarkable that many of Wordsworth's poems deal with the relationship of the child to the world, and consequently, with the relationship of the adult to the child, and through the child relationship of the adult to nature. Most simply this poem says that the poet is thrilled in his youth when he saw one; he will continue to be thrilled by a rainbow when he grows old; if it cannot be so then, he would prefer to be dead.

### ❖ Model Questions

1. For Wordsworth, Nature was his main source of ----- and escape from all the cares of this world.
  - A. spiritual comfort
  - B. sadness
  - C. disappointment
  - D. grief

The correct answer is (A)



## Lecture 6

### She Walks in Beauty - Byron

#### ❖ **She Walks in Beauty-Byron (1788-1824)**

- 1 She walks in beauty, like the night
- 2 Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
- 3 And all that's best of dark and bright
- 4 Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
- 5 Thus mellowed to that tender light
- 6 Which heaven to gaudy day denies.
  
- 7 One shade the more, one ray the less,
- 8 Had half impaired the nameless grace
- 9 Which waves in every raven tress,
- 10 Or softly lightens o'er her face;
- 11 Where thoughts serenely sweet express
- 12 How pure, how dear their dwelling place.
  
- 13 And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
- 14 So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
- 15 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
- 16 But tell of days in goodness spent,
- 17 A mind at peace with all below,
- 18 A heart whose love is innocent!

#### ❖ **Type of Work and Year Written**

- ♥ “She Walks in Beauty” is a lyric poem centering on the extraordinary beauty of a young lady. George Gordon Byron (commonly known as Lord Byron) wrote the poem in **1814** and published it in a collection, *Hebrew Melodies*, in **1815**.

#### ❖ **Theme**

- ♥ The theme of the poem is the woman's exceptional beauty, internal as well as external. The first stanza praises her physical beauty. The second and third stanzas praise both her physical and spiritual, or intellectual, beauty.

## ❖ **Commentary- of Lord Byron's-'She Walks in Beauty'**

- ♥ The poet is describing a woman. He says: her beauty is like the beauty of a clear, starlit night. It is a beauty that combines the most attractive elements of darkness and brightness. It is a gentle, soft beauty like the beauty of night which is more tender than that of the day.
- ♥ It is a perfect beauty in which the darkness of her hair sets off the fairness of her face; a face which shows only the most serene, pure thoughts. A face which smiles and expresses the innocence of the heart and mind.
- ♥ It is a matchless poem in which beauty takes on new dimensions. Physical beauty is not everything. More important still is the beauty of the soul, mind and manners. This is perfection itself. A strange balance is struck between night and day, darkness and brightness, shades and rays, mind and body, etc. All these outline the image of perfect beauty.
- ♥ **In the first stanza**, the lady is walking in beauty. She wears a dark dress. She is like the night when the sky is clear and the stars are twinkling. The stars here may be the jewels glittering on her dark dress; darkness and brightness, in an incredible balance, meet in her aspect (the dress) and her eyes (glittering like her jewels or the stars). The simile in line one is followed by the double alliteration in line 2 (cloudless climes and starry skies).

This is followed by the antithesis in line 3 (dark and bright) and the metaphor in 'meet' (L 4). From the very beginning, Byron has decided to exploit as many poetic devices as he can outline the perfection of his beautiful portrait in which there is a touch of softness, tenderness and delicacy.

- ♥ **In the second stanza**, the lady's beauty is likened to that of a great portrait in which the rays and shades have been studied carefully so much so that "one shade the more, one ray the less/ Had half impaired the nameless grace. Sweet thoughts go hand with purity of body and mind.
- ♥ **In the third stanza**, there is softness, calmness and eloquence. Beauty speaks for itself. The winning similes reveal goodness of heart, peace of the mind and innocence of love.

## ❖ **The romantic characteristics in the poem:**

- ♥ This is an idealistic image of beauty which exists in worlds other than this real one. It lives in the poet's imagination. It is a beauty one often meets in dreams in Romantics such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats.
- ♥ The poem is a lyric and its sounds are very important in the creation of its total effect. R.S: **ababab**.

## ❖ **Rhyme Scheme and Meter**

- ♥ The rhyme scheme of the first stanza is ababab; the second stanza, cdcdcd; and the third stanza, efefef. All the end rhymes are masculine. The meter is predominantly iambic tetrameter, a pattern in which a line has four pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables—eight syllables in all. The first two lines demonstrate the pattern followed throughout the poem except for line 6, which has nine syllables.

## ❖ Use of Alliteration

♥ Alliteration occurs frequently to enhance the appeal of the poem to the ear. The most obvious examples of this figure of speech include the following:

- Line 2:.....cloudless climes; starry skies.
- Line 6:.....day denies
- Line 8:....Had half
- Line 9:....Which waves
- Line 11...serenely sweet
- Line 14...So soft, so
- Line 18...Heart Whose

## ❖ Other Figures of Speech

♥ Examples of other figures of speech are the following:

- Lines 1, 2:.....Simile comparing the movement of the beautiful woman to the movement of the skies
- Line 6:.....Metonymy, in which heaven is substituted for God or for the upper atmosphere
- Lines 8-10:.....Metaphor comparing grace, a quality, to a perceivable phenomenon
- Lines 11-12:.....Metaphor and personification comparing thoughts to people; metaphor and personification comparing the mind to a home (*dwelling-place*)
- Lines 13-16:.....Metaphor and personification comparing the woman's cheek and brow to persons who *tell of days in goodness spent*

## ❖ Model question

1. The rhyme scheme of the first stanza in She Walks in Beauty by Byron is \_\_\_\_\_
- A. abbaacc
  - B. ababbc
  - C. ababab
  - D. abbbcc

The correct answer is ( c )

2. The theme of She Walks in Beauty is the woman's exceptional \_\_\_\_\_
- A. power
  - B. ugliness
  - C. patience
  - D. beauty

The correct answer is (D)

## Lecture 7

### Byron- WHEN WE TWO PARTED

#### ❖ **Byron- WHEN WE TWO PARTED**

- 1 When we two parted
- 2 In silence and tears,
- 3 Half broken-hearted
- 4 To sever for years,
- 5 Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
- 6 Colder thy kiss;
- 7 Truly that our foretold
- 8 Sorrow to this.
  
