UNIT 2 A PRELUDE TO THE STUDY OF POETRY

Structure

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to appreciate any work of literary art better, specially a poem. To split it into more concrete terms:

- you will be able to speak about the abstract entity that is a poem – in other words the ontology of a poem;
- speak on the acoustic aspects of a poem such as metre, rhyme, and rhythm. And finally;
- you will complete the task of appreciation by bringing together the capacities developed in the previous and the present unit.

With this theoretical background you will be better.equipped to study'this course.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The function of this unit is, in a way to complete the task we had set for ourselves in the previous unit, i.e. preparing you mentally, equipping you technically and

providing you with a perspective for the study of this M.A. English programme in general and this course on British Poetry in particular.

This course on literature, perhaps like any other course on literature, seeks to educate you affectively, improve your ability for appreciation, give you better insights into the ways literary artists, especially the poets, communicate.

In Unit1 we adopted the method of commenting upon two portraits. They are examples of visual art and perhaps made communication more convenient. In this unit we go a little deeper. In talking about a poem you talk about the images and metaphor ; symbol and icon ; emblem and exemplum that have a visual appeal though in an abstract manner.

There is **a** still more subtle and deep level which is the rhythm. This is a product of metre and rhyme and of many other effects which perhaps even the poets are not always conscious. The entire sound effect or prosody of a poem is a common ground of the society, the individual and the language. We will examine some of the fundamental ideas in prosody in the third, fourth and fifth sections. These sections of this unit would require drilling as you do in mathematics. It will require just a little attention and practice so you may study especially 2.3 and 2.4 independently of other sections if you so wish.

The first section **(2.2)** is a bit abstract and examines the thing called a poem. It would be good if you can get a hang of the poem in abstraction. However, don't bother yourself too much about this section in case you find it vague.

The last major section i.e. 2.6 shows how all your study can be employed in "deciphering" the text of a poem. You have done this type of work during your undergraduate days. You may feel that you did not need this section. However, it is included to bring the discussions in the two introductory units to a conclusion. This is the shortest of the five major sections and you may go through it before reading other sections, if you so desire.

However, don't break off at any of the subsections within a section as that may interrupt the discussion in your mind. Then you may feel muddled.

We have not discussed the poetic forms such as the lyric, epic, allegory or fable or the various aspects of figurative language such as simile, metaphors, irony, hyperbole, or terms of art such as fancy, imagination, gothic, classic, neo-classic, romantic, pastoral, elegy, satire, pathos, bathos, myth, romance, sensibility, wit and humour, etc. We expect you to know them or consult a dictionary to find out more as and when they occur in your study of this course.

Although a little time consuming, this unit will enhance your ability to study literature in general and poetry in particular. You may study this unit for an hour or two daily over a week or two.

2.2 THE READING OF LITERATURE

Such are the changes in critical attitudes that a poem is no longer to be read as an inscription on a rock devoid of its origin, context or locale. The poet seen as an inhabitant of a lonely tower or lost in the music of his thought or an inmate of a castle freed from the responsibilities of life whose servants could do the living for him appears today as an unrealistic and posed picture of the poet. The poet is a human being among other human beings, and speaking to and being spoken to reciprocally. The language s/he uses is a social artefact and also a tool in politics. Let's recall

Shakespeare or Yeats or Blake or Kabir or Tulsi. They were all men spealung to other men and-women like themselves.

We could not agree less with Derrida that 'the institutional or socio-political space of literary production... does not simply surround works, it affects them in their very structure.' As students of literature we wish to feel *that* element of the text on our pulse. Hence we get interested in the Irishness of Yeats, the julahaness of Kabir, the atheism of Shelley and the conservativeness of Eliot and Tulsi.

2.2.1 Writing and reading as historical acts

These issues involve us in the historicity of literary products. Talking about the makeup of the poet, in his 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' Eliot wrote:

> ... that the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.

Without this sense, Eliot opines, no poet can remain a poet beyond his twentyfifth year. However, it is not just the tradition of literature that a good poet embodies, but also that of politics, science, economy and natural events. To turn from poetic creations to criticism, in our time Derrida points out that 'Deconstruction calls for a 'highly "historian's" attitude' and admits that *of Grammatology,"* is a history book through and through.' ' In his or her experience of writing as such' continues Derrida, 'a writer cannot not be concerned, interested, anxious about the past, that of literature, history, or philosophy, of culture in general.' Derrida cites two dissimilar cases of James Joyce and William Faulkner:

> What I have just suggested is as valid for Joyce, that immense allegory of historical memory, as for Faulkner, who doesn't write in such a way that he gathers together at every sentence, and in several languages at once, the whole of Western culture.

Dryden in his poetry comments upon contemporary events more frequently than Wordworth but for that reason Wordworth's poetry is not less historically situated than Dryden's or for that matter Shelley's.

2.2.2 The subjectivity of a work.of art

The poet, we have said, is a person living among other persons. And yet his / her poem is not, for the moment we may say?an objective document such as a theorem of Euclid or the 'General theory of Relativity ' of Einstein. The poet writes about an intensely personal experience not only when a Wordsworth is writing his autobiographical poem such as *The* Prelude or a Tennyson expressing his grief over the death of his friend Arthur I-Iallam in *In* Memoriam but also when an Eliot writes The *Waste* Land or an Aurobindo Ghose *Savitri*. So powerful is the narcissism that it does not forsake even a philosopher such as Jacques Derrida. He told Derek Attridge,

> At the "narcissistic" moment of, "adolescent" identification... this was above all the desire to inscribe merely a memory or two. I say "only", though I already felt it an impossible and endless task. Deep down, there was something like a lyrical movement toward confidences or confessions.

Derrida goes on:

> Still today there remains in me an obsessive desire to save in uninterrupted inscription, in the form of a memory, what happens - or *fails* to *happen*. What I should be tempted to denounce as a lure - i.e., totalization or gathering up -

> isn't this what keeps me going? The idea of an internal polylogue, everything that later, in what I hope was a slightly more refined way, was able to lead me to Rousseau or to Joyce, was first of all the adolescent dream of keeping a trace of all the voices which were traversing me - or were *almost doing* so - and which was to be so precious, unique, both specular and speculative.

Derrida above italicizes ' fails to happen' and ' almost doing so ' which shows that literature is not just a simple record of the events of the artist's life but also of his unfulfilled wishes, his dreams, his desires, that Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text* went even further and called 'neuroses.' 'Thus every writer's motto reads:' wrote Barthes, ' *mad I cannot be, sane I do not deign to be, neurotic I am'*. The belief in the subjectivity or autobiographical character of all art has been felt with ever greater intensity since the Romantics. In our own time, ' I want' writes George Poulet,' 'at all costs to save the subjectivity of literature.'

'Eliot's dictum,' Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation'is directed not upon the poetry.' has been much abused in English Departments in support of a certain kind of idleness that obviates any research into the life and times of the poet. 'Poetry ' we have heard beign echoed so often, ' is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.' What is forgotten, however, is that, while contradicting Wordsworth, Eliot went on to qualify his definition in the following words:

> But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

In Eliot's theory of poetry as much as in his poetry we observe the impact of his piety which demands the extinction of personality. 'For knowledge' wrote E.H. Gombrich, ' a well stocked mind, is clearly the key to the practice of interpretation.' In order to interpret a poem we cannot overemphasize the importance of a knowledge of the life of the poet and the background of his age. 'Man' wrote Emerson,' is explicble by nothing less than all his history.'

2.2.3 The Specular moment of literature

'He should' however, pointed out Emerson,' see that he can live all history in his own person.' He advises the student to read history actively and not passively. Emerson exhorts him:

> He must sit solidly at home, and not suffer himself to be bullied by Kings or empires, but know that he is greater than all the geography and all the government of the world; he must transfer the point of view from which history is commonly read, from Rome and Athens and London to himself, and not deny his conviction that he is the court, and if England or Egypt have anything to say to him, he will try the case; if not let them for ever be silent.

What is relevant for us in history is the moment or instance in the present - in the poet's life, in the reader's life - that the past can throw its floodlight upon. Otherwise we say, as it has been said, 'Let the dead past bury its dead' or repeat with Gandhi Ji in *Hind Swaraj* that happy is a nation without a history. The necessary history is inscribed in ourselves just as the wings of the young pigeon that hatched yesterday predicted air and the eyes of the human embryo anticipated light. The poet writes about the present, about the living, not what is dead and discarded. 'The poet's text is the text of bliss', as Barthes says, 'the text that discomforts, unsettles the reader's historical, cultural , phychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language'.

