

BEGC -114
Postcolonial
Literatures**Block****3****POETRY**

UNIT 1**An Introduction to Poetry in the Postcolonial Space** **115**

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BLOCK 3 INTRODUCTION

Block 3 of the Postcolonial Literatures (BEGC-114) titled Poetry has been designed to introduce you to important poets from the world of postcolonial poetry and their selected important poems. The block consists of four units structured as below:

Unit 1 An Introduction to Poetry in the Postcolonial Space explores the origins of the Postcolonial Poetry.

Unit 2 discusses two important poems ‘**Tonight I Can Write**’ and ‘**The Way Spain Was**’ by **Pablo Neruda**. An overview Latin American Literature has been given for a better understanding of tradition of poetry from this space.

Unit 3 Explains the plural contexts of the culture of the Caribbean. The unit then goes on to discuss **Derek Walcott’s** two important poems, ‘**A Far Cry From Africa**’ and ‘**Names**’. Both these poems have been analysed and annotations have been provided.

Unit 4 briefly discusses **David Malouf’s** ‘**Revolving Days**’ and ‘**Wild Lemons**’.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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UNIT 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY IN THE POSTCOLONIAL SPACE

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 The Origin or History of Colonialism
- 1.2 Postcolonial India
- 1.3 Poetry in Postcolonial Space
- 1.4 Language
- 1.5 Literature
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Glossary
- 1.8 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions
- 1.9 Suggested Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This particular unit will provide an introduction to the concept of colonialism and the connection with the various regions or countries that came under the clutches of colonial rulers. The discussion will revolve around the various aspects that colonialism takes within a particular geographical location and the impact it has on the peoples' mind that face the wrath of colonialism. Certainly, you will get to know in detail about the consequences the people who were colonized had to face and how they had to pay a heavy price. When we talk about consequences in this context, we will lay emphasis on the language that transformed before and after the colonial era. Herein the primary focus will be laid on the post-colonial spaces in the Poetry of various poets.

1.1 THE ORIGIN OR HISTORY OF COLONIALISM

The process or act of becoming a colony by an external force is known as colonialism. We can trace the origin of colonialism after the medieval period in Western Europe, when European explorers travelled around the nook and corner of the world discovering new regions and establishing themselves as part of their own Nation. With the rise of Science and Technology in the Western Civilization, navigation became suitable/enough to chart out the various routes through ships as trading allowed to look for new areas for raw materials and manufactured goods.

The whole idea of colonialism was to establish a stronghold over the indigenous population. To rule over a Nation which is not its own and that required long-term planning and military and ideological commands. Hence, it was very convenient for the Colonial powers to assert themselves as superiors to the Indigenous population by importing the customs, law, education system, language, literature and most importantly religion. The indigenous population was considered primitive and hence slavery came into force in all those colonized regions.¹ The seeds of post-colonial era were sown around 1945 i.e during the second world war. However, the real momentum was gathered around the 1970s.

Before we move on to Postcolonial Poetry it is of utmost importance to understand the constructs of Orientalism and The Theory of Deconstruction. By the term Orientalism, the dictionary meaning of it is the study of the history, languages and cultures of the East. Whenever we talk of Orientalism the only person's name which comes to our mind is Edward Said. He was the one who was entirely instrumental in opening up the vistas of postcolonial studies in general. The entire credit goes to Edward Said for the colonial discourse undertaken by him in his epic work "Orientalism" that was published in the year 1978. This historic work of Said actually offered a whole range of critical and analytical dimension of Oriental studies. In fact, to be precise the whole gamut of oriental study is the construction of knowledge by the West. Edward Said has provided three definitions of Orientalism. The First definition states that, *"Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient- and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist- either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism"*. The second definition pertains to academic aspect and it states that, *"Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident"*. In the third definition Edward Said makes a transition from academy to socio- political dimension. It states that, *"Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient"*. Edward Said had to face numerous criticisms in his discourse on Orientalism. However, he was asserted by the following argument that, *"Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is - and does not simply represent- a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world"*.

When it comes to decolonization the first and foremost nuances that comes to our mind is the question of language. In the post-colonial space language plays a major role in understanding the cultural domination. Decolonization as per Cambridge dictionary, is the process in which a country that was previously a colony (controlled by another country) becomes politically independent. As the very notion of colonization involves the process of destroying the local structure in terms of social, political, economic and all other aspects and establish a new set up on the basis of the coloniser's goals. On the other hand, the notion of decolonisation means discard the whole structure set by the colonial rulers in the pre-colonial era and setting up a new one to match up with their needs and aspiration. In this era, they would restructure every aspect of the society in terms of economic, political, religious and other aspects. Here the mind set of people would have a transition from the colonial times to the onset of a new country evolved out of the clutches of slavery, exploitation, depression and emptiness. The language had a deep impact in the decolonised society. The society was left in a fractured state. The ancient traditional language was replaced by the colonial language and soon after decolonisation the language also had a sea change to bring back to its near original form. In India the colonisers came for the purpose of trade and commerce whereas in countries like America and Australia their intention was to settle down. Hence the style of the resistance movement was different from one country to another depending on the nature of colonisation process of each country. Apparently the decolonisation of mind was one of the

focal aspects of the entire gamut of discourse of the colonial process and subsequently the decolonisation.

1.2 POST COLONIAL INDIA

As the colonisers left India there was a conflict amongst the people of India regarding the onset of globalization and nativism. There was a tremendous clash between the East and West. The colonisers established their hegemony upon the local population.

Gauri Viswanathan (1989: 1-4 passim) opines that the discipline of English [in India] came into its own in an age of colonialism ... and in the long run served to strengthen Western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways. The history of education in British India shows that certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature – for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – were considered essential to the processes of socio-political control by the guardians of the same tradition. ... A vital and subtle connection exists between a discourse in which those who are to be educated are represented as morally and intellectually deficient and the attribution of moral and intellectual values to the literary works they are assigned to read.

India had a rich traditional value since time immemorial. Sanskrit was the language which defined the rich cultural heritage of India. With the advent of the colonial power the master tongue English replaced all the respective mother tongues including the classical language such as Sanskrit and Urdu. Macaulay's Minute wiped out the root of Indian Language in its entirety. The colonial rulers wanted to break the very fabric of Indians and divide them as much as they can as this would enable them to further strengthen their stronghold over the vulnerable Indian population and then rule this Nation. With this aim in view the Britishers tried to change the entire societal system of India including language, culture, religion, education and the list is endless. There was severe discomfort amongst the Indians as they had no other option then to be a silent spectator and accept their fate without a word of protest. Amongst the Indian there was one western educated gentleman by the name Michael Madhusudan Das who fully supported the English Education system. Though many Indians during that time opposed him but directly or indirectly many reforms in the Indian Society took place. The abolition of Sati, Child Marriage and other superstitious beliefs were practiced by the tradition loving Indian people there was support for widow remarriage but still. The English language and Indian English literature are considered to be the offshoot of British Colonialism.

There was a time when the question of an official language arose for a multi-lingual state. The framers of the Indian Constitution had in 1951 designated English as the associate official language of India along with Hindi until 1965, after which it was to be withdrawn from official use. That has not happened as yet, primarily languages for official purposes rather than Hindi, which many of their inhabitants do not speak at all – thereby leaving English even today as the sole link language within the country. Incidentally, English is the 'official' language of at least two Indian states, Meghalaya and Nagaland, whose various tribes speak vastly different sub-languages, with no common medium of communication other than English. English is also the native tongue of the small Eurasian or Anglo-Indian (the more usual term) community, the offspring of

mixed marriages during the colonial period, whose numbers are fast dwindling due to emigration to Britain, Australia and Canada. Hence, English does have a status other than being solely a colonial legacy. There has always been a strained relationship between the mother tongues and the 'other tongue'.

Another threat that lingered in front of the Indians was the question of nativism. How after the colonisers left India and the language and literature was severally affected by the imposition and cultural imperialism. A new form of Literature evolved out of the fractured society. And this transition took a lot of lot of effort and time.

To quote in the words of critic Bhalchandra Nemade's uncompromising 'nativism' (deshiyata):

It is expected that native perceptions naturally express themselves in any literature. However, as a result of years of slavery under crafty European rulers, a peculiar kind of colonialist internationalism was born in various parts of the colonial world in the mid-twentieth century. ... It is time to tell people who are used to such elitism that any human being or literature can stand tall only in its own native land and linguistic group. ...being native means being attached to a particular place. ... But when non-native, alien, imported values, languages, and cultures coming in from outside threaten native values, languages and cultures, communities have to become nativistic in order to survive. (Nemade 1997: 233-236 passim).

It was the great task of the Asiatic Society that was founded by Sir William Jones at Calcutta in 1784 to glorify India's classical Vedic and Sanskritic past. In the post-colonial environment, several poets made its mark by various heart rendering composition. These composition still hold strong impact in the heart and minds of millions of Indian.

The writers in the post-colonial India reject the tradition and ethos of the colonial masters/rulers. They had their own notion of identity and the result is seen in the writings of the time. Basically, the literature that emerged after the end of British regime is known as the postcolonial literature. In the fifties a new school of poets emerged who turned their back from romantic writings and were more fascinated with the circumstances of the time and wrote according to the age. Nissim Ezekiel is one of the most important Indo-English poets of the post-independence era and his "Night of the scorpion" is one of his best known poems. During that time the female poets also had some fiery ideas of post colonialism and it reflected in their writings in the true sense of the term. Kamala Das is one of the leading female poets of that age and even till date, she is revered in a great way. The most outstanding poet of the sixties is A.K.Ramanujan. India and his Indian experience are the subject matter of his writings. The Poets who dearly show the postcolonial aspect in their writings are Nissim Ezekiel, A.K.Ramanujan and Kamala Das to name a few.

1.3 POETRY IN POSTCOLONIAL SPACE

In this segment we are going to discuss and interrogate about what happens when postcolonial identity politics intersect and complicate the neat binary of globalism and nativism? The mother tongue by the master tongue, and the consequent jeopardizing of national identity, are too well known to need repetition. The legacies of colonialism have created lot of blemishes in the post-colonial spaces.

If fiction or any similar literary work of art can create the material of everyday life through density and accumulate of real life, then poetry is also detailed information capable of garnering a similar aim through its usage of imagery and metaphor. Before we proceed further to delve deeply into postcolonial poetry it's very essential to understand the language used. The constructs of the social fabric changed and so did the poetic fervor. A 'new world' came into being after the colonizers left. The 'new world' languages were first deconstructed from the left-over material and then reformulated in order to enable the suitability and convenience of the burden of postcolonial phase.

There is dearth of books on postcolonial poetic voice. Whatever little poetic work is available is replete with nationalistic tone reflecting upon the history, politics and sociology of the colonizers. The first generation of postcolonial era had no other option then to lend their poetic expression in the foreign tongue i.e English. As the colonizer imposed upon the colonized population their language, they had no option but to adhere to the imposition. With the passage of time the language has been modified and reworked as per the suitability of the postcolonial subjectivity³.

The postcolonial poet had to negotiate with the colonial past and neo colonial present struggling hard to find a definite space to situate the sense of belongingness to its own native land and its inhabitants and also the constant fast changing world in times of globalization. There is no denying the fact that the postcolonial poet is caught between the threshold of two worlds. One is the imposed culture and the other is the inherent culture. And under such circumstances we have such fiery poetic voices of Pablo Neruda Derek Walcott, David Malouf to name a few.

Pablo Neruda's (1904-1973) poetry sought to find a distinct identity of Latin America from that of Spain. **Pablo Neruda**, was born as **Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto**, (born July 12, 1904, Parral, Chile—died September 23, 1973, Santiago). He was a Chilean poet, diplomat, and politician who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. He was perhaps the most important Latin American poet of the 20th century. He is widely known as the Picasso of poetry. Neruda was the son of José del Carmen Reyes, a railway worker, and Rosa Basoalto. He lost his mother very early and the whole family moved to Temuco, a small town farther south in Chile, where his father remarried. Neruda began to write poetry at the tenderage of 10, but his father never encouraged him in writing poems, which was why probably the young poet began to publish under the pseudonym Pablo Neruda. He entered the Temuco Boys' School in 1910 and finished his secondary schooling there in 1920. He was a voracious reader and was very introvert as a person. The good thing was he was tremendously encouraged by the principal of the Temuco Girls' School, Gabriela Mistral, a gifted poet who would herself later become a Nobel laureate.

He had a very struggling life. Though he composed many poems but still he was unable to earn a living from his poems. In order to make ends meet he started publishing in all kinds of newspapers and other means. Neruda's body of poetry is so rich and varied that it defies classification or easy summary. It developed along four main directions. His love poetry, such as the youthful *Twenty Love Poems* and the mature *Los versos del Capitán* (1952; *The Captain's Verses*), is tender, melancholy, sensuous, and passionate. In "material" poetry, such as *Residencia en la tierra*, loneliness and depression immerse the author in a

subterranean world of dark, demonic forces. His epic poetry is best represented by *Canto general*, which is an attempt at reinterpreting the past and present of Latin America and the struggle of its oppressed and downtrodden masses towards freedom. And finally, there is Neruda's poetry of common, everyday objects, animals, and plants, as in *Odaselementales*. During his time the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936. His poetic journey was again disrupted. He even participated in the political arena of his Country and he had to face banishment from his own country for opposing the ideology of the regime in power. He was actively engaged in negotiating between colonial and neo-colonial oppression. The poetic space he created in his native tongue is truly admirable. His writings have unity of style and purpose for which he was a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 1971.

Derek Walcott's full name was **Derek Alton Walcott**, (born January 23, 1930, Saint Lucia—died March 17, 2017, Cap Estate), West Indian poet and playwright noted for works that explore the Caribbean cultural experience. Walcott was best known for his poetry, beginning with *In a Green Night: Poems 1948–1960* (1962). This book is typical of his early poetry in its celebration of the Caribbean landscape's natural beauty. The verse in *Selected Poems* (1964), *The Castaway* (1965), and *The Gulf* (1969) is similarly lush in style and incantatory in mood as Walcott expresses his feelings of personal isolation, caught between his European cultural orientation and the black folk cultures of his native Caribbean life. *Another Life* (1973) is a book-length autobiographical poem. In *Sea Grapes* (1976) and *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), Walcott uses amore economical style to examine the deep cultural divisions of language and race in the Caribbean. *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981) and *Midsummer* (1984) explore his own situation as a black writer in America who has become increasingly estranged from his Caribbean homeland.

He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992 for his tireless efforts to compose poetry to build bridges in his multi-cultural society. We see language as a major tool used to assert the Caribbean identity especially in the poems of Walcott. The society of Saint Lucia is a crossroad of cultures, languages and races; this linguistic and racial diversity is attributed to colonialism. The island alternated between France and England several times before finally being ceded to the United Kingdom in 1814. Due to these changes in the colonial government, Standard English, English Creole and French Creole are spoken in Saint Lucia. These are the three languages Walcott uses in his poems in order to portray the richness and advantages of cultural diversity. He felt that the imagined homeland of the ancestral past has been absolutely transformed by the colonizers. We can see extensive use of memory and imagination in the work of Walcott:

We were blest with a virginal, unpainted world

With Adam's task of giving things their names... (collected poems 294)

Walcott always had an inner conflict within him as he could not take sides since his grandfathers from both sides were white, while his grandmothers from both sides were black. His woes can best be understood in the following lines:

I had no nation now but the imagination

After the white man, the niggers didn't want me

When the power swing to their side

The first chain my hands and apologize, 'History';
And next said I black enough for their pride.