- 9 The dew of the morning
- 10 Sunk chill on my brow –
- 11 It felt like the warning
- 12 Of what I feel now.
- 13 Thy vows are all broken,
- 14 And light is thy fame:
- 15 I hear thy name spoken,
- 16 And share in its shame.
  
- 17 They name thee before me,
- 18 A knell to mine ear;
- 19 A shudder comes o'er me –
- 20 Why wert thou so dear?
- 21 They know not I knew thee,
- 22 Who know thee too well: -
- 23 Long, long shall I rue thee,
- 24 Too deeply to tell.
  
- 25 In secret we met –
- 26 In silence I grieve,
- 27 That thy heart could forget,
- 28 Thy spirit deceive.
- 29 If I should meet thee
- 30 After long years,
- 31 How should I greet thee! –
- 32 With silence and tears.

## ❖ INTRODUCTION

- ♥ This poem is about the love, first, and later the hatred a man feels towards who was his beloved because she left him. It's a very typical Romantic poem, typical of a Romantic writer like Lord Byron, who expresses his feelings of love, a typical issue of Romanticism.
- ♥ The vocabulary is easy to understand for everybody who studies the English language. The first verse of the poem is also the title of the poem, which means that the writer could not or did not want to find a title for the poem (maybe the damage he felt was so strong that he was not able to find a good title for the poem, as he writes at the end of the third stanza (*Long, long shall I rue thee/ Too deeply to tell*)).
- ♥ "*When We Two Parted*" is a poem of George Gordon Byron written in **1808** and published in **1813** in "*The poetical works of Lord Byron*".

## ❖ The main characteristic of Byron's poems

- ♥ is its strength and masculinity, combined in a lot of cases with irony. In "*When We Two Parted*" is a poem of heart broken, expressing strong feelings in a simple but full of meaning vocabulary, such as in other poems like "*So we'll no go more a roving*".(2)

## ❖ STRUCTURE

- The poem is divided in four stanzas and each one in eight verses.
- The rhyme used by Byron follows this structure: **abab cdcd efef ghgh ijij klkl mnmn kbkb**.
- Separating each stanza in four verses, we have the rhyme more clear, each even verse and each odd verse rhyme with its equivalent even or odd verse.
- This structure gives to the poem a lot of rhythms, giving the sensation of musicality.

## ❖ COMMENTARY

- ♥ On the whole, the poem is all the time giving the feeling of the pain that the poet has due to the separation of the two lovers; what we cannot know is if the separation is because of death or maybe because "she" split up with him.
- ♥ **In the first stanza** the poet begins with the main topic, remembering the separation of the two lovers, how they felt: "*half broken-hearted*", showing his pain. Also he expresses the idea of what we think that this separation is due to the death of his lover with the metaphor of: "*Pale grew thy cheek and cold, / colder thy kiss*". All that surrounds her is cold, and this cold is a perfect form to express the death in contrast with the warm involving the life.
- ♥ In a four stanza poem, Byron describes his parting from his beloved. **The first stanza** conveys a sense of sorrow and desolation. Words like tears, broken – hearted, pale, colder and sorrow are used to convey the sadness of the two lovers.
- ♥ Following with the poem, in **the second stanza** it can be found the relation of colder morning with the pain that the poet is feeling. Also another time we can see that his lover is dead: "*thy vows are all broken*". In the **second stanza**, the poet holds his beloved is responsible for the parting. She has broken her vows.

- ♥ Nature shares his sadness ( the dew of the morning sunk chill on my brow) . This parting took place sometime ago, but he still feels the sadness of it. This corresponds with the romantic belief that the impressions of an experience remain with the poet even after the experience itself has come to an end.
- ♥ **The third stanza** contains strong vocabulary showing again that “she” is dead: “*A knell to mine ear; A shudder comes o’er me*”. These two verses remain to the sounds of the bells of a funeral, using the appropriated word “Knell”. Also he asked himself why he loved her so, and people who knew her well do not know any relation between them.
- ♥ **At the last stanza** the poet is remembering when they met and transmits us a feeling of hope: “*If I should meet thee*”. Maybe life exists before death and they can reopen their love, and the poet also tells us how they greet: “*With silence and tears*”.
- ♥ The sadness continues throughout **stanza three and four**. Her name is a knell to his ear. His sadness is too deep to describe . She has deceived him and her” heart could forget”. He will forgive her. If he meets her after long years, there is nothing to greet her with but silence and tears. The poet is too sentiment here.
- ♥ The repetition of “silence and tears” at the beginning and end of the poem denotes the poet’s inability to leave his moment of pain behind. He is trapped in a state of grieving a lost love. It is all the more hurtful that he lost her to another man, and all he can offer her is that he will protect her identity by grieving alone.
- ♥ The cold is a very important metaphorical element at the beginning of the second and the third stanzas: *The dew of the morning/ Sunk chill on my brow*: here the cold is shown as a metaphor of the feelings that the man has towards the woman, as it happens too in *A knell to mine ear/A shudder comes o’er me*: dew, chill, knell and shudder are words that symbolize cold in many different ways.
- ♥ **In the last stanza**, the two first verses have two words that may be synonyms, but they mean a totally different thing, they are the contrast of the poem: *In secret we met*, here Byron wants to transmit the passion of two lovers in their first secret encounter. And *In silence I grieve* symbolizes that nobody can help this man to come back to smile after having been left by the woman he loved. The two following verses, *That thy heart could forget/ Thy spirit deceive* say what she made him: she forgot him and she deceived him.

#### ❖ **The Romantic characteristics in the poem**

- There is a sense of sadness and loneliness permeating the whole poem.
- The link between man and nature is evident in the second stanza.
- The experience continues with the romantic poet long after the causation has ceased.
- Rich imagination and ordinary language .
- The question in the poem reflects the poet’s wonder and sadness over such a parting.