Now you may ask what are you to do as a student and critic of literature. How should you treat history or biography in your own analyses of a poem. History and biography

have to be reconciled to the interpretation of a new, a specular moment described in the work of art. Derrida opines that history is contretemps - a series of unlucky, unfortunate or unexpected events - and its virtue lies in its iterability. In his 'Signature Event Context' he pointed out that the verb 'iterate' comes from the Sanskrit root *iter* which means different, (भिन्न). While history is iterable, or repeatable it is not the same event that is repeated. (Anjali, though a copy of a 16th century Mughal paniting is a new act, has a different originary history. It nonetheless underlines the value of the original.) By repetition Derrida points out,

> Not that the text is thereby dehistoricized, but historicity is made of iterability. There is no history without iterability, and this is also what lets the traces continue to function in the absence of the general context or some elements of the context.

It is for these reasons that we have to read a poem simultaneously for what is unique and specular in it and the iteration - in both senses of repetition and difference - of the historical and general.

2.2.4 From the writer's text to the reader's work

Western criticsm in the latter half of the twentieth century can be said to have moved from a poetics of writing to a poetics of reading. The Sanskrit critical theory developed theories of *Karayitri Pratibha* and a *Bhavayitri Pratibha* - the creative and appreciative talents. 'Classic criticism' complained Roland Barthes in *Images Music Text*, ' has never paid any attention to the reader; for it the writer is the only person in literature.' For Barthes points out that ' a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original blend and clash.' Barthes pointed out at the instability of the text, According to him a text is not isotropic (*isos* in Greek means same and *tropos* manner or disposition). The edges and the seams are unpredictable he tells us. 'In the man, could we lay him open' opined Emerson, 'we should see the reason for his last flourish and tendril of his work; as every spine and tint in the sea-shell pre-exist in the secreting organs of the fish'. However reassuring Emerson may sound it appears today as an elusive goal; nonetheless a desirable one.

So after Derrida we talk about archaeological criticism that goes at the writer's text, to the sources of experience both unique and not-unique at the same time. In this sense the text is open. We have just a trace of the author's meaning in his text which can be supplemented by the author's other works both written and unwritten and all other texts of all other authors, the t.v. programmes, newspaper reports etc, to which the author responds,

The reader, however, delimits the open ended text of the author. S/He imposes upon it the status of a work. He interprets, analyses, examines and evaluates and arrives at a definite meaning which we call,eschatological criticism after Derrida. Eschatology from the Greek ' doctrine of last things' is usually applied to death and the last judgement. Thus the reader's work has a stable meaning. This criticism can be called in Barthes' words 'a mere parasite of the story being narrated.'

Self - Check Exercise I

1. Write in about 60 of your own words on the relevance of the reader to a work of art.

_____

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_____

2. If your friend tells you that a poem is made of words how would you respond to him / her?

2.3 VERSIFICATION: THE GRAMMAR OF POETRY.

In one his last poems written in 1,938called 'The Statues' the Irish poet W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) marvelled at 'The lineaments of a plummet measured face'. As you know masons work with plummets which is a plumb or ball of lead attached to a string for testing perpendicularity of wall, etc. And yet the 'plummet measured face' has its distinctive features or lineaments. Earlier on in the poem Yeats had written:

> ... for the men
> That with a mallet or a chisel modelled these
> Calculations that look but casual flesh, put down
> All Asiatic vague immensities,
> And not banks of oars that swam upon
> The many-headed foam at Salamis.
> Europe put off that foam when Phidias.
> Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass.

Salamis, which you may locate on a map of Greece, was the site of the rout in 480 B.C. of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.)- the son of Darius, the Persian King (521-485 B.C.) - by the Greeks. According to Herodotus (5th B.C.) the Greek historian who had participated in the war and left an account of it, the armies of the Persians were fantastic; their might unchallenged. However they were defeated by the cooperation of Athens and Sparta . Salamis is seen here as a symbol of the victory of

mathematics, calculation, number over 'vague immensities' and the proverbeal Asiatic grandeur. We are reminded of the sea battle at Salamis by the 'many headed foam' in the sixth line of the quotation above. In the same line Yeats cunningly slips in the name of Phidias, who was perhaps the greatest artist of ancient Europe. His colossal statue of Zeus at Olympia in the south-east of Acropolis wrought in ivory and gold over a core of wood was the most famous statue of antiquity. He had also contributed three statues of Athene on Acropolis. One of them was wrought in ivory and gold. He had also probably designed and certainly supervised the construction of the frieze of Parthenon. Yeats perhaps wants to tell us that it was Phidias' artistry, his life-like creations, products of calculation and measurement nonetheless that set high standards for the society of Pericles (492-429 B.C.).

We may, may not or only partially agree with Yeats's observations above on 'Asiatic vague immensities' but we cannot deny that pieces of art, or any work in politics or warfare for that matter, are human contrivances of planning with the help of cold concrete facts - be they words, or colours or rocks and mortar or people and locations.

A student who wishes to learn poetry properly must learn the basics of metre especially if s/he wishes to appreciate the poetry in a foreign language. With reference to the study of ancient Greek and Latin literature by English students Eliot opined:

> We have to learn a dead language by an artificial method, and our methods of teaching have to be applied to pupils most of whom have only a moderate gift for language.

While delivering his W.P. Ker Memorial Lecture (1942) at Glasgow Eliot went even further and emphasised the study of English metre even for the native English speaker:

> Even in approaching the poetry of our own language, we may find the classification of metres, of lines with different numbers of syllables and stresses in different places, useful at a preliminary stage, as a simplified map of a complicated territory: but it is only the study not of poetry but of poems, that can train our ear.

What Eliot says after the colon gives the impression that if you know the technique some day inspiration would descend and give your verse the life that is poetry. The 'soul of rhythm' Sri Aurobindo (whose writings you are going to rend in another course) wrote 'can only be found by listening in to what is behind the music of words and sound and things'. He admitted, that the 'intellectual knowledge of technique helps... provided one does not make of it a mere device or a rigid fetter' Aurobindo appears to be in agreement with Eliot but they appear on the surface to place their emphases a little differently. Aurobindo points out:

> Attention to technique harms only when a writer is so busy with it that lie becomes ihdifferent to substance. But if the substance is adequate, the attention to technique can only give it greater beauty.

'It is in my view' Aurobindo went on,

> a serious error to regard metre or rhyme as artificial elements, mere external and superfluous equipment restraining the movement and sincerity of poetic form. Metre, on the contrary, is the most natural mould of expression for certain states of creative emotion and vision, it is much more natural and spontaneous than a non-metrical form; the emotion expresses itself best and most powerfully in a balanced rather than in a loose and shapeless rhythm. The search for techniques is simply the search for the best and most

appropriate form for expressing what has to be said and once it is found, the inspiration can flow quite naturally and fluently into it.

In different words though, Eliot and Aurobindo appear to be in agreement about the place and utility of the knowledge of versification in the writing and, by extension for us, the study of poetry in English.

2.3.1 Prosody, Metre, Scansion

(a) **Prosody** : That part of grammar which deals with laws governing the structure of verse is called prosody. It encompasses the study of all the elements of language that contribute towards acoustic or rhythmic effects, chiefly in poetry but also in prose. Ezra Pound called Prosody "the articulation of the total sound of a poem". However, we know that alliteration (the rhythmic repetition of consonants) and assonance (repetition of vowel sounds) occur as much in prose as in poetry. Besides assonance and alliteration rhythmic effects are produced in poetry as well as in prose by the repetition of syntactical and grammatical patterns, However, compared with even the simplest verse, the "prosodic" structure of prose would appear haphazard and unconsidered.

(b) **Metre and Metrics :** Metre measures the rhythm of a line of verse. The word inetre derives from the Greek word *metron* which means 'measure'. Traditionally metre refers to the regular, recurrence of feet. According to the Hungarian-American linguist John Lotz (b. 1913), 'In some languages there are texts in whicli the phonetic material within certain syntactic frames, such as sentence, phrase, word, is numerically regulated. Such a text is called verse, and its distinctive characteristics meter. Metrics is the study of meter. A nonmetric text is called prose.' In the words of Seymour Chatman (b.1928) 'Meter might be defined as a systematic convention whereby certain aspects of phonology are organised for aesthetic purposes. In order to find out where the accent falls we scan a line.' 'Like any conventicn' Chatman goes on, 'it is susceptible of individual variation which could be called stylistic, taking "style" in the common meaning of "idiosyncratic way of doing something"'

(c) **Scansion** : In general parlance, to scan is to look intently at all parts successively. Radars cause particular regions to be traversed by a controlled beam. In prosody scansion refers to metrical scanning of verse. When a unit of verse - a foot, a line or a stanza - is scanned with the help of symbol's the metre can be seen as well as heard.

We make use of a few syinbols in order to scan a passage in verse (and sometimes also in the case of prose). The symbols are shown below:

Symbol	Name of the symbol	Purpose
/	The acute accent	Metrically stressed syllable
u	The breve	Metrically weak syllable
|	A single line	Division between feet
||	A double line	Caesura or pause in the line
A	A rest	A syllable metrically expected but not actually present.

