

---

## UNIT 12 POETRY AND SOCIETY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (PRE-RESTORATION)

---

### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Historical Background
  - Thirty Years' war
- 12.3 Cultural Background
  - 12.3.1 The Visual Arts
  - 12.3.2 Mannerism
  - 12.3.3 The Baroque
- 12.4 Science
  - 12.4.1 The Astronomical Revolution
  - 12.4.2 the Mechanical Philosophy
- 12.5 The Spenserians
  - 12.5.1 Phineas Fletcher
  - 12.5.2 Giles Fletcher
  - 12.5.3 George Wither
  - 12.5.4 William Browne
- 12.6 The Cavalier Poets
  - 12.6.1 Herrick
  - 12.6.2 Carew
  - 12.6.3 Suckling
  - 12.6.4 Lovelace
- 12.7 The Metaphysical Poets
  - 12.7.1 Vaughan
  - 12.7.2 Crawshaw
  - 12.7.3 Traherne
- 12.8 The Early Augustans
  - 12.8.1 Waller
  - 12.8.2 Davenant
  - 12.8.3 Denham
  - 12.8.4 Cowley
- 12.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.10 Answers to Exercises
- 12.11 Bibliography

---

### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

---

After going through this unit you will be able to have

- A comprehensive idea of the complicated British Milieu political, religious, scientific, aesthetic and philosophic – in the period under discussion, and
- A close acquaintance with the distinct traits of the different modes of poetry in vogue at the time.

---

### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

---

In England the seventeenth century is a period of great upheavals in almost all spheres of life – social, political, religious, philosophical and scientific. These developments have their impact on the poetry of the time which is noted for

innovations in content and techniques. The main current of the poetry is metaphysical (The details about it you will have later in the block). Close to this current there are flowing other currents as well. These are the Spenserians, the Ben Jonsonians and the Early Augustans. The Spenserians remain uninfluenced by the dominant mode of Donne and work as a link between Spenser and Milton. The Ben Jonsonians try to emulate the classical model of Ben Jonson. They also present sustained arguments and scholarly images in the vein of Donne. The Early Augustans show a definite sign of change in their perception and their technique.

Each important development in the life and poetry of the time has been elaborately explained in the course of the discussion.

---

## **12.2 THIRTY YEARS' WAR (1618-48)**

---

You will read about the Civil War in England in unit 22. Like the British Civil War, this war, too, was politico-religious in nature. But while the Civil War was a British affair, this war spread over the whole of the continent and the key fighters in this war were France, Germany and Spain. British involvement in it was limited. The continent at the time was sharply divided into two hostile religious groups. France and Poland were Catholics, while Britain, Holland and Scandinavia were Protestants.

In Germany both faiths were in conflict. But this conflict was sought to be kept in abeyance by the Treaty of Augsburg. Under the treaty, the religion of the reigning Prince was to be the religion of the place. Emperor Ferdinand of Germany was a Catholic and Catholic princes were more powerful than the Protestant ones. Ferdinand was a cousin of the king of Spain, and in league with Spain, he thought of gaining control over the whole of the Central Europe. Meanwhile, Henry IV of France aligned himself with the Protestant elements in Germany. But he was murdered by a Catholic fanatic.

King James of England wanted to be an arbiter. He also wanted marital ties between his family and the families of some Catholic States. But ironically enough, it is his son-in-law Elector Frederick, who proved to be the cause of this Thirty Years' War. The inhabitants of Bohemia invited Elector Frederick to be their ruler, but the German Emperor did not agree to this arrangement. Frederick was defeated by the forces of the German emperor at the battle of White Mountain near Prague in 1620. Palatine, the kingdom of Frederick, too, was captured by Spanish Catholic forces. For want of support from the Parliament, and due to the fragile economic position of England, King James could not do anything significant in favour of his son-in-law.

In short, a lot of blood was spilt in this long drawn and widely spread war. Ultimately this war came to an end in the peace of Westphalia.

In fact, neither the Protestants nor Catholics won this war. The faith of the people in religion was greatly shaken by this religious war. The effect was accentuated by the British Civil War. People thought of thinking freely even in matters concerning the fundamentals. This tendency got further fillips through the Renaissance and the developments in the field of science, particularly astronomy.

### **EXERCISE-I**

1. Name three main fighters in the Thirty Years' War.

---

---

---

---

2. What was the period of the Thirty Years' War?  


---

---

---

---
3. Which two religious groups were involved in this war?  


---

---

---

---
4. Tell the main difference between the Thirty Years' War and the Civil War.  


---

---

---

---
5. Name two countries that were dominated by the Protestants.  


---

---

---

---
6. Name two countries that were dominated by the Catholics.  


---

---

---

---
7. Was England one of the main fighters in The Thirty Years' War?  


---

---

---

---
8. Give the location of the place called White Mountain. When was the battle of White Mountain fought? Who won this battle?  


---

---

---

---

---

## 123 CULTURAL BACKGROUND

---

### 12.3.1 The Visual Arts

With a view to appreciating in full the cultural milieu of our period (the seventeenth century), we have to make ourselves aware of the aesthetic preoccupations of the time. The accession of Charles I in 1625 was propitious for many-fold increase in aesthetic activities, especially in the sphere of visual arts. Despite financial difficulties, Charles spent a lot of money on collection of art-objects. The Earl of **Arundel** embarked on an art-collecting spree and he had full support of the king. The **king** and his courtiers were fond of their portraits drawn by painters. Van Dyck's portraits of the king and his courtiers are memorable. The king sent his men all over **the** Continent in search of beautiful paintings. The missions of papal **representatives**

came to Charles with gifts including a "Titian" and a bust of Charles by Bernini. (From *Donne to Marvell*) The interest of Charles in visual arts had its impact on the application of this art to architecture and carpentry and other related fields. This fact is reported among others by G.M. Trevelyan: "Framed pictures and marble sculptures were becoming common, after the example set by the art-loving Charles I and his great subject, the Earl of Arundel. Rubens, Van Dyck and the homelier Dutch painters did much work for English patrons. The plaster work of the ceilings was elaborately decorative... The trestle table was giving place to solid tables with ornamental legs. Many magnificently carved bed and cupboards...still survive in their grandeur..." (*English Social History*)

This craze for visual arts imperceptibly passed into the poetry of the time, especially the Spenserians. The pastorals of these poets are full of scenic paintings.

### 12.3.2 Mannerism

The word "mannerism" means the angularity of speech or behaviour, particularly a habitual trait peculiar to a person. It also implies an excessive use of a distinctive manner in literature. In the context of the seventeenth century literature, it means a particular trait of the period that has been made use of over much. The Metaphysical poets are fond of using witty and ingenious analogies. Such analogies in Metaphysical poetry is often expressed through conceits. (The word 'conceit' has been elaborately explained in Unit 13). The moment a conceit becomes a forced explication of an image to the furthest point to which ingenuity can carry it, it becomes a bad conceit. This is caused because of the sheer love of the poets for mannerism. In one of his elegies, John Donne, by a series of ingenious analogies, advocates the preposterous proposition that an old and ugly woman will make a better wife than a young and handsome one. This indulgence in sheer wit smacks of mannerism.

Poems of the forties and the fifties of the seventeenth century abound in conceits running to fantastic extravagance. Even a major poet like Marvell indulges in this mannerism. R.G. Cox rightly affirms:

...the wit of Marvell himself sometimes misfires, as with his Salmon-fishers who 'like Antipodes in Shoes', have shod their Heads in their Canoes.  
(*Pelican Guide to English Literature*, Vol-3)

John Cleveland in his poetry make wit a game and the imaginative pressure is not there to back it up. Consequently, he is liable to Johnson's charge that the attempts of the Metaphysicals are analytic (one that splits) and that they are deficient in the poetic power to make a synthesis of the heterogeneity of materials. In the third stanza of the poem, *To the state of Love* Cleveland dilates at length on his clasping of his beloved. Cleveland's use of wit is a hangover of the Metaphysical heritage and does not have anything to do with the newness of perception.

### 12.3.3 The baroque

The term 'baroque' has been derived from the Spanish and Portuguese name for a pearl that is rough and irregular in shape. It has become a pet word for art historians in their description of a style of architecture, sculpture and painting in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It later spreads to Germany and other countries in Europe. Initially it was a term of disapprobation, but with the passage of time the derogatory meaning is lost. This term is also applied to literature. It has assumed the signification of any elaborately formal and magniloquent style in verse or prose, for example, some verse passages in "Paradise Lost" and Thomas De quincery's description of his dreams in *Confessions of English Opium Eater*. It took the intplication of a stock-in-trade word designed for the post-Renaissance literature on the Continent. Besides, it is a catch-word frequently applied to elaborate verses and

extravagant conceits of poets like Marino and Gongara in Italy, St. Amant in France and Crashaw in England. The poems of Donne, especially some of his divine poems in which he contemplates the apocalyptic vision, are labelled as baroque. This term also suggests the religious emotionalism of poets like Crashaw. In the continental context, the term, 'baroque', refers to the crisis of sensibility in the late Renaissance.

The Renaissance in initial years generates remarkable self-confidence and buoyancy of spirit. The pagan world that comes into being with the Renaissance clashes with medieval ethic, and there ensues a war between body and soul. So long as the balance of the two is there, the picture is ordered and 'coherent'. But as time goes by the schism in the psyche gets pronounced. This results into pessimism, chaos and violence. The scenario is perceptible in the Jacobean drama and the Metaphysical poetry, more conspicuous in the former than in the later. The baroque thus helps the poets to present and surmount the chaotic state prevailing in the Continent. Some poets who want to come to grips with the conflict between the body and the spirit harness their senses in the service of God. This phenomenon is noticeable in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyala, the Emblem Books of Jesuit poets like Southwell and the poetry of Crashaw.

The baroque sensibility works in two different ways. In the poetry of Crashaw it works in terms of rich sensuous images in adoration of the Divine. Drops of blood became rubies and tears became pearls in his poetry. In his poems, the experience of suffering undergoes a glittering metamorphosis, and the end product is the emergence of a world of tenderness and joy. In most of the continental poets, the picture is macabre and the dance of death is horrifying. The taste for the macabre is perceptible in the French drama as well. The life in the contemporary literature looks tortured, restless and tense. The scenario is full of skeletons, bones and shrouds. Poems of Theophile, St. Amant, Gongara and Marini replace the living world by a series of correspondences (reseinblances). The recurrent motifs are tears, wounds, flaming hearts, the turtle dove, the phoenix, the grave and the nest. But some of the baroque poets conjure up a rich sensuous world. By doing so they want to transcend the ugly and horrifying world where things are out of joint. H.J.C Grierson rightly remarks of Crashaw's resplendent world that steals a march over the world of suffering :

Crashaw's long odes give the impression at the first reading of soaring rockets scattering balls of coloured fire, the 'happy fireworks' to which he compares St. Teresa's Writing.