❖ **Model Question**

1. **1-The repetition of “silence and tears” in WHEN WE TWO PARTED at the beginning and end of the poem denotes the poet’s \_\_\_\_\_**
  - A. happiness
  - B. cheerfulness
  - C. gladness
  - D. painfulness
  
2. **2-In WHEN WE TWO PARTED \_\_\_\_\_ shares sadness with the poet .**
  - A. the wife
  - B. the neighbour
  - C. nature
  - D. a friend

The correct answer is (c)

## Lecture 8

### Ode to a Skylark- by Percy Shelley

#### ❖ **Ode to a Skylark- by Percy Shelley**

- 1 Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
- 2 Bird thou never wert -
- 3 That from Heaven or near it
- 4 Pourest thy full heart
- 5 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
  
- 6 Higher still and higher
- 7 From the earth thou springest,
- 8 Like a cloud of fire;
- 9 The blue deep thou wingest,
- 10 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.
  
- 11 In the golden lightning
- 12 Of the sunken sun,
- 13 O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
- 14 Thou dost float and run,
- 15 Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
  
- 16 The pale purple even
- 17 Melts around thy flight;
- 18 Like a star of Heaven,
- 19 In the broad daylight
- 20 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight –
  
- 21 Keen as are the arrows
- 22 Of that silver sphere
- 23 Whose intense lamp narrows
- 24 In the white dawn clear,
- 25 Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.
  
- 26 All the earth and air
- 27 With thy voice is loud,
- 28 As, when night is bare,
- 29 From one lonely cloud
- 30 The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.



31 What thou art we know not;  
32 What is most like thee?  
33 From rainbow clouds there flow not  
34 Drops so bright to see,  
35 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody: -

36 Like a Poet hidden  
37 In the light of thought,  
38 Singing hymns unbidden,  
39 Till the world is wrought  
40 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

41 Like a high-born maiden  
42 In a palace-tower,  
43 Soothing her love-laden  
44 Soul in secret hour  
45 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

46 Like a glow-worm golden  
47 In a dell of dew,  
48 =Scattering unbeholden  
49 =Its aërial hue  
50 Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

51 =Like a rose embowered  
52 In its own green leaves,  
53 By warm winds deflowered,  
54 Till the scent it gives  
55 Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingéd thieves:

56 Sound of vernal showers  
57 On the twinkling grass,  
58 Rain-awakened flowers -  
59 All that ever was  
60 Joyous and clear and fresh - thy music doth surpass.

61 Teach us, Sprite or Bird,  
62 What sweet thoughts are thine:  
63 I have never heard  
64 Praise of love or wine  
65 That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

66 Chorus hymeneal,  
67 Or triumphal chant,  
68 Matched with thine would be all  
69 but an empty vaunt -  
70 A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

71 What objects are the fountains  
72 Of thy happy strain?  
73 What fields, or waves, or mountains?  
74 What shapes of sky or plain?  
75 What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

76 With thy clear keen joyance  
77 Languor cannot be:  
78 Shadow of annoyance  
79 Never came near thee:  
80 Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

81 Waking or asleep,  
82 Thou of death must deem  
83 Things more true and deep  
84 Than we mortals dream,  
85 Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

86 We look before and after,  
87 And pine for what is not:  
88 Our sincerest laughter  
89 With some pain is fraught;  
90 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

91 Yet, if we could scorn  
92 Hate and pride and fear,  
93 If we were things born  
94 Not to shed a tear,  
95 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

96 Better than all measures  
97 Of delightful sound,  
98 Better than all treasures  
99 That in books are found,  
100 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

101 Teach me half the gladness  
102 That thy brain must know;  
103 Such harmonious madness  
104 From my lips would flow,  
105 The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

- ♥ The Ode to a Skylark is one of the most famous poems in the English language. Shelly in this ode idealizes the singing of the skylark. In the singing of the skylark, Shelly finds an ecstasy and rapture which are unattainable by human beings. The poet contrasts the sorrow of human life with the joy of the skylark.
- ♥ In this poem , Shelly dwells upon the sweet and rapturous singing of the skylark. The music of the skylark has been idealized by Shelly. The poet wants to know what is that inspires the skylark to sing such melodious and ecstatic strains. He contrasts the sorrow and suffering of mankind with the unspeakable joy of the bird. If it were possible for the poet to experience the gladness of the skylark , he would be able to sing songs as sweet and delightful as those of the bird itself.

### ❖ Summary

- ♥ The speaker, addressing a skylark, says that it is a “blithe Spirit” rather than a bird, for its song comes from Heaven, and from its full heart pours “profuse strains of unpremeditated art.” The skylark flies higher and higher, “like a cloud of fire” in the blue sky, singing as it flies. In the “golden lightning” of the sun, it floats and runs, like “an unbodied joy.”
- ♥ “ As the skylark flies higher and higher, the speaker loses sight of it, but is still able to hear its “shrill delight,” which comes down as keenly as moonbeams in the “white dawn,” which can be felt even when they are not seen. The earth and air ring with the skylark’s voice, just as Heaven overflows with moonbeams when the moon shines out from behind “a lonely cloud.”
- ♥ The speaker says that no one knows what the skylark is, for it is unique: even “rainbow clouds” do not rain as brightly as the shower of melody that pours from the skylark. The bird is “like a poet hidden / In the light of thought,” able to make the world experience “sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.” It is like a lonely maiden in a palace tower, who uses her song to soothe her lovelorn soul. It is like a golden glow-worm, scattering light among the flowers and grass in which it is hidden.
- ♥ It is like a rose embowered in its own green leaves, whose scent is blown by the wind until the bees are faint with “too much sweet.” The skylark’s song surpasses “all that ever was, / Joyous and clear and fresh,” whether the rain falling on the “twinkling grass” or the flowers the rain awakens.
- ♥ Calling the skylark “Sprite or Bird,” the speaker asks it to tell him its “sweet thoughts,” for he has never heard anyone or anything call up “a flood of rapture so divine.” Compared to the skylark’s, any music would seem lacking. What objects, the speaker asks, are “the fountains of thy happy strain?” Is it fields, waves, mountains, the sky, the plain, or “love of thine own kind” or “ignorance or pain”?
- ♥ **Pain and languor**, the speaker says, “never came near” the skylark: it loves, but has never known “love’s sad satiety.” Of death, the skylark must know “things more true and deep” than mortals could dream; otherwise, the speaker asks, “how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?”