(Collected Poems 350)

David Malouf's full name is **David George Joseph Malouf**, (born March 20, 1934, Brisbane, Australia). He is an Australian poet and novelist of Lebanese and English descent whose work reflects his ethnic background as well as his childhood and youth spent in Queensland. Malouf received a B.A. with honours from the University of Queensland in 1954. He lived and worked in Europe from 1959 to 1968, then taught English at the University of Sydney until 1977. After 1977 he became a full-time writer, dividing his time between Australia and Italy.

Malouf's volumes of poetry include *Bicycle and Other Poems* (1970; also published as *The Year of the Foxes and Other Poems*), *Neighbours in a Thicket* (1974), *Wild Lemons* (1980), *First Things Last* (1980), *Typewriter Music* (2007), and *Earth Hour* (2014). Malouf even authored several plays and novels which was significant of the ages.

Malouf's *Interiors*, is his first body of published poetry. With his treatment of interior spaces, Malouf introduces a subtle critique of postcolonial Australia. The interiors are actually perceived as sites of memory. This links them closely to 'the enculturation of a subject' into the linguistic order, and with this, into the social order. For this reason, the moments in which the interior space is undermined are those moments of connection to something outside this order. The interiors spaces offer two ways of being in Australia: one that encapsulates the postcolonial mindset (in the sense of internalized colonial structures), and one which is decolonial, if only in relation to the white subject. The first is reflected in the interiors as sites of memory: specifically, those memories and cultural artefacts that were imported from England. These are the basis of suburban living and interaction with the Australian landscape.

'First Things Last' and 'The Crab Feast' stand out for the way they make a study of consciousness itself. They offer a way of dramatising the process of 'being aware.' Malouf in 'First Things Last' presents a surgery conducted in a hospital. The patient loses the sense of awareness under the influence of anesthesia, and then gradually regains consciousness. The whole process is observed or perceived as a metaphor of the mind's structure and of the mind's way of acquiring knowledge and have a sense of values. Malouf shows empathy and imagination in presenting this state of loss and recovery. Senses and judgment disappear, only then to recreate themselves awkwardly after the event. The concluding poem in the sequence delivers a startling, challenging effect:

Laying the small bones out
in rows for the moon
to suck. We call this Living
from One Day to the Next.

To lie tight-wrapped in butcher's
paper and bleed
events: you all know this one:
it's Learning from History.

You mount a bicycle
without wheels. What falls away
as you pedal uphill?
The Joys of the Flesh

The styles are as many as
the players. Strict rules
apply but can be broken.
Nobody wins. (First Things Last 39-40)

It is an ingenious presentation on how moral and social values come to be, and how society generally comes to find and hold these values. In these final stanzas Malouf takes simple images from dreams or newspapers and juxtaposes them against giant clichés or proverbs. It is implied that this is the way society stumbles on its values. There is irony and even comedy here of a rare and strangely dignified kind. The wit in the title 'First Things Last' has been pointing in several directions. It suggests we live in either unfinished times or deep down in times of innocence. The cryptic point made in the final verse (above) is for Malouf a serious statement. Styles, players and rules are for real, yet relative and provisional. 'They can be broken.' Social contracts come and go. 'Nobody wins.' There is a poised and stoical respect, here, for social order and the way it comes into being. It is a wisdom that edges its way out of Malouf's tumultuous journey into the unconscious.

Malouf's postcolonial narratives found expression in the Australian landscape. The trace of aboriginal history and the postcolonial dilemma had a beautiful expression in the following way:

Here the sheer edge
Of a continent dry weed
Clutches, grey gulls turn
From the sea and gather
Here, precariously
Building their nest.
And here too at the edge
Of darkness where all floors
Sink to abyss, the lighted
Bar is of light
The furthest promontory
And exit sheer fall.

(‘Sheer Edge’)

Most of his poems reflects the treatment meted out by the white settlers to its native population. David Malouf as a postcolonial author demonstrated the consequences of colonization for the feeling of national identity on the territories which have been previously colonized.

1.4 THE LANGUAGE

The question of national identity is one of the main themes discussed in postcolonial literature. Shedding light upon the outcomes of colonization, the

postcolonial authors criticized the beliefs in racial superiority and emphasized the importance of resurrection of national identity on the territories which have been colonized previously. In the means of discussing Literature, language is of utmost importance. So now we will lay emphasis on the language of postcolonial writings.

The language of postcolonial literature is not something that is used in common parlance. In the postcolonial era there was a constant threat of dominance from the master tongue to the mother tongue. A conflicting situation filled the mindset of people who had just got over with the colonial masters who had been having a dominating influence over the food, culture, lifestyle and above all the language. Let me remind you one thing here that the words, tones, grammar, syntax were used to register landscape, show the patterns of social relationship that is shaped by displacement, dispossession and resistance, conquest, subjection and struggle. The concept of 'new world' was abundantly used by the writers of that time. The languages are first constructed and again deconstructed to suit the sentiments of the burden of postcolonial era. English was transformed by post-colonial writers. Language has changed phenomenally. New writers are writing to a global audience. Changing language is synonymous to changing the order. In Derek Walcott's poetry the language is used in such a manner which presents the model of a 'new world'. Walcott used more metaphors than lyric or poetic language that reflected the local world which is purely organic. For instance, in "Islands" the poet observes that,

But islands can only exist if we have loved them.

I seek as climate seeks its style to write

Very crisp as sand,

Clear as sunlight,

Cold as the curled wave,

Ordinary as a tumbler of

Island water.

("Islands", p.52)

The island here for the poet is not just nature's bounty but the effect and the presence of it matters.

1.5 THE LITERATURE

As it has already been discussed in the previous segment that the Literature of the postcolonial phase was one of mixed response to the culture that was imposed upon by the colonizers and the inherent culture of the colonized. The central theme of postcolonial literature is the result of the process of colonization on the colonized territories and their population. The postcolonial writers criticized the racial and cultural prejudices which were meted out by the colonizers as justification for their actions. The authors working in this literary style focused mainly on the social aspect of postcolonial problems. Hence it will not be wrong to mention here that the literature of the postcolonial poetic space had the freedom to generate a new world literature that had thrown sufficient light on nation building aspect after the colonizers left. According to Bill Ashcroft, redefining the 'post-colonial' as no longer only subversive and resistant, but transformative and liberatory: 'It is transformation that gives these societies control over their future. Transformation describes the way in which colonised societies have taken

dominant discourses, transformed them and used them in the service of their own self-empowerment.' This creative transformation of imperial discourses might well be termed 'postcolonial' (minus the hyphen), since it involves a productive osmosis rather than mere continuation.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

A liberal Democracy allows one to equally participate in the political space. In order to do so the political space needs to be hospitable. The cultural dominance of the imperial power and the aftermath of the post-colonial stage created a void in the mindset of the inhabitants to explore the lost legacy and tradition of the colonized nations. The language had to go through a transition to reach its own space. The poetry in the post-colonial period provided that space to some extent and the aftermath of that arena brought in tremendous contribution in terms of reflecting the society through compositions of poems that clearly sang the woes and pathos of the people the colonizers left them with.

1.7 GLOSSARY

- Creole: A person of mixed European and black descent, especially in the Caribbean
- Colonial: The act of acquiring full political control over another country, exploiting it economically
- Orientalism: The style, artefacts, traits which are characteristics of the people and culture of Asia (Eastern World).
- Decolonisation: means the process of deconstructing the colonial ideologies of the superior power.
- Displacement: it is mostly defined to be the change in position of an object or person.
- Globalisation: is the process of interaction and integration among people, companies, government and other agencies worldwide.
- Nativism: Original inhabitant of a particular place.
- Metaphor: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used in an object which is not the literal meaning of it
- Syntax: The arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language

1.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the source of Colonialism?
2. What is the definition of Orientalism according to Edward Said?
3. What does decolonising the mind signify?
4. What are language constructs of Postcolonial time?
5. Write a brief note on Postcolonial poetry.
6. What are the constructs of English language in India?

7. Briefly comment on the poetic sense of Pablo Neruda.
8. Write a short over view of Derek Walcott's Poetry.

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Klages, Mary. Key Terms in Literary Theory. London: Continuum, 2012
2. Satpathy, Sumanyu. The Southern post colonialisms The Global South and the New Literary Representations. Delhi: Routledge, 2009
3. Sati, Someshwar. A warble of postcolonial voices An anthology of short stories and poems Vol.II. Delhi: Worldview publicaions, 2018
4. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pablo-Neruda>
5. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Derek-Walcott>
6. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Malouf>
7. Appreciating David Malouf as a Poet by James Tulip



UNIT 2 PABLO NERUDA: “TONIGHT I CAN WRITE”, “THE WAY SPAIN WAS”

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Brief Overview of Latin American Literature
- 2.2 Introduction to Pablo Neruda
- 2.3 “Tonight I can Write” -Text with Annotations and Analysis
- 2.4 “The Way Spain Was” - Text with Annotations and Analysis
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 References
- 2.7 Suggested Readings
- 2.8 Answers to Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the poetry by Pablo Neruda. After reading the Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- recall names of prominent Latin American poets;
- outline the life and works of Pablo Neruda;
- critically comment on “Tonight I can Write”; and
- critically comment on “The Way Spain Was”

2.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE

In this section we will learn about the major authors and trends in Latin American Literature. But let us first understand; what is meant by the term 'Latin America'?

In terms of geography, Latin America includes all parts of Central and South Americas that were part of Spanish or Portuguese Empires during the colonial period. It also includes the Caribbean, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Brazil. In the United States, all the countries south to it on the American continent are broadly called the Latin America. Thus, English speaking countries like Belize, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Bahamas, the French-speaking Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana and even the Dutch-speaking Netherlands Antilles, Aruba and Suriname, all are included under this category. However originally, Latin America designates all those countries and territories in the Americas where a Romance language (languages derived from Latin i.e., Spanish, French, Portuguese or the Creole languages) is spoken. The term came into use in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was coined by intellectual leaders who were looking to France for cultural leadership instead of Spain or Portugal. It was during the French invasion of Mexico in 1862 under the Empire of Napoleon III. The motive of using the

term 'Latin' was to mark a difference from the Anglophone people of the North America. The term came in vogue even more in the twentieth century as then Mesoamerican, Central American, Caribbean and South American countries tried to establish their cultural distinction from the United States. However, Scholars today find the term highly problematic because it elides and subsumes the many distinct countries with different pre-conquest origins into one collective entity.

The corpus called 'Latin American Literature' includes oral and written works in Spanish, Portuguese and English. It also encompasses work in any native language by authors from parts of North America, South America and the Caribbean. Critics usually adhere to the following classification of major periods of Latin American Literature: Pre-Colombian, Colonial Resistance, Modernismo, Boom, and Contemporary.

The Pre-Colombian period refers to the time before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. Latin American literature of this period was primarily oral and created by people of Omec, Mayan, Aztec and other Mesoamerican civilizations. It primarily dealt with accounts about religion, astronomy, agriculture and political history. Many scholars consider the term pre-Columbian flawed because it takes the colonial explorer as the frame of reference and does not directly indicate the indigenous people. Ancient Americas is regarded as more suitable term to indicate the flourishing cultures of Mesoamerican civilizations.

The Colonial period began in the 15th century. The colonization of America began with the arrival of Christopher Columbus at the islands now called Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Mistakenly assuming that he had reached India, he proclaimed the natives of these islands as 'Indians'. It is in this period we see the beginning of the written tradition in Latin American literature. It comprises of the first-person accounts of European explorers. Some Natives also created anecdotes of the way life changed after coming of colonizers.

Neoclassicism, Realism and Naturalism are the prominent trends in the 19th century Latin American literature. The first novel called *El Periquillo Sarniento* was published in 1816. It was written by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. It was romanticism and popular poetry that informed the Latin American public opinion in the 19th century thereby in many ways influencing the invention of the concept of Latin America. In this context, the contribution of José Martí Heredia of Cuba exiled in Mexico and Antônio Gonçalves Dias of Brazil has been immense. Both are well known for their poems on exile. Some of the widely known poems by Heredia are about Niagara Falls, Aztec ruins, and other natural wonders such as a storm. His ode "Himno a un desterrado" relates his experience as an exile. It is difficult to present generalized picture of characteristics of romanticism in Latin American poetry, yet some commonly identifiable traits have been as follows; advocacy of individual freedom, nature as a source of knowledge, nature metaphorically depicted as the eternal witness of history turned to ruins, the quest for voice of the people and a reaction against Spanish imperialism couched in nationalist and anti-colonial discourse. Another major poetic voice of this era was of José Hernández who wrote 'gauchesque' poetry. These are romantic verses about the persecuted Argentinean gauchos in the wake of modernization and industrialization. The Argentine gaucho is a type of cowboy and occasional laborer located in rural Argentina. Hernández poetic and prosaic works elucidate all aspects of the life of these people. His epic poem *Martín Fierro* written in Spanish is about the life of the gaucho. Written in a style that

evokes the rural Argentine ballads known as *payadas*. It was originally published in two parts; *El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879). Notable for enunciating the contribution of gauchos in Argentina's independence from Spain, it has now been translated into over 70 languages.

The late 19th century is marked by the rise of Resistance literature. It includes anti-establishment works of fiction written in Romantic and Naturalist tradition. The prominent themes are quest to establish a sense of national identity, rights of indigenous people and national independence from the Spanish and the Portuguese colonizers. Doris Sommer's has called these narratives foundational fictions and include works such as *Facundo* (1845) by Argentine writer Domingo Sarmiento, *Maria* (1867) by Jorge Isaac from Columbia, *Cumanda* (1879) by Juan León Mera from Ecuador etc. With the rise of women's education women writers also wrote fiction highlighting the oppression and marginalization of indigenous people, slaves and women. Some notable works are *Sab* (1841) by Cuban author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. He wrote in Romantic conventions. *Blanca Sol* (1888) by Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera is another important text. One of the most important novels of 'indigenismo', *Aves sin nido* (1889) was penned by the Peruvian Naturalist author Clorinda Matto de Turner. Beginning in Mexico with the Revolution of 1911, indigenismo was a nationalist political ideology expressed in various policies, educational and economic reform programs as well as through artistic expression. It advocated dominant social and political roles for Indians in constructing a nation-state, according to Indian heritage by drawing a sharp distinction between Indians and Europeans.