*(Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century)*

Grierson, too, describes Crashaw's style in a baroque language. The baroque poetry has an affinity with the continental mode. It abounds in conceits that have the continental lineage. Grierson discovers that in Crashaw's *The Weeper* and *The Hymn to St. Teresa* conceits

...are more after the confectionery manner of the Italians than the scholastic or homely manner of the followers of Donne.

Let us see an example of Crashaw's baroque conceit in the following lines:

O cheekes! Beds of chaste loves,  
By your own showers seasonably dash't,  
Eyes! nests of milkie Doves  
In your own wells decently washt.  
O wit of love that thus could place,  
Fountaine and Garden in one face!

*(The Weeper)*

The fountain and the garden are in the face of the repentant sinner, Magdalene. Tears dropping from her eyes refresh plants in the bed of her cheeks. This co-presence of the fountain and the garden is a matter of great joy. She has the feeling that tears shall be welling up in her eyes all the time. At another place in the same poem the

poet compares the tear-splashing eyes to two portable baths and, again, to contracted oceans. They are imagined to be oceans because the reservoir of water is not likely to be depleted:

Two walking Baths, two weeping motions;  
portable and compendious Oceans.

**EXERCISE-11**

1. Name the earl who took lead in art-collection during the reign of Charles I

---

---

---

---

2. Name **two** painters of the time.

---

---

---

---

3. Define the word 'mannerism'.

---

---

---

---

4. What is meant by the 'baroque'?

---

---

---

---

5. Name an English poet who writes baroque poems.

---

---

---

---

6. Name a baroque poem that you have read.

---

---

---

---

7. Which class of the English drama may be nick named the 'baroque drama'?

---

---

---

---

8. Are the baroque writers generally optimistic or pessimistic?

---

---

---

---

---

## 12.4 SCIENCE: AN INTRODUCTION

---

With the end of the Elizabethan world-picture around 1590s new assumptions about life come into being. These assumptions spring from the emergence of the empirical science that relies solely on experiment. The medieval world order which, was based on faith faces a challenge. The territory of faith shrinks, leaving the rest to reason. Our period witnesses spectacular triumphs in diverse scientific fields. The Elizabethan world-order based on Ptolemaic astronomy as a vast system of the concentric sphere with the earth at the centre receives a shattering blow from three eminent astronomers: Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo and the notable physicist, Newton. The sun replaces the earth as the centre of the universe. The role of the astronomical theories is causing an upheaval in the minds of the people find an apt description in Donne's poem *Anniversary I*

And now Philosophy calls all in doubt  
The Element of fire is quite put out,  
The Sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit  
Can well direct him where to look for it

### 12.4.1 The Astronomical Revolution

Let us have a brief discussion on the contemporary scientists and their contributions.

i). • **Copernicus (1473–1543):** Copernicus's book titled *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* that is concerned with the revolution of planets also brings about a revolution in the world-view of the time. Copernicus believes that the sun is at the centre of the universe and that the earth moves round the sun. He also discovered that the earth has two sorts of motions: diurnal and annual. Thus the Copernicus theory displaces the earth from its geographical pre-eminence. It also makes man skeptical about the cosmic importance attached to him in the Christian theology. It challenges the medieval belief that the universe is an affair between God and man.

Copernicus himself is apprehensive of church inquisition and withholds the publication of his book till near his death time in 1543. The Legend goes that he holds the first copy in his hands on his death-bed. Luther to whom he communicates his theory feels completely upset. He looks upon Copernicus as a fool malingering a vain bid to reverse the established astronomical belief. Calvin, too has his gibe at Copernicus takes him to be rash and impetuous in placing his theory above the holy spirit of God.

ii). **Tycho Brahe (1546-1601):** Brahe holds an important position in the evolution of the astronomical science. His theories are partially correct. He holds that the sun and the moon go round the earth, but the planets go round the sun. He contradicts Aristotle's idea that everything above moon is unchanging. He makes a star catalogue and takes down the details of the movements of the stars. His study is of great use to Kepler.

iii). **Kepler:** Kepler takes the heliocentric theory of Copernicus and makes a lot of improvement on it. Kepler finds three laws to describe the motions of the planets. His theories of astronomy are published in 1609 and 1619. He maintains that the paths of the planets are elliptical, not circular. His second law relates to the varying speed at which a planet travels along its ellipse. The third law relates to the movement of a planet towards another planet.

iv). **Galileo (1564 – 1642):** Galileo adopts the heliocentric system of Copernicus and Kepler. He invents a telescope and makes a number of discoveries. He discovers the phases of Venus and the satellites of Jupiter. So far there were believed

to be only seven heavenly bodies: the five planets, the sun and the moon. So the number of seven was regarded sacred. This myth is now exploded with the addition of the four moons of Jupiter the number comes to eleven. His discoveries generates a lot of heat in the society and considerable hatred against him. Bertrand Russell points out that

“...the traditionalists denounced the telescope, refused to look through it, and maintained that it revealed only disaster...”  
(*An Outline of Western Philosophy*)

Russell adds that even the professors of philosophy were members of the ignorant ‘mob’.

v). **Isaac Newton (1642–1727):** Newton believes that the heavenly bodies attract one another with a force. This force is directly proportional to the product of their masses. It is in inverse ratio to the square of distance between them. His ideas about the motions of planets and their satellites, the orbits of comets and the tides are deduced from his laws of motions. He makes an improvement upon Kepler's three laws and discovers the law of gravitation.

Most of these discoveries thus come in conflict with the established religious belief.

#### 12.4.2 The Mechanical Philosophy

Our period is marked by a spectacular advancement in the scientific thought. The work of individuals like Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Harvey, Gilbert, Descartes and Boyle and the Royal Society creates a climate of opinion that is inimical to the belief in the supernatural and the occult. Now the universe comes more and more to be

...regarded as the great machine working by rigidly determined laws of material causation.  
(Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background*).

Descartes gives a picture of the universe that moves according to fixed mathematical laws. Galileo plays an important role in establishing the primacy of the physical universe. According to Aristotle, heavier objects fell faster than the light ones. But Galileo established that both heavy and light objects fall in a like manner. He also contradicts Aristotle's principle that an arrow is kept in flight only so long as the air pushes it. He holds that a moving object remains in motion until some force stops it. Galileo's stress on experiment is evident from his letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany written in 1615:

"Methinks that in the discussion of natural problems we ought not to begin at the authority of places of scripture, but sensible experiments and necessary demonstrations".

Cited in J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition*).

Galileo does not believe in the blind following of the established philosophical principles; he rather believes in the deduction of philosophical laws from the book of nature. To put it in his own words,

philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes – I mean the universe... This book is written in the mathematical language and the symbols are triangles, circles... without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it...  
(cited in the book just referred to)



Another important agent of this scientific movement is Francis Bacon. In his book, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) he talks of the scientific method which involves the making of experiments, the drawing of general conclusion from them and the testing of these generalization in further experiments. He is a champion of the inductive method in science. This inductive method receives a boost with the establishment of the Royal Society in 1660.

Newton who becomes the President of the Royal Society after Hooker's death in 1703 conceives the universe as a machine. He contradicts Aristotle's belief that nature can be explained from self-evident principles. He does not rely on those self-evident principles and establishes notions which match the facts of experience.

Hobbes and Locke are also eminent scientific thinkers of the time. They were not practising scientists, but their ideas were scientific. Locke was also a member of the Royal Society. Hobbes's contribution to the theory of mechanism and causality is significant. He turned Galileo's physics into a Metaphysics. He regarded mind as simply another body in motion. He enunciates the basic postulates of the mechanical philosophy in the following words :

For seeing life is but a motion of limbs...all automata have an artificial life?  
For what is a heart but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body.  
(Cited in *The Western Intellectual Tradition*)

The late seventeenth century poetry is an artistic reflection of the mechanical philosophy. We find a primacy of reason in the poems of Cowley, Denham and Waller. You will have the details in the section on the early Augustans.

### EXERCISE-III

1. Describe the following adjectives : Heliocentric homocentric and concentric.

---

---

---

---

2. Name three astronomers of the time.

---

---

---

---

3. Write a few words on Copernicus.

---

---

---

---

4. Who wrote the following :

- a) *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*
- b) *The Advancement of Learning*

---

---

---

---

5. Which poets of the seventeenth century are influenced by the mechanical philosophy?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Name a poet who reflects the contemporary conflict between religion and science.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Name two scientific thinkers who were associated with the Royal Society.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. In which year did Copernicus die?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Name some important scientific philosophers of the time.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Which eminent scientist became the President of the Royal Society in 1703?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

## 12.5 THE SPENSERIAN

---

The period under discussion is dominated by the Metaphysicals. But some poets of the time still write in Spenser's vein. This poetry makes a deification of love. In it we find an exaltation of virtue. The poetic tone is generally solemn and serious. The questioning spirit of the Metaphysicals is generally absent from this poetry. Like the poetry of Spenser, the Spenserian poetry is generally allegorical, pastoral and pictorial. There are four important poets in the group: Phineas Fletcher, Giles Fletcher, George Wither and William Browne. They have the significance of being a living link between Spenser and Milton and work as a conduit for passing the Spenserian legacy to Milton, who, too, takes to the allegorical mode.

### 12.5.1 Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650)

Phineas Fletcher, a clergy by profession, is noted for his allegorical poem, *The Purple Island*. An allegory is a narrative in the guise of something that is suggestively similar. It also has a moral bearing. *The Purple Island* is also pastoral in character and has an affinity with Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. In a pastoral we have an

enchancing world of peace and harmony. It may have a tail of chivalry and love. In a pastoral allegory the shepherds act as agents. But in this poem we have a fisherman who talks about love and religion. Here we find a pictorial description of the beauty of mountains, meadows, brooks and dales. It also looks like an anatomy of human body. This provides a battleground to virtues and vices. The poem has an echo of Book II, Canto 911 of *The Faerie Queen* by Spenser. Sir Guyon comes to the castle of Alma and falls into the trap of sensual enticement and struggles with them. The poem has a didactic design. The poet is also influenced by the notable Protestant poet of the time, dubartas. In this poem we have a reinarkable religious fervour reminiscent of Bunyan's allegories. The poem has influence on Milton's *Morniag of Christ's Nativity* in point of sensuousness and mythological embellishment. Fletcher's diatribe against the Jesuits in his poem, *The Locusts*, too, has its bearing on Milton's mind. The Jesuits are abominable because in league with infernal powers they hatch a conspiracy against the godly people .:

The Porter to th'infernal gate is sin,  
A shapeless shape, a foule deformed thing,  
Nor nothing, nor a substance...