2.4 TYPES OF METRES

There are basically four types of metres. They are:

i. Syllable – stress or accented syllabic metres
ii. Strong – stress metres
iii. Syllabic metres
iv. Quantitative metres

We will now discuss each one of them one by one.

2.4.1 Syllable-stress or accented syllabic metres

The smallest unit of meter in poetry is a foot. A **foot** in'prosody is a pattern of phonetically stressed and unstressed syllables. The four principal feet foand in English verse are illustrated below:

(a)	iambic	ăppéar, bĕhóld, ăttáck, sŭpplý
(b)	trochee	tíger, hólў, úppĕr, grándeŭr
(c)	anapaest	ŭndĕrstánd, cŏllŏnáde, rĕăppéar
(d)	dactyl	déspĕrăte, messĕnger, propĕrtў, infămŏus

Besides, the four major feet the **spondee** (′′) and the **pyrrhus** (∪ u) also occur as substitutions in a passage of verse. Some theorists also admit the **amphibrach** (∪/∪), **amphimacer** (/ ∪ /) and **tribrach** (u u ∪) into their scansion. However, these are rather uncommon in English poetry.

Syllable stress metres got established in English in the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?-1400). After him, for about two centuries the syllable-stress metre fell into disuse or was misunderstood. It was only towards the end of the 16th century that the syllable-stress metres got re-established.

Now we will scan a passage of each major metrical type and then leave a few stanzas unscanned for you to scan. After having scanned them with a *pencil* you may compare your scansion with those scanned at the end of the unit.

(i) The Iambic metre :

With rav/ished ears
The mon/arch hears
Assumes / the God
Affects / to nod.
And seems / to shake / the spheres. Dryden.

Comments: The five line stanza above is in iambic dimeter (two feet). However, the concluding line is in iambic trimeter. The rhyme scheme is a b b a,

Self-check Exercise 1

Now you may scan the following passages and comment briefly on the metrical features:

Passage 1: In woods a ranger

To joy a stranger

Comments :

_____

_____

2: Thy way not mine, O Lord

However dark it be;

Lead me with thine own hand

Choose out the path for me.

Comments :

_____

_____

3: The way was long, the wind was cold,

The minstrel was infirm and old;

The harp, his sole remaining joy,

Was carried by an orphan boy,

Comments :

_____

_____

4: Confusion shame remorse despair,

At once his bosom swell

The damps of death bedewed his brow,

He shook, he groaned, he fell.

Comments :

_____

_____

_____

_____

5: I put my hat upon my head

And walked into the Strand,

And there I met another man

Whose hat was in his hand.

Comments

The passages above, you must have noticed, are clumsily regular. They may qualify as passable verse but don't have the power to move us as poetry does.

By far the most cominon measure of English poetry is the **iambic pentameter.** It is generally found in two distinct kinds - the unrhymed variety called **blank verse** and the rhymed variety **heroic couplet.**

As epics concentrated on a typical hero such as Achilles and Aeneas they were generally called heroic poems. Dryden and Pope translated Virgil (70-19 B.C.) and Homer (9th Century B.C) respectively in the rhyming couplet. It became the dominant metre of late seventeenth and eighteenth century poetry. Hence the metre began to get called "heroic". The Restoration playwrights in trying to transfer epic gsandeur to their stiige made their characters speak in heroic couplet. The effect, however, was grandiose rather than grand. The heroic couplet reached perfection in the hands of Alexander Pope. Below we scan four lines from his *Essay* on *Criticism* (1711) :

When A/jax strives/ some rock's/ vast weight/ to throw,
The line/ too lab/ours, and// the words/ move slow;
Not so,// when swift/ camilla scours1 the plain
Flies o'er/ th. unbend/ing corn/ and skims/ along/ the main.

The lines above are in regular iambic pentameter except the sixth which is an hexameter. An iambic hexameter line is also called an **alexandrine.** In the second foot of the fourth line we notice an elision i.e. omission of a syllable in pronunciation. Thomas Norton (1532-84) and Thomas Sackville used *blank verse* for the first time in their play *Gorboduc* (1561). Below is a specimen from the play:

The royal king and eke his sons are slain;
No ruler rests within the regal seat;
The heir, to whom the scepter ' longs, unknown
Lo, Britain's realm is left an open prey,
A present spoil for conquest to ensue.

The regimented uniformity of the iambic pentameter lines above communicates monotony and as poetiy it is lifeless.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93), about whom you would read in the course on *British Drama* (MEG 02), changed all this by varying the accents, introducing the medial pause (called **caesura**) and allowing the sense to flow into a freer sentence structure. Here is an example from *Doctor Faustus* (1604) :

Was this/ the face/ that launched / a thous/and ships,
And burnt/ the top/less tower/ of Il/ium ?

Sweet Hélen,/ make me/ immortal/ with a kiss,

Her lips/ suck forth/ my soul;/ see where/ it flies !

Come; Helen,/ come, give me/ my soul/ again.

Here will/ I dwell/ for hea/ven is/ in these lips,

And all/ is dross/ that is/ not Hel/ena.

You would notice that the passage above is dominated by blank verse i.e unrhymed iambic pentameter. However, the third and fifth lines are tetrameter lines. Whereas the first foot of the third line is a spondee, there is an anapaestic variation in the last foot. With the help of an extra unstressed syllable before "Kiss" Marlowe succeeds in communicating, as it were, Faustus's .longing for Helen.

Marlowe intoduces the fifth line with a trochaic inversion. This is succeeded by an amphimacer. However, you would notice that while there are metrical variations in the two lines, the number of accented syllables remain uniformly five in each line of the passage. Marlowe thus achieves a felicity of expression by adopting a unique rhythm apposite for the character and his stuation in the play but without contravening the natural rhythm of the English language.

Even more **flexibility** was introduced into English poetry by Shakespeare. You may scan one of his sonnets or some of the passages you like in his plays you will read on the ***British Drama*** (MEG 02) course.

Self-check Exercise III :

Now you may scan a couple of passages from Shakespeare and Keats and write your comments on them in the space provided:

(a) Two truths are told,

As hap/py pro/logues to / the swell/ing act

Of the imperial theme. I thank you, gentlemen.

This supernatural soliciting

Cannot be ill, cannot be good; if ill,

Why hath it given me earnest of success,

Commencing in a truth ? I am Thane of Cawdor.

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair.

And make my seated heart knock at my ribs Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and Kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Appolo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told ,
That 'deep browed Homer ruled as his demesne
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise
Silent upon a peak in Darien.

John Keats.

In the examples above you noticed that two measurements are involved in metre: we have to speak about the kind of foot and the number of feet. You scanned passages in the iambic metre in two feet or dimeter, three feet or trimeter, four feet or tetrameter, five feet or pentameter, six feet or hexameter and seven feet or septameter. You noticed that the septameter verse often divided into lines of tetrameter alternating with trimeter. It has been estimated that ninety per cent of English poetry is in the iambic pentameter. Now we will examine a few examples of the trochee, anapaest and dactyl also.

(ii) *The Trochaic Metre* :

Below we scan a stanza in trochaic tetrameter:

May thou/ month of/ rosy/ beauty,
Month when/ pleasure/ is a/ duty,
Month of/ bees and/ month of/ flowers,
Month of/ blossom/ laden/ bowers.

Do the drill below in order to find how well you have understood the trochaic metre.

Self-Check Exercise IV

(a)

Dreadful gleams,

Dismal screams,

Fires that glow,

Shrieks of woe,

Sullen moans,

Hollow groans. A.Pope

(b) Rich the treasure,

Sweet the pleasure. J. Dryden

(c) When the British warrior queen

Bleeding from the Roman rods,

Sought with an indignant mien

Counsel of her country's gods.

(d) Tell me not in mournful numbers

Life is but an empty dream;

For the soul is dead that slumbers,

And things are not what they seem .A.W. Longfellow

(e) All that walk on foot or ride in chariots

All that dwell in palaces or garrets

(f) On a mountain stretched beneath a hoary willow

Lay a shepherd swain and viewed the rolling billow.

Above you **scanned** passages of trochaic mono-, di-, tri-, tetra-, penta-, and hexameters. However, I may remind you that in good poetry you do not find long stretches in the trochaic metre. The iambus and trochee are bisyllabic feet. Now let us

examine the anapaest and dactyl which are trisyllabic feet i.e.; they are made of three syllables.

(iii) The anapaestic metre.

Below is scanned a passage in anapaestic trimeter:

I am mon/arch of all/ I survey,
My right/ there is none/ to dispute;
From the cen/tre all round/ to the sea
I am lord/ of the bird/ and the brute

You will notice above that the first foot of the second line is an iambus. Verses in the anapaestic metre often have iambic substitution. Now you may do the following self-check exercise.