The first distinctly Latin American literary movement in Spanish that had a global impact is called 'Modernismo' that emerged in the 19th century. It was an amalgamation of Romanticism, French Symbolism and Parnassian school of poetry. This Spanish American modernism that flowered in 1880s must not be confused with the Anglo-American Modernism of poets such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound that peaked around 1922 or with the Brazilian modernism that arose around 1928. Global industrialization, capitalism, Spain's loss of all its colonies and the rise of North American cultural and economic imperialism were some factors that ushered in a new poetic era of Modernistas who were critical of the conservative thematic and stylistic structures that persisted from the colonial period. The poetry of José Martí, Julian del Casal (Cuba), Salvador Díaz Mirón (Mexico), José Asunción Silva (Columbia), Leopold Lugones (Argentina), Ricardo Jaimes Freyre (Bolivia), Amado Nervo (Mexico) and Delmira Agustini (Uruguay) is usually considered to have started the trend. Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, a renowned journalist from Mexico and founder of the literary review *La Revista Azul*, promoted Modernismo throughout Latin America. It was the publication José Martí's *Ismaelillo* in 1882 which is regarded as a definitive moment in the growth of the movement. Martí is considered the first great visionary Latin American poet as he sought to define Nuestra América. That is casting the identity of Latin America as one struggling for artistic, political and economic independence. However it is Rubén Darío's collection of poems *Azul* (1888) which is considered a foundational text of this poetic movement. The Nicaraguan poet Darío is regarded the central figure and also the father of this movement. His poetry was a reaction to the decadence of Romanticism. Modernismo poetics has many stages and diverse poets yet there are some defining notions associated with it such as; cosmopolitanism or transnational preoccupations, a cult for the exotic, use of Greek and Nordic mythology as

inspiration, use of free verse, propensity for musicality, adherence to the ideal of arts for art's sake and a search for aesthetic ideals of perfection and beauty. Jean Franco has summed up *modernismo's* key features in the following words: "rejection of any overt message or teaching in art, the stress on beauty as the highest goal and the need to free verse from traditional forms"(119). Nevertheless, the movement began to wane by 1914 and other avant-garde artistic and aesthetic movements gained prominence.

In the 1920s a number of innovative but somewhat ephemeral artistic movements that are categorized under the heading avant-garde cropped up as an attempt to free art from having to respond to needs other than those of artistic creation and expression. Their impact was most strongly felt in Argentina, Chile, Peru, Cuba and Mexico. However, some critics say that these trends also inspired visual artists, Cubist poets etc. in Eastern, Western Europe and the United States, culminating in surrealist tendencies. These movements were guided by the intention of defying and revising the 19th century literary and artistic tradition. Many groups were also connected to social and political antagonism against hegemonic trends of the time. They laid emphasis on stripping poetic language of ornamental devices and other conceptual debris of tradition to foster powerful newly created imagery. Art was thought to be an unmediated expression of the genius of its creator. The poet was perceived as a small God and the main thrust was to create from scratch. Vicente Huidobro's essay "El creacionismo" of 1925 was an influential manifesto to proclaim these ideas. The publication of *Altazor* in 1931 by the Chilean Vicente Huidobro marks a break with the past. The ingenious stylistic practices that Huidobro devised and his poetic vision came to be known as 'creacionismo' as he sought to create a poem the way nature made a tree. He invested his words with autonomous linguistic and symbolic significance. His unique antilyrical, intellectual use of words which were disconnected from emotional and spiritual experience created a world different from other words and captured poet's experience of the existential angst. His poems "Arte poética," "Depart," and "Marino" exemplify this. Huidobro's influence is also evident in the school of thought centered on the 'theory of Ultraísmo' which attempted to construct alternative linguistic choices and synthesized Latin American with Spanish and European tendencies. The main proponent of this movement was Jorge Luis Borges. Some of his most representative poems that embody his theory of unification of lyricism and metaphysics as means of the poetic process are "Everything and Nothing," "Everness," "Laberinto," "Dreamtigers," and "Borges y yo", though he was frequently nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature primarily for his short fiction. Another distinctive and eminent figure that emerged during this phase was César Vallejo from Peru. Though, he was hardly recognized during his lifetime, he created an idiom to render the Spanish tradition, his own Peruvian heritage as well as the contemporary concerns involving war, depression, isolation and alienation. His first book of poems titled *Los heraldos negros* (1918) got translated as *The Black Heralds*. It shows stylistic influence of Parnassianism and Modernismo. It was in *Trilce* a major work published later where we see abundant use of startling imagery, neologisms, colloquialisms, typographic innovations. In 1945, the Nobel Prize for Literature was given to Gabriela Mistral. A Chilean poet, educator and diplomat, she became the first Latin American to be awarded. Enjoying popularity throughout her life she is remembered as Latin America's most honoured woman. She was the recipient of National Award for Chilean Literature as well. Further, she received honorary doctorates from the University of Florence, the University

of Chile, the University of California, and Columbia University. Her poetry infused with lyricism, inspired by strong emotions is considered representative of the idealism of the Hispanic American World. Her influence is profoundly evident on Pablo Neruda who won the Nobel Prize in 1971. For an elaborate discussion on Neruda as a poet read section 2.2. Another significant poet from the region who was internationally famous as a distinguished poet, critic and essayist is Octavio Paz. One of his best-known books, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* is a comprehensive portrait of Mexican society and culture. Awarded the Nobel prize in Literature in 1990, his eminence was recognized as early as the mid-1960's when J. M. Cohen, in his influential study *Poetry of This Age, 1908-1965*, called Paz and Neruda, "two of the chief Spanish-American poets." In the presentation speech of Nobel Prize his poem "Piedra de sol" ("Sunstone") was praised as a magnificent instance of surrealist poetry. His early poetry bears influence of Marxism, Surrealism, Existentialism, Buddhism and Hinduism. However in the later poems, love, eroticism and Buddhism become dominant themes. It is the opinion of many critics that Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vallejo, Alejo Carpentier and Jorge Luis Borges created the groundwork for the next phase in Latin American Literature called 'the Boom' that peaked during the 1960s and 1970s.

Boom is the phase after the II World War. It is the time when some seminal works by writers like Julio Cortazar (Argentina), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Octavio Paz (Mexico), Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru) and Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Columbia) brought international acclaim to Latin American Literature. It did not constitute a formal movement or had any clearly defined manifesto. The writers in focus were mainly authors of prose fiction who brought to fore the concept of magical realism although it predates the boom period. These writers did not follow a credo but shared perceivably common traits. Some common features of Boom fiction are: it is heavy in metaphor, has freewheeling non-linear use of time, has shifting perspectives, tends to be folklorist, is often politically charged but the themes are largely metaphysical and universal in nature. William Faulkner, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Federico Garcia Lorca are regarded as inspiration for this literary effusion. Another important factor that was a significant political event and became the intellectual rallying point for the writers of this period was the Cuban Revolution. Many of the Boom writers were pro-revolution. They saw themselves as public intellectuals. They explicitly supported the regime of Fidel Castro. One of the definitive literary features of the texts written during this time was the non-linear and experimental narrative structure. Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963) and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1966) published in Spanish became hugely popular. They were pretty soon translated into English as *Hopscotch* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* respectively. Márquez's novel especially became a landmark text in World Literature. It led to the association of magic realism with Latin American literature. A nebulous term to define, magical realism is a mode of writing in which the fantastical and magical elements are presented as normal/commonplace and ordinary is presented as extraordinary to question the normative reality. It is because it constructs an alternative to accepted reality this mode is also considered a genre of political subversion because many writers have used it as a tool against political regimes. Also known as "marvelous realism" or "fantastic realism", the concept was introduced as "*lo real maravilloso*" ("the marvelous real") by the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier in his essay "On the Marvelous Real in Spanish America" (1949). According to him the dramatic history and geography of Latin

America appeared 'fantastic' in the eyes of the world. But it was the critic Angel Flores who in 1955 adopted the term 'magical realism' instead of 'magic realism' to describe Latin American authors writing in the mode that transformed "the common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal". Today, magical realism is as an international trend. However, the popularity of magic realism as literary trend increased tremendously when in 1967 the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Miguel Angel Asturias. Augusto Roa Bastos's *Yo, el supremo* (1974) is also considered a monumental text. In 1982 García Márquez received the Nobel Prize and published *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Some other important novelists of this period were Chilean José Donoso, the Guatemalan Augusto Monterroso and the Cuban Guillermo Cabrera Infante.

The next phase is called 'the contemporary era'. It is also called 'the post-boom phase' because writers had started reevaluating the success of the Boom period to be burdensome. They condemned the caricature that stereotyped Latin American Literature to magical realism. The literature written in this phase is often characterized by a propensity towards irony, humour and popular genres. However some writers continue to ride the success wave of Boom. Laura Esquivel in *Como agua para chocolate* translated as *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989) is one such text. It employs a pastiche of magical realism. The writing in the contemporary period is varied. Some other significant authors who have earned international acclaim in the recent years are Paulo Coelho, Isabel Allende, Diamela Eltit, Giannina Braschi, Luisa Valenzuela and many others. In the recent years the genre of *testimonio* has gained a lot of popularity after Rigoberta Menchu (a feminist and human rights activist for Indigenous people of Guatemala) earned international acclaim. Some prominent contemporary Latin American poets are Nicanor Parra, Carmen Ollé, and Ernesto Cardenal. Nicanor Parra is the originator of the contemporary poetic movement in Latin America known as antipoetry (poems that are antiromantic, demeaning and aggressive). Ernesto Cardenal's poetry blends revolutionary political ideology with Roman Catholic theology to reveal ugly truths. Another important contemporary poet has been Rosario Ferré who is known for her radical and militant feminist poetry. In general, the poetry since the 1980s focuses majorly on themes of oppression and exile. For instance, Mario Benedetti from Argentina and Juan Gelman focus on the experience of exile. There have also been number of poets such as Alejandra Pizarnik, Rosario Murillo, Giaconda Belli, Claribel Alegria, Juana de Ibarbourou, Ana Istarú who write poetry about the marginalization and oppression of women in a male dominated society. Finally, the 21st century Latin American poetry characterized by experimental orientation and socio-political consciousness about national and international issues, signals the work of *los nuevos*, the new poets.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Recall briefly the names and contributions of the prominent Latin American poets.

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- 2) What do you understand by the term magical realism?

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2.2 INTRODUCTION TO PABLO NERUDA (1904-1973)

Hailed as 'Picasso of poetry' for his inclination to experiment and change his poetic style frequently, Pablo Neruda was a poet-diplomat from Chile. He was born in the town of Parral on 12 July 1904. Earlier known as Neftali Ricardo Reyes, he adopted Pablo Neruda as a pseudonym. The pseudonym later became his legal name as well. Neruda's work is central to Spanish American Poetry between the 1920s and 1970s and forms a critical link between the surrealist movement and the Magic Realism of the 20th Century. He is considered the greatest poet writing in the Spanish language in his lifetime. Neruda won the Nobel Prize for poetry in 1971. His poems have been translated into many languages.

The early part of Neruda's life was spent in Temuco where he received his education. His father is known to have been a railway employee and mother was a teacher. Unfortunately both the parents died when Neruda was still very young. Brought up by his stepmother, Neruda's poetic talent was encouraged by his school teacher Gabriela Mistral. Mistral, a Nobel Prize winner herself, gave him books to read and mentored him. In the early 1920s he went to the capital city of Santiago to study. A precocious boy he published some of his first poems in the student magazine *Claridad* and contributed some articles to the daily "La Mañana". In 1920, he adopted his pen name and started contributing to the literary journal "Selva Austral". He greatly admired the Czechoslovak poet Jan Neruda (1834-1891). It is reported that he took his name to honour his memory. His first book was published in 1923. It was titled *Crepusculario*. His best-known work *Veinte poemas de amor y una cancion desesperada* (Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair) was published the following year. This internationally celebrated and critically acclaimed collection of poems made him immensely popular and the much quoted Latin American poet. Poems in this volume are lucid, lyrical, contain vivid nature imagery and are highly symbolic. The poem 'Tonight I Can Write' is taken from this collection. The predominant tone in the entire collection is modernista- simple, meditative and highly suggestive that brings strong images and memories to mind. In his article "Pablo Neruda: Overview" René de Costa states that this book when published was judged by critics to be brazenly titillating. It was criticized for being highly erotic and its daring departure from the established tradition of genteel Hispanic lyricism. In *Saturday Review* Robert Clemens observes that this book "established [Neruda] at the outset as a frank, sensuous spokesman for love."

The second phase of Neruda's life, when he emerged as a poet diplomat, spans from 1927 to 1935. During this phase he was put in charge of number of honorary consulships by the government. Subsequently he travelled to Burma, Ceylon,

Java, Singapore, Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and Madrid. His experiences in these countries left a powerful impact on Neruda. He felt pained to see the intellectual servitude of the culturally rich South Asian Masses. Anguished about the contemporary social disorder he increasingly identified with the downtrodden masses. In 1933 he published *Residencia en la tierra*, which contains esoteric poem with marked surrealist tendencies. Subjects like past, death and chaos are recurrent and are presented as nightmarish visions of disintegration. Some poems are difficult, cryptic, mysterious and obscure. Chile's relationship with Spain and the aftermath of colonization is a predominant theme. The style is fragmented which is an outcome of abandoning normal syntax, rhyme, and stanza organization. There is deliberate juxtaposition of opposites; crude against the beautiful. Conscious references to violence and vagueness are also pervasive. Nature imagery is intensified.

In 1934, Neruda was appointed Chilean consul in Barcelona, Spain. However soon he got transferred to Madrid, where he met and befriended Federico García Lorca. Later García Lorca became a close friend of Neruda. Lorca was an enthusiastic supporter of Neruda's poetry. It is around this time that Neruda emerged as a people's poet and developed staunch communist leanings. He also came in contact with Rafael Alberti, Miguel Hernández and Peruvian poet César Vallejo. The Spanish Civil War that broke out in 1936 (the military revolt against Republican government in Spain, supported by conservative elements) and the execution of García Lorca affected him deeply, motivating him to join the Republican Movement. His poetry written during this phase is concerned with social and political matters. In 1937 he returned to Chile. Hereafter he became actively involved in his country's political life. He also gave many lectures and did poetry readings. He was a supporter of Republican Spain and Chile's new centre-left government. In 1940 moved to Mexico as Chile's consul general. Here he began writing the epic poem *Canto-General*. Hailed as the Bible of America, the poem celebrates Latin American flora, fauna and history. Neruda returned to Chile in 1943. In 1945 joined the Communist Party of Chile. During 1946 elections he campaigned for the leftist candidate Gabriel González Videla. 1947 was the year of publication of *Third Residence*, that contained the poem *The Way Spain Was*. Embodying his attitude of solidarity for the people of Spain, as a poetic response to the horrors of the Spanish civil War, the poem recounts the repeated strife and suffering that Spain had to endure historically. Feeling betrayed by the President in 1948 he published an open letter criticizing Videla for his repressive policies. Consequentially, Neruda was expelled from the senate for his subversive activities. Persecuted, he went into exile. During his banishment he visited Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Mexico. It is also reported that during this time that he met a Chilean woman, whom he later married. Her name was Matilde Urrutia.