### 12.5.2 Giles Fletcher (1585-1623)

He, too, was a clergyman. Apart from the influence of Spenser, the Influence of the Stalian poet of Counter Reformation is also perceptible on him. His poems are allegorical. They are marked by paradox His fondness for paradoxes and sensuousness is attributed to the influence of the *Stalian* writers. In his love for paradoxes he is also akin to Catholic poets like Southwell and Crashaw. His well-known poem, *Christ's Victorie and Triumph* (1610) relates to the Fall, the Incarnation, the Redemption and the Ascension. The poem is in the Spenserian vein. The end of the poem is remarkable. The poem ends with a vision of the marriage of the divine, groom and his mystical Bride, the Church. The description of paradise is rapturous. The poem is suffused with the benign and forgiving spirit of the Gospel. The Sensuousness and paradoxical wits infuse the elements of the baroque into the poem. But the carping consciousness of Puritan poets like Milton and Bunyan is absent from this poem.

### 12.5.3 Wither (1588-1667)

Unlike the Fletcher brothers, Wither is a Puritan. But he is in the habit of changing sides in politics. He is now a Royalist and now a Parliamentarian. The Royalists imprison him.

The Puritanical strain in him makes him unrelenting in his antipathy to vices. His poetry sometimes has a satiric edge. In his captivity he writes a number of poems. This comes at in the form of an anthology titled *Juvenalia* (1622). His other notable poems are *The Shepherd's Hunting* (1615), *Fidelia* (1615) and *Faire Virtue* (1624). His poems are pastoral and religious. He has a deep love for the country-side. He believes in the healing power of nature and is believed to have anticipated Wordsworth. His *Christmas* is a poem of naïve and pure delights. But his poems experience a Puritan interference from the poet. He inserts moral maxims in them and thus prevents them from being natural,

### 12.5.4 William Browne (1591-1643)

Unlike George Wither, Browne had got a sweet temper. He is suffused with a Chaucerian spirit and lets himself go in his description of jollity and mirth in the lap of nature. His poem, *The Shepherd's Pipe* gives us simple and pure delights of nature in the Chaucerian vein without the interposition of any moral speculation. This poem also has the sweetness that we discover in Spenser's Bower of Bliss (in *The Faerie Queen*). The allegorical strain of Spenser is noticeable in his poem *Britannia's*

*Pastorals*. This poem also calls to mind Sidney's *Arcadia*. The account of song birds singing their melodious songs, the scenic beauty of dawn breaking over a village and the lively and vibrant picture of huntsman dovetails with the patriotic subject. The poet relates the chivalrous acts of Knights who fight for the glory of the country.

#### EXERCISE-IV

1. Describe in a few words the main traits of the Spenserian poetry in the seventeenth century.

---

---

---

2. Name the poets who are called the Spenserians

---

---

---

3. In which sense are these poets important?

---

---

---

4. Name the poets who wrote the following:

- a. The Purple Island, b. The Locusts,  
b. *Christ's Victoria and Triumphs*  
c. *Juvenalia*, e. The *Shepherd's Hunting*,  
f. *Fidelia*, g, *Faire Virtue*, h. Christmas,  
i. The Shepherds' Pipe.

---

---

---

5. Write a note on Phineas Fletcher.

---

---

---

---

## 12.6 THE CAVALIER POETS

---

The expression, 'The Tribe of Ben' needs elucidation. It has two key words: 'Ben' and 'Tribe'. 'Ben' cryptically, stands for Ben Jonson, 'Tribe' means a cohesive group under a chief. Here the leader is Ben Jonson in the realm of literary art for a number of younger poets of the time. Usually the word 'Tribe' is used contemptuously. But here it does not have any pejorative meaning. They, no doubt, seek inspiration from Ben Jonson and like to call themselves his 'sons' (Pelican *Guide to English Literature*, vol. 3). Still they are distinctively individual in their perception. All these poets were associated with the Court of Charles I. They were also known as Cavalier Poets, The cavaliers were Royalists and were pitted against the Round heads who were supporters of Cromwell. The faith of the cavaliers was Anglican and they aligned with the squires. The Roundheads were Puritans and were

confined to the industrial and commercial centres. It is worth noting that the Tribe of Ben was a part of the cavalier group. All cavalier poets did not belong to the tribe. This discussion confines itself to Ben's tribe only.

Let us first have an idea of the basic qualities of Ben Jonson's poetry. Ben Jonson's poetry is a blend of classical discipline and sturdy native inspiration. Ben Jonson is prized for poise, maturity and civilized grace in his non-dramatic poetry. In his poetry the stress is on the centre of emotion: but control does not mean the suppression of genuine feelings. He wants a critical control of emotional experience.

The cavalier poets thus seek to fashion their poetry after Ben Jonson. They, sometimes, also present a sustained argument in the vein of Donne, and again like Donne, they present the feelings in terms of images called not from classical mythology as was wont with the early Elizabethans but from different branches of knowledge, such as theology, philosophy and natural science. Thus the two veins of Ben Jonson and John Donne mingle in this poetry in various proportions. It is because of this that Geoffrey Walton calls this poetry an "aristocratic synthesis" of Ben Jonson and Donne (*The Pelican Guide* to English Literature, Vol.3). In this poetry we have the upper-class culture of pre-Commonwealth England. It is an eminently English poetry, but it, especially in the poems of Suckling and Lovelace, also embraces the Continental literary traits exemplified by poets like Marino. In the poetry of the Tribe the elements of elegance and sophistication are tinged with naivety. When emotional discipline flags, it becomes boisterous and it verges on obscenity. As a result of the slackening of the classical grip, some of these poems become uneven, awkward and slipshod.

The quintessence of the poetry of the Tribe thus summed up finds its manifestation in various proportions in four principal talents : Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, John Suckling and Richard Lovelace.

### 12.6.1 Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

Robert Herrick : Herrick's poetry falls into three groups : anatomy poems, religious poems and epigrams. The last group is insignificant and so our study of Herrick's poetry will center round his erotic and divine poetry only. In his love poem, To *Anthea*, he adores his mistress in the Petrarchan vein :

Bid me to live, and I will live,  
They Protestant to be...  
Or bid me die, and I will dare  
E'en Death, to die for thee.

The poet has the singleness of mood of veneration for his lady-love. Though he proclaims himself to be the 'Son of Ben', he does not appear to possess the Jonsonian attribute of control over emotion. The typical classical pose and maturity Jonson exhibits in the subtle ordering of emotions is sadly lacking in this sentimental outpouring of the poet for wooing Anthea. It is a tender and playful paraphrasing of the simple and unalloyed amorousness of the poet. In his poem on Julia he waxes lyrical over the silk costume of his beloved, and in an ecstatic ardour breaks forth into

...how quickly flows  
That liquefaction of her clothes.

It is the naivety and unpretentiousness of a lover who shows abject servility to his mistress. In this respect he is close to the Elizabethan songsters. In the poem, *The Poetry of Dress*, he gives us a picture of the bewitching beauty of his beloved. The beauty here does not lie in the impeccable arrangement of the garment the lady is attired. The poet notices with a remarkable effusion of abounding joy:

A winning wave, deserving note,  
In the tempestuous petticoat,

This discovery of beauty in wild civility is not in tune with Ben Jonson's concern for form and emotional discipline.

Herrick's poem, *To Dianeme* ushers the reader in a different world suffused with the classical wit that tempers Ben Jonson. Here the poet initiates us into a world that is different from the world of adoration. In this sense he is close to Donne. He wants to confront the beloved on an equal footing :

Sweet, be not proud of those two eyes  
which starlike sparkle in their skies.

He drives the point home to his beloved that all her world of beauty is gone and that she has no armour against this ineluctable law of change, decay and death. In this poem the poet strikes an anti-Petrarchan note. Herrick is remembered for his oft-quoted poem, *Corina's going a- Maying*. In this poem, love assumes a greater dimension. It is in this sense that love is depicted in the backdrop of the greater rhythms of nature involving the sun in its splendid radiance at a dawn. We have pictures of dew-spangled herbs, trees and many-hewed flowers. Nature is in jollity and it is unwise to stay indoors. The poet says that to remain unresponsive to the beautiful rhythm of nature is an act of impiety:

'tis sin,  
Nay, profanation to keep in,  
When as a thousand Virgins on this day  
Spring, sooner than the Lark, to fetch in May.

In this poem Herrick moves away from his master, Ben Jonson and goes in for romanticism that puts a premium on the indissoluble bond of man and nature. It is a celebration of paganism. Here the poet shakes off the shackle of rules and prescriptions.

Though Herrick in many a lyric is preoccupied with the theme of *Carpe diem* (i.e. making hay while the sun shines), he is also aware of the transience and brevity of all earthly things. This awareness becomes an obsession with the poet, and it is articulated in poems like *To Daffodils* and *The Funeral Ribs of Rose*. In *To Daffodils* he says,

Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
you haste away so soon:

This awareness of the transience of life is a prelude to his religious poetry, such as *A Thanksgiving to God for his House* and *Litanie to the Holy Spirit*. Herrick's religious poetry is a simple invocation to God's grace. He looks upon God as his saviour. He gets succour from God in the moments of distress. In his religious poetry we do not have conflict between sin and redemption. His simple and naïve love for God is depicted in the following lines of the poem, *Litanie to the Holy Spirit*:

When (God knows) I'm lost about  
Either with despair, or doubt  
Yet before the glasse be out,  
Sweet Spirit comfort me.

### 12.6.2 Thomas Carew (1594-1639)

Carew may not have the freshness and spontaneity of Herrick, but he outstrips him in point of workmanship. He has two poetic masters – Ben Jonson and Donne. The debt to Donne lies in the sustained argumentative evolution of his lyrics and the flexibility of his lines and the influence of Ben Jonson is perceptible in matters of

grace, urbanity and poise. His love lyrics do not have the languorousness of Herrick's erotic poetry, but they present a dry intellectual analysis of the experience of love. Sir Herbert Grierson rightly affirms :

...the poetic ornament of that court of Thomas Carew.  
This young careless liver was a careful artist with a  
deeper vein of thought and feeling in his temperament  
than a first reading suggests.