Self-check Exercise V

(a) How fleet is the glance of the mind
Compared with the speed of its flight !
The tempest itself lags behind
And the swift winged arrows of light

(b) The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

(c) Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corpse to the ramparts we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot,
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

(d) I am out of humanity's reach,

I must finish my journey alone.

_____

_____

The couple of lines are in anapaestic trimeter. However, the first foot is an iambic substitution.

(iv) The dacylic metre

It helps to recall a trochee a the converse of an iambus, and the dactyl as the opposite of an anapaest. Below we scan a passage in dactylic dimeter.

Touch her not scornfully

Think of her mournfully.

Gently and humanly;

Not of the remains of her

Now is pure womanly.

The passage above is in dactylic dimeter. The rhymescheme is a a a b a. Now do the following exercise.

Self-check Exercise VI

Scan the following and then briefly comment on the scansion.

(a) One more unfortunate

Weary of breath

Rashly importunate

Gone to her death!

Take her up tendenly;

Lift her with care;

Fashion'd so slenderly young and so fair!

_____

_____

(b) Merrily merrily shall I live now

Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

_____

_____

Above you have learnt to scan passages in the four dominant feet of English ie; the iambus, trochee, anapaest and dactyl.

(v) The amphibrachic metre

In a word such as eternal you notice that the emphasis falls on the middle syllable. 'Eternal' thus is in the amphibrachic foot. Let's scan a line in the amphibrachic metre.

Ŏ hush thee,/ my babie/ thy sire was/ a knight.

You may have noticed that the last foot is an iambus.

Self - Check Exercise VII

Scan the following passage and then comment on your scansion:

(a) Most friendship is feigning

Most friendship mere folly.

Compare your scansion with the passage scanned for your under 2.9.

Above you have an outline of the "traditional" English metres. These were established by the Renaissance theorists who tried to subject the vernacular English forms to the rules of classical prosody. Let us now turn to examine three other forms of metres.

2.4.2 Strong–stress metres

Antecedent to the syllable–stress metres was the strong–stress metre of Old and Middle English poetry. The strong-stress metres for that reason are often called the "native" metres and they are indigenous to the Germanic languages (such as German, English, Dutch, Swedish, etc.). In strong-stress verse there are a fixed number of stresses in each line. The unstressed syllables may, however, vary considerably. The use of strong–stress metre can be seen in the Old English epic poem *Beowulf* (C. 1000) and in William Langland's vision poem, ***Piers Plowman.*** Below you have the opening four lines from the latter :

In a sómer sésun // whon sófte, was the sónne

I schóp me in-to a schróud // a schéep as I wére;

In hábite of an hérmite // un-hóly of wérkes

Wende I wýdene in this world // w ndres to here.

You would notice in the four lines above that each line divides into a medial pause (ll) or caesura. On both sides of the caesura there are two stressed syllables. The passage is also marked by alliteration.

With the rise of French literature in England in the 12th and 13th centuries rhyme replaced alliteration and stanzaic forms replaced the four-stress line. However, the strong-stress rhythm was too strong to be abandoned completely and it can be felt in the love lyrics and popular ballads of the 14th and 15th centuries. If you scan ' Lord

Randall ' you will find a mixture of the iambus and the anapaest of the "traditional" metre along with the four stresses divided equally on two sides of the caesura.

O where ha you been // Lord Randall, my son ?

And where ha you been // my handsome young man ?

I ha been at the greenwood ; // mother, mak my bed soon,

For I'am wearied wi h ul htin, // and fain wad lie d o wn.

Today the strong-stress survives in nursery rhymes and songs:

Jack and Jill // went up the hill,

To fetch a pale // of water,

Jack, fell down, and // broke his crown

And Jill // came tumbling after.

Above there is an alternation of four and three stresses in alternate lines. However, there'is more regularity in most of the nursery rhymes:

One, two // buckle my shoe:

Three, four // knock at the door;

Five, six // pick up sticks;

Seven, eight // lay them straight;

The middle of the nineteenth century saw the revival of interest in the strong-stress metres due to the innovations of Walt Whitrnan (1819-92) in America and Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89) in England. In the 20th century a number of poets, including Ezra Pound (1885-1972), T.S.Eliot (1888-1965) and W.H. Auden (1907-73) revived the strong–stress metre. Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (1948) and Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) testify to the energy of the strong–stress metre.

2.4.3 Syllabic Metres

In syllabic metres stresses and pauses vary. The number of syllables in each line, however, remains fixed. Poetry in Romance languages (languages that have grown out of Latin, the language of ancient Rome, such as French, Italian and Spanish) is dominated by the syllabic metres. In English, however, to most ears, the syllable-count alone does not produce any rhythmic interest.

2.4.4 Quantitative metres

Quantity in the present context refers to the *time* we take to pronounce a syllable. It is a product of the duration for which we pronounce the vowel at the nucleus of the syllable. For instance you can pronounce "sweet rose" in various ways shortening and lengthening the vowel sound as you please. This variability, however, would hinder communication between the poet and you as the reader. Now if you compare Sanskrit, or Hindi for that matter, with English you find that you cannot exercise your discretion in lengthening or shortening the vowel sound or the quantity of the syllable in the two Indian languages. They are predetermined by the linguistic system of Sanskrit and Hindi.

The quantitative metres dominated Greek and Latin poetry because they are highly inflected. (To inflect a word is to change its form at the end according to its peculiar, case, mood, tense and number. For instance we can say that "child" and "boy" inflect differently in the plural.) The inflection promoted the construction of long, slow-paced lines because those languages supported the alternation of the long vowels in the roots and the short ones in the inflections. English which lost most of its inflections in the 15th century, unlike German, is less hospitable to the quantitative metres.

2.5 RHYME AND RHYTHM IN POETRY

You know that verse is generally distinguished from prose as a more compressed and regularly rhythmic form of statement. One of the most important constituents of rhythm is **metre** about which you know already. There are, however, other factors such as **alliteration** (the use of several nearby words or stressed syllables beginning with the same consonant **), assonance** (the repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds usually in accented syllables), **consonance** (the repetition of a pattern of consonants with changes in the intervening vowels such as in *linger, longer; languor*) and onamatopoeia (which is direct verbal imitation ofnatural sounds) that also contribute to rhythm. Besides metre on the one hand and alliteration, assonance, consonance and onamatopoeia on the other, rhyme helps to create rhythm and define units of verse in subtle ways. Let's now examine *rhyme* and what it does; however, after you've done a short exercise.

Self -Check Exercise VIII

Don't scan the following passages. However, identify the use of alliteration, assonance, or consonance in them and then supply your comments in the space provided. Having done so compare your answers with those supplied at the end of the unit.

(a) Ruin hath taught we thus to ruminate
That Time will come and take my love away.
Shakespeare : Sonnet 64

(b) In pious times, ere priestcraft did begin,
Before polygamy was made a sin,
Dryden :'Absalom and Achitophel'

(c) For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.
Keats :'Ode or Melancholy'

(d) Not the twilight of the gods but a precise dawn
if sallow and grey bricks, arid the newsboys crying war.
Louis MacNeice

(e) It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined .
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned.
Wilfned Owen : ' Strange Meeting

2.5.1 Rhyme and Rhymeschemes

Rhyme consists generally of identity of sounds at the end of lines of verse. Now let's read the following lines:

Faith is not built on disquisitions *vain* ;
The things we must believe are few or *plain.*
John Dryden : *Religio Laici*

Above ' vain ' and ' plain ' are rhyming words. You will notice that both are accented monosyllabic words. Such a rhyme is called **masculine.**

When the accented syllable is followed by an unaccented syllable (as in 'hounding' and 'bounding') the rhyme is called **feminine.** An example is given below:

Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good–morrow.

You notice above that ' son-ow ' and ' morrow ' are bisyllabic words and the accent falls on the first syllables. You will notice also that there is **double rhyme** above.

In English **triple rhyme** is used for comic or satiric purposes, as Byron does in Don Juan:

... oh! , ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not henpecked you all ?

Above the last three syllables that have been underlined rhyme.

Sometimes syllables within the same line may rhyme as in the Iast stanza of Browning's 'Confessions' :

Alas,
We loved, sir – used to meet ;
How sad and bad and mad it was –
But then how it was sweet !

The words ' sad ' , ' bad ' and ' mad ' in the passage above rhyme though within the same line.This is an example of **internal rhyme.**

When rhymes are only rhymes in appearance and not in sound as in the case of 'alone' and 'done' or 'remove' and 'love' we have **eye rhyme.**

Above (SCE VIII,e) you read a few lines from Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting'. The poem furnishes examples of *assonance.* However, Owen called it **pararhyme.** Such rhymes are now used for special effects but it was earlier understood as a sign

of pressing exigency or lack of skill. It was thus called of ***rhyme*** (orpartial, ***imperfect*** or ***slant rhyme***).