In 1952 the political situation in Chile had become favourable for Neruda to return. In this last phase of his life simulated by international fame and personal happiness, he wrote incessantly and published *Elemental Odes* in 1954. These odes are written in simple language, humorously capturing minute details of everyday objects. Between 1958 and 1973 he published about 20 books. Among his works of the last few years are *Cien sonetos de amor* (1959), *Memorial de Isla Negra*, *Arte de pájaros* (1966), *La Barcarola* (1967), the play *Fulgor y muerte de Joaquín Murieta* (1967), *Las manos del día* (1968), *Fin del mundo* (1969), *Las piedras del cielo* (1970), and *La espada encendida*. After

being diagnosed with cancer in 1970, Neruda was bed ridden between 1972 and 1973. The Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to him in 1971. Neruda died in September 1973. His funeral turned into a public protest against the Chilean dictatorship, when thousands of grieving Chilean flooded the streets spontaneously.

Now before we read the prescribed poems, let us first answer the following questions.

Check Your Progress 2

- 2) Make a critical appraisal of Pablo Neruda as a poet.

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- 3) Name the collection of poems that catapulted Neruda to fame. Critically comment on its prominent literary features.

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2.3 “TONIGHT I CAN WRITE” –TEXT WITH ANNOTATIONS AND ANALYSIS

From Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair [1924]

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, ‘The night is shattered
and the blue stars shiver in the distance.’

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.

I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.

How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.

And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.

What does it matter that my love could not keep her.

The night is shattered and she is not with me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.

My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight searches for her as though to go to her.

My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees.

We, of that time are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.

My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.

Another's. She will be another's. Like my kisses before.

Her voice. Her bright body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but maybe I love her.

Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms

my soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer

and these the last verses that I write for her.

ANNOTATIONS

Tonight I Can Write—The word 'tonight' in the title indicates that the devastating sorrow had perhaps prevented the poet from writing about the loss till now. The poem is a lyrical evocation of speaker's relationship with the woman he has loved and lost

"blue stars shiver in the distance"—suggests the distance between the lovers and the fidgetiness of the speaker's isolation.

line 4 sings- the whistling sound made by the wind (wind is personified)

line 13 immense- endless, infinite

line 14 verse- poetry

dew-tiny drops of water that form on cool surfaces at night, when atmospheric vapour condenses.

pasture-land covered with grass and other low plants suitable for grazing animals, especially cattle or sheep

line 24 touch her hearing- deliberately intermixed sensuous imagery.

ANALYSIS

The poem has been taken from the collection titled *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* published in 1924. In English it reads as *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*. It was translated in English by W. S. Merwin in 1969. According to Anil Dhillon, "*Veinte Poemas* is a series of tense and desperately sad poems, often sensuously erotic in which the poet analyses the nature of his feelings for two separate girl friends "Marisol" of Temuco and "Marisombra", who was a fellow student in Santiago. The poem is a lament. The theme of the poem is regret due to heartbreak and loss of love. Written in simple language the poem is a lyric expressing poet's sadness because he has been estranged from his lover. A lyric is a formal poetry, typically spoken in first person and expresses personal emotions and feelings of the poet. This poem is written in free verse with no rhyme scheme or meter. But it does have a sense of rhythm. A mixture of consonance and assonance brings it through. The predominant mood is that of melancholy and nostalgia indicative of poet's conflicted emotional state. The imagery is sensuous and vivid. Nature as trope is highly ambiguous and symbolic of different things such as memory, the backdrop, and indicator of time as well as emblematic of poet's feelings. The speaker is contemplating on the aspects of nature that remind him of his lost love. Thus nature not only becomes a link to past memories but also his current emotional state.

The title of the poem lends significant sub-text to the poem. Written with ellipses, it is incomplete yet suggestive of the main idea that the pain of separation that causes much sadness to the poet is also a catalyst for him to compose this poem. The first line 'Tonight I can write the saddest lines' is repeated three times in the poem thus it also forms a refrain emphasizing the melancholic mood. The repetitions also provide thematic unity to the poem. After stating the major theme the poet then uses nature imagery as symbols to depict his passion, emotional turmoil and grief. As if echoing the poet's heartbreak, 'The night is shattered'. Blue stars shivering in distance are symbolic of the coldness and distance between the former lovers. The personified 'night wind' indicates poet's emotional turmoil. The poem remarkably captures the ambivalence of the poet who claims that he loved his beloved and in reciprocation his beloved also sometimes loved him. Night is a recurrent trope in this poem. In the line "Through nights like this one I held her in my arms", night becomes a trigger of memories reminding the poet of intimate times when the poet kissed his beloved over and over under the boundless sky. Yet night is also a setting for the poem to unfold and amplifies the immensity of poet's loneliness. In retrospection, the poet then claims that his beloved loved him and sometimes he too loved her back. The word 'sometimes' used again brings connotations of uncertainty. This implies the treacherous nature of memories that are susceptible to ambiguity and deterioration. The poet then acknowledges that perhaps it was the beauty of her "great still eyes" that compelled him to love her. The use of the refrain reiterates the sense of loss, making the poet realize, "I do not have her", "To feel that I have lost her". This feeling is heightened to a mournful suffering when in the next line poet states that the immense night has only intensified the feeling of loss. However, despite the anguish he finds recompense in poetry as, "the verse falls to the soul

like dew to the pasture". The poetry wells up in the heart of the poet as gently as moist water drops upon green fields. This expression is a poetic device called simile. The idea is continued in the next line where he consoles himself by saying, "what does it matter that my love could not keep her", yet in the very next line he contradicts himself by recounting that the night is shattered and the lover is not with him. In the next two lines the poet says that though he is aware of "someone singing in the distance" but he is so much engulfed by sadness and his soul is unable to come terms with his loss. Overwrought by it he yearns to be with her, so much so that "his sight searches for her" and "his heart looks for her". Night as a trope is repeated in the next line, fusing the idea of night as a backdrop and an indicator of the passage of time. "The same night whitening the same trees. / We, of that time, are no longer the same" encapsulates the idea that while the world remains the same, the lovers have changed drastically. The moon is not mentioned but it is suggested that it is moonlight that makes trees appear white. The next few lines of the poem capture poet's conflicted emotions where he first claims with certitude that he doesn't love her anymore but then immediately recalls the passion with which he had loved her. This makes him yearn for her again, and his "voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing". Contradictorily, he is reminded that the lady now belongs to someone else, though in his mind he vividly remembers, "Her voice. Her bright body. Her infinite eyes." In this line he expresses his longing to reunite with his lover but he can't so he tries to console himself by repeating to himself that he no longer loves her. However, his heart belies him and he doubts himself again saying, "but maybe I love her". This emotional turmoil makes him come to a realization that "Love is short, forgetting is so long." The line is indicative of the profound and lasting impact love has on people. Forgetting a passionate love affair or an estranged lover is thus a difficult and time taking process. Also, love as an idea is universal and eternal in the sense that it transcends the lovers who are only objects of love and prone to change. Once again the poet mentions the night because it is "through nights like this one he had held her in his arms" so he is made to reminisce the amorous intimate moments he shared with her. The night is a reminder of these memories so his "soul isn't satisfied that he has lost her". But these sentiments act as impetus for the poet to transmute his pain into poetry, making him conclude, "though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer and these the last verses that I write for her." Rejection in love becomes an inspiration for the poet to write. From a flux of complex and contradictory emotions that the speaker feels, the poem becomes a medium to crystallize his resolves to move on. In Agosin's opinion this poem along with some others in this collection, "marks a clear transition from the era of Spanish-American modernism to that of surrealism, with its often disconnected images and metaphors, which will dominate Neruda's next phase."

Check Your Progress 3

Read the following questions and answer the questions in the space that follows:

- 1) Discuss the significance of the title "Tonight I can Write . . . ". Does it aptly reflect the theme?

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- 2) Examine the symbolic use of nature imagery in the poem.

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- 3) Make a short critical appraisal of the poetic devices used in the poem ,
“Tonight I can Write”.

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2.4 “THE WAY SPAIN WAS” –TEXT WITH ANNOTATIONS

From Third Residence [1947]

Taught and dry Spain was,
a day's drum of dull sound,
a plain, an eagle's eyrie, a silence
below the lashing weather.

How unto crying out, unto the very soul
I love your barren soil and your rough bread,
your stricken people!
How in the depths of me
grows the lost flower of your villages,
timeless, impossible to budge,
your tracts of minerals
bulging like oldsters under the moon,
devoured by an imbecile god.

All your extensions, your bestial solitude,
joined with your sovereign intelligence,
haunted by the abstracted stones of silence,
your harsh wine and your sweet wine,
your violent and delicate vineyards.

Stone of the sun, pure among territories,
Spain veined with bloods and metals, blue and victorious,
proletariat of petals and bullets,
alone alive, somnolent, resounding.

ANNOTATIONS

taut: tensed, rigid

day's drum of dull sound: dreary monotonous rhythm of time

eyrie: eagle's nest usually made high on mountain cliffs

lashing weather: tempestuous storm

barren soil: infertile land

tracts: large expanse

bulging: swelling outwards

oldsters: opposite of youngsters, old people

devoured: eat, consume

imbecile: foolish

bestial: savage

sovereign: monarch, supreme

haunted: frequented by ghosts, possessed

abstracted: intellectual, withdrawn

harsh: coarse

violent: aggressive, brutal

proletariat: the wage earners that comprise the lowest rung of the society and are oppressed by the bourgeoisie in a capitalist regime.

somnolent: sleepy, tired, drowsy

resounding: emphatic and ringing

ANALYSIS

The Spanish Civil War forms the context of this poem which was published in *Third Residence* 1947. Between 1936 to 1939 Spain got engulfed in civil strife due to conflict between the leftist Republicans who were in the government and the Nationalist who were conservatives who were supported by Fascist forces. The right wing nationalists had the support of army, Catholic church, monarchists and large landowners. There were a number of reasons for the war to break out. One reason was the decline of the Spanish Empire, as by 1930s Spain had lost all of its colonies. The Second Empire formed in 1930s had proved incompetent in maintain law and order. The Church was strongly opposed to the social reform measures and army had always interfered in the country's politics. The feeling of unrest was compounded by the fact that by this time Spain also had been lagging behind industrially in comparison to the rest of the Europe. During this time Neruda had been posted in Spain as a consul and was deeply affected by the Spanish Civil War as it claimed the lives of two of his close friends, Garcia

Lorca and Miguel Hernandez. Neruda returned to Chile in 1937. Hereafter he became a member of the Communist Party of Chile and continued to express his concerns for social issues. In John Felstiner's words, "Spain's trauma affected Neruda unexpectedly: in teaching him a form of patriotism, an identification through time with land and people, the war on Spanish soil tightened his bond to Chile"(55).

Tejwant Singh Gill in "Neruda and Spain" argues that the Spanish Civil War deeply moved the intelligentsia world over who perceived General Franco's revolt against the Republic, abetted by German Nazism and Italian Fascism, as a threat to the treasured ideals of freedom, democracy and socialism. For poets and artists who felt overwhelmed by this contest between the democratic and the despotic forces, this war became a metaphor that they rendered in different ways through creative compositions. Some notable examples are the poem 'Ode to Spain' by W. H. Auden and Pablo Picasso's painting 'Guernica'. In Latin American poetry Pablo Neruda and Cesar Vallejo showed forceful engagement with this metaphor. For instance, Neruda's *Spain in My Heart* published in 1937 was written with the intent to extend his support for the republican cause. The poetry collection provided solace to the refugees. Expressing his sympathy with the vast multitude of strife stricken people, it contains poems such as "I Explain a Few Things" that invoke Spain's glorious past, full of prosperity and happiness, which is then contrasted with a decaying Spain ridden with endemic poverty perpetrated by royalty and also religion, and also the horrors perpetrated upon the civic population by the despotic forces. Further, many poems also express his compassion for the innocent people victimized, written with an intent to instil hope and show solidarity. In this poem too (The Way Spain Was) he recounts with deep anguish the suffering that people of Spain had to endure repeatedly. Some critics also opine that it is due to his experience in the diplomatic service he cultivated a feeling of solidarity for the tormented masses of Spain. He mourns for the 'stricken people' going through the hard times, and historically rich and glorious Spain destroyed by the despotic fascist forces. This sentiment is reflected in the title of the poem, *The Way Spain Was*. It is because the poem is a retrospective recollection of Spain's glorious past juxtaposed with contemporary disintegration and decay. It charts out his emotional response towards Spain through the use of surrealist poetic techniques. Before we begin stanza by stanza explanation, let us understand what is surrealism? Surrealism is a movement in literature and visual arts that emerged in Europe with Paris as the centre, between the I and the II World Wars. It grew out of the earlier anti-art Dadaism. It was a reaction against excessive rationalism and bourgeois values which were pervasive in the European culture and politics and had culminated in the horrific destruction caused by these wars. The term 'surrealism' was coined by Guillaume Apollinaire in 1917. The major spokesman of the movement was the poet and critic André Breton, who was also trained in medicine and psychiatry. He published the Surrealist Manifesto in 1924. Breton who regarded it as a revolutionary movement was influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud, particularly his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), and perceived the unconscious (especially dreams and fantasy) as a means to unlock imagination because the rational mind repressed imagination by weighting it down with taboos. He also advocated the need to bypass reason and rationality, to embrace chance through "pure psychic automatism" while creating art. Thus, the thrust of the movement was to reunite the conscious and unconscious realms of experience to create an absolute reality or super reality/surreality. Unlike their forefathers of Romanticism who also stressed upon the importance of

personal imagination, the surrealists believed that revelations could be found on the street and everyday life. These writers were also influenced by Karl Marx and believed in the potential of imagination to encourage the revolution by revealing the contradictions in the everyday life. The most recognisable element of the movement is the element of surprise which is achieved through incongruous juxtaposition of content. The literary device called 'non sequitur' (denotes an abrupt, illogical, or unexpected turn in plot or dialogue by including a relatively inappropriate change) is used for comic purposes. Another prominent feature is the perplexingly outlandish and uncanny imagery meant to jolt the reader out of complacency and normative assumptions. Nature imagery is frequently used but with a twist, for instance the German painter and sculptor Marx Ernst used a bird as his alter ego. W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Ted Hughes, Robert Bly, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, etc. are some Surrealist poets in English. Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon and Federico García Lorca have also created their most enduring work under the influence of surrealism. In Latin American poetry surrealist aesthetic is discernible in poems by Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz.

In the light of above discussion let us now analyse the poem, "The Way Spain Was".

The first stanza presents a visual impression of Spain's topography as a severe land caught in the monotonous rhythm of time; a country with mountains where birds like eagle make their nest and plains that are full of tumultuous storms. Through these symbolic images Spain is invoked here as a land ridden with turmoil both in geographical and topographical sense.

The second stanza records Neruda's personal attitude to Spain, his love for the country, the people in its villages, its infertile land, and its rudimentary crude food. He is deeply moved by the suffering of its people who remain sunk in endemic poverty. He yearns to see the fresh bloom of life, which is not to be found anywhere because be it rich minerals or old people, all alike are being consumed by an 'imbecile god' the despotic General Fransico Franco who led the military uprising backed by right-wing nationalists.