Hazlitt dubs him as an "elegant court triflex" (cited in Crompton – Rickett's *History of English Literature*). But F.R. Leavis has all praise for him :

Carew, it seems to me, has claims to more distinction  
than that he is commonly accorded. (THE REVALUATION)

In his love poetry Carew, sometimes, comes under the sway of Petrarch as Donne does in his poem, *The Canonization*. In the poem, *Song*, in a vein of adoration, he finds the ever smiling rose (an impossibility) in the beauty of his beloved. In the last stanza he compares the fragrant bosom of his beloved to a spicy nest in which the phoenix comes, at last, to die. In the poem, *To my inconstant Mistris*, he writes in the way Donne does in his poem, *The Flea*. He wants to win the love of the lady who has broken faith with him. But unlike Donne, Carew is not outrageous and lyrical in his anti-Petrarchan poems. He is suffused with the court culture and cannot have the raffishness of Donne. The urbanity of time may also be attributed to the influence of Ben Jonson. Carew uses religious vocabulary, such as "poor excommunicate", "stray faith" and "glory crowned". The poet has banished the lady from his charmed circle of joy, because she deserted him. Meanwhile he has found another beloved and finds a great pleasure in the company of the new beloved. He says that now the former beloved would envy his happy lot and will like to return to him. But now he will not accept her. Some lines of the poem are double-edged. For example, we may see the following :

And to my soule, a soule more pure  
Than thine...

If the lover is under an impression that he has a right to label her 'excommunicate' and 'apostate', he too deserves the same labels. The ironical expression implicit in the expression, "a soule more pure than thine" is an unwitting acknowledgement of the fact that he, too, is inconstant. This play of critical intelligence is Carew's indebtedness to Jonson-Donne heritage.

Carew's poem, *Maria Wentworth*, is a fine elegy. It, perhaps foreshadows the elegy of Thomas Grey on Richard West and Samuel Johnson's elegy on Dr Levet. It is in many ways superior to Grey's elegy which at many places tends to sentimentality. Carew's elegy is suffused with the double strains of Jonson and Donne. The image of Virgin as a bride justifying a chaste polygamy is a Metaphysical wit. The following lines reflect the civilizing grace of Ben Jonson :

Good to the Poor, to kindred dear,  
To servants kind, to friendship clear,  
To nothing but herself severe.

### 12.6.3 Sir John Suckling (1609-42)

Like Thomas Carew, Suckling is a court poet. But he is far less urbane and polished than Carew. However, he is witty and generous. He disarms people by his witty sallies. He is mercurial and volatile. He has the protean quality of changing his stance in lovemaking.

In the poem, *Song*, poet is wooing his lady-love who is pale, wan and mute. The poet feels exasperated when his entreaties fall flat on her. He feels vexed and annoyed and fails to keep his cool. In sheer rage, he breaks into imprecations:

If of her self she will Love,  
Nothing can make her;  
The Devill take her.

In the poem, *Sonnet*, the poet is love-sick. His mind is so revetted on love that he does not care a háng for any other consideration:

Make me but mad enough, give me good store  
Of love...

He is in a state of frenzy and says that beauty is a misnomer and a cheat. These expressions are indicative of the poet's cynical attitude to love. He does not know of any sacred bond subsisting between the lover and the beloved, and in the vein of a typical Retoration rake or gallant arrogates himself the powers to invent to himself his own concept of beauty and love. In the last stanza the poet becomes a downright sensualist and uses raw imagery:

'Tis not the meat, but it is the appetite  
makes eating a delight,

Thus he loses control over his emotion and does not follow the Jonsonian principle of restraint.

The poem, *My dearest Rival* is a sustained piece from beginning to end. The poet shows his argumentative development of his emotional experience. He has got a rival in love-making. He lists on an ingenious plan to curb the eccentricity of the beloved and to foil the game of his rival. He has an understanding with the beloved that they make a joint endeavour to praise the beloved. They vie with each other in extolling the beauty of the beloved. They continue with this venture till death knocks at their door. He says to his rival that if he dies before him he will make a will bequeathing the lady-love to him, and if he outlives the pact he will relinquish his claim to the rival. He says,

For no one stock can ever serve  
To love so much as shee'll deserve.

This poem has a singular place in Suckling's canon of love poetry. This poem is marked by classical restraint. Here the poet forbears using coarse and brutal expressions. The interlocutor in Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* says that Suckling uses the language of a gentleman. Probably the interlocutor has this poem in mind.

#### **12.6.4 Richard Lovelace (1618-58)**

Lovelace is a poet of finer sensibility than Suckling. His indulgence into vulgarity is only casual. He makes an unbridled use of emotion in his poem, *The Scrutinie*. He suffers no qualms of conscience in snapping his relation with his lady-love at his sweet will. He took a vow to his beloved that he would be constant in love-making. But just as the day ended he revoked his commitment. This forsaking of the pledge is wanton and comes within the purview of perjury. But the poet wants to go scot-free and is not in the least ashamed of riding rough shod over the feelings of the beloved :

Have I not lov'd thee much and long,  
A tedious twelve houres space?...  
Could I still dote upon thy Face'?



But in his poems like *To Lucasta, Going beyond the Seas*, *To Lucasta, **Going to the Warres***, and *To Althea, from Prison*, Loveless is quite a different poet. In his poem, *To Lucasta, Going beyond the Seas*, he speaks of a complete union with his beloved, even at the moments of separation, reminding us of the two legs of the compasses in Donne's poem *A Valediction forbidding mourning*. *To Lucasta, Going to the warres* is also an affirmation of true love to the beloved. The image of "the nunnery" is suggestive of the elevated character of love. *To Althea, from Prison* breathes the rarefied atmosphere of the Italian poet, "Marino". The poet conjures up the picture of Althea. She comes to him in prison, riding the wings of poesy. His union with her in the realm of imagination is ecstatic. The poet shows himself transcending the confinement of the temporal world and discover bliss in the anns of love.

### EXERCISE-V

1. What is meant by the term, "The Tribe of Ben?"  


---

---

---

---
2. Name the poet who belong to the Tribe of Ben.  


---

---

---

---
3. Which of the two group is bigger the Tribe of Ben or the cavalier poets  


---

---

---

---
4. What were the main traits of Ben Jonson's poetry?. Confine your answer to twenty words.  


---

---

---

---
5. Which sense the poets of the Tribe are similar to John Donne?  


---

---

---

---
6. Name two poems by Herrick.  


---

---

---

---
7. Name a poem in which Herrick appears like a romantic poet?  


---

---

---

---

8. Name four religious poems by Herrick.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Name a poem by Carew in which we have the adoration of the beloved in the petrarchan vein.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Name four poems by Suckling.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Name four poems by Lovelace.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Write a few words on the poem, *My dearest Rival*.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Which of the four important members of the Tribe seems to be most uncourtly and vulgar?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

## 12.7 THE METAPHYSICAL POETS

---

Seventeenth century in English literature witnesses the emergence of a host of religious poets. They are Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Marvell, Vaughan and Traherne in their chronological sequence.

You will have long discussions on Donne, Herbert and Marvell later in the block.

### 12.7.1 Henry Vaughan (1621/22-95)

Vaughan was born at Newton St. Bridget, Brecknockshire in 1621/22. He was the elder of the twins. His father came of an illustrious Welsh family. The pre-eminence of the family lay in the chivalry of one of its members, Sir Thomas Vaughan. Sir Thomas Vaughan fought gallantly in the battle of Agincourt. He fell a victim to Richard III. He was commemorated by Shakespeare. Very little is known about his mother. Henry Vaughan had the privilege of passing the early years of his life in a singularly beautiful and picturesque country. This opportunity of being nurtured in a lovely place was denied to major Metaphysical poets, such as Donne, Herbert and

Crashaw. Herbert saw the country-life only when he became matured. The urban Donne and the scholastic Crashaw missed the healing touch of nature.

Pre-Restoration

Henry Vaughan had been to Oxford along with his brother, Thomas. Thomas got his B.A. from Oxford, but Henry did not get his B.A. degree. He studied law and medicine, too. He was a Royalist and participated in the Civil War. He had the experience of being wounded in battle and also of imprisonment. He felt a great disappointment when he found that the Royalists lost the battle to the Parliamentarians. He also felt that his prospect of becoming a lawyer was belied. His frustration mounted all the more when two of his close friends died in military operations. His suffering was exacerbated with the untimely death of his brother and he also became vulnerable to illness, references to which are there in many a poem. All these facts of his private life—soldiering, protracted illness, the death of his brother and the failure of the Royalist cause—were the shaping spirit of his imagination. He got a very disappointing picture of life, violent and unjust. This resulted into an indignant contemplation of life, the manifestation of which is noticeable in the recurrent account of the fall of man from the state of grace in his poetry. It is this experience of disenchantment with the ways of man that is at the root of his moral preoccupation. His saddening experiences changed the course of his life. The Henry Vaughan of early days who mixed with the gay Cavaliers and bacchanalian wits found himself moving in a new direction. His gait became different, he became sober and charted a new path for himself. This change in him was further reinforced by a lot of literary activities he did from 1647 to 1650. This period is the watershed in his life. During this period he makes a lot of translations of classics. These translations hasten the spiritual change in him. He makes a translation of two very substantial essays by Plutarch, one of which relates to the diseases of the mind and the body. He develops a stoic point of view with a good deal of warmth and shrewdness. He translates Guevara's *The Praise and Happiness of the Country-life*. In keeping with the incipient mood, he translates *Flores Solitudes* by Nierembergins. This relates to the theme of solitude and retirement. Through the translation of Anselm's *Man and Glory* he offers a sterner fare. This book deals with the theme of temptation of the world. He also translates the book titled *The World Condemned*. This, too, deals with the religious theme of guilt and salvation. He also makes a translation of Nolius's *Hermetical Physick*. This book is metaphysical in character and tells us about the relation of God, nature and man. His long contact with the theological works has a chastening effect in him. He feels himself roused into a new life of bounding spiritual energy. With his new frame of mind, he beseeches his readers not to read his works written prior to 1647. There are at least ten passages in his poetry that suggest a consciousness that he has been looking for truth in a wrong place, i.e. in the paths of magic:

And my false Magic, which I did believe  
Any mystic Lyes to Saturn I do give.