## ❖ Form

- ♥ The rhyme scheme of each stanza is extremely simple: **ABABB**.

## ❖ Notes

### ♥ Lines (1-5) Hail to thee,.....unpremeditated art.-

The poet calls the skylark a cheerful and happy spirit. The skylark is not a bird but a spirit because, flying at a great height, it is not visible. The poet offers a warm welcome to the skylark. He joyfully greets the skylark. The skylark sings spontaneous songs from somewhere near the sky. It sings sweet melodies which express the feelings and emotions of its heart. A continuous stream of rich music flows naturally from the skylark. The skylark sings effortlessly and without any previous preparation.

### ♥ Lines ( 6-10): Higher still and higher..... ever singest.-

The skylark leaps upward from the earth and climbs higher and higher into the blue sky. It flies up into the sky like a cloud of fire rising upward. It keeps singing while flying, and it keeps flying while singing simultaneously.

## Lecture 9

### Ode to a Skylark- by Percy Shelley

#### ❖ Notes

- ♥ **Lines (11- 20) In the golden lightning..... they shrill delight.....** The skylark leaving the earth soaring upward is like a soul that has shed its mortal body and is on its way to heaven. The expression “unbodied joy” means a happy soul that has shaken off its mortal body. As the skylark flies upward, the pale and purple twilight of the morning seems to melt away, giving place to the white light of the rising sun. The skylark becomes invisible as it flies higher and higher. For this reason it is like a star which shines in the sky invisibly during the day time.
- ♥ **Lines ( 21- 30) Keen as the arrows....is overflowed.** During the night, the moon sheds its white light upon the earth. But this bright light begins to fade with the coming of the morning. In the light of the morning, the moonlight fades away. Although the moon now becomes almost invisible, yet we are aware that the moon is still in the sky. In the same way, the skylark is invisible to our eyes, but listening to its music, we are aware of its presence in the sky. The earth and the sky are flooded with the music of the skylark in the same way as they are flooded with the bright light of the moon
- ♥ **Lines ( 31- 40) what thou art.... It heeded not.** As the skylark flies up and up, it sends a shower of rich music to us on the earth. The music flowing from the skylark is much more pleasant and delightful even than the bright rain- drops falling from the clouds. The invisible skylark may be compared to a poet who is hidden from the public gaze by the originality and obscurity of his ideas. The poet goes on singing his songs and expressing his ideas through those songs. He could at last compel people to listen to him and to try to understand him. The idea is that the skylark keeps singing till we are moved to admiration for its songs, even though the skylark is invisible.
- ♥ **Lines ( 41- 50) Like a high- born maiden..... From the view** The skylark is here compared to a young damsel of high birth. This girl is supposed to be residing in a palace tower where she sings songs of love. The girl herself is not visible to outsiders because she is confined in the tower. But the songs of the girl overflow her apartment, and are heard by people outside the same as the skylark. The skylark is like a beautiful, shining glow- worm flying about among the dew covered grass and flowers. Both the glow-worm and the skylark are invisible but we are conscious of their presence.
- ♥ **Lines ( 51- 60) like a rose embowered....doth surpass.-** We may not be able to see a rose which is wrapped up in its green leaves, but we shall certainly become conscious of it because of its sweet scent. We are aware of the presence of the skylark because of its sweet songs which are loud enough to reach our ears. The music of the skylark is more joyful than the sound of rain falling on the bright grass, in spring.
- ♥ **Lines ( 61-70) teach us .....some hidden want.** The music of the skylark is full of a rapturous joy which seems to have a divine quality. As compared with the skylark’s singing, a wedding song or a song of victory would seem to be meaningless. By comparison with the skylark’s song, other songs seem to suffer from some deficiency which we cannot define.
- ♥ **Lines (71-80) what objects.....love’s sad satiety.** The poet wants to know what the source of the skylark’s happiness is. Is the skylark so happy because it has never known any sorrow or grief? The skylark feels so happy that there can be no question of its ever feeling lazy or indolent. Nor does the skylark ever experience a feeling of the faintest irritation. The skylark does not experience the disillusionment or disgust which human beings experience.

♥ **Lines (81-90) walking or asleep.....saddest thought.** Both in its walking and sleeping hours, the skylark must be seeing truer visions of the nature and significance of death than human beings can. And that is the reason why the skylark is so happy and why it can produce such continuous and rapturous music. The life of human beings is full of disappointments and frustration. There is an element of pain mingled even with their most genuine laughter. The sweetest songs of human beings are those that are full of sorrow and grief. The songs of the skylark, on the contrary, are an expression of pure joy.

♥ **Lines (91-101) Yet if we could scorn.....as I am listening** Human happiness is marred by feelings of hatred, pride, fear, etc. Human beings were born to suffer sorrows and grief and to shed tears over their misery. The skylark is scornful of the earth. That is why it flies in the higher regions above. Only by acquiring the skylark's musical skill can any poet equal the joyful singing of the skylark. If the skylark could communicate to Shelly even half of its joy, he would feel inspired to write poems that would compete with the songs of the skylark. All that Shelly needs is the feeling of ecstasy which the skylark experiences.

### ❖ **Explanation**

#### ♥ **The skylark's flight and its song**

A skylark, says Shelly, is not a bird but a spirit which pours forth rich melodies of spontaneous music from somewhere in the sky. The skylark flies higher and higher, singing all the time. In the golden light of sunrise, the skylark flies and floats unseen in the aerial regions.

#### ♥ **The rich and glorious music of the invisible skylark**

The skylark, because of the great height at which it flies, is invisible to human eyes, in the same way as a star is invisible during the day time. The loud, joyous music of the skylark is fully audible. We feel the presence of the skylark in the sky just as we feel the presence of the moon which is hardly visible to the eyes in the clear light of the morning.

The whole earth and air overflow with the skylark's singing even as the whole sky at night is lit up by the white light of the moon. The real nature of skylark is not fully known to us. The shower of music that descends from the skylark is brighter far than the rain-drops falling from clouds.