In the third stanza Neruda reflects on the condition of Spain by juxtaposing past and present. Spain is historically rich but reduced to a state of destitution at the time of the Spanish Civil War. Neruda personifies it and juxtaposes contradictory qualities as its attributes. For instance, it is gifted with supreme intelligence as well as withdrawn quietude. Its wine is both potent as well as mild. Its vineyards are turbulent as well as delicate.

In the last stanza too Neruda presents a surrealistic collage of images to recall the lost glory of Spain and its condition during the civil war. The antiquity of Spain is evoked through the phrase "stone of sun, pure among territories". Its rich mineral reserves evoked with the phrase "Spain veined with bloods and metals". A land once governed by great monarchs, "blue and victorious" it is now "proletariat of petals and bullets" because of the protesting masses. Here Neruda deliberately juxtaposes the coarse against the alluring. The motive is to shock the reader out of complacency. The concluding line of the poem instills hope, that despite the strife, and despite its sleepy, lonely state, in future, Spain will emerge emphatic and reverberating in victory.

In terms of use of poetic technique, inspired by surrealism the poem is highly cryptic and obscure. The meaning is not easily conveyed because of the use of

the mysterious and unusual images. Nature imagery is intensified. The syntax is fragmented. There is predilection with alliteration. According to Marjorie Agosin (2011), the inspiration behind this chaotic enumeration in the collection *The Residence Cycle* was not just Neruda's experience of the Orient during his sojourn in the South East Asia but also a culmination of the avant-garde movement that had been gestating in Europe and Latin America in the early decades of twentieth century. In "The Residence Cycle Neruda and the Avant-garde" she writes "we see that the language of these books, charged with metaphor, intense subjectivity, and distilled aestheticist vocabulary, unleashes the imagination and makes possible a break with the order characterized by logical structures, established rhythms, and other traditional norms of poetic expression"(77).

Check Your Progress 4

Read the following questions and answer the questions in the space that follows:

- 1) Discuss Neruda's attitude towards Spain in "The Way Spain Was".

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- 2) Critically comment on the poetic techniques used by Neruda in "The Way Spain Was".

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit the following ideas have been discussed:

Latin America refers to territories in the Southern American continent. It also includes Mexico (North America) where the (Romance languages) Spanish, Portuguese or French are spoken. In the first half of the 19th century Latin American literature shows influence of Neoclassicism, Realism and Naturalism. The first distinctly Latin American literary movement in Spanish that had a global impact is called Modernismo. It emerged in last decade of 19th century and eventually gave way to avant-garde tendencies in the 20th century, which are evident in movements like Creacionismo and Ultraísmo. In fiction of the next phase called 'the Boom' the literary mode of magical realism came to the fore with many Latin American writers getting international acclaim.

There have been many illustrious poets from Latin America like, Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz who won the Nobel Prize. Among them Pablo Neruda is the most widely read poet of the 20th century. His poetry collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, a collection of poetry from which the poem "Tonight I can write..." has been taken, brought him into limelight.

The poem is a lyric where poet persona laments the loss of a lover. The next poem "The Way Spain Was" is from the collection titled *Third Residence*. Infused with surrealist poetic tendencies the poem invokes Spain's glorious past and juxtaposes it with its decaying, degenerating condition under the grip of despotic forces after the Spanish Civil War.

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2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

These are only suggested as additional reading and are in no way compulsory.

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2.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

For all answers refer to 1.1

Check Your Progress 2

For your answers refer to 2.2

Check Your Progress 3

For answers refer to 2.3



UNIT 3 DEREK WALCOTT: “A FAR CRY FROM AFRICA”, “NAMES”

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Brief Overview of Caribbean Literature
- 3.2 Introduction to Derek Walcott
- 3.3 “A Far Cry from Africa” -Text with Annotations and Analysis
- 3.4 “Names” - Text with Annotations and Analysis
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 References
- 3.7 Suggested Readings
- 3.8 Answers to Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the poetry by Derek Walcott. After reading the Unit carefully, you will be able to:

- recall names of some prominent Caribbean Writers;
- give a brief outline the life and works of Derek Walcott;
- critically comment on the poem “A Far Cry from Africa”;
- critically comment on the poem 'Names'.

3.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

The title 'Caribbean Literature' is derived from the Caribbean Sea that surrounds the West Indies. The sea is named after Caribs, one of the many Amerindian indigenous ethnic groups of this region. Considering the linguistic diversity, heterogeneity and the cultural plurality of the region, critics consider presenting a general overview of Caribbean literature a difficult task. What makes it challenging is the fact that, as argued by some critics, geographically the Caribbean zone must consider not only the group of islands that extends from Cuba to Trinidad, but also Suriname, Guyana, French Guiana, and the coastal areas of Venezuela and Colombia that are at the continental edges of South America and Central America. It also includes Panama, Costa Rica, Belize, and the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua that border the Caribbean Sea. Moreover, the presence and chaotic proliferation of five European languages namely: Spanish, English, French, Dutch and Portuguese (a result of a chequered history of imperial rivalries for the conquest of this contested region from the 15th to the 19th century) as well as the growth of other local languages like Haitian Creole and Papiamentu due to creolization, makes charting the literary history of this region a herculean task. Further, the Caribbean culture is a culture transplanted and transposed, riven with a sense of dislocation, a historical void, lack of a common indigenous roots and clarity of tradition. It is because demographically the region is inhabited

by people of mixed racial background –of European, Asian and African origin who are the descendents of European planters, the African slaves and the indentured labourers from India and China.

The Caribs, an indigenous Amerindian tribe that was one of the dominant groups in the Caribbean (besides Arawaks) that inhabited the islands before the arrival of Columbus in 1492 has been reduced to very small population mostly concentrated in the northern part of Dominica. It is because the consequent wave of European invaders that came after Columbus brought with them infectious diseases, such as smallpox to which these people had no immunity, caused large scale deaths. Later the warfare, enslavement and annexation of their territory by the imperial powers caused much displacement and destruction of this ethnic community. During the 16th till the 19th century, with the proliferation of the Atlantic Slave Trade, ship loads of slaves were brought from West Africa to work on the island plantations of coffee, tobacco, cocoa, sugar and cotton, established by the European colonizers. These slaves were subjected to dehumanizing practices and were bought and sold like objects. They belonged to different tribes and lacked common language or tradition. When slavery was abolished in most British colonies by the Emancipation Act of 1833, a new system replaced it. Under this indentured labourers were transported from India and China to work in these plantations, thereby further complicating the notion of a unified Caribbean identity. Further in the 20th century after the disintegration of the West Indian Federation, each of the islands projected identity of independent nation-states.

In order to overcome these challenges, some literary critics discuss the distinct literatures emerging from this region by using linguistic blocs as a parameter for categorization which is as follows: Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the French-speaking Caribbean, the Dutch speaking Caribbean and the English-speaking Caribbean. A few critics also argue that despite the bewildering cultural disparity, the experience of colonialism, the consequent persecution and enslavement of people because of the establishment of the plantation economy and the resultant creolization serve as common context to synthesize the literary output of the Caribbean. This literature is also studied as expressing predominantly diasporic thematic concerns of displacement, sense of exile, a search for roots and a yearning for returning to the homeland. Many expatriates and intellectuals also take the traditional Black culture expressed in myths, folk lore, music, speech rhythms and dialects as a reference point to chart distinct Caribbean aesthetics.

Before we proceed further let us briefly discuss some important terms in the context of Caribbean culture.

- a) **Creolization:** It is the process of cross-fertilization, intermixture and aggregation of cultural elements through which Amerindian, European and African; customs, traditions and languages, have blended to yield new cultures in the Caribbean. It takes a long period of time to unfold. A Creole, in terms of ethnicity, refers to a person of mixed African and European race, who lives in the West Indies and speaks a Creole language. The heavily accented language of the underprivileged, poor black peasants and labourers are also called Creoles. These languages developed overtime from pidgin (mixing of various languages) by the slaves due to the exigencies of finding a medium to communicate in the absence of common native tongues. Appropriated later by indentured labour they eventually became the main

languages in these parts. However, English, French, and Spanish the language of the upper crust of society, of the expatriate plantocracy and the middle class, have been the language of education and officialdom. This has created in the region the problematic of the 'agony over language', spoken of by Edward Baugh. From the 1960s to the contemporary times, this phenomenon has been important in Caribbean writing. It indicates that language use in the Caribbean corresponds to racial power equations, hierarchy and class stratification. Despite strong nationalist movements in the 1940s the entrenched racial attitudes towards languages persist.

- b) Negritude Movement: A literary and ideological movement aimed at cultivating 'Black Consciousness' across Africa and its diaspora, it emerged in Paris around the 1930s and 1940s led by French-speaking African and Caribbean writers, artists, politicians and intellectuals. The term was coined by Aimé Césaire, in his epic poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), translated as *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* or *Journal of a Homecoming*. He later emerged as a prominent Caribbean Surrealist writer. The other prominent proponents of the movement were Léon Damas and Léopold Sédar Senghor who shaped the idea of Negritude with their poetry. They were inspired by Harlem Renaissance (the intellectual, social and artistic, New Negro movement of 1920s that flourished in New York) and the works of Claude McKay and Langston Hughes who laid the groundwork for black expression. The Negritude writers rejected the French colonial hegemony evident in the policy of assimilation and voiced dissent against physical/psychological violence perpetrated by colonialism. Etymologically, the term is constructed from the French word nègre that meant 'a black man' and had a derogatory meaning. By redefining the word in positive terms these writers claimed dignity of their identity. They instilled in it a sense of pride by establishing cultural, racial and historical ties to the African continent. The movement also emphasized the shared black heritage of the African diaspora.
- c) Rastafarian Movement: It was a spiritual movement that emerged in Jamaica in 1930s following the coronation of Emperor Ras Tafari in Ethiopia (Africa), who took the name of Haile Selassie. The movement was built on the notion held by African slaves about soul's return to Africa from exile in the Caribbean. At the core of the movement was the idea of faith in Selassie's divinity (who was placed in the legendary line of King Solomon) and his agency in the literal repatriation of Jamaican people to their African homeland. The genesis of the movement is complex. It was initially a spiritual movement of the underclass but soon spread across the Caribbean to sections of the middle class and intellectuals. It later gained global attention through the music and lyrics of Bob Marley who was a devoted Rastafarian. In fiction, the movement took shape in the works Roger Mais (1905-55) who talks of the experience of dislocation and estrangement. It was later elaborated in the dramas of Walcott as well.
- d) Créolité: It is a literary movement that developed around 1980s by writers Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant who hailed from Martinique. It was a response to the inadequacies of the Negritude movement that projected a monolithic perception of black identity. It is based on Edward Glissant's views that heterogeneous Caribbean identity cannot be formulated exclusively in terms of African descent as it negates the influences of the

indigenous Caribbeans, the European colonialists, and the indentured servants from India and China. The movement also rejects French dominance in literature, culture and academic context by promoting French-based Creole language called Antillean Creole that has elements of Carib, English, and African languages in its vocabulary and grammar. It is spoken primarily in the group of islands in the Caribbean called the Lesser Antilles.

Now, let us read briefly about some prominent writers from the Caribbean writing in English.

George Lamming's novel *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) is an important text. Its publication had a huge impact in creating a distinct identity of Caribbean literature. Set in a hamlet, in following the experiences of the protagonist, the novel examines the legacy of colonialism, slavery, feudalism and racism in the Caribbean village society. George Lamming was born in 1927 in a Carrington a small village in Barbados. He is regarded as one of the most significant writers in the Caribbean Anglophone literature. Other than him there have been many notable fiction writers from the Caribbean such as Roger Mais, Edgar Austin Mittelholzer, V.S. Reid, Samuel Selvon, Wilson Harris, Michael Anthony, Garth St. Omer, Jean Rhys and V. S. Naipaul, who dealt with the themes of colonialism, the dilemmas of the West Indian diaspora and the sense of alienation felt by black people in a society with white values and traditions as norms. For instance the novel *A Brighter Sun* (1952) by Selvon, set in the World War II era, depicts the life of East Indians and Creoles in the racially split Trinidad. Similarly *A Morning at the Office* (1950) a novel by noted Guyanese writer Edgar Mittelholzer depicts the 'contradiction of being white in mind and black in body' as phrased by Derek Walcott. It is done through a sympathetic portrayal of characters from the middle and lower-middle-class in Trinidad. The novel *New Day* (1949) by V.S. Reid is hailed as a landmark in West Indian literature. Reid was a major exponent of the Jamaican heritage and anti-colonial ideas. In this novel, he depicts the political history of Jamaica by using a dialect as the language of narration. *Wide Sargasso Sea* published in 1966 gave an indomitable reputation to Dominica born author Jean Rhys. A prequel to *Jane Eyre*, the novel depicts the suffering, the racial/sexual exploitation of the Creole heroine Antoinette and the complexities of being white minority in the Caribbean. The character is a feminist as well as anti-colonial re-imagination of Bertha Mason (Rochester's mad wife locked up in the attic in *Jane Eyre*). Among other notable women writers, Jamaica Kincaid from Antigua is considered the best novelists of autobiographical fiction for texts like *At the Bottom of the River* (1983). This discussion cannot be completed without mentioning V.S. Naipaul who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2001. He was of Indian descent and hailed from Trinidad but spent most of his life domiciled in England. Known for writing with a sense of disappointment, discontent and pessimism about the postcolonial conditions in the Third World, his much acclaimed *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) is set in Trinidad and centers on the main character's attempt to assert his personal identity and establish his independence symbolized by owning a house. His other novels *The Mimic Men* (1967) and *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) are also considered key texts in postcolonial literature.

A search for distinctively authentic Caribbean voice has been a prominent concern implicit in the broadness of the range of West Indian theatre which includes the conventional drama of social realism, the yard theatre, roots theatre, pantomime, Jamaica's Gun Court theatre, church theatre, carnival theatre, calypso theatre,

theatre of ritual, folk theatre and such other. Some leading playwrights from the Caribbean have been Errol John, Douglas Archibald, Dennis Scott, Trevor Rhone, David Edgecombe, Michael Gilkes and most certainly Derek Walcott.