We may divide Henry Vaughan's poetic career into three phases. The first phase is that of gay and elegant love lyrics which were published in 1646. The second phase is the core of Vaughan's poetry stretching from 1647 to 1650. This group of poems is labelled *Silex Scintillans*. This anthology is enlarged in 1655 with the poet's preface to it. The third phase is known as "Thalia Redeviva". This was published in 1678. This group is considered to be of little value. This volume also includes some erotic poems which were written in the first phase. The poems of the first group owe their origin to the poetic fashion of the time. Vaughan seems to have drunk with the wits and swaggered down the streets with some of his bohemian friends. These poems are in the vein of Donne's early love lyrics devoted to the wooing of the mistress in an outrageous and cynical manner. The poem, *To Amoret gone from him* is a fine specimen of the lover trying to woo his beloved by cogent reasoning. The poet seems to attempt an imitation of Donne's amatory verses. The poems of this phase are marked by playful tenderness without the sensuous immediacy and rawness of Donne's poetry. But later Vaughan is convinced of the meaninglessness of these

poems. So he discards the fashion of amorous verses and goes in for real poetry that comes out in the form of *Silex Scintillans*. It is in this phase of poetry that the poet finds his voice and discovers a poetic medium for making articulate the vision incubating in his psyche. The kind of experience that the poems depict is control to his Muse. The poems generally present Vaughan's meditation on nature or on right or eternity or death or the presence of God in His Creation. In the preface to the enlarged edition of *Silex Scintillans*, Vaughan acknowledges his debt to Herbert in no uncertain terms and attributes the change in his poetic course to Herbert :

The first, that with any effectual success attempted a diversion of this foul and overflowing stream (i.e. of 'witty' amatory verse), was the blessed man, Mr. George Herbert, whose holy life and verse gained many pious Converts (of whom I am the least) and gave the first check to a most flourishing wit of his time. (cited in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, Vol.3)

This candid statement of Vaughan prejudices the minds of many a critic of Vaughan who, on the basis of some poetic expressions of Vaughan having resemblance with Herbert's, try to establish that Vaughan's poetry is derivative. They maintain that Vaughan chooses the themes and titles of Herbert's poetry portrayed in a tame manner, makes a rehash of what Herbert does in his poetry. A critic like Hutchinson goes to the extent of remarking that he finds no other example of a poet who has so extensively borrowed from his model. (Cited in Boris Ford's (ed.), *From Donne to Marvell*) "Borrowing" is not the right word here, because Vaughan is not a plagiarist who steals lines from a passages from others and calls them his own. There is a kinship between Vaughan and Herbert in point of moral concern for taking a lesson from nature for the refashioning of man in the moral mould. This is the meeting point between the two poets. Soon-after they part company and chart their ways of coming to grips with their vision in their own distinctive ways. Herbert's propensity is towards classical exactness and he does not have the flair for the intuitive apprehension of mystery that resides at the core of the universe as Vaughan does. Vaughan's concern is much more for the restoration of the commerce of heaven and earth that man has snapped willfully. In this restoration of the salutary intercourse of heaven and earth, his love of the picturesque native country comes to his rescue.

Vaughan's view of nature is difficult to understand without an acquaintance with his view of man. In the poem, *Man* he talks about the unstable character of man:

He hath no root, nor to one place is ty'd,  
But ever restless and Irregular  
About this Earth doth run and ride,

It is painful to contemplate the spectacle of the rebelliousness of man, his stubbornness to hearken to God's commandments and his proclivity to chase strange gods of fleshly appetite. This wanton defiance of man sunk in the mire of vile passions the poet puts against the process of nature which has a regularity and constancy about it. The first stanza of the poem, *Man* is about the steadfastness of the ordinary things of nature, such as birds which are like "watchful clocks" dividing time in a noiseless and imperceptible manner, the bees that "get home and hive" at night and the flowers that "rise with the sun". The poet longs for the steadfastness of the objects of nature that will have a beneficial influence on man by arresting his straying from the path of moral rectitude. He says,

I would (said I) my God would give  
The staidness of these things to man!' for these  
To his divine appointments ever cleave,

The spectacle is both sublime and pathetic. It is sublime in the sense that the Creator has set man above all the rest of the creation, and it is pathetic in the sense that man becomes oblivious of his glorious destiny that he knocks at all doors, strays and roams.

In the poem, Cock-crowing, the poet in the vein of the German mystic, Boehme, talks about the unbreakable continuum subsisting between heaven and earth. Vaughan does not share the belief of a Christian Platonist who believes in the theory of ascension from the little world of man to the world of divinity. His is a conception of grace in descending order, meaning thereby that God's benedictions shower down from the top and the poem, Cock-crowing is a fine embodiment of the spark of divinity transfiguring in the ordinary cock. In this poem the poet presents the quintessence of his vision which in its capacious fold contains a remarkable intermingling of the terrestrial and the supernatural. At the outset the poet talks about the divine magnetism that works in the cock all night and makes him dream of *Paradise* and light. The cock remains undaunted in the night and its entire attention is riveted on the coming of the dawn in all its splendour and glory. It has an undying knack for anticipating the coming of the day in all its radiance, and this sense of having a premonition of the coming dawn has come to him from the Lord who is the Father of lights:

'Father of Lights.' What Sunnie seeds,  
What glance of the day hast thou confin'd  
Into this bird?

In the life of the cock the rapport with the Lord of Creation is intact, but the tragedy with the world of man is that a veil keeps off the grandeur of God from him, and consequently, for want of divine emanation, his life remains folded in darkness :

Only this veyle which thou hast broke,  
And must be broken yet in me,  
This veyle, I say, is all the cloke  
And cloud which shadows thee from me.

Here Vaughan is very much like the penitent Donne or Herbert ashamed of his willed remoteness from the Maker. He is also akin to them in invoking divine ministration for his redemption :

O take it off!' Make no delay,  
But brush me with light, that I  
May shine unto a perfect day,

Henry Vaughan's vision is also perceptible in his distinctive contemplation of death. Generally death is considered to be a terrible reality of which we are afraid. But for Vaughan death has got a splendour of its own, and in this treatment of death he is like Donne in some measure in the sense that Donne, too, views death as a benign force which enfranchises the captive soul and enables it to experience felicity. In her book *Metaphysical Poets*, Helen C. White rightly observes that Henry Vaughan exhibits the characteristic seventeenth century "Mortuary splendour" and, in a typical *Metaphysical* vein, views death as the gate to the radiance of eternity. In the poem, *Ascension Hymn*, Vaughan hails death as a lovely, beautiful and righteous thing:

Dear, beautiful death! the jewel of the just.

In a bid to elaborate the beneficial idea of death the poet gives the image of a sepulchre or tomb and that of a star. The star is the soul and the tomb is the body, If the star is put into the narrow confines of a tomb, its light is circumscribed, but if it comes out of the cribbed and confined cell of the tomb; its light increases. In a similar manner, the soul comes out of the body after death and finds itself in its full

glory. But this glorification of death need not be taken as a morbid preoccupation of a psychopath,, it should rather be viewed as a desire for a richer life of the spirit. The view of death as the release of the spirit from the bondage of material existence has hardly anywhere been expressed so glowingly.

Vaughan's is a nature-mysticism. It has some kinship with the Blakian universe as regards mystical contemplation. This mysticism finds a beautiful account in the poem, *The Retreat*. In this poem, Vaughan's intuitive perception of eternity in "some gilded cloud, or flowers" unfolds his mystical vision. In many of his poems he talks about the radical failure of the ratiocinative faculty in man to comprehend the dynamics of the universe shrouded in mystery. He has an intense desire for cleansing the dusky and blurred glass of life so that he may have a glimpse of the bright face of God. In the poem, *The Retreat*, he imagines the days of purity when the soul was free of all blemish and he wanted to recapture the primal innocence that animated his soul either in the pre-natal state or in the state of childhood:

Happy those early dayes! when I  
Shin'd in my Angell-infancy.  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,

Vaughan's mystical vision is sometimes supposed to be vague and shadowy. It is thought that his picture is hazy and there is nothing to clutch at. But Vughan's mysticism is not a flight into the realm of the inane. In the poem, *The Retreat*, the lines,

But felt through all this fleshly dresse  
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

Give a lie to thê misconception about his mysticism as being sloppy and fluid. The awareness of eternity here and now is a rebuff to those who talce Vaughan's mysticism with a grain of salt. Compared with an identical experience of 'angel infancy' in Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* Vaughan's contemplation has got definitiveness about it. Wordsworth may be charged with vagueness and a mental bombast, but Vaughan's *The Retreat* has got an experience realised in terms of concrete immediacy in the images of "the bright stroots of everlastingness" and the unsteady gait of a man inebriated who in his bed to move forward goes two steps backward.

'It is'generally believed that Vughan's poems have a brilliant beginning and a brilliant ending, whereas in between the two there is a lack of a sustained development of the idea from the beginning to the end. Vaughan is supposed to be a poet of flashes, one who sees visions but miserably fails when the question of incarnating that vision in terms of a concrete situation comes. The opening line, like the following:

I saw eternity the other night (From *The World*)

impresses the reader, but the poem does not become a sustained piece. It turns out to be a struggling one leaving the impression of a curious tameness and flatness on the reader. The vision that flashes like a wonderful jet in the beginning experiences a swift extinction. But this is not true of all poems of Vaughan. He distinguishes himself on the plane of sensibility. He is not as good on the reflective level as he is on the level of sensibility. However, in a few notable poems, such as "Man", "Peace", "Regeneration", "Cock-crowing", "The Retreat" and "The Night", he exhibits his capacity for sustaining his inspiration from start to finish. It is not any lack of faith in ecstasy, nor is it any failure of taste for the heights. It is a matter of Metaphysical heritage for keeping both heaven and home in sight. Vaughan is also accused of being loose in the texture of his structure. His poetry has beautiful phrases or purple patches. But he lacks the compression of Herbert. Compared with

the taut and firm lines of Herbert, Vaughan's lines are diffuse and limp. For example, we may see the following lines from Vaughan's "Night":

Through that pure vision – shrine,  
That sacred vail drawn o'r thy glorious noon.  
That men might look and live a Glo-worms Shine,

But, at times, Vaughan, too, succeeds in presenting lines that are precise and compact. For example, we may see the under-mentioned lines from *Regeneration*,

The unthrift Sunne shot vitall gold  
Checqu'd with Showie fleeces,  
The aire was all in spice  
And every bush  
A garland wore.

Like Crashew's, Vaughan's vocabulary is limited and somewhat monotonous. There is a tendency in both Crashaw and Vaughan to use words like 'herb' and 'star' in a special, almost liturgical meaning. But the emotional aura is much more extensive.