#### ♥ **A series of similes**

Through a series of similes which follow, Shelly suggests the sweetness of the skylark's music, the invisibility of the skylark, and the great height from which the bird sings. The skylark is like the poet who soars to the regions of lofty thought, whose thoughts are not easily understood, but whose music can be fully enjoyed. The skylark is like a high-born maiden pouring forth her love into sweet songs which flow beyond her bower, though she herself is not visible.

The skylark is like a golden glow-worm which is hidden from view by the flowers and grass but whose presence becomes known to us by the light which it scatters around. The skylark is like a rose which is concealed from sight by the leaves around it but whose existence is revealed to us by the sweet scent with which it fills the air.

#### ♥ **The perfect joy of the skylark**

The singing of the skylark is unsurpassed. Even the happy songs of marriage and the joyous songs of victory are inferior to the singing of the skylark. It is not known what the source of the skylark's inspiration is. There is not the least touch of languor or annoyance in the skylark's joy.

The skylark is ignorant of human suffering as also of the sad satiety of love. The skylark seems to have a truer and deeper knowledge of the mystery of death than human beings. That is why music flows from the skylark in such a crystal stream.

♥ **The tragedy of human life contrasted with the bird's joy**

Human beings yearn for the impossible . There is a touch of sorrow in their merriest laughter, Their sweetest songs are songs of sadness. But even if human life were not so ugly and sorrowful, human beings would never experience that intense joy which belongs to the skylark.

If the poet were to experience even half of this joy, he would feel inspired to compose poems as sweet and irresistible as the songs of the skylark. There is something unique about the skylark's ecstasy, and this ecstasy is at the root of the skylark's exquisite song.

The song of the skylark, rather than the skylark itself, is what holds all the power. It is the song that can have the "light of thought" of "the poet," the "soothing love" of the maiden, invisible existence as the "glow-worm golden," and the aura of "a rose." It is this power to awaken so many different parts in nature, and make them aware to the human mind, that Shelley wants to "be taught."

❖ **Model Questions**

1- In the singing of the skylark, Shelly finds \_\_\_\_\_ which is unattainable by human beings.

- A. sadness
- B. depression
- C. ecstasy
- D. ugliness

The correct answer is (c)

2- The skylark is \_\_\_\_\_ of human suffering as also of the sad satiety of love.

- A. A- ignorant
- B. B- aware
- C. C- knowledgeable
- D. D- observant

The correct answer is (A)

# Lecture 10

## The Victorian Poetry

### My Last Duchess - Robert Browning

#### ❖ The Victorian Poetry

##### The main characteristics of the Victorian Poetry

1. It was an age of drastic changes in the British society as a result of industrialization and rich landowners were turning into businessmen.
2. It was an age of adventure, free enterprise and individual initiative.
3. It was age of imperialism. The reasons for imperialism were fundamentally economic:
  - A. Looking for cheap raw- materials.
  - B. Finding markets for manufactured goods.
4. Names of great imperialists and politicians appeared in the Victorian age: e.g. Disraeli and Gladstone.
5. It was an age of scientific progress in which great scientists and thinkers lived: e.g. Darwin, Huxley, Karl Marx
6. Faith in the reality of progress was the main characteristic of the early Victorian Age. Doubt, skepticism and questioning became the main characteristic of the later Victorian Age.
7. The Victorian Age was an age of agnosticism and skepticism. It was an age of weak religious belief.
8. These aspects were more or less reflected in the poetry of Tennyson, Browning and Matthew Arnold.

#### ❖ “My Last Duchess-Robert Browning

- 1 That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
- 2 Looking as if she were alive. I call
- 3 That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
- 4 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
- 5 Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
- 6 "Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
- 7 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
- 8 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
- 9 But to myself they turned (since none puts by
- 10 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
- 11 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
- 12 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
- 13 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
- 14 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
- 15 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
- 16 Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps



17 Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
18 Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
19 Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff  
20 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
21 For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
22 A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
23 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
24 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
25 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
26 The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
27 The bough of cherries some officious fool  
28 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
29 She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
30 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
31 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked  
32 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
33 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
34 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
35 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
36 In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
37 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
38 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
39 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
40 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
41 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
42 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
43 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
44 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
45 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
46 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
47 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
48 The company below, then. I repeat,  
49 The Count your master's known munificence  
50 Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
51 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
52 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
53 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
54 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
55 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
56 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

### ❖ ROBERT BROWNING (1812-1889)

- ♥ Browning was born of parents who were not rich but were well off enough to enable the son, whose genius they recognizes, to dedicate himself to literature. He married the poet Elizabeth Barret in **1846**. He and his wife had lived in Italy since their marriage till his wife's death in **1861**. Then he returned to London and lived there till his death in **1889**.

## ❖ Summary and Commentary

- ♥ .....Upstairs at his palace in October of **1564**, the Duke of Ferrara—a city in northeast Italy on a branch of the Po River—shows a portrait of his late wife, who died in **1561**, to a representative of the Count of Tyrol, an Austrian nobleman. The duke plans to marry the count's daughter after he negotiates for a handsome dowry from the count.
- ♥ While discussing the portrait, the duke also discusses his relationship with the late countess, revealing himself—wittingly or unwittingly—as a domineering husband who regarded his beautiful wife as a mere object, a possession whose sole mission was to please him. His comments are sometimes straightforward and frank and sometimes subtle and ambiguous. Several remarks hint that he may have murdered his wife, just a teenager at the time of her death two years after she married him, but the oblique and roundabout language in which he couches these remarks falls short of an open confession.
- ♥ The duke tells the Austrian emissary that he admires the portrait of the duchess but was exasperated with his wife while she was alive, for she devoted as much attention to trivialities – as she did to him. , he says, “I gave commands; / “Then all [of her] smiles stopped together.” .....Does *commands* mean that he ordered someone to kill her?
- ♥ The poem does not provide enough information to answer these questions. Nor does it provide enough information to determine whether the duke is lying about his wife or exaggerating her faults. Whatever the case, research into her life has resulted in speculation that she was poisoned.
- ♥ This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the **16th** century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself.

## ❖ The Portrait of the Duchess

- ♥ .....The portrait of the late Duchess of Ferrara is a fresco, a type of work painted in watercolors directly on a plaster wall. The portrait symbolizes the duke's possessive and controlling nature in as much as the duchess has become an art object which he owns and controls.