Derek Walcott: 'A Far Cry from Africa', 'Names'

The names of Derek Walcott and Edward Kamau Brathwaite have almost become synonymous with Caribbean poetry. However, there are many other significant poets like Lorna Goodson from Jamaica, Wayne Brown from Trinidad and Tobago, Dennis Scott from Jamaica, David Dabydeen from Guyana, Cyril Dabyden, Claire Harris, Dionne Brand, etc who have contributed to the growth of Caribbean poetry. The collection titled *Rites of Passage* (1930) by Edward Brathwaite is popularly regarded as the starting point of West Indian literary studies. Acutely attuned to the experience of dispossession and exploitation wrought by slavery, his poetry expresses deep empathy for the West Indian slaves and examines African and indigenous roots of Caribbean culture. He was the winner of the Sixth Annual Griffin Poetry Prize in 2006 for *Slow Horses* (2005). Brathwaite as a poet and historian was the exponent of social consciousness wrought through creolization in literature of the Caribbean. He vigorously advocated and promoted the Creole as a national language in his critical and theoretical essays. He also cofounded the Caribbean Artists Movement. Some other works by him include *Masks* (1968), *Islands* (1969), *Our Ancestral Heritage: A Bibliography of the Roots of Culture in the English-speaking Caribbean* (1976) and *Barbados Poetry: A Checklist: Slavery to the Present* (1979), *Black + Blues* (1976), *Middle Passages* (1992) and *Ancestors* (2001). In contrast to Brathwaite's Afro-centric approach, Derek Walcott has given importance to the cross-cultural aspect of the Caribbean region but with focus on the postcolonial era. Patricia Ismond has aptly summarized the difference in "Walcott vs. Brathwaite" by calling Brathwaite's approach as vernacular-oriented "nation poetry" whereas in contrast Walcott's aesthetic orientation exhibits metropolitan sophistication. Walcott's contribution to the Anglophone Caribbean poetry and drama is discussed in detail in the next section.

Check Your Progress 1

- 4) Why do critics consider presenting a comprehensive history of the Caribbean a herculean task?

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- 5) What do you understand by the term Negritude?

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- 6) What is the significance of creolization in the Caribbean context?

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3.2 INTRODUCTION TO DEREK WALCOTT

Derek Walcott and his twin brother Roderick Walcott were born on January 23, 1930 in Castries, St. Lucia. His father Warwick Walcott was a civil servant, a poet and a visual artist. His mother Alix Walcott was a school teacher. Major supporters of art, both the parents encouraged him to learn painting and get involved in the local theater activities in his childhood. Originally trained as a painter, Walcott later switched to poetry as a medium of creative expression. Under the influence of his mother who inculcated in him a love for poetry Walcott began writing poetry at an early age. His first poem was published at the age of 14. Then by the age of 19 he had managed to self-publish two poetry collections titled: *25 Poems* and *Epitaphs for the Young: XII Cantos*. After studying at St. Mary's College in Castries initially and at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, Walcott moved to Trinidad in 1953. Here he has worked as theatre and art critic. In 1959, the Trinidad Theatre Workshop was cofounded by him with his brother. It produced many of his early plays. However, it was with the publication of *In a Green Night* (1962) that he achieved a literary breakthrough. The book celebrates the Caribbean landscape, its history and interrogates the ramifications of colonialism. The poems deal with the themes of language, power and place. These become leitmotifs in later collections as well. The poems published in *Selected Poems* (1964), *The Castaway* (1965), and *The Gulf* (1969) render his dilemma of being caught between European cultural orientation and native Caribbean black folk cultures. Some other works by him are; a book-length autobiographical poem *Another Life* (1973), poetry collections where he explores the theme of linguistic, cultural and racial divisions in the Caribbean, *Sea Grapes* (1976), *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), *The Fortune Traveller* (1981) and *Midsummer* (1984) where he explores the theme of his estrangement from the Caribbean and his precarious situation as a black writer in America. *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *The Prodigal* (2004), *Selected Poems* (2007), *White Egrets* (2010) and *Morning Paramin* (2016) are his later collections. Walcott's impressive oeuvre comprises of both poetry and drama. His plays draw upon various genres such as fable, allegory, folk and morality. They also deal with the socio-political and epistemological effects of post-colonialism as reflected in West Indian experience. He has earned a lot of awards and honors. The notable ones include; the British Knighthood, MacArthur Foundation 'genius' award and the Obie Award for his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. But most importantly he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992 for *Omeros* (1990). While maintaining a steady stream of poetry and drama throughout his life Walcott also taught at various universities across the world including, Boston University, Columbia University, Yale University, Rutgers University, and Essex University in England.

Among Walcott's critics some key areas of debates that also constitute the interpretative framework for his literary corpus have been; his quest for Caribbean poetics, his troublesome relationship with the western canon, his ideological engagement with the idea of Caribbeanness, his exploration of the interface in divide between Europe and Africa, his stance on the complex linguistic dynamics of the Caribbean with respect to Standard English vs. Creole of the Anglophone Caribbean and most prominently his 'quarrel with history'. Walcott's early education in British colonial education system made him well versed with western canon. In poetry, he is deeply influenced by the study of Virgil, Dante, Eliot, Pound, Dylan Thomas etc. Critics argue that western models also inform the

frames of many of his plays, such as influence of the Irish playwright J M Synge is visible in *The Sea at Dauphin*; Bertolt Brecht's influence and oriental techniques can be seen in *Drums*. The atmosphere in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* is reminiscent of August Strindberg and Shakespeare's influence is discernible in *A Branch of Blue Nile*. Despite being heavily influenced by British and American literature, a dominant trait in the body of work created by Walcott is the juxtaposition and cross fertilization of both colonial and folk cultures which mirrors the cultural hybridity of the Caribbean region. Critical of Afro-centric or Eurocentric purism, his poetry and drama espouse the discourse of cross-cultural aesthetics. For instance he evinces a mastery of the Standard English, has knowledge of French, experiments extensively with the dialects of the Caribbean and often amalgamates them all in his work. In theatre too, he employs hybrid practices by seamlessly interweaving wide-ranging modern theatrical conventions with popular Caribbean performance modes. Be it form or content, Walcott shows sustained engagement with the idea of 'Hybridity', which is a key concept in postcolonial theory and is profoundly entrenched with the ideas of identity and multiculturalism. In literature it is often used to challenge the essentialist racist mindset, as historically speaking European Colonizers had used the argument of their racial supremacy to justify colonialism and slave trade. For the preservation of this supremacist racial discourse, undiluted pure culture was considered a necessity; hence they considered racial intermixing was considered denigrating influence and a threat. Hybridity in Walcott's work is a fundamental ideology in general and symptomatic of creolization (discussed in section (2.1). A prominent trope in Walcott's writing is grappling with the past- prehistoric and historic. Walcott perceives history as an ideological construct in the colonial discourse. He rejects it to advocate myth as an alternative. This has been discussed in detail in section 2.4 with reference 'Names'. Another recurrent motif in his plays and poetry is 'poet persona's quest for self which is ridden with contradictions, conflict as well as continuities and metamorphoses'. Often the metaphor of 'migration' literal or figurative is employed to flesh out this theme. This is also played out evidently in both the poems 'A Far Cry from Africa' and 'Names'. For detailed analysis read the sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Check Your Progress 2

- 7) Make a critical appraisal of Derek Walcott as a poet and a dramatist.

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- 8) Why is hybridity as a concept fundamental to Walcott's body of work?

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3.3 A FAR CRY FROM AFRICA- TEXT WITH ANNOTATIONS

A Far Cry From Africa

From In A Green Night [1962]

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt
Of Africa, Kikuyu, quick as flies,
Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt
Corpses are scattered through a paradise.
Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:
“Waste no compassion on these separate dead!”
Statistics justify and scholars seize
The salients of colonial policy.
What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
To savages, expendables as Jews?

Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break
In a white dust of ibises whose cries
Have wheeled since civilization’s dawn
From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.
The violence of beast on beast is read
As natural law, but upright man
seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.
Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars
Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,
While he calls courage still that native dread
Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,
The gorilla wrestles with the superman.
I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?

Betray them both, or give back what they give?

How can I face such slaughter and be cool?

How can I turn from Africa and I

ANNOTATIONS

tawny pelt: tan coloured undressed skin of an animal

Kikuyu: ethnic tribe of Kenya . In 1963 Kenya gained independence from the British but only after a prolonged violent campaign by Kikuyu African anti-colonial organisation called Mau Mau.

veldt: uncultivated or open country that is not forested

carrion: rotting flesh of dead animals

compassion: pity

savages: uncivilized people The natives inhabitants of the colonies were considered sub-human animals by the colonisers who justify colonisation as a 'civilizing mission'.

Jews: The Bible provides various incidents of persecution of Jews. It could also be a reference to the holocaust perpetrated by Hitler during the World War II when millions of Jews were killed in the concentration camps.

rushes: tapering plants that grow at the edge of water

ibises: birds that wade in shallow waters

natural law: the food chain according to which animals kill to feed on other animals in order to survive but not out of greed. It could also indicate Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

as with Spain: Spanish conquistadors made settlements in the Caribbean Islands after Christopher Colombus chanced upon West Indies while trying to discover alternative sea route to India. Eventually, slaves from West Africa were brought to the Caribbean Islands to work in the plantations set up by the settlers.

gorilla: symbolic representation of African people as monkey like because of their dark skin and apparent lack of civilization

superman: symbolic representation of the white race indicative of their apparent technological progress

betray: not to be loyal, refuse to accept

ANALYSIS

The poem is taken from the collection titled *In a Green Night* published in 1962 that brought Walcott to limelight. Search for identity is the overarching theme of the collection and *A Far Cry from Africa* is considered the most representative poem. The title of the poem is ambiguous as well as ironic and doesn't convey clearly the main theme of the poem. The theme of the poem is Walcott's conflicted feelings arising due to his mixed racial lineage. The theme is explored through a recollection of Mau-Mau uprising in Kenya during the rise of African nationalism against the British and its violent consequences. The phrase 'a far cry' in the title literally means something that is different from what is expected. Figuratively

the word 'far' also conveys a sense of 'long distance' from the African continent. Wes Davis observes that "far cry is both a distant cry and dissimilarity... a great distance separating places". Thus, the title is ambiguous and is indicative of Walcott's dilemma about yearning for a lost culture as well as a distancing from it. However, the conflicted feelings are transmuted into a poetic creation.

The opening stanza of the poem recalls Africa ravaged by the conflict between the British colonizers and rebels of the Kikuyu Tribe. Here African land is pictured as a tan animal skin being tousled by wind of violence and racial prejudice. The word 'flies' is a metaphor for the Kikuyu rebels that are growing fat by gorging on the bloodstream of the African grasslands, a veritable Eden now strewn with corpses. Similarly, among the colonizers a high ranking officer is the 'worm' crying out to show no pity to the misfortunes of those massacred from both the opposing sides. This violence is explained even by academics and scholars who cite statistics to justify the salient features of colonial policy. But placing this in critical light the poet rhetorically questions the efficacy of these facts and figures that are of no use to the innocent victims treated inhumanly as savages and persecuted like Jews. Poet's own liminal position makes him perceive both the colonizers and the colonized as murderers.

The second stanza presents a vivid account of topography of a pre-colonial Africa as an ancient civilization teeming with flora and fauna that has now become ridden with strife due to colonization. Since the beginning of civilization, this land with sun-baked rivers as well as verdant plains teeming with beasts, has been inhabited by people who threshed out the grains, making the reed that grows along the marshes break and rise above like the birds of swamp called ibises. However, the colonizer who thinks of himself as an 'upright man' ironically tries to obtain godliness by tormenting these indigenous natives. The coloniser feels madly ecstatic because of being victorious in the wars perpetuated by him for the purpose of colonial conquest. In his euphoria he calls it bravery. However, the native out their fear of the widespread massacre dread the 'white peace' (which is a metaphor for apparently beneficial aspects of the colonial rule). In this stanza the anti-colonial critique becomes more evident as, in comparison to the animals who live by the laws of nature, Walcott presents the civilized white man as more monstrous for wreaking havoc on this land and celebrating his war victories by sadistically oppressing the natives.

The final stanza then brings out Walcott's own dilemma about his mixed racial identity. He begins by reiterating his remorse at the cruel and violent ways of men deemed necessary in the instances of racial conflict. This necessity is 'personified'. It is called 'brutish' who acts guiltlessly and wipes its hands clean of any remorse 'upon the napkin of a dirty cause'. Though vaguely, Walcott makes a reference to the Spanish conquest of the Caribbean Islands to emphasize the misuse of compassion on such violent upheavals where 'gorillas' come in conflict with 'the superman'. Having articulated the outward manifestations of racial conflict Walcott then directs the focus to his own emotional turmoil. Divided by his dual heritage as both black and white blood flows through his veins, he feels troubled by his biological mixed ancestry. His hatred for imperialism comes in contradiction with his love for the English language. He realises that imprecating the colonial officer does not diminish his love for the English language. The poem ends with rhetorical questions that iterate not only his dual heritage but also his dilemma; should he refuse either of the heritages? But neither

can he reject English nor dismiss the slaughter of the African natives.

Derek Walcott: 'A Far Cry from Africa', 'Names'

Carolyn Cooper in a "Language Beyond Mimicry: Language as Metaphor and Meaning in Derek Walcott's Oeuvre", states that Walcott's poetry captures the aesthetic problem peculiar to the Caribbean Literature due to the linguistic heterogeneity of the region. "His early work reveals a seminal thematic preoccupation- a conflict of cultural values which is rooted in language. The two languages of his native St. Lucia, the West African/ French based Creole and Received Standard English, symbolizes for Walcott two radically opposed modes of perception: Creole articulates the dynamic spontaneity of folk culture, English expresses the rigorous intellectual discipline of the letters"(159). Mervyn Alleyne has also explained that in St. Lucia there exists a 'fundamental schism' with encoded 'master servant polarity' between Creole and English. This is a remainder of slavery in the Caribbean. Creole language as a medium is also a repository of the folklore, popular customs, ceremonies, rituals spoken by a huge section of population. It is spontaneous medium of expression. It also reverberates with the private mores of the people. On the contrary, English is the medium for formal and official communication. It is very conservative, and is spoken mostly by people who have received it through schooling or literary exposure. Thus, the two languages are very different in nature and function. They are indicative of the cultural dualism which creates a sort of conflict of values in the Afro-Caribbean psyche. Expressing this effect in his poem *Codicil* Walcott calls himself a "schizophrenic, wrenched by two styles" and *A Far Cry from Africa* extends this theme. Cooper argues, "The ambiguity of the poem's title demonstrates Walcott's ambivalence: The Mau-Mau revolution against British colonial policy is a powerful cry, whose intensity distance can not diminish. The shared experience of British colonialism which the Blacks in Caribbean and Kenya have survived, establishes a bond of empathy. But despite that commonality of experience Walcott recognizes that his own experience is distinct, is a far cry from Kenyan. He abhors the savagery of British culture which has provided him the language he must use to indict it"(160). However, in an essay titled "Meaning" published in 1970 Walcott proposes that a creative synthesis of this cultural dichotomy is a the positive inheritance of colonialism in the Caribbean. He also delineates three distinct stages in his own artistic development. A withdrawal into the world of English literature is the first stage. The second stage is of movement outward towards the folk rhythms expressed in Creole. Finally, the third stage of attempts to combine the two cultures in a synthesis. These stages are enumerated in "What the Twilight Says: An Overture", a collection of literary essays.

Check Your Progress 3

Read the following questions and answer in the space that follows:

- 4) Comment on the ambivalence of the title, *A Far Cry from Africa*.

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- 5) Discuss the significance of animal imagery in the poem.

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- 6) Explain the theme of racial/cultural conflict in the poem.

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3.4 NAMES –TEXT WITH ANNOTATIONS

I

Names

From Sea Grapes [1976]

My race began as the sea began,
with no nouns, and with no horizon,
with pebbles under my tongue,
with a different fix on the stars.