### 12.7.2 Richard Crashaw (1612/13-49)

Richard Crashaw was born in England in 1612/13. He was the son of William Crashaw, a famous Anglican preacher and writer of conspicuous Puritan sympathies. William Crashaw was also noted for his passionate participation in the acrimonious debate of the time relating to the repugnance to the papal authority. The initial development of the mind of Richard took place in the scholastic atmosphere of the family. The foundation of his education was laid in the father's library in White chapel. The staunch and sincere crusading spirit of the father affected the sensibility of the son. The family ambience was afflicted with a series of setbacks, and this had a lasting impact on the mind of Richard. When he was three or four years old, his mother died. But the step-mother was there to supplant his mother with tenderness and affection. His father also died a premature death, leaving Richard under the guardianship of two distinguished lawyers who were the friends of his father's Temple days. Signor Praz attributes something of his susceptibility to maternal tenderness to recurrent losses in the family. Crashaw's letter containing the nostalgic expression "my dearest mother" and his praises of Teresa of Avila and the Virgin is indicative of his craving for maternal love. The tragic incidents in the family made him highly sensitive. The first turning point in his life after his father's death was his acceptance for admission to the Charter house in 1629. His stay at Charterhouse had a lot to do with the formation of his religious sensibility. Sunday exercises were a part of the curriculum, and as a part of this course, seniors were required to make verses in Latin and Greek on the Gospel and the Epistle of the day. Richard Crashaw proved his merit by being elected to the Greek scholarship at the college on October 6, 1631. He did matriculation in the next year as a pensioner at Pembroke College, Cambridge. With a considerable reputation as a youthful poet he came to the university. He made many contributions to the collections of elegies in his first year. In the address prefixed to his "Epigrammata Sacra, he makes a declaration of his objectives in making poetry. He speaks of his unflinching resolve to devote himself to sacred poetry. He was greatly influenced by Little Gidding. Little Gidding was a circle of like-minded spirits suffused with religious feelings. It was founded by Nicholas Ferrar. This circle sought to put a primu in on monasticism and religious life in the Protestant England. Nicholas Ferrar was a friend of Richard's father. Little Gidding also ministered to the spiritual nourishment of George Herbert. Ferrar was an Anglican, but he was not prejudiced against Catholics. Like Ferrar, Crashaw was an Anglican scrupulously refraining from taking upon Pope as Anti-Christ.

The poetry of Crashaw falls into three groups. The first group is called "Epigrammata Sacra". This was published in 1634.

This anthology contains poems that are wholly Latin and wholly sacred. The second anthology "steps to the Temple" was published in 1646 and was enlarged in 1648. This book is a mixture of Latin and English poems. Unlike the preceding anthology, this anthology includes both secular and religious poems. The third collection is known as "The Delights of Muses". This is also a mixture of sacred and profane themes. The fourth anthology was titled "The Carmen Deo Nostro." It was published in 1652. The poems in this group are exclusively sacred and English. It is an outcome of the poet's realisation that his Muse will be more at home in the vernacular than in Latin.

A perusal of his sacred poetry gives us an idea that Crashaw's idea of God is different from Donne's and Herbert's. Donne has got the conception of a wrathful God intent on punishing those who go against His commandments. Donne suffers from deep anguish resulting from his nagging sense of sin and is, generally, afraid that the wrathful God will not absolve him of his sins. The sense of sin is also the prime alienation of man from God in Herbert's poetry. But Crashaw is altogether a different breed. He is a radiant spirit who feels perfectly assured of his salvation in God. It is probably in only one poem by Crashaw, i.e. *Our Lord in his Circumcision to His Father* that God is wrathful. Crashaw's God is generally the God of love who cannot bear to see the misery of this Creation. In his poem, *Christas Nimia*, God, the emblem of love, shows largesse on people irrespective of their deeds in this world:

Why shouldst thou bow thy awfull brest to see  
Why mine own madneses have Done with mee  
(From *The steps to Temple*).

In the poem, *A letter to the Countess Denbigh*, Crashaw's all-benign and all-forgiving God is ready to embrace the hesitant man:

Disband dull Fears, give Faith the day:  
To save your life, Kill your Delay.  
(From *The Carmen Deo Nostro*)

In his conception of a loving God, Crashaw owes much to Marino, the Spanish poet, who in his poem, *Sospetto D'Herode* (1637), gives an identical conception of God:

That the unmeasur'd God so low should sinke,  
As prisoner in few poore Rags to Lye.

The idea is that God is bountiful even in granting pardons. Crashaw seems to have been highly impressed by God's forgiveness and His readiness to provide succour to the needy.

In his poem *Hymn to St. Teresa* the poet presents a highly exalted account of the life of St. Teresa of Avila. Some critics feel that it is a resume of the great sacrifice of St. Teresa and that it has nothing to do with the personal predicament of Crashaw. But a careful reading of the poem makes it manifest that through this account of Teresa's sacrifices for the fulfilment of the lofty ideal of love and sacrifice, Crashaw is enacting the drama taking place in his own soul. St. Teresa is the alter ego of Crashaw. We have an idea of the poet's radiant spirit talking about the uplifting inspiration emanating from St. Teresa. The poet expresses his sense of wonder and delight in a fellow creature and makes an effort to analyse the sources of power that he has felt in the words of the saint. He has a feeling that Divine love has kindled Teresa's heart and that Teresa's fire has kindled his heart. In the hymn Crashaw says,



Some critics see in excess of sentimentality in Crashaw's poetry. But actually it is not so. Crashaw's uses some poetic devices that presently his poems from being sentimental. The preponderance of antithetical expression impart a sort of stringency to his poems and neutralize the effects of emotion. For example, we may see the following:

Fountain and garden in one face (From *The Weeper*)

One charge against Crashaw's that his poetry abounds in abstractions. This charge seems tenable. The words Crashaw uses lack the nerve and sinew of the English Language. The forthrightness and masculinity of Saxon words are absent from his poetry. Some sort of remoteness is there in hearing in the studied and impersonal diction.

Crashaw has the great gift of the sheer power of music. The little and cadence constitute the secret of his poetry. His images are not well realized. But it does not mean that the fumbles and gropes in the realm of uncertainty. What is lacking in the immediacy and concreteness of imagery is made up by the uplifting and ecstatic rhythm of the life.

Despite extensive researches into the life of Thomas Traherne, very little is known of it definitively. The place and date of his birth are unknown. However, scanty evidence gleaned from various sources tell us that Traherne was the son of a shoemaker of Hereford. His family was connected with the ancient family of the same name that for three centuries owned Middlecourt, at Lugwardine, a mile from Hereford. It is also supposed that Traherne had some Welsh blood in him. Information goes that the Traherne family was well off and prosperous and that Thomas Traherne had the fortune of having a happy boyhood. On March 1, 1652 he entered Brasenose College, Oxford, the haunt of the Puritans of the time. He did his B.A. from there in 1657. His stay at Oxford provided him with a great opportunity for saturating himself with the classics. The subject that endeared to him was Platonic philosophy. His early interest also centred round Socrates and the Stoics. On doing his B.A. he came in contact with Annabella, the Dowager Countess of Kent who offered him the living at Credenhill (supposedly a parish). In his *Centuries of*

Meditations, he tells us about his setting down in the country with a contented heart. He was satisfied with the austere and spartan life in the country. He spoke of his firm determination to be content with ten pounds a year, some leather clothes, bread and water. In this strict regimen, he was in quest of felicity. He had a Thoreau-like vision. In 1661, he did his M.A. and in 1669 he did Bachelor of Divinity. The range and kind of scholarship he displayed implied a prolonged sojourn in a well-stocked library at a parsonage. In the library he read Thomas A. Kempis, Bernard of Clairvaux, the Church Fathers, especially St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas and Luther. The University Note Books tell us about Traherne's readings in Seneca, Plato, Plutarch, Aristotle, Pico della Mirandola and the Hermetic philosophy. The Bible also formed an integral part of his life and he made use of it in his daily meditation. His books, *Roman Forgeries* (1673), *Christian Ethicks* (1675) and *A Serious and Pathetical Contemplation* (1699) are suggestive of his wide and extensive reading not only of religious literature but also of political and social upheaval of the time. In recognition of his talent, Sir Orlando Bridgman made him chaplain. But unfortunately, Sir Bridgman himself suffered an eclipse and moved to London, accompanied by Traherne. This was a blessing in disguise for Traherne who got an opportunity of mixing with the London elite. He made a mingling of the felicity of the rural retreat with the stark reality he encountered in the mercantile world. In *Christian Ethicks*, he is not a dreamer enjoying isolation and solitude, but a philosopher and critic, intensely aware of and responsive to the intellectual currents of his day. On Bridgman's retirement in 1672 he accompanied him to Teddington, Middlesex where he died in 1674. He had a row of five houses which he donated to the poor. This act of munificence is suggestive of certain unworldliness which pervades everything he wrote.

Traherne is one of the most intensely personal poets of the time. In this respect, he surpasses even Donne. In Donne, we are aware of a tension between his self-consciousness and his desire to transcend himself. But in Traherne, the impression is that of a poet who is obsessed with the compulsive course of self-articulation in the lyrical form. Traherne is a man of revelation, and the heart of that revelation is his own experience. He is both, a prophet as well as a poet. Like Henry Vaughan and Wordsworth, he tells us about the experience of innocence either of childhood or of the life before birth. This experience is Edenic. His insatiable desire for recapturing the felicity which has something celestial about it endows his poetry with a mystical dimension. In his poetry, the reader feels confronted with the overwhelming consciousness of the presence of God in His Creation. Traherne outdoes Vaughan and Wordsworth in making the reader feel this immanence of God in His Creation with a sense of urgency that is difficult to match. In Vaughan's *The Retreat*, the desire to tread the ancient track to catch a glimpse of the shady city of palm trees gets impaired by the sway of intoxication with sensual pleasures. The see-saw rhythm bodes well for the pilgrim embarking on the journey to the place of his birth in Paradise. In Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, shades of the prison house descend on the growing boy and the landscape becomes murky, despite the realisation that the world of vile passions is not his original home. But in Traherne there is no uncertainty, no second thought, no succumbing to temptation and no procrastination in the attainment of felicity. The confident pilgrim in his poem, *On News*, has fastened his eyes on the priceless treasure in a foreign country :

My very Joys themselves, my forren Treasure,  
Or els did bear them on their Wings;  
With so much Joy they came, with so much Pleasure.

The poet says that the treasures of the temporal world hold no attention for him :

...(since nought did please  
I knew.) my Bliss did stand.