You have read above that Old English and Old Germanic heroic poetry as well as the lyrics in O.E. were written in strong-stress metre. With the ascendancy of the influence of French on English rhymes replaced alliteration and stanzaic forms gave way to four stress lines of the so called "native" or strong–stress metres.

However, blank verse is unrhymed verse and until the advent of *free verse* it alone achieved wide popularity in English. Although used by the Earl of Surrey in translating Virgil's *Aeneid* blank verse was employed primarily in drama. Milton's *Paradise* Lost (1667), however, was one of the first epic poems in English lo use it. In the nineteenth century Wordsworth's *The Prelude (1868-1869),* Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1833)and Browning's *The* ***Ring*** *and the Book (1868-1869)* were written in blank verse.

Sometimes stanzaic forms do not exist in poetry in blank verse as in the case of Milton's 'Lycidas' (1637) and *Paradise Lost.* This is true also of rhymed verse as in Samuel Johnsons 'London' (1738) and 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' (1749). The texts are divided into units of sense as in prose paragraphs and'are thus called **verse paragraph.**

The recurring feature of English poetry is, however, a *stanza* which consists of a fixed number of lines and a well defined rhyme scheme. However, it is not so in the case of Dryden's 'Alexander's Feast' (which you will read in Block 5) which has lines of varying lengths as well as number of lines. Similarly Spenser's *Epithalamion* is in the stanzaic form but the stanzas are constituted of lines of varying lengths and rhymes. In this case stanzaic form is reinforced by a **refrain** i.e. a line repealed at the end of each stanza.

The simplest form of a stanza is the **couplet;** that is two lines rhyming together. A single couplet in isolation is called a **distich.** When a couplet expresses a complete thought and ends in a terminal punctuation sign we call it a **closed couplet.** You have already read about the **heroic couplet.**

A traditional form of the couplet is the **tetrameter,** or **four beat couplet:** Milton's

'L' Allegro' and Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' are admirable examples of great poetry in the octosyllabic couplet.

A three rhymed pattern is called a **triplet** or **tercet.** Below is an example of it from Dryden's poetry:

> Warm'd with more particles of Heav'nly Flame
> He wing'd his upward flight, and soar'd to fame:
> The rest remained below, a Tribe without a Name.

Three lines with one set of rhyming words can be found also in Tennyson's 'The Eagle'. This is, however, not very common in English and is generally used to give variety to a poem in the rhyming couplet. However, the rhymes are sometimes linked from verse to verse and may run as aba - bcb - cdc - ded - and so on. This form of triplet is called **terza rima.** It is borrowed from Italian and was employed by Dante (1265-1321) in his ***Divine*** *Comedy.* The finest example of it in English is Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" which, however, ends in a couplet.

Quatrains are stanzas of four lines. Above you read about the **ballad stanza** in which tetrameter and trimeter lines alternate. A variety of rhyme schemes have been observed in quatrains: a b a b (in which lines rhyme alternately); a b c b (in which the second and fourth lines only rhyme).

Dryden (in *Annus Mirabilis*) and Gray (*Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*) in the eighteenth century employed five stress iambic lines that rhyme alternately. In the nineteenth century Tennyson used tetrameter quatrains rhyming a b b a in *In Memoriam* and FitzGerald used pentameter quatrains that rhyme a a b a in his translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.*

There are, however, stanzas of five, six, seven and eight lines which are too numerous to be differentiated. Here we will discuss some of the "named varieties"

(a) **Rhyme royal** was used by Chaucer for the first time in English in *Troilus and Criseide* (c. 1385188) and then by Shakespeare in The *Rape of Lucrece* (1594). The rhyme scheme of a seven line stanza in rhyme royal is a b a b b c c. It looks as if a quatrain has been dovetailed onto two couplets.

(b) **Ottava rima** was introduced in England by Wyatt in the sixteenth century. The premier example of this verse form is Byron's *Don Juan* . The rhyme scheme of the eight line stanza is a b a b a b c c. You will notice that an extra a rhyme has been intoduced in the rhyme royal scheme. The single couplet at the end of the stanza gives a witty verbal snap to the foregoing section.

(c) The **Spenserian stanza** like the preceding two stanza forms discussed above has iambic pentameter lines. However, the last line is an Alexandrine. Edmund Spenser devised it for *The Faerie Queene.* In the nineteenth century Keats employed it brilliantly for ***Eve** of St. Agnes* and Shelley for *Adonais.* The nine lines rhyme a b a b b c b c c. You notice that the b sound recurs 4 times and c three. The pattern is intricate and poems in this stanza form are slow-moving.

(d) The **Sonnet** was originally a stanza used by the Sicilyan school of court poets in the thirteenth century. From there it went to Tuscany where it reached its highest expression in the poetry of Petrarch (1304 - 74). He wrote 314 sonnets idealizing his beloved Laura.

In England it was Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-47) and Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503 - 42) who experimented with the sonnet form and gave it the structure that Shakespeare used and made famous. Since then the sonnet has prbved itself to be one of the most versatile of the poetic forms. It was used in recent years by Vikram Seth in his novel *The Golden Gate.* Long pbems composed of a series of sonnets are called **sonnet sequence.** Poets such as Edmund Spenset, Sir Philip Sidney, Michael Drayton, William Shakespeare, Elizabeth Barret Browning, D.G. Rossetti, W.H. Auden; Conrad Aiken and Rainer Maria Rilke have grouped together sonnets dealing with a particular lady or situation. However, the degree in which they are autobiographical or tell a coherent story is a matter on which opinions diverge.

The sonnet today is defined as a lyric of fourteen lines in the iambic pentameter form. However, originally it was a stanza in the Italian. There have been sonnets in the hexameter as for instance the first of Sidney's *Astrophil* and *Stella* and Milton's ' On the New Forces of-Conscience', which is in twenty lines. Most of the sonnets, however, fall into two or three categories - the **Pentrarchan, Shakespearean** and **Spenserian.**

The **Petrarchan sonnet** is divided into two parts of eight and six lines each called the octave and the sestet. Originally the sonneteer set ,forth a problem in the octave and resolved it in the sestet. However, Milton did not follow the convention nor did he use it as a medium for the expression of his amorous inclinations as Petrarch had done before him. Wordsworth and Keats both wrote Petrarchan sonnets. A Petrarchan sonnet follows the rhyme scheme abba abba in the octave. In the sestet two or three rhymes may be employed such as cdc cdc or cde cde.

The **Shakespearean sonnet** is usually divided into three quatrains to be followed by a rhyming couplet. The rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet: is abab cdcd efef gg.

A Spenserian sonnet is also divided into three quatrains and a rhyming couplet. However, there are fewer rhymes in a Spenserian sonnet than in the Shakesperean The former follows the following rhyme scheme :

abab bcbc cdcd ee.

Above we have discussed rhymes and the various types of rhyme schemes employed by poets writing in English. Now let us examine the function of rhythm in poetry.

2.5.2 Rhythm.

Rhythm is to borrow Plato's words, 'an order of movement' in time. We generally speak of rhythm in connection with poetry or music. I-Iowever, you must have heard people talking of the rhythms of nature or even biological rhythm. Perhaps periodic repetition of a certain pattern is the ***sine*** *qua non* of rhythm. All the arts-painting, sculpture, and architecture - have their rhythm. Here, however, we will talk of rhythm in the context of poetry only. Above you studied about a variety of acoustic effects in poetry such as metre, rhyme, alliteration, onamatopoeia, etc. They contribute to the rhythm of a poem. Prosody which taltes into account the historical period to which a poem belongs, the poetic genre and the specificities of a poet's style goes closer to the rhythmic aspect of a poem.

For instance, quantity (or vowel length) is a rhythmic but not a metrical feature of English poetry. This is because English does not impose any strict regularity in quantity as it does with respect to stress. For example in 'sweet rose' the vowel sounds can be lengthened or shortened at will. This cannot be done in many Indian languages. However, the lengthening and shortening of the vowel sound does affect the rhythm of the poem. Similarly, the rise and fall in the human voice. especially in reading poetry which is called **cadence** is a rhythmic not a metrical feature. Many other factors contribute to the rhythm of a piece of verse or prose. Grammatical features are some of these.