But now my race is here,
in the sad oil of Levantine eyes,
in the flags of the Indian fields.

I began with no memory
I began with no future,
but I looked for that moment
when the mind was halved by a horizon.

I have never found that moment
when the mind was halved by a horizon-
for the goldsmith from Benares,
the stonecutter from Canton,
as a fishline sinks, the horizon
sinks in the memory.

Have we melted into a mirror,
leaving our souls behind?
The goldsmith from Benaras,

the stonecutters from Canton,
the bronzesmith from Benin.
A sea-eagle screams from the rock,
and my race began like the osprey
with that cry
that terrible vowel,
that I!

Behind us all the sky folded,
as history folds over a fishline,
and the foam foreclosed
with nothing in our hands

but this stick
to trace our names on the sand
which the sea erased again, to our indifference.

II

And when they named these bays
bays,
was it nostalgia or irony?

In the uncombed forest,
in the uncultivated grass
where was there elegance
except in their mockery?

Where were the courts of Castille?
Versailles' colonnades
supplanted by cabbage palms
with Corinthian crests,
belittling diminutives,
then, little Versailles
meant plans for a pigsty,
names for the sour apples
and green grapes of their exile.

Their memory turned acid
but the names held;

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Valencia glows
with the lanterns of oranges,
Mayaro's
charred candelabra of cocoa.
Bing men, they could not live
except they first presumed
the right of every thing to be a noun.
The African acquiesced,
repeated and changed them.

Listen , my children say:
Moubain: the hogplum,
cerise: the wild cherry
baie-la: the bay,
with the fresh green voices
they were once themselves
in the way the wind bends
our natural inflections.

These palms are greater than Versailles,
for no man made them,
their fallen columns greater than Castille,
no man unmade them
except the worm, who has no helmet,
but was always the emperor,
and children, look at these stars
over Valencia's forest!

Not Orion,
not Betelgeuse,
tell me, what do they look like?
Answer, you damned little Arabs!
Sir, fireflies caught in molasses.

ANNOTATIONS

name: a noun, a word used to address a person, indicator of one's identity

fix: position, predicament

pebbles under my tongue: It is said that the Greek orator Demosthenes treated his speech impediment by talking with pebbles in his mouth.

sad oil: sad here means nostalgia for homelands left behind, oil means the extracts from the olive fruit that grows abundantly in the Mediterranean lands

Indians: It refers to both the American Indian indigenous people of Caribbean as well as the Indians transported to the Caribbean as indentured labours

Benaras: A holy city on the banks of River Ganga

Canton: A highly populated city of south China.

fishline: a line attached to hook used for fishing

Benin: Earlier called Dahomey is a North African Country

Osprey: a large broad-winged fish-eating bird

foreclosed: rule out, prevent, preclude

indifference: complacency, disinterestedness

bays: basin, cove

nostalgia: a sentimental longing for past

irony: state of affair contrary to what is expected

uncombed: unkempt, wild

mockery: parody, jeering, derision, contempt

Castille: A historical region in Spain. It was a large powerful kingdom in the Middle Ages.

Versailles' colonnades: Versailles is a city in France. It is famous for The Palace of Versailles that was the principal royal residence of France between the 17th and 18th century until the start of French Revolution. The palace is a historical monument and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

supplanted: substituted, replaced

belittling: denigrate, deride, underestimate, insult

diminutives: miniature

Valencia: The third largest city in Spain known for its heritage in Arts and Science

Mayaro: A Beach at the east coast of island of the Trinidad and Tobago.

Candelabra: a candlestick holder with many branches

green voices: symbolic meaning of green here is growth and learning

inflections: the rise and fall of voice while talking.

columns: pillars

Orion: a prominent constellation also called a hunter in Greek mythology.

Betelgeuse: A distinctly reddish and the second brightest star in the constellation of Orion. The name is a corruption of the Arabic Name "yad-al-jauza" which means the hand of al-jauza. Al-jauza was a character in Arab mythology.

Molasses: the remaining thick brown syrup left after sugar is crystallized

ANALYSIS

Published in the collection titled *Sea Grapes* the poem 'Names' articulates Walcott's preoccupation with the themes of history, identity and language. The focus of the poem is on the idea of West Indian crisis of consciousness due to a sense of historical void. Divided in two parts the poem conveys the diasporic anxieties of Caribbean Islanders. It describes the perspectives of descendents of migrant slaves brought from Africa, India and other parts of the world as well as

the colonizers from Europe. The title is indicative of the role played by language as a carrier of cultural identity and as a medium to record history. It also indicates how language gets wielded as an instrument of control by colonizers to impose Eurocentric norms and history upon the colonized subjects. However, as natives interpellate these norms through mimicry they ironically also subvert them.

In the first part, the poet attempts a journey into his racial and subjective consciousness to trace the origin of his 'race'. The word is a pun implying the meaning of 'running' as a verb, and also 'ethnicity' as a noun. Although, the existence of his people is as old as the sea yet he is unable to find any 'nouns' to represent the same, indicating an erasure of his people's history. His search for accounts of his origin seems difficult like trying to speak clearly with pebbles under the tongue. It is perhaps because he speaks in English which is the coloniser's language. The difficulty is compounded by his predicament of having a different perspective on stars/constellations in the sky that have been used as nautical signposts for navigation in the sea from antiquity. The line 'no noun, no horizon' registers a pessimistic tone. It evokes the exasperation that comes with the realization of loss of memories, loss of connections with one's ancestral land, and lack of a cohesive identity due to forced migration. All this compounds to make the search of a past previous to colonial history appear futile. This idea is developed in the next stanza where the poet acknowledges that the journey of his people despite beginning in antiquity thousands of years ago and thousands of miles away has now brought them here in the West Indies, where his people worked in plantations as slaves like the indentured labourers from India and China. Consequently, the poet who is of mixed racial descent, a successor of these exploited immigrants forcefully transported and brought to the Caribbean, the poet's quest for cultural identity begins with a void with no memory of the past or the future. This makes him probe for the exact moment when discriminatory colour consciousness seeped into human mind dividing the world as black and white with racial prejudice. The phrase 'I have never found that moment' emphasises the fruitlessness of his search. This is due to the socio-linguistic complexity of the Caribbean milieu. This flux of influence is further reflected in the interactions between people of different ethnicities such as "the goldsmith from Benaras" and "the stonecutters from Canton". For these people who were brought to the Caribbean generations ago, from faraway places (Benaras – a city of India at the banks of River Ganga and Canton- a populous city of South China) the search for cohesive identity sinks in the memory like a fish line sinks in the sea water without any trace. In the next few lines, the poet laments the loss of distinct ethnic roots of these people by posing a rhetorical question, "Have we melted into a mirror, leaving our souls behind?". This fleshes out his concern about the distortion of reality and loss of memories of past as the glorious cities of Benaras, Canton or Benin that once held sway are now have lost their glory with the passage of time. This sense of historical void results in an agonising process when it comes to articulation of identity in the multi-ethnic Caribbean territories. The assertive cry of 'I', the first person singular pronoun that contains the sense of self of an individual is to be made against the racial prejudice. It is to be carved out in spite of persistent dehumanization wrought upon the people of the Caribbean by a long history of colonial oppression. Phonetically, this shrill and agonising cry sounds like the terrible scream of the sea-eagle. Despite these earnest efforts the poet is tormented by the lack of a definite identity due to the lost, collapsed, devalued historical past of the Caribbean people. He compares the condition of his people with that of children trying to write on sand. For

Walcott the attempt "to trace our names on sand" yields no results as the sea erases them waves after waves. The word indifference here indicates the ethnic conflict and divisions that have been endemic to the Caribbean. In these lines there is also a note of resignation to the fate of the oppressed.

In the second section the poem depicts a different perspective. It shifted from poets own conflicted state of mind (embodied in the first section) to the condition of the colonizers who were also dislocated in the process of colonization. However, their migration was voluntary. They had left their homelands and come to the Caribbean in search of a better life. Displaced far away from the countries of their origin these people also suffer from nostalgia. It is evident in their attempts to recreate their homelands on these distant shores by naming places as Castille, Versailles and Valencia. They gave European names to bays, unexplored forest and uncultivated land. This is also indicative of their efforts to continue their famed histories and relive their past glories. Walcott problematizes this sentimental yearning as ironical through rhetorical questions such as, "was it nostalgia or irony?" This replication on the part of the colonisers that lacks the refinement of manners and elegance of the original homelands appears as "mockery" due to the absurdity of the comparison between the ornate architecture of pillars of Versailles with the columns of cabbage palms which is a common vegetable. The ridiculousness of these attempts is highlighted when the plans for dirty filthy settlements like pigsty are named little Versailles, after famed European cities. The word 'little' used with Versailles is indicative of the habit of the colonisers to add "little" or "grand" to names imported from their native country. However these efforts to fashion these newly conquered lands after European models often prominently leads to much pretence in their state of self-imposed banishment. Walcott calls this "the sour apples/ and green grapes of their exile". One can read here an allusion to the popular Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes. Despite the errors of memory that fades over time and "turns acid", these names remain. Therefore, Valencia originally a province of south of Spain, in the Caribbean glows with oranges instead of lanterns and Mayaro a beach town in the south-eastern Atlantic coast of the republic of Trinidad and Tobago, instead of scorched candle holders of the royal gatherings, blooms with foliage of cocoa the tropical African tree that resemble the shape of the candelabra. These lines are an implicit criticism of the civilizing mission of the colonizers. Blind to the beauty of the Caribbean landscape before them and they denigrated it by taking Eurocentric frame of comparison. Then they assiduously enforced their own limited worldview on the 'slaves'. Also, presuming themselves to be the representative of the category of 'man', they take for granted the right to name things. Though, the Africans gave in to the enforcement of European language and culture, yet in their attempts to imitate they also reinterpreted and modified the norms. This aspect is brought out in the next stanza where the poet refers to the subversive potential of mimicry. The colonizers enforce foreign names on the natives yet even in their innocent imitation and calling the hogplum, the wild cherry and the bay by their French names, *moubain*, *cerise* and *baiel-la* respectively, the natives effect a change in the pronunciation due to inflections caused by linguistic interference of their Creole languages. The word "inflection" comes from the Latin *inflectere*. It means "to bend". Further the colonizer as master instructs the natives, who are infantilized and treated patronizingly. Ironically, they are taught about their own geography but couched in European terms. He calls the palm greater than Versailles and the fallen trees greater than the pillars of Castilles because they grew and fell naturally without human

intervention. Then pointing to the sky he asks the children to name the constellation known Orion with the star Betelgeuse. Walcott then presents the persona of the master/teacher who demands “tell me, what do they look like?/ Answer, you damned little Arabs!” Caught helplessly in the coloniser’s ideological grip and habit to dictate names, the native respond, “Sir, fireflies caught in molasses.” The last line of the poem metaphorically conveys the condition of the natives. They are trapped in the sweet sticky mess of forcefully imposed yet difficult to resist identity of the colonized subject, like fireflies stuck in molasses. Yet, despite their plight they glow. In Rei Terada’s words “It is because paradoxically forcing the children to speak English only makes the ironies of their situation more obvious, as their innocent pronunciations deflect their textbook version of political geography. Even though they don’t realize it, their mispronunciation amount to reinterpretation”(222). Terada in “*The Pain of History Words Contain*”: Walcott and Creole Poetics”, interprets the metaphor in the last line of the poem in the following words “children poignantly suggest that stars are as small, live, and vulnerable as fireflies in the matrix of the universe”. She also points out that fireflies are a recurrent motif in Walcott’s poetry. Focusing on the logic of linguistic mimicry in the poem, Terada then compares it with another poem “Saint Lucie”, also published in *Sea Grapes*. She states that Walcott makes association between words and fireflies in the phrase “text of fireflies” in “Saint Lucie”. In this context, the ephemeral luminosity that these creatures conjure is related with the short-lived magic of the Creole words spoken by the children in the process of naming. Therefore, the last image is connected to the title. In her opinion the two parts of the poem “Names” recount the linguistic complexities of the society. The use of Roman numeral I indicating part one of the poem is also a visual pun implying the meaning of personal pronoun I. However, Walcott’s concerns are not limited to his own anxiety alone, but are reflective of his community which is clearly articulated in the line “my race began like the osprey/ with that cry,/ that terrible vowel, / that I!”(223). This line suggests that history, be it of an individual or a community, is an important aspect for construction of one’s identity.

Interrogating Eurocentric History has been key concern in postcolonial literature. This entails examining the appropriation of history by the colonial master which included interfering with local traditions/customs, rejecting native beliefs as superstitions, imposing their own language as a medium of education and infantilizing the native. It also includes attempts to retrieve and re-write alternate histories from subaltern perspectives by the natives, which invariably involves dredging through horrific memories of racial discrimination, dehumanization and subjugation. Like many writers from the West Indies, Walcott has also tried to address these postcolonial concerns through his poetry, plays and essays. To substantiate this let us consider a few instances. In *The Gulf* (1969) Walcott states that “his fear/or history was its lack “(26). In *Sea Grapes* (1976), he writes “History/ is natural- famine, genocide”(31). In *a Green Night* (1962), he mentions, “And I, with a black/Heart, and my back/healing from history”(24). Walcott’s work is replete with such engagement with history as an ideological construct. Robert Elliot Fox in his essay, “Derek Walcott: History As Dis-ease” highlights this by making an assessment of Walcott’s attitude towards history through a study of his work. According to Fox, “Walcott’s attitude towards history is scarcely one of respect or admiration”(241). As cited by him, in the essay titled “The Muse of History”, the epigraph that is, “History is a nightmare from which I am trying to recover”, is a quotation from Joyce. Further Walcott calls it “Medusa of

the New World", "amnesia"; then eventually declares that there is, "No history, but flux, and only sustenance, myth..."(241). Reflecting on the West Indian crisis of consciousness, Fox argues that Caribbean islands have been a "pepper pot of languages, races and cultures, because of their geographic location. Not only are they scattered in the sea between two halves of the Americas, but they have also acted as the contact point between the New World and the Old, furthermore, these Islands are peopled by the posterity of Europeans, Africans, Indians, Chinese and people of mixed racial descent. Consequently, a history of this region only emerges, "each distinct, yet inseparable from the rest"(237). Faced with such complexity, for compilation of historical account imagination can prove more effective than academic ordering of facts. He further explains:

One of the problems with history is that it becomes inevitably entwined with politics, harried by ideologies. History is not true collective memory; it is selective and hierarchical for the most part. Ancestral memory is enshrined archetypal in myth, which has always proved more valuable to art than the most acute historical sense- and individual memory can hope to link up with origins only when it consciously eschews the weight of history. As for modern mass memory, it is, when not amnesia, mostly nostalgia, which is one of history's agonising offspring. (237)

History as an academic discipline is popularly understood as the study of significant events of the past recorded in written documents. V. S. Naipaul in *The Middle Passage* (1962) a book of travel essays had cynically remarked, "that history of the islands can never be satisfactorily told . . . "as "History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in West Indies"(29). What he implies is that the people of West Indies do not have glorious or outstanding achievements that typically constitute a teleological historical account, rather their sense of past is ensconced in the humiliating experiences of invasions, slavery and racism. However, what critics have found problematic with Naipaul's pessimistic vision is the condemnation of future possibilities in his claim that under the overwhelming influence of the past, "these small islandswill never create"(25). In comparison, though Walcott also rejects the idea of History as time but instead of a distrustful and disparaging outlook about future possibilities, he posits the idea of myth as an alternative to transcend history. He also highlights the significance of 'imagination' as a means to overcome the sense of a lack of history. As recorded by Edward Baugh, Walcott states, "In the Caribbean history is irrelevant, not because it is not created, or because it was sordid; but because it never mattered. What has mattered is the loss of history, the amnesia of the races, what has become necessary is imagination, imagination as necessity, as invention"(2006, 10). For Walcott myth, because it does not negate the imaginative mechanizations of memory as invalid, is preferable to history that as a narrative in absolute terms depends primarily on the unimaginative accumulation of details. This is evident in his poem "The Sea is History", a poem which is a retort to the proposition that Caribbean is ahistorical. Figuratively speaking, it projects the idea that the sea has been an archive as well as a chronicler of the Caribbean. In the poem Walcott recalls significant events of colonial history but overwrites them by entwining several biblical myths, episodes and incidents to present the idea that for the Caribbean islanders, the Sea has not only been a significant factor shaping their lives but has also been a source of their history.