To him God is the 'Cream', the 'Gem', the 'Diadem' and the 'Ring' enclosing all that belong to the material world (From *On News*). He says that the *Heavenly Eye* (From *Centuries of Meditation*) is much wider than the sky and that it oversees everything. There is a joyous acquiescence into God who is the Alpha and Omega of everything. In the poem, *Hosanna*, Traherne speaks of the sovereignty of God :

No more shall Walls, no more shall Walls confine  
That glorious soul which in my Flesh doth shine.

Henry Vaughan compares the body to a tomb and the soul to a star and says that the star remains eclipsed in the tomb. But Traherne's faith in God makes him declare that the walls do not have the power to keep the soul from sending out light. This shows that the poet's faith in God is unflinching.

To Traherne, all aspects of human experience, apart from the adoration of God, are secondary, derivative and ancillary. When the commerce of the human soul with the Divine ceases, people become blind and fall prey to vile passions. In this state of delusion they take the sham for the real. Like Bunyan, he movingly pictures people groping about in darkness, and says that salvation resides in God.

Traherne's mystical experience gives him a distinctive character. He feels that the joy and illumination he experiences is not self-regarding. He believes that the joy of this ineffable order increases by common sharing and does not, like goods of this world, diminish by use. Felicity is to be reached out to all, because its real value lies in the communal sharing :

The light which on ten thousand faces shine  
The Beams which crown ten thousand vines  
With Glory and delight, appear  
As if they were  
Reflected only from there all for me  
That a Greater Beauty there might see.  
(From *Centuries of Meditation*)

The poem, *Shadows in the water* shows the criss-cross pattern of Traherne's self-consciousness in a typical Donne manner. It is only Donne of all other Metaphysicals who **come** closer to Traherne in respect of the adroit playing of one attitude against another. In this poem, the poet is on the brink of a pool of water and broods over the possibilities of abstruse and bizz **are** possibilities of life. The paradoxical play of **intithetical** ideas is beautifully reflected as in the following :

. **Beneath** the Water People drown'd,  
Yet with another Hev'n crown'd,

In the concluding stanza of the poem Traherne's heightened consciousness of nature, the treasure house of the unknown joy is embodied in his becoming one with the purpling stream. This rapport with the sweet murmur of the rill is possible when the thin '**Skin**' is broken. Earlier in the poem the poet speaks of the intervening barrier of a **film** that keeps off the poet from the other world. **The** film reminds us of Vaughan's veil that keeps off a man's soul from the Divine.

Traherne is not an accomplished craftsman. He does not have the native endowment of a **poet** consciously manipulating his materials into a **design**. His poetic genius feels at home in the couplet form, and when he comes to the composition of spacious stanzas, he fails. Traherne comes towards the end of the Metaphysical movement when the sensibility of England is moving towards plainness. So he is also close to **Cowley** and his disciples whose writings are marked by clearness, coolness and simplicity. He is good at writing couplets. In respect of musical quality, Traherne is

close to the Caroline poets. The poems that he writes in praise of God are exceedingly moving.

**EXERCISE-VI**

1.

Bring out some points of difference between the religious poetry of Donne and that of Herbert.
2.

Which of the two Marvell is closer to ----- Donne or Herbert?
3.

When did Henry Vaughan die?
4.

Name works that Vaughan translated in English.
5.

Name two poems by Vaughan
6.

Who wrote the following

a. *Silex Scintillans*

b. *Thalia Rediviva*.
7.

Give the main idea of the poem, *Cockcrowning*.
8.

When was Crashaw born?
9.

In which language was the first anthology of Crashaw written?

10. In which sense Crashaw's idea of God is different from those of Donne and Herbert?

---



---



---

11. Who wrote the following :
- Centuries of Meditations*
  - Shadows in the Water.*

---



---



---



---

## 12.8 THE EARLY AUGUSTANS

---

T.S. Eliot states a basic fact of life when he says that sensibility alters from generation to generation. This change in sensibility necessitates a corresponding change in poetic medium. Probably mid-seventeenth century poets like Waller, Davenant, Denham and Cowley perceive a change in the sensibility of the people and makes an artistic reflection of this changed awareness in their poetry. Their poetry points to a change in favour of order and decorum both literary and social. In their poetry we have a predominance of reason and this preoccupation with reason, becomes the hallmark of the poetry of the eighteenth century. It is in this sense that these poets are called the precursors of the Augustan poetry. In the preceding and the contemporary Metaphysical poetry (some Metaphysical poets were contemporaries with them) the focus is on the inner vibration of man, but in this poetry the centre of interest shifts towards the social aspect of man. The Metaphysical wit involving cerebral quibbling gives way to epigrammatic neatness. Instead of the passionate thought of the Metaphysical we have a polite rationality and a good sense. The eloquent rhetoric of the Metaphysical is replaced by a tone of polite discussion. Things are amenable to rational argument and wit is regulated by a sense of good form. Unlike the Metaphysicals, these poets do not revel in ransacking the world for images expressive of their unusual perceptions. They focus their attention on the general conceptions of life. They take their cue from the experimental philosophy of Bacon. Abraham Cowley, a leading poet in this group, is a founder member of the Royal Society that lays emphasis on getting knowledge through observation. Hobbes's rationalism is there as a great assault on the vagaries of imagination. This incipient growth of rationalism comes as a great foil to the playing up of the imaginative faculty that sometimes runs into an excess in the Metaphysical poetry.

### 12.8.1 Edmund Waller (1605/6-87)

Waller writes lyrics in the vein of the cavaliers like Suckling and Lovelace. But his emotion is not unrestrained. He puts his emotional experience to scrutiny.

In his poem, *The selfe-banished* the poet languishes in love for a lady for sometime. But his wooings evoke no response. His attempt to distance himself from her proves futile. The memories revive and hurt him. We have an impression that the poet has been wronged by the lady-love, but the penultimate stanza springs a surprise. The last line,

The vow I made to love you too

brings the cat out of the poet's bag. It is now clear that the poet has affairs also with another woman.

In the poem, *Song*, the poet takes a dig at a beauty who is proud of spurning the offer of love. Unlike the Metaphysicals, he takes the familiar image of rose, and says that a lovely lady who is unresponsive to lovers is a rose flower blooming in the wilderness of a desert and dying unwept and unsung. He offers a counsel to the beauties of the world:

Bid her come forth,  
Suffer her selfe to bee desir'd,  
And not blush so to be admir'd

In the Metaphysical the stress is on the presentation of individual experiences, but in the hands of poets like Waller the personal experience merges into the experiences of the common people.

Waller also wrote divine poems. His poem, *Of the Last Verses*, is about the wisdom that comes with old age. It gives us the story of a man whose passions are spent and whose visions are unclouded. The man has been compared to a dark cottage, battered and decayed. The chinks in the door of the cottage admit the ray of the sun. The ray is the light of wisdom that drives out the darkness of ignorance that was thickened by vile passions. The conclusion of the poem reminds us of the concluding line of Sophocles's *Antigone* that have been uttered by the chorus :

We learn when we grow old.

There, we have pride, instead of passions, that clouds the vision of the protagonist.

This poem has been written in complete. The pair of iambic pentameters rhyming together is foil to the waywardness of emotions. The couplet thus keeps exuberance under check. Thus Waller earns the credit for reforming the numbers. He can also make the couplet supple by using enjambement (or run on) as he does in the following:

No Mortal Parts are requisite to raise  
Her.'..

This reminds us of John Donne who is in the habit of using enjambents (explained in units 13 and 14). This also shows that the co-currents of literature have overlapping boundaries and they are bound to be affected by each other (or one another), though in some measure only.

### 12.8.2 Sir William Davenant (1606-68)

Davenant wrote both secular and religious poems.

*For the Lady, Olivia Porter* is a fine specimen of his love poetry. Endimion Porter has an intense desire to send a new year's gift to his wife, Olivia Porter. He wants to give her the tribute of a white "Ermine" and orders his men to hunt the ermine. He also sends his men to climb up a rock and bring a star contracted in a diamond. But he says that the eyes of Olivia outshine the stars. He thinks of presenting her pearls brought from the sea, but he realises that the tears of his wife are like pearls. He also realises that his images are hyperbolic and so he comes down to the world of reality :

How I command? How slowly they obey?  
The churlish Tartar will not hunt today:  
Nor will that lazy sallow Indian strive  
To climb the rock, nor that dull Negro dive.

The antithetical statements in the first line of the quotation are played off against each other and, in a mock-heroic vein bring the poet back to the waking world. The heroic couplets give a compact form to the riot of emotions the poet indulges himself in.

The poem, *The Christian's reply to the Philosopher* relates to the clash of body and soul, and also to reason and faith. He says that our body is the seat of passions and passions are like mists that darken the vision. The poet tries hard to move towards the light of divinity, but the progress is tardy. At last he looks towards death as

A short dark passage to Eternal Light.

Allied with this theme of death as the harbinger of a new life is the theme of dry reason made mellowed by faith.

### 12.8.3 Sir John Denham (1615-69)

Denham is often associated with Waller. Both are regarded as the pioneers of the classical poetry from Dryden to Johnson. Pope sums up the chief attributes of the two in the following words:

Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness

Like Waller, Denham goes in for correctness and decorum. His primary concern is for common sense and good form. The measured and deliberate movement of his verse proclaims the advent of a new era. His poem, *Cooper's Hill* is a specimen of the careful art involved in the making of the couplets, the appropriate medium for his controlled feelings. From the vantage point of the summit of the hill he looks at the landscape. But the painting of the landscape is different from the exuberant fantasy of either a Sidney or a Spenser. There is a skilful mingling of the descriptive and the reflective strains. The description of Runnymede brings to mind the historical associations of the place. During the process of rumination, the matter of kingship also comes. Johnson is full of praise for Denham's *Cooper's Hill* and looks upon him as the initiator of the new genre of local poetry. The meticulous care that Denham employs in the fashioning of his couplets is evident from the following extract from *Cooper's Hill*.

O could I flow like thee and make thy stream  
My great example, as it is my theme!  
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle yet not dull  
Strong without rage, without overflowing full.

The simple and direct diction is governed by the requirement of sense. The assortment of words having antithetical meanings are telescoped together in expressions like "though deep yet clear," "though gentle yet not dull" and "strong without rage". The couplet becomes a poetic instrument for describing things with a great precision and conciseness.