Roinan Jakobson drew our attention to grammatical features in poetry. He compared the role of pure grammatical parallelism in poetry to geometrical features in painting. 'For the figurative arts' he wrote, 'geometrical principles represent a "beautiful necessity"...' and went on to add, 'It is the same necessity that in language marks out the grammatical meanings.' In his 'Yeats' "Sorrow of Love" through the Years' written along with Stephen Rudy they drew attention to Yeats's predilection for "art that is not mere story – telling". They went on:

> According to Yeats, "the arts have already become full of pattern and rhythm. Subject pictures no longer interest us." In this context he refers precisely to Degas, in Yeats' opinion an artist whose excessive and obstinate desire to 'picture' life - "and life at its most vivid and vigorous" - had harmed his work.

Jaltobson and Rudy go further and point out,

> The poet's emphasis on pattern reminds one of Benjamin Lee Whorf. the penetrating lingiust who realized that 'the patternment' aspect of language always overrides and controls the 'lexation' or name–giving aspect," and an inquiry into the role of "pattern" in Yeats' own poetry becomes particularly attractive, especially when one is confronted with his constant and careful modification of his own works.

The two authors go on and draw attention to Yeats' epigraph to his *Collected Works in Verse and Prose* which reads:

The friends that have it I do wrong
When eves I remake a song,
Should know what issue is at stake:
It is myself that I remake.

In the course of his revisions, the patternings, Yeats claimed not just to be improving his poems lexationally but pattern-wise, rhythm-wise which he equated with remaking himself under the influence of some much more deep and subtle truth which we can apprehend if at-all only transiently.

If we scan a couple of sonnets of Shakespeare and compare their rhythm we can appreciate its role in a poet's style. Let's first scan two sonnets of Shakespeare - sonnets 71 and 116. They are given below:

No long/er mourn/ for me/ when I /am dead
Than you/ shall hear/ the sur/ly sul/len bell
Give warn/ing to/ the world/ that I/ am fled
From this/ vile world/ with vil/est worms/ to dwell.
Nay if/ you read/ this line,/ remem/ber not
The hand/ that writ/ it;// for/ I love/ you so,
That I/ in your/ sweet thoughts/ would be/ forgot,
If think/ing on/ me then/ should make/ you woe.
Oh, if/ (I say,)/ you look/ upon/ this verse
When I/ (perhaps)/ compound/ed am/ with clay
Do not/ so much/ as my/ poor name/ rehearse
But let/ your love/ even with/ my life/ decay
Lest the/ wise world/ should look/ into/ your moan
And mock/ you with/ me af/ter I/ am gone.

(Sonnet. 71)

Let me/ not to/ the marr/ iage of/ true minds
Admit/ impe/diments.// Love is/ not love
Which al/ters when/ it al/tera/tion finds,
Or bends/ with the/ remo/ver to/ remove:
O, no,/ it is/ an e/ver fix/ed mark,
That looks/ on tem/pests and/ is ne/ver shaken;
It is/ the star/ to ev/ery wand/ring bark,

Whose worth's unknown, although his higth be taken
Love's not Time's fool though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (Sonnet, 116)

You may have noticed above that in sonnet 71 Shakespeare's theme is death, his own death, not death in the abstract as in the case of Donne. Shakespeare is addressing his beloved, the dark lady and asking her to forget all about him. The legacies of time are suffering and despair and Shakespeare conveys his slow progress towards them with the help of the solemn regularity of the iambic pentameter. It is, however, gently disturbed as the narrative progresses. A caesura divides the third foot of the sixth line. There are parantheses in lines 9 and 10. In the last line of the third quatrain Shakespeare asks his beloved to forget him (after having written the sonnet to perpetuate his memory) nay more, let her love decay along with the decay of the lover's body. The irony of this audacious request finds echo in the spondaic third foot of the twelfth line. Shakespeare's resigned irony soon finds voice in the thirteenth line where the pyrrhic first foot is succeeded by a spondee in the next.

Rhythm derives from the Greek *rhythnzos* which in *turn* derives from *rhein* which means to flow. Rhythm is generally understood as an ordered alternation of contrasting elements. However, you noticed above that Shakespeare gave expression to his personal feelings in sonnet 71 by wrenching the metre. Mutability, death and decay were a recurrent theme in the poetry of the Elizabethan age and the ground rhythm of iambic pentameter adequately expresses it. However, if Shakespeare had made periodicity of accent the *sine qua non* of his rhythm it would have been only at the cost of his expressive range.

Unlike sonnet 71, sonnet 116 is, to use Gerard Manley Hopltins's term, metrically "counter-pointed ". Trochaic reversal in the first foot is not unusual in an iambic pentameter line. However, Shakespeare makes use of a trochaic foot even in the second. In fact the only iambic foot is the third foot which is succeeded by a pyrrhic-spondaic combination. The first line is enjambed i.e., it runs over to the second line with its three iambic feet and a caesura and a reversed fourth foot. The sudden violence of the poet's feeling is checked with the help of two pyrrhic feet alternating with the iambic ones in the last line of the first quatrain. The iambic ground rhythm is fully established only in the second quatrain.

The third quatrain, however, begins with a reversal and a spondaic substitution. In the last line of the quatrain the rhetorical emphasis on the third foot is supported acoustically with the help of a spondee. These deviations help the poet in lifting the theme above mundane realities and communicating his "meaning" better.

We had a glimpse of Shakespeare's manipulation of metre in two of his sonnets. Even with the help of just two samples we can say that Shakespeare has a powerful and distinctive style. The prosody of every poet of genius is unique and his rhythm is perhaps the most personal of the expressive equipments. However, we cannot forget that a language has a metrical pattern peculiar to itself. There is also a historical determinant of the choice of metre. Complex factors contribute towards the

determination of rhythm. Nature herself said Aristotle, 'teaches the choice of the proper measure'. However, it is the poet's task to hear her voice with sincerity and humility if s/he is to discover her/himself.

Self-check -Exercise IX

1. Briefly distinguish between rhyme and rhythm.

2. What according to you is rhythm ? Write in about 30 of your own words.

3. Do you think that rhythm can be an indicator of a poet's style ? Give reasons for your answer. Does a poet's style tell us about the person that s/he is?

2.6 ANALYSIS OF A POEM

In the foregoing sections you read about the various elements of poeby. A knowledge of some of the theoretical aspects of poetry would help you in reading poems. Below you will read an analysis of Keats's 'On First Looking into Chapman's I-Iomer.' Did you scan the poem and write your observations in SCG III (b) ? If you did not you should now do so in order to benefit from in section. Let's now analyse the poem.

'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'

John Keats (1795-1821) was the youngest of the Romantic poets. He was the son of a manager of a livery stables in Moorfields. He died when Keats was eight. His mother remarried but died of tuberculosis when he was fourteen. John the eldest child, had two brothers - George and Tom - and a sister, Fanny. Keats was apprenticed to an apothecary-surgeon at the age of fifteen. Before the apprenticeship he had received his early education at Clarke's school an Enfield .

One evening in October 1816 Keats read the works of Homer in the translation of the Elizabethan poet George Chapman. He did this in the company of Charles Cowden Clarke, son of his former master and his life long friend. That Keats had a monumental experience is clear from "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"

Somewhat lilte a true Petrarchan sonnet this poem also clearly divides the treatment of the theme between the octave and the sestet. In the octave Keats sets the background while the sestet describes the effect on him of his experience.

In the first half of the octave Keats speaks of his wide study of Western literature - Which he characterizes as "realms of gold". Keats's metaphor gives us an insight into his attitude towards literature. The 'goodly states' and 'Kingdoms' are the poet's territories they have marked out as their own in the infinite area of the English or Western languages..However, these territories are held by poets not insolently as Kingdoins are held but as a sign of their loyalty towards Apollo, the ancient classical god of poetry. This is a sign of Keat's literary piety for we know that Keats like Shelley was not a Christian poet.

The second half of the octave extends the metaphor of the kingdom of poetry to tell us that Keats had heard about Homer's epics although he had never read them. Homer is traditionally recognised as the first epic poet of Europe just like Valmiki and Vyasa were of India. They can be considered pure and original because they did not borrow their images from other poets. Hoiner knew and understood human nature dispassionately. His understanding was clear and unclouded by doubts, distractions and fears. Besides, Homer was the monarch of poets deservmg the exalted title of 'serene'. It is at the end of the octave th:t Keats tells us about the cause of his

exaltation i.e. his reading (with Charles Cowden Clarke) of Homer in Chapman's translation. The octave structurally is not divided from the sestet as it ends in a colon.

Having told us about the background of his poem in the octave Keats turns to communicate his enjoyment of Homer to us in the sestet. This is done through two unforgettable images. The first of these is that of a professional astronomer into whose sight a new planet has moved in. The second is that of a discoverer such as Hernan Cortez who conquered Mexico for Spain and became the first western adventurer to enter Mexico city. HIstorically, however, it was Vasco Nunez de Balbao who was the first European in 1513 to stand upon the peak of Darien in Panama. It is significant that Keats does not name any astronomer such as Galileo who had discovered new satellites of the planet Jupiter. It would be in keeping with Keats's piety to infer that in referring to 'some watcher of the skies' he is making use of the primitive figure of speech of periphrasis. If the images help Keats in communicating his peculiar feeling or flavour of the sense or meaning the rhythm of his verse gives further density by suggesting the right tone and unfolding the ,intention while reemphasizing his meaning or sense, and feeling.