## Lecture 11

### “My Last Duchess-Robert Browning

#### ❖ Explanation

##### ♥ That is my last Duchess..... look at her

The messenger of a neighbouring Count has come to the Duke of Ferrara. The Duke of Ferrara is a widower, his last Duchess died recently, and he intends to marry the daughter of the Count.

The Duke shows to the messenger the portrait of the last Duchess painted on the wall.

The picture has been well done that it appears life-like and realistic. It looks a living ,breathing reality. The Duke is proud of it and considers it a remarkable piece of art. He proudly tells the messenger that the picture is the work of the famous painter, Fra Pandolf.

##### ♥ I said ‘ Fra Pandolf..... to turn and ask thus

The Duke shows the portrait of his last Duchess to the messenger who has come with an offer of marriage on behalf of the daughter of a neighboring Count. He would expect the daughter of his master, the Count, if she becomes his wife, to concentrate all his attention on himself. The messenger was the first person to turn to him inquiringly. He would satisfy his curiosity. He himself would explain to him( the messenger) the cause of that deep, serious expression.

##### ♥ Sir, it was not ....that spot of joy

In the portrait, the Duchess is shown to have a faint blush on her cheeks. The Duke explains to the messenger how that slight flush of joy came to her cheeks. It was caused merely by the pleasure she derived from the presence of her husband. As a matter of fact, she had a childish heart and was easily moved even by little acts of courtesy.

The Duchess, as a matter of fact, had a simple, innocent nature, ready to appreciate even little acts of courtesy, and was easily pleased by a trifle. But the Duke regards it as rather childish on her part. Rather, in his opinion she lacked in dignity. He would expect a more proper behavior from his second wife.

##### ♥ She had a heart- how shall I say.....on blush at least

The duke further tells the messenger that the last Duchess had a very simple, childish nature. he fails to find suitable words to describe her childish simplicity. She was pleased by trifles. She like everything she looked at. She could not judge and distinguish between what was really worthwhile and what was not.

She had no discrimination, or sense of right and wrong. The Duke is critical of the dead duchess. His vanity is hurt at the very thought that she treated his own presents at par with petty trifles given to her by others.

##### ♥ She thanked man.....anybody’s gift

The last Duchess was simple, innocent, and frank hearted. She thought there was no harm in thanking those who showed her even a trifling courtesy. She would appreciate even the slightest courtesy shown to her. The Duke did not like this.

His pride was hurt. She could not differentiate between the gift of rank and position that he had given her, and the petty trifles that others presented to her. She thanked everybody in the same way. The Duke is critical of the conduct of his last Duchess and considers it unbecoming and frivolous. In his opinion, she lacked in dignity and intelligence.

♥ **Who would stoop.....I choose never to stoop**

The Duke tells the messenger that his last Duchess had the childish habit of thanking everybody. There was no harm in thanking others as such, but she failed to distinguish between the valuable gifts given to her by him, and the ordinary acts of courtesy done by others.

The duke further says that he did not try to correct her and put an end to her foolishness in thanking everybody, because he thought it hurts him to take note of her childish conduct. The speech clearly reveals that the Duke is a proud and conceited person. He has false notions of dignity and decorum.

♥ **Oh, Sir, she smiled.....smiled stopped together**

The Duke tells the messenger that the last Duchess did not know how to conduct herself with dignity and decorum as the wife of a man of rank and birth like himself.

She had the habit of smiling. She smiled at everybody.

Her habit of smiling and thanking for the slightest courtesy shown to her increased so much that he could no longer tolerate it. Therefore he gave orders that her smiling should stop, and all smiling was stopped. How did the smiles stop? What were the orders he gave? The poet has left the meaning obscure.

♥ **I repeat the Count your master's .....in bronze for me**

The Duke now changes the subject and talks about his intended marriage with the daughter of the Count, the master of the messenger. He tells the messenger that the natural generosity of his master is sufficient guarantee that his legitimate expectations for a dowry would be fully satisfied. A suitable dowry will not be denied to him. Then very cunningly he adds that, of course, his primary interest is not in the dowry but in the fair daughter of the Count.

❖ **Analysis**

♥ Written in **1842** by Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" is the dramatic monologue of the duke of Ferrara who is negotiating his second marriage through an agent of the count of Tyrol on the grand staircase of the ducal palace at Ferrara in northern Italy. Executing the elements of a dramatic monologue, the duke reveals his situation and much more than he intends to the both the agent and the reader.

♥ Using iambic pentameter AABB couplets Robert Browning reveals the horrifying story of the murder of the duke's previous wife through the duke's conversation with the agent. As the duke attempts to paint an inaccurate picture of himself to the agent, desiring to appear as a noble, but abused and caring, loving husband who had no choice but to murder his prideful, disrespectful wife, the duke's true controlling, manipulative, jealous nature is revealed.

❖ **Type of Work**

♥ ..... "My Last Duchess" is a dramatic monologue, a poem with a character who presents an account centering on a particular topic. This character speaks all the words in the poem. During his discourse, the speaker intentionally or unintentionally reveals information about one or more of the following: his personality, his state of mind, his attitude toward his topic, and his response or reaction to developments relating to his topic .

♥ The main focus of a dramatic monologue is this personal information, not the topic which the speaker happens to be discussing. The word *monologue* is derived from a Greek word meaning to speak alone.

### ❖ Publication

♥ .....Browning first published poem under the title "I. Italy" in 1842 in *Dramatic Lyrics*, a collection of sixteen Browning poems. Brown changed the title of the poem to "My Last Duchess" before republishing it in **1849** in another collection, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*.

### ❖ Setting and Background

♥ .....The setting of "My Last Duchess," a highly acclaimed **1842** poem by Robert Browning, is the palace of the Duke of Ferrara on a day in October **1564**.

### ❖ Characters

♥ Speaker (or Narrator): The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara. Browning appears to have modeled him after Alfonso II, who ruled Ferrara from **1559** to **1597**. Alfonso was married three times but had no children. The poem reveals him as a proud, possessive, and selfish man and a lover of the arts. He regarded his late wife as a mere object who existed only to please him and do his bidding.