### 12.8.4 Abraham Cowley (1618-67)

Cowley stands at the cross roads of transition, and as such, his poetry shows the traits of both – the Metaphysical poetry and the Augustan poetry. He has fondness for the Metaphysical conceit of Donne. He also has a growing taste for physical science and rationalism. He is a great friend of Hobbes and a great admirer of Bacon. He is one of the founder members of the Royal Society. The Society aims at the acquisition of scientific knowledge. It also aims at the invention of a style that is simple, natural, precise and concentrated, bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can. The language is a common man's language. It is not the language of wits.

Though Cowley shows the influence of Donne in him, he does not hesitate in heralding a new order. This order lays emphasis on Reason, Nature and Truth.

In the poem, Ode: of *Wit* he presents wit in a manner that is quite different from that of the Metaphysical. The attributes of wit, according to him are Reason, agreeable harmony and lack of Discord or confusion. It is a serene and steady contemplation of life. In the poem, *The Change* the poet gives a realistic picture of love. The poem is marked by a genuineness of feelings. Reason and common sense make their presence felt in the poem. The poet is aware of the pitfalls underlying the charming surface of love. The apparently beautiful beloved is a prisoner of Pride, Malice and Inconstancy. The case of the lover is completely different. He looks ravaged by despair, grief and fear, but he harbours profound love in his heart. This critical examination of the theme of love anticipates the character of Belinda in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

The classical bent of Cowley is seen in poems like *On the Death of Mr Crashaw* and *On the Death of Mr. William Hervey*. The stateliness of diction in which he pays a tribute to Crashaw is classical in tone :

Thou from low earth in nobler Flame didst rise  
And like Elijah, mount Alive the skies.'  
Elisha – like (but with a wish much less,  
More fit thy Greatness, and my Littleness)

The couplet form saves the elegiac strain from becoming too morose and gloomy. The magniloquence of diction typical of a neo-classical poem has an uplifting effect.

### EXERCISES-VII

1. Write a brief note on the characteristics of the Early Augustan poetry.

---

---

---

---

2. Who wrote the following poems :

- a. *The self-banished*  
b. *Of the Last Verses*

---

---

---

---

3. Write a few lines on the poem, *The self-banished*.

---

---

---

---

4. In which poem does Waller suggest that wisdom comes with old age.

---

---

---

---

5. Name two poems by Davenant.

---

---

---

---



Who wrote Cooper's *Hill*?

In which poem does the following line occur :  
"O could I flow like thee and make thy stream"

In Cowley's poem, *The Change* we have the prototype of the arch-character in Pope's poem, *The Rape of the Lock*. What is the name of this character in Pope's satire?

## 2.9 LET US SUM UP

Now that you have had a close look at the multi-faceted life and poetry of the seventeenth century, you may be able to form your idea of the period. In sum, it is one of the most troubled times in the history of England. The Civil War between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians took the toll of many a life. The Thirty Years' War between the two wings of Christianity engulfed almost the whole of the continent. The contemporary man is torn between influences and counter-influences from the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Ptolemaic theory, the Royal Society, the Bible and so on. There is a conflict in the mind of man between faith and science and body and soul, and there is turmoil without. The picture of the horror is best mirrored in the continental baroque and the Jacobean drama. The Metaphysical poets strike a balance between the ugly and the beautiful, as it is exemplified by Donne's key image in *The Relique*: "a bracelet of bright hair about the bone". Even in his religious poetry Donne brings together the two apparently antagonistic worlds: the earthly and the spiritual. In his religious sonnet, *Batter my heart* he imagines himself to be a bride wedded to God but being placed under the spell of her worldly seducer. This is the state of the contemporary man.

But the turmoil is not abiding. People have started looking forward to order, Reason, Reason and Nature. This phenomenon is well reflected in the poetry of a new generation that combines the best qualities of both the worlds. To put it in Emile Zola's words,

... (He) took the highest place in the estimation of his day. He closes the list of the 'metaphysicians' and anticipates the English classicists. He resembles Donne in his search for conceits and subtleties, ...but with a taste for physical science, he is above all an intellectual.

(*A Short History of English Literature*)

Though Cowley shows the influence of Donne in him, he does not hesitate in heralding a new order. This order lays emphasis on Reason, Nature and Truth.

In the poem, *Ode: of Wit* he presents wit in a manner that is quite different from that of the Metaphysical. The attributes of wit, according to him are Reason, agreement, harmony and lack of Discord or confusion. It is a serene and steady contemplation of life. In the poem, *The Change* the poet gives a realistic picture of love. The poem is marked by a genuineness of feelings. Reason and common sense make their presence felt in the poem. The poet is aware of the pitfalls underlying the charming surface of love. The apparently beautiful beloved is a prisoner of Pride, Malice and Inconstancy. The case of the lover is completely different. He looks ravaged by despair, grief and fear, but he harbours profound love in his heart. This critical examination of the theme of love anticipates the character of Belinda in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

The classical bent of Cowley is seen in poems like *On the Death of Mr Crashaw* and *On the Death of Mr. William Hervey*. The stateliness of diction in which he pays a tribute to Crashaw is classical in tone :

Thou from low earth in nobler Flame didst rise  
And like Elijah, mount Alive the skies.'  
Elisha – like (but with a wish much less,  
More fit thy Greatness, and my Littleness)

The couplet form saves the elegiac strain from becoming too morose and gloomy. The magniloquence of diction typical of a neo-classical poem has an uplifting effect.

### EXERCIS-VII

1. Write a brief note on the characteristics of the Early Augustan poetry.

---

---

---

---

2. Who wrote the following poems :

- a. *The selfe-banished*  
b. *Of the Last Verses*

---

---

---

---

3. Write a few lines on the poem, *The self-banished*.

---

---

---

---

4. In which poem does Waller suggest that wisdom comes with old age.

---

---

---

---

5. Name two poems by Davenant.

---

---

---

---

6. Give the main idea of the poem, *For the Lady, Olivia Porter*

---



---



---

7. Who wrote *Cooper's Hill*?

---



---



---

8. In which poem does the following line occur :  
"O could I flow like thee and make thy stream"

---



---



---

9. In Cowley's poem, *The Change* we have the prototype of the arch-character in Pope's poem, *The Rape of the Lock*. What is the name of this character in Pope's satire?

---



---



---



---

## 12.9 LET US SUM UP

---

Now that you have had a close look at the multi-faceted life and poetry of the seventeenth century, you may be able to form your idea of the period. In sum, it is one of the most troubled times in the history of England. The Civil War between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians took the toll of many a life. The Thirty Years' War between the two wings of christianity engulfed almost the whole of the Continent. The contemporary man is torn between influences and counter-influences from the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Ptolemaic theory, the Royal Society, the Bible and so on. There is a conflict in the mind of man between faith and science and body and soul, and there is turmoil without. The picture of the horror is best mirrored in the continental baroque and the Jacobean drama. The Metaphysical poets strike a balance between the ugly and the beautiful, as it is exemplified by Donne's key image in *The Relique*: "a bracelet of bright hair about the bone". Even in his religious poetry Donne brings together the two apparently antagonistic worlds: the fleshly and the spiritual. In his religious sonnet, *Batter my heart* he imagines himself to be a bride wedded to God but being placed under the spell of her worldly seducer. This is the state of the contemporary man.

But the turmoil is not abiding. People have started looking forward to order, decorum, Reason and Nature. This phenomenon is well reflected in the poetry of Carew that combines the best qualities of both the worlds. To put it in Emile Legouis's words,

... (He) took the highest place in the estimation of his day. He closes the list of the 'metaphysicians' and anticipates the English Classicists. He resembles Donne in his search for conceits and subtleties, ...but with a taste for physical science, he is above all an intellectual.

(*A Short History of English Literature*)

---

## 112.10 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

---

**Note:** The answers that are well reflected in the body of the discussion do not find any mention here

### Exercise I

1. France, Germany and Spain
2. 1618 – 1648
3. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants.
4. The latter was British affair, while the former was a continental (an European) war. Britain did not participate in it.
5. Britain and Holland
6. France and Poland
7. No, it did not even participate in it.
8. It is near Prague in Germany.
9. The German emperor won the battle.

### Exercise II

1. The Earl of Arundel
5. Crashaw
6. The Jacobean drama
7. Optimistic

### Exercise III

1. According to the heliocentric conception the sun is the centre of the universe. The planets move round it. This theory was propounded by Copernicus.
- b. The homocentric theory believes that man is at the centre of the universe. As per the Christian theology the universe is an affair between God and man.
1. The word 'concentric' means having a common centre with another circle or other circles. As per the Ptolemaic astronomy, there is a vast system of concentric sphere with the earth at the centre.
2. Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo
4. a. Copernicus (b) Francis Bacon
5. Cowley, Denham and Waller.
6. John Donne
7. Newton and Locke
8. 1543
10. Newton

### Exercise IV

They are important in the sense that they serve as a living link between Spenser and Milton.

### Exercise V

3. The Cavalier Poets
14. Suckling

### Exercise VI

1. In Donne's religious poetry, there is an exciting argumentative evolution warring impulses culminating in a harmony but in Herbert the conflict is not

exciting. In Donne's divine poetry we never have the feel that the poet tilts the balance in favour of one at the expense of another. But in Herbert earthly pleasures are played down and heavenly bliss is played up. Herbert tends towards an austere and ascetic mood, where as Donne plays upon the entire gamut of experience even in his divine poetry

2. Donne. Like Donne (Marvell) shows a vibrant structure that encompasses within its fold the deeply moving picture of sensual ecstasy warring with the spiritual ecstasy.
10. Donne thinks God to be wrathful who is intent on punishing those who go against His commandments. He is afraid that God will not absolve him of his sins. The sense of sin alienates man from the God in Herbert's poetry, too. But Crashaw is nearly always assured of his salvation in God.

---

## 12.11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

1. Helen Gardner, *The Metaphysical Poet*
2. H.J.C. Grierson, *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*.
3. H.J.C. Grierson *Cross Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century*
4. Paul Grave, *The Golden Treasury*.
5. Boris Ford (ed), *From Donne to Marvell*
6. B. Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background*
7. B. Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background*.
8. Bertrand Russell *An Outline of Western Philosophy*.
9. J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition*.
10. G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History*
11. Arthur Crompton-Rickett, *A History of English Literature*.
12. Harry Blamires, *A Short History of English Literature*.
13. Emile Legouis, *A Short History of English Literature*.
14. Gerald Hammond (ed), *The Metaphysical Poets*.
15. J.B. Leishman, *The Monarch of Wit*.
16. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*.
17. F.R. Leavis, *Revaluation*
18. Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*.
19. L.C. Knights, *Explorations*.