As pointed out earlier, 'On First Looking' is a Petrarchan sonnet that makes use of four rhymes in the following scheme: abba abba cdcdcd. Perhaps it would be apposite to point out that because of such few rhymes, i.e. 4, the intensity of feeling is communicated better than it could have been done with the help of a Shakespearean sonnet with its seven rhymes and relatively loose structure more suitable for a meditative and philosophical tone.

Although European in appeal thematically, Keats's sonnet is typically English with its ground rhythm of iambic pentameter. There are only two variations in the first quatrain. There is a pyrrhic foot in the first and another in the fourth line. The second quatrain begins with a trochaic reversal and it announces the turn in the subject matter. From literature in general, Keats narrows down to Homer in the second half of the octave.

The sestet which describes Keats's state of exaltation conveys it at the acoustic level through variations from the blank verse ground rhythm. Lines 10,11,12 and 13 have pyrrhic substitutions. In case we elided the unstressed first foot to include the article 'a' in the first foot of the tenth line we could read it as an anapaestic foot. However, in that case the line would have only four feet, It would become brief and fast suggesting theswimming of a planet into the range of vision of the astronomer with astronomical speed. There is another anapaestic substitution in the fourth foot of the twelfth line. However, the line retains the five feet notwithstanding the trisyllabic foot, The last four lines are given to the explorers in the new world and the crescendo comes in the last line which begins with a trochaic reversal. 'Thc importance of the theme for the poet is suggested by the spondaic second foot of the eleventh line which begins the new comparison.

Keats has been called a poet of the senses. The abstract idea of the discoveiy of a new planet gives joy that is cerebral but the sight of the seascape from the peak in Darien is more sensualand akin to Keats's character. The choice of Keats's imagery in this sonnet and marrying it to the approriate rhythm clinches the success of the poem. 'On First Loolcing into Chapman's Homer' has, no wonder, become a felicitous record of one of Keats's unforgettable personal experiences of an encounter with the father of European poetry that was Homer.

Above we have tried to show how the various aspects of a poem can be knit together into an account of your appreciation of it especially with respect to your observations on rhythm. If you were in a class with your friends we might have analysed a few poems and seen how our responses varied. If possible try it out from time to time, at the Study Cenlre or at a privately formed Study Group.

2.7 LET'S SUM UP

This unit brings the orientation for the study of M.A. English in general and this course on 'British Poetry' in particular to an end. With the help of these two units we have tried to tell you how you can say something about a work of art in general and a poem in particular;

We began the orientation by reacting basically to two portraits on the first and third covers of this course. This was because the visual arts malce an immediate appeal. They are appreciated both individually and socially, communally and in small groups. A piece of literature, especially nondramatic literature, has to be enjoyed privately. Hence we began the orientation by commenting on two pox-traits.

Criticism has often been described as the soul's adventure among masterpieces - and this course which for you is an adventure of critical appreciation began with an appreciation of two portraits that also symbolically meant to tell you about this course. Besides, each block will have one or two copies of paintings that are meant to serve as frontispieces and also visually tell you about the age. Just a few comments are offered on them in the introduction to the blocks. You may explore further on your own because it has been recognized since time immemorial that proficiency in several arts is necessary for specialization in any one. Did you read the epigraph of this course? It can as well be a desideratum for you.

In this unit we examined in the first place the thing called literature, especially poetry in somewhat abstract terms. In the second place we examined the prosodic aspect of poetry. Finally we showed how the various aspects can be put together in our critical appreciation of a poem. In the last major section we have done for poetry what in the previous unit we did for portraits - we critically appreciated a poem. This is what we expect you to be able to do on this course. Critics say that the evolution of the rhythm of a language tells us about the cultural evolution of the people, their changing and evolving consciousness. If this is a tall claim I leave you to decide for yourself.

Hereafter the units will tell you either about an age or a poet or about some poems. We will expect you to be able to respond to all the three - the man, the milieu and the moment that gave birth to the poem - in your comments on passages set from poems prescribed for detailed study and printed in these blocks.

This is a long unit. You must not have expected it to be longer. At the M.A. level. we did not consider it necessary to describe the genres such as lyric, epic, ode, etc. or figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, synechdoche, metonymy etc. You should consult a dictionary of literature in order to discover the terms of art as and when you feel the need to do so.

2.8 A BRIEF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This unit does not tell you about literary terms, figures of speech, etc. However, as a student of literature you will be required to understand and use them in various contexts including your essays and answers, Below are recommended a few dictionaries and encyclopaedias for your use.

The new edition of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature (1985)* edited by Margaret Drabble is intended to serve, as its predecessgr Sir Paul Harvey's (1932), as a 'useful companion to ordinary everyday readers of English literature'. It gives brief notes on authors of books, literary trends such as Neo-classicism and

Romanticism, (Postmodernism is alas missing), figures of speech such as oxymoron and litotes, literary movements such as the Oxford, or Pre - Raphaelite and Aesthetic movements and many other facts that a student of English literature would wish to know from time to time. It is possible that the new edi'tion has not reached the shelves of the library you have access to. That should not disturb you. I found Sir Paul's work very delightful and in the beginning Drabble's work with its shorter notes was a bit of a disappointment to me. Besides the *Companion* you may consult , *Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Harry Shaw published by McGraw Hill Book Co. (New Delhi, 1972) and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Chris Baldick (Delhi, 1990). *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-century Poetry* edited by Ian Hamilton (Delhi, 1994) has a much broader coverage on poetry in English.

Literary criticism today more than ever before has been under the influence of disciplines such as rhetoric and Linguistics. You would find A.B.Sharma's *The Growth and Evolution of Classical Rhetoric* (Ajanta: New Delhi, 1991,'92) at the Study and Regional Centre ; it is meant to introduce classical rhetoric to distant learners in India like yourself. For a quick reference to terms such as **felicity conditions** or **lexie** consult A *Dictionary of Stylistics* by Katie Wales published by Logman (London, 1989). *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism* edited by Martin Coyle et. al. (Routledge: London, 1990) has long articles written by experts on various aspects of literature including an article on 'Postmodernism' by Robert B. Ray (pp. 131 - 147).

In case you wish to study some thought provolting essays on poetry and its 'meaning' I should recommend just two: the first one is by Roman Jakobson called 'What is Poetry?' (pp. 368 - 378) in *Language and Literature* edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Ma, 1987) and the other one called 'The Third Meaning' (pp. 52 - 68) by Roland Barthes in *Image, Music, Text* (Flamingo: London, 1982). We may allude to those essays a few times in this course. The character of critical appreciation of literature in general and poetry in particular has changed radically over the last couple of decades and its influence has been felt in the English departments in India as well. It would be a good idea to read Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* with its chapters on reception theory, phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, structuralism, semiotics, etc. It will also be a good general introduction for your M.A. (English) programme.

2.9 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Exercise I :

1. The reader adds to the meaning of a poetic text. The poem is of course the cause of the meaning. I-Iowever, that is not the only cause. It has to be understood in terms of our background knowledge of the poem. However, we cannot understand it unless we do so in the light of our own experience of life. The reader re-creates meaning.
2. A poem is made or words just as a portrait is made of colours or a piece of music is an arrangement of sounds. There, however, the matter does not end. A real poem (as opposed to mere verse) elnobodies a poet's life's experience, an intense moment ofrevelation of life's truths, joys and sorrows. Just as a formula in mathematics or a *sootra* in Sanskrit grammar embodies more than meets the eye a poem appears to reveal truths as we go on living.

Note : The answers above are subjective and your responses may not be in full agreement with mine. However, think over the matter . You should discuss your own answers, if you can, in your peer group.

Exercise II:

1. In woods/ a ran/ger
   To joy/ a stran/ger

The two lines above are in iambic dimeter. However, they are ***Izypermetrical*** which means that an unaccented rhyming syllable is at the end of each line.

2. Thy way/ not mine, /O Lord,
   How ev/er dark/ it be;
   Lead me/ with thine/ own hand,
   Choose out/ the path/ for me.

The quatrain above is in regular iambic trimeter.

3. The way/ was long/ the wind/ was cold,
   The min/strel was/ infirm/ and old;
   The harp,/ his sole/ remain/ing joy,
   Was car/ried by/ an or/phan boy.

Above there are two couplets in regular iambic tetrameter,

4. Confu/sion, shame,/ remorse/ despair,
   At once/ his bos/om swell
   The damps/ of death/ bedewed/ his brow;
   He shook,/ he groaned,/ he fell.