- **Duchess:** The late wife of the duke. Browning appears to have modeled her after Lucrezia de' Medici, a daughter of Cosimo de' Medici (**1519-1574**),
- **Emissary of the Count of Tyrol:** The emissary has no speaking role; he simply listens as the Duke of Ferrara tells him about the late Duchess of Ferrara
- **Count of Tyrol:** The father of the duke's bride-to-be.
- **Daughter of the Count of Tyrol:** The duke's bride-to-be is the daughter of the count
- **Frà Pandolph:** The duke mentions him as the artist who painted the fresco.

### ❖ Model Question

1. The speaker in My Last Duchess is \_\_\_\_\_
- A. the Duchess
  - B. the Queen
  - C. the Duke
  - D. the messenger

The correct answer is (C)

# Lecture 12

## Break - By Alfred, Lord Tennyson

### ❖ Break, Break, Break

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

#### 1

- 1 Break,<sup>1</sup> break, break,
- 2 On thy cold gray stones, O<sup>2</sup> Sea!
- 3 And I would<sup>3</sup> that my tongue could utter
- 4 The thoughts that arise in me.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2

- 5 O, well for the fisherman's boy,
- 6 That he shouts with his sister at play!
- 7 O, well for the sailor lad,
- 8 That he sings in his boat on the bay!<sup>4</sup>

#### 3

- 9 And the stately ships go on
- 10 To their haven under the hill;
- 11 But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
- 12 And the sound of a voice that is still!

#### 4

- 13 Break, break, break,
- 14 At the foot of thy crags,<sup>5</sup> O Sea!
- 15 But the tender grace of a day that is dead
- 16 Will never come back to me.

- ♥ Tennyson was one of a family of twelve. The place where he was brought up was a very retired one and here from childhood. Tennyson stored his mind with those impressions of nature to which it was ever deeply sensitive. He published his poems in **1840**, which firmly established him as the leading poet of the day. He was created poet- laureate in **1850**.

### ❖ INTRODUCTION

- ♥ This is a sad poem inspired by the death of Tennyson's intimate friend- Arthur Hallam. The sea with its waves breaking against the shore awakens in the poet memories of bygone days and reminds him of happy days that passed never to return. In stanza **1**, the poet expresses his inability to describe the thoughts that arise in him.
- ♥ In stanza **2**, he envies the happiness of the fisherman's boy who plays with his sister and the sailor who sings happily in his boat. In stanza **3**, he misses the kind of touch and the voice of a friend who is dead. The happiness of bygone days never comes back (stanza **4**).

## ❖ Substance of the poem

- ♥ The waves of the sea are rising and falling. As if sharing the grief of the poet, they strike their head against the rocks and break into water drops. The waves of the sea, like the poet himself, remain helpless in conveying their grief to the shore. The poet observes that 'human life goes on as usual'. The stately ships come into the harbor and go out of it as usual. The stately ships come into the harbor and go out of it as usual, and the children are shouting joyfully at their game.
- ♥ However, neither the sympathy of nature, nor the throb and zest of life around him, can serve to lessen his grief. His sorrow is too deep for words. His friend is dead, and he will never again hear his voice, nor touch his hand. The pleasure which he enjoyed in his company will never be again:  
**But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.**

## ❖ Critical notes, comments & explanation

### ♥ Stanza 1

The poet sits on the grave of his friend Arthur Hallam on a lonely hill, overlooking the Bristol Channel. The poet is sad at the death of his friend. His sorrow is so deep that he fails to find adequate words to express it.

Break, break.....The waves of the sea are rising and falling and breaking into water drops. It seems to the poet that they are striking their head against the sea-shore, as if in sympathy with his grief. Like him they, too, fail to express their grief.

### ♥ Stanza 2

The sailor's lad, and the fisherman's boy are happy at play. They are shouting with joy. The boy alone is sad. Life is happy and pleasant for the fisherman's boy, and not for the poet.

### ♥ Stanza 3

The ships are coming and going as usual. But the poet's friend is dead. He can no longer hear his voice or feel the touch of his hand. Life will never again be the same for him. The poet wishes his friend were alive and he could hear his voice or feel the touch of his hand.

### ♥ Stanza 4

Nature may mourn the death of his friend in sympathy with him, but alas. His friend will never live again. He will never again know that happiness which he enjoyed in his company.

## ❖ Type of Work and Date of Composition

- ♥ "Break, Break, Break" is a lyric poem that Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) was believed to have completed in 1834. It centers on Tennyson's grief over the death of his best friend, Arthur Hallam, a fellow poet. Lyrical poetry presents the deep feelings and emotions of the poet as opposed to poetry that tells a story or presents a witty observation. A lyric poem often has a pleasing musical quality. The word *lyric* derives from the Greek word for *lyre*, a stringed instrument in use since ancient times.

## ❖ Rhetorical Devices

♥ Following are examples of figures of speech and other rhetorical devices in "Break, Break, Break":

- Apostrophe

(Lines **1** and **2**): The narrator addresses the sea.

- Personification and metaphor

also occur in Lines **1** and **2**, for the poet regards the sea as a human being.

- Alliteration

(Line **8**): **b**oat on the **b**ay

(Lines **9-12**): Stanza **3** uses this figure of speech as follows:

And the stately ships go on

To their **h**aven under the **h**ill;

But O for the touch of a **v**anished **h**and,

And the **s**ound of a **v**oice that is **s**till!

(Line **15**): **d**ay that is **d**ead

## ❖ Themes

- Grief

The main theme is bereavement, heartache, emptiness. In the narrator's dark hour of grief, the sun rises, children laugh, business goes on as usual. How could the world be so cruel and unfeeling?

- Preciousness of Youth

Tennyson's friend, Arthur Hallam, was only **22** when he died. The shock of Hallam's death impressed upon Tennyson how priceless youth is. To underscore this idea, and to express the agony he suffers at the loss of young Hallam, Tennyson presents images of youthful joy: the fisherman's son playing with his sister and the "sailor lad" singing in the bay.

## ❖ Model Question

1. Tennyson was born in.....

- A. 1807
- B. 1808
- C. 1809
- D. 1810

The correct answer is ( c )



## Lecture 13

### Modern Poetry - Next, Please by Philip Larkin

#### ❖ The main characteristics of Modern Poetry

1. Modern poetry is free from traditional restrictions of rhyme and rhythm.
2. It is greatly affected by modern science and technology.
3. The modern poet is pessimistic about the future of modern man and his world.
4. Modern poetry is affected by modern political, social and economic theories.
5. In modern poetry, words are used more symbolically than literally.
6. The language of modern poetry is that of everyday conversation. The modern poet is speaking to his reader in an intimate tone of voice.
7. In modern poetry, man is represented as a lonely exile who is seeking his home.
8. There is no logical argument in a modern poem. Rather, the poem depends on the free association of ideas. The modern poem is "a heap of broken images".

#### ❖ Next, Please by Philip Larkin-(1922-1985)

- 1 Always too eager for the future, we
- 2 Pick up bad habits of expectancy.
- 3 Something is always approaching; every day
- 4 Till then we say,
  
- 5 Watching from a bluff the tiny, clear
- 6 Sparkling armada of promises draw near.
- 7 How slow they are! And how much time they waste,
- 8 Refusing to make haste!
  
- 9 Yet still they leave us holding wretched stalks
- 10 Of disappointment, for, though nothing balks
- 11 Each big approach, leaning with brasswork prinked,
- 12 Each rope distinct,
  
- 13 Flagged, and the figurehead wit golden tits
- 14 Arching our way, it never anchors; it's
- 15 No sooner present than it turns to past.
- 16 Right to the last
  
- 17 We think each one will heave to and unload
- 18 All good into our lives, all we are owed
- 19 For waiting so devoutly and so long.
- 20 But we are wrong:
  
- 21 Only one ship is seeking us, a black-
- 22 Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
- 23 A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
- 24 No waters breed or break.

## ❖ Summary

- ♥ We are excessively eager to know what would happen to us in the future. On account of this eagerness, we develop the bad habit of expecting , or hoping for, good things to happen in our lives. All the time we have the feeling that something good is about to happen to us; and every day we say that it would happen soon.
- ♥ We are like persons who stand upon the top of a cliff and observe a multitude of ships coming towards us. Actually, however we see not the ships but promises of bright and nice things happening to us. The approach of these promises , like that of ships, is very slow; and they waste much time.
- ♥ These promises do not materialize quickly, and eventually they do not materialize at all, so that we greatly disappointed and miserable. At a distance, each such promise looks distinct and concrete; but, with the passing of time, each of these promises fades away. We spend all our lives hoping for achievement and success, but our hopes prove to be false.
- ♥ There is only promise and one expectation which never fails to materialize, and that is death.

## ❖ Critical appreciation

- ♥ The theme of disillusionment and of death. The theme of this poem is the disillusionment that we experience as a result of the disappointment of all our hopes and expectations. We keep hoping for something good to happen to us, but our hope is dashed to the ground every time. Only one expectation is always fulfilled in human life, and that is the expectation of death.
- ♥ The title of the poem, Next, Please refers to one promise being followed by another . literally, the title refers to a queue of persons waiting to receive something, and an official at the other end calling out for the next man in the queue to approach him and receive his certificate, or his rations, or his visa, or whatever it is for which people are standing and which they are waiting to receive.
- ♥ The last stanza of the poem points to the inevitability of death. In fact, the real theme of the poem is death. Larkin was obsessed with the idea of death; and many of his poems deal with this theme briefly or at length, directly or indirectly.

## ❖ The use of an extended metaphor to express the idea

- ♥ Our multitude of hopes is compared to a “sparkling armada of promises”. In other words, hopes are regarded as ships which are drawing near but do not actually arrive at their destination. There is only one ship which would not fail to come ; and that ship is death. The metaphor of the ships begins from the second stanza of the poem and continues till the very end.
- ♥ The premise of this piece is that we focus our attention on the future instead of living in the here and now. Notice the inclusive use of “we” and “our” throughout the poem. Larkin suggests we spend our entire lives waiting for the rewards the future will apparently endow to those who patiently wait for them. The irony is, of course, that from our vantage point think we are looking at our well deserved rewards in life when in fact we are only seeing The Grim Reaper’s vessel getting closer.
- ♥ The rhyme scheme is **aabb** and the first three lines of each are mostly in iambic pentameter, while the last line of each is much shorter and is either four or six syllables in length.
- ♥ Note the tone **in the first stanza**. Lexis such as “eager” and “expectancy” have rather positive connotations, yet there is a tension when we see the phrase “bad habits”.
- ♥ **The second stanza** is rather cinematic in nature. This technique is rather typical of much of Larkin’s work. He often provides us with vivid mental images. We are taken to a cliff by the seaside. From here we see an approaching metaphorical “armada of promises”. It brings to mind the phrase that “one day our ship will come in.”

- ♥ He uses a three-part list to premodify this image; it is “tiny, clear” and “Sparkling”. This “armada” is laden with alluring “promises” and seems a very attractive proposition to the onlooker.
- ♥ However, we have a hint of caution when we note the time-reference lexis in the second half of this stanza: “slow”, “time” and “haste”. He seems to be suggesting that much of life is spent waiting for rewards rather than having them.
- ♥ **The third stanza** shows us Larkin’s pivot word “Yet”. He will often set up a scene then interject a “yet” or “but” or “however” to turn the conversation round.
- ♥ The naval semantic field is extended with lexis like “balk”, “brasswork” and “rope”. Note the poet’s effective use of postmodification too, here: brasswork is “prinked” and ropes are “distinct”, but the first line has given us a very clear negative land-based metaphor in the lines:  
**“holding wretched stalks  
Of disappointment”**
- ♥ We have been tantalized but are destined to be let down. Such is Larkin’s pessimistic view of life. The agony of lost opportunity is further extended in the fourth stanza. It starts with alliteration of the repeating “f” sounds and if we had originally thought the “promises” on board had been material wealth, our love life is equally doomed to failure.

### ❖ Model Question

1. The last stanza of Next, Please points to \_\_\_\_\_
- A. The happiness of the poet.
  - B. The beauty of nature.
  - C. The inevitability of death.
  - D. Pleasure of life.

The correct answer is ( c )

## Lecture 14

### General Revision

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