In the stanza above iambic trimeter lines alternate with iambic tetrameter lines. We also notice that 'swell' and 'fell' rhyme but the first and third lines don't. We thus get the impression that the stanza could also be written as iambic heptameter couplets.

5. I put /my hat/ upon/ my head
   And walked/ into/ the strand
   And there/ I met/ another man
   Whose hat/ was in/ his hand.

The poem above is iambic in rhythm alternating tetrameter and trimeter in verse Icngth.

Self-Chcck Exercise III

Now you may scan a couple of passages from Shakespeare and Keats and write your comments on them in the space provided:

(a) Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme. I thank you, gentlemen.
This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good; if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair.
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs...

Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

If you read Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in *Understanding Drama* (EEG07) you must have recognised the words of the eponymous hero, in the play. Macbeth met the three witches on his way back from the battlefield who had addressed him sucessively as Duke of Glarnis, Thane of Cawdor and finally as King of Scotland. Impressed by his display of courage Duncan has honoured him by giving him the dukedom of Glamis and Thaneship of Cawdor. However, Macbeth is not yet King of Scotland which he cannot be, unless, he thinks, he murders Duncan, his king and benefactor. The idea of regicide and ingratitude has shaken him and lie admits of having his 'functions' being 'smothered in surmise'. The given extract is the opening part of his introspection (for us) and soliloquy for the audience in the theatre.

The ground rhythm of the the extract is iambic pentameter. However, he does not follow it slavishly. There are interesting variations. They are as below:

- the first line is iambic dimeter;
  the first foot is a spondee;
- there are at least three pyrrhuses in a passage of ten lines i.e. in the 3rd, 6th and 7th;
- seventh and eighth lines are hypermetrical;
- there are two caesuras – in the third and seventh lines;
- the third foot of the sixth and the fourth foot of the seventh line have an elision.

With the help of these variations Shakespeare imparts colloquial case and informality to the soliloquy. We notice here, to use Coleridge's words, as we did not in the case of Sackville and Norton, metre being used as a pattern of expectation, fulfilment and surprise. As Macbeth makes his progess from coni'usion to clarity in the course of the soliloqy we notice the ground rhythm becoming more and more natural. According to Harvey Gross, the function of prosody is 'to image life in a rich and complex way'. We notice here for ourselves how prosody has succeeded in articulating the movement of the mind of Macbeth.

(b) **On First Looking into Chapman's Homer**

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and Kingdoms seen;

Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
That deep browed Homer ruled as his demesne
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise
Silent upon a peak in Darien.

For comments on the prosodic features of this sonnet read section 2.6.

Self-check Exercise IV

(a)

Dreadful gleams,
Dismal screams,
Fires that glow,
Shrieks of woe,
Sullen moans,
Hollow groans. A.Pope

You could say that above there are three couplets in trochaic monometer. However it would be more appropriate to call it a passage in trochaic dimeter with the second foot being catalectic in each case. Perhaps the best idea would be to **call** it a passage in the amphimacer foot. The passage can be scanned in any of the three **ways.**

(b)

Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure. J. Dryden

The two lines are in trochaic dimeter.

(c)

When the British warrior queen
Bleeding from the Roman rods,
Sought with an indignant mien
Counsel of her country's gods.

The stanza is in trochaic tetrameter. However, the last foot of every line is catalectic. We call a foot catalectic that has just an accented syllable.

(d)

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream;
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem. A.W. Longfellow

The stanza is in trochaic tetrameter. However, the last foot of the second and fourth lines are catalectic. The rhymescheme of the passage above is: a b a b.

(e)

All that walk on foot or ride in chariots
All that dwell in palaces or garrets

The stanza is in trochaic pentameter.

(f)

On a mountain stretched beneath a hoary willow
Lay a shepherd swain and viewed the rolling billow.

The couplet is in trochaic hexameter.

Self-check Exercise V

(b)

How fleet is the glance of the mind
Compared with the speed of its flight !
The tempest itself lags behind
And the swift winged arrows of light

The ground rthythm of the passage above is anapaestic trimeter. However, the first foot of each of the first three lines is an iambus. Iambic substitutions in lines in the anapasestic meter is quite common.

(b)

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

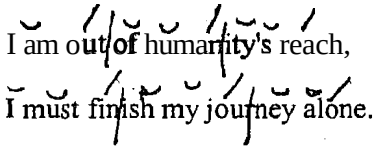
The passage is in anapaestic tetrameter without any variation.

(c)

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corpse to the ramparts we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot,
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

If repetition of a pattern is the *sine* qua *non* of rthythm, the passage is uniformly in tetrameter. However, out of sixteen feet only ten are in the anapaest. The remaining feet are in the iambic.

(d)

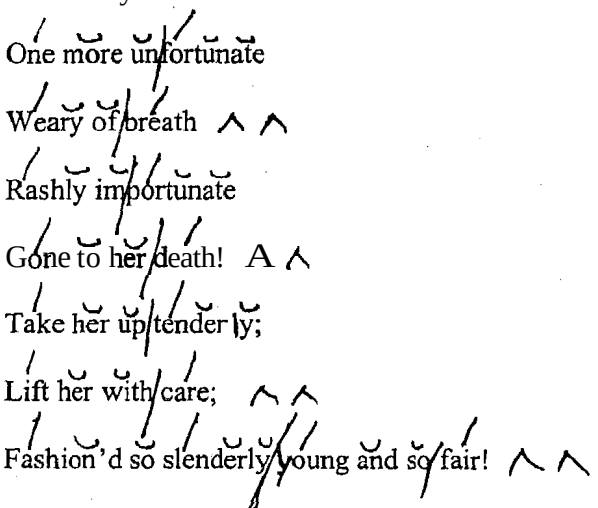


The couple of lines are in anapaestic trimeter. However, the first foot is an iambic substitution.

Self-Check Exercise VI

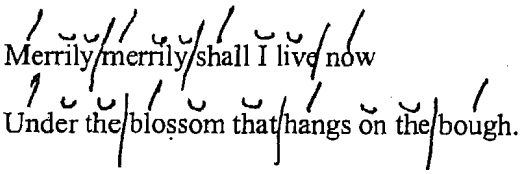
Scan the following and then briefly comment on the scansion.

(b)



The two stanzas above are in dactylic dimeter. They rhyme alternately i.e. a b a b c d c d . The second, fourth, sixth and eighth lines are catalectic.

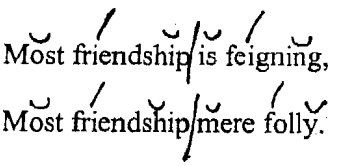
(b)



The couplet/distich above is in dactylic trimeter.

Self-check Exercise VII

(a)



Both the lines are in amphibrachic dimeter.

Self-check Exercise VIII

(a) There is alliteration in 'ruin' and 'ruminate' on the one hand and 'taught', 'time' and 'take' on the other.

(b) Dryden by employing 'pious', 'priesteraft' and 'polygamy' on the one hand and 'begin' and 'before' on the other in his distich makes use of the figure of sound of alliteration.

(c) The repetition of the sibilants i.e 'shade' and 'soul' on the one hand and 'drowsily' and 'drown' on the other create an acoustic effect that is daily experience. This particular type of effect is called alliteration.

(d) In the two lines the consonants in 'dawn' and 'war' are different. However, there is an identity of vowel sounds. This is an example of assonance.

(e)

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined .
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned.
Wilfred Owen : ' Strange Meeting '

In the passage above we have underlined four words. 'Escaped' and 'scooped' have an identity of consonants while the vowels differ just as in 'groin' and 'groan' also. These are two examples of consonance.

Self-check Exercise IX

1. Rhyme refers to the agreement in terminal sounds of two or more words or lines in verse such as rich and which ; increase and peace ; descend and extend. Rhythm indicates measured flow of words and phrases in prose or verse or movement suggested by the succession of strong or weak elements or of different conditions in a given time span.
2. Rhythm is one of the factors of style. It indicates flow or progression in time. Certain units get repeated in rhythm --a foot in English poetry when repeated contributes to the rhythm of that poem. Poets often achieve effects not by regularity but through breaks in the order, the established ground rhythm of the poem.
3. Every poet, for that matter any artist, has a distinctive style and his / her rhythm contributes towords it. We talk about Milton's grand style and contrast it with the gentle art of Shakespeare. Milton writes about Heaven and Hell, God and satan; Shakespeare about ordinary men and women involved in their common love and hate, ambition and defeat, pride and humility such as we experience ourselves. Their choice of words, rhythm of their language are thus poles apart just as are their,themes. All these tell us something about the persons that Milton and Shakespeare must have been in their inner lives.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 ?-1400)

William Blake : *The Canterbury Pilgrims*