Check Your Progress 4

Read the following questions and answer in the space that follows:

- 1) Comment on the structure of the poem *Names*. How does the structure mirror the thematic concerns of the poem ?

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- 2) Discuss the use of journey as a motif in *Names*.

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- 3) What are your observations about Walcott's attitude towards history?

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit the following ideas have been discussed:

The Caribbean is considered a politically, culturally, and linguistically fragmented region. Geographically it is not limited to the islands in the Caribbean Sea but also includes some mainland regions of the North and South American continents surrounding the sea.

Between the 15th and the 19th century the area was colonized by the Spanish, English, French, Dutch and Portuguese which has led to a chaotic proliferation of languages. Creolization has added to the linguistic diversity of this region. Because of the historical experience of slavery Caribbean literature is acutely concerned with issues of racial prejudice, creolization, nation building, cross-cultural identity and hybridity. Walcott who has emerged as one of the representative poets from the Caribbean also voices these concerns in his poetry and drama. His poem *A Far Cry from Africa*, noted for its striking animal imagery, deals with the theme of conflict of cultural values which is rooted in language that causes the anxiety of split identity in the poet persona because of his mixed racial heritage. His other poem *Names* highlights the fact that during the era of imperialism, domination was compounded by the processing of naming landscape, landmarks and settlements in the New World with Eurocentric names. The poem raises questions about politics of naming; such as who has the power to name

whom? What is the language used for naming? The poem also fleshes out Walcott's leitmotif, the theme of 'quarrel with history' through a challenging and futile metaphorical quest for past. It is because other than name, past is also a significant prerequisite for construction/assertion of one's identity.

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These are only suggested as additional reading and are in no way compulsory.

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3.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

For all answers refer to 3.1.

Check Your Progress 2

For your answers refer to 3.2.

Check Your Progress 3

For answers refer to 3.3

Check Your Progress 4

For answers refer to 3.4

UNIT 4 DAVID MALOUF: 'REVOLVING DAYS', 'WILD LEMONS'

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 David Malouf
- 4.2 Australian Postcolonial literature
- 4.3 The Text Revolving Days
- 4.4 Analysis
- 4.5 The Text Wild Lemons
- 4.6 Analysis
- 4.7 Glossary
- 4.8 Let us sum up
- 4.9 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions
- 4.10 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able

- a) to provide information about David Malouf's life and work as a Poet, dramatist, novelist and short story writer,
- b) to analyze the poems prescribed for you. The major themes and concerns of the poems and understand the age where the poet lived and reflected upon through his composition.

You can begin by reading and re-reading the poems minutely and go through the glossary if any further understanding is essential. Do the poems speak about Australian life or is it a reflection of the postcolonial era? These are some ponderable facts that need to be addressed.

4.1 DAVID MALOUF THE PERSON



Source: Google

David Malouf graced this planet on the 20th of March, 1934 in South Brisbane to a Catholic father and a Sephardic Jew Mother. His paternal family has arrived in Australia in 1880s from Lebanon while his mother's family came to England via Holland before finally migrating down to Australia in 1913. And this is the reason why Malouf always took keen interest in cross-cultural aspects and his writings truly reflect this spirit. He went to Brisbane Grammar School and after that graduated in Bachelor of Arts from the University of Queensland. At the age of 24, like many young Australians he travelled to different countries, and stayed abroad for almost a decade. He taught in England and travelled in Europe. Finally, in the year 1968 he returned to Australia and worked as a senior tutor and soon after became Lecturer in English at the University of Sydney. He became a full time writer from 1977 onwards after taking voluntary retirement from the position of Lecturer. He used to enjoy the quiet and tranquility of southern Tuscany but since 1985 lived in Sydney. He has many feathers in his hat in the sense that he is a poet, novelist, dramatist, short story writer, literary critic orator and the list is endless¹.

His first two published books were both collections of poetry: *Bicycle and Other Poems* (1970) and *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems* which was published in the year 1974. His first venture to pen down a novel, *Johnno* published in the year 1975, is the semi-autobiographical tale of a young man growing up in Brisbane during the Second World War, a period in Malouf's life that he later wrote about in his memoir *12 Edmondstone Street* published in 1985. His second novel, *An Imaginary Life* that was published in 1978, is a fictional life of the poet Ovid, who was exiled from Rome by the Emperor Augustus in 8 A.D. and sent to live in exile among the Scythians on the Black Sea. *Child's Play with Eustace & The Prowler* published in 1982 consists of a novel about terrorism and two short narratives, while *Fly Away Peter* that was published in the year 1982 displays a contrast with the idyllic setting of a bird sanctuary on the Queensland coast with the horrors of the First World War. Hence his writings reflect a variety of subject matter. This truly coincides with the background which Malouf belongs and the outlook he projects in his writings is truly commendable.

His later novels include *Harland's Half Acre* published in 1985. This is the story of an artist living in a remote area and his attempt to recover his family's past through the land. The novel, *The Great World* that was published in 1990, won the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book) and the Prix Fémina Etranger (France). This is the story of two Australians imprisoned by the Japanese during the Second World War is a very touching story line indeed. The wellknown novel, *Remembering Babylon* which was published in 1993, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction and won the first International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 1996, as well as the Commonwealth Writers Prize (South East Asia and South Pacific Region, Best Book). The story is set in northern Australia during the 1850s which was about a community of Scottish immigrant farmers whose existence is threatened by the arrival of a stranger. The novel *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* published in 1996, was set in New South Wales in 1827, is based on the relationship between an illiterate Irish convict and the police officer sent to hang him. This is another heart rendering plot which acquired him lot of appreciation.

David Malouf was also a great story teller and also earned a reputation as a lucid short story writer. His collections of short stories include *Antipodes* that was published in 1985; *Dream Stuff* published in 2000; and *Every Move You*

Make published in 2006. His short stories were collected and published in one volume, *The Complete Stories*, in 2007. This book was shortlisted for the inaugural Australian Prime Minister's Literary Award in 2008. He wrote the libretti for *Voss*, an adaptation of the novel by Patrick White and first produced in Sydney in 1986, and *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, an opera with music by Michael Berkeley, and delivered the Boyer lectures in 1998 for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Apart from this he is also the author of a play, *Blood Relations* that was published in 1988.

David Malouf was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize in 2011. Since we are discussing more about his poems here, therefore it will be imperative to have a critical appreciation of his poetic talent and the poems he composed.

Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems, the collection of poems published in 1974, for the first earned him a reputation as a new Australian talent with tremendous potential. He won various prizes, including the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. The interesting aspect is, this book throws maximum light on Malouf's own past. *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems* comprises intimate memories of suburban childhood, of domestic interiors, of mother, sister and the War, of travel in Europe. One of the most impressive aspects of these early poems is their subtle shift between affectionate recollection, and the past as something more haunting and horrific. In later collections of poetry such as *First Things Last* that got published in 1980, Malouf returns to these childhood experiences. Reading his poems is a fascinating experience as he combines poetry with prose, youthful innocence with wisdom of the matured lot and henceforth the allusions attached to it.

You will be glad to know that in the recent past some of Malouf's best poems have been collected and is made an anthology entitled *Revolving Days* that was published in the year 2008. The book opens with the author's childhood times spent in Brisbane during the same time of the Second World War, the following section again shifts to 1960s Europe, section three of the anthology reflects Malouf's shifting to Sydney and the final poems, his journeys undertaken between Europe and Australia. A recurring theme across most of this work is the relationship between innocence and experience, a theme he has also explored in an *On Experience* (2008). *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems* was followed by *Johnno* (1975), Malouf's first novel. *Johnno* covers a landscape that will be familiar to readers of the earlier work, notably wartime Australia and metropolitan Europe. Often described as one of his most autobiographical works, the story is told from the perspective of Dante who has returned to England following the death of his father. This novel is more concerned with the life of Johnno. Johnno who is Dante's friend, who are complete opposites in nature to each other. Johnno's was wild in many ways as he was also indulged in such ill activities like shoplifting, visiting the brothel et al. Dante on the other hand had maintained his middleclass conservatism in the novel. Like *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems*, and many of his later novels, the book takes a critical look at the emphasis on possessions and lifestyle in 'well to do' Australia. His next novel, *An Imaginary Life* (1978), represents something of a departure from the everyday worlds of Malouf's earlier work. A poetic account of the Roman poet Ovid during his final years, it develops many of the mythical elements and emblems scattered through *Neighbours in a Thicket: Poems*, into a more sustained narrative about exile and transition and change.

Australia has witnessed transition in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There were large scale social, cultural and political changes in Australia due to the war in Vietnam and Domino Theory. David Malouf has elaborately written about it in his fictions. There is a variety of theme in his poems ranging from Australian landscape, transformative identity, migration besides nature, culture, multiplicity et al.

4.2 AUSTRALIAN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Before getting into a detail understanding of postcolonial literature in Australia it is important to know the Aboriginal Australia. So, in this segment we are going to throw some light on the same. The Aborigines did not have a written literature per se but had an oral tradition of myths, songs, chants, stories and legends. The stories consist of two major ideas – (i) Dreaming – the space where the spiritual, moral, supernatural and natural relate to each other and (ii) Journeys and travel across lands forms.

The Aboriginal population is reported to be approx. 60,000 years in Australia before the Europeans set foot and settled here permanently. They were the original inhabitants of this Land. The Aboriginal Australian's primary occupation was hunting, fishing or gathering. They lived in groups and were nomadic people moving from one place to another in search of food and water. They used wood, bone and shells to make tools and weapons. The earliest human migration to Australia is recorded to be from Africa although it is still not clear as to who the indigenous people of Australia are. Some are also known to be migrated to Australia through Southeast Asia.

There was a radical change in the Australian Aboriginal history after the 18th- and 19th-century when the British came to settle here. Unlike other colonized places the British had the intention to settle here. As regards other colonies they went for trade and commerce. It is a known fact to all that in 1770, one Englishman Lieutenant James Cook charted the Australian east coast in his ship HM Barque *Endeavour*. James Cook discovered the east coast under instruction from King George III of England on 22 August 1770 at Possession Island, and coined the name as Eastern Australia 'New South Wales'. Hence, James Cook is considered to be the founder of Australia.

The Post-colonialism era describes the persisting cultural legacy within a nation that has experienced the onslaught of colonialism and imperialism. The post colonialist critic like Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin suggest that the term is used generally to define all cultures affected by the imperial process until the present time (1989, p. 2). Carrying forward this notion, however, many political scientist and theorists claim that, it more accurately describes a nation that experienced colonialism, however the people themselves have been officially decolonised (Bunyan 2013). Meaning thereby, that there is no longer a concept or sense of the 'coloniser' and the 'colonised'. It's a complete withdrawal of power by the colonisers.

The primary focus on Australian postcolonial literature centred round marginalization, exile, racism, identity, land rights, settler guilt and denial, resistance, indigeneity, language and so on. The kinds of writings that emerged in Australia may be pointed out as- Challenging the Eurocentric voice and fighting for one's own identity, imitation of the European tradition, culture and literature

and forming a new literature out of it and last but not the least synthesis and inclusion as in the case of Malouf and an acceptance of this.

Thus, Australian literature witness's diaspora and post colonialism and the resultant issues arise out of it are race, history, identity, culture and so on to the shift to multiculturalism, resistance to eurocentrism, celebration of the difference and so on and so forth.

After many deliberation and discussion by experts it has been formulated that Australian literature can be both postcolonial and non-postcolonial and that insisting that Australian literature as a whole is solely postcolonial or not is reducing its status quo and would brand it as essentialist. To be precise, many works of Australian literature are postcolonial in terms of subject matter and technique, and Australian society is postcolonial in many ways. However, many Australian texts do not engage with postcolonial issues at all, and Australian society can legitimately be viewed as other than postcolonial; for example, many Indigenous Australians understand Australia as a colonial or neocolonial society. Essentially a distinction should be made between Australian society and Australian literature for a wider understanding of the whole gamut of post colonial literature in terms of Australia. Just because Australian society is postcolonial, it does not necessarily make us believe that Australian literature is postcolonial or not. It would be wrong to declare that Australian literature as a whole is not postcolonial. It will be reasonably right to claim that most Australian literature is postcolonial and most Australian literature can be better understood through the application of postcolonial reading strategies, regardless of whether or not one believes that Australian society is postcolonial.

As has already mentioned earlier that the Aborigines had oral tradition. There were no written documents available. The first written literature that was available to the World was by the white settler communities in the form of reports of the colony that was supposed to be written back to England. The major themes were exploration of the "new" continent and the nostalgia of homeland left behind. Barron Fields' *First Fruits of Australian Poetry* is the first collection published in Australia. The Indigenous people write about resistance, opposition, identity, culture and so on. Third category of writers like Malouf celebrate the inclusiveness of cultures and claim it to be a synthesis rather than a curse. He, like Neruda, celebrates difference, multiculturalism, and the remaking of a new found identity.

In the words of David Malouf, Australia is an "experiment in social engineering" founded on "an enlightenment belief that if you took people, even criminals, out of their terrible poverty, and set them down in a place where they could own their own land and work, then they would, in a kind of way, remade." Since Australia developed from penal colonies to urban states, the diaspora results in formation of new hybrid communities. Malouf celebrates the synthesis and integration in his works.

4.3 THE TEXT: REVOLVING DAYS

That year I had nowhere to go, I fell in love — a mistake of course, but it lasted and has lasted.

The old tug at the heart, the grace unasked for, urgencies that boom under the pocket of a shirt. What I remember

is the colour of the shirts. I'd bought them
 as an experiment in ways of seeing myself, hoping to catch
 in a window as I passed what I was to be
 in my new life as lover: one mint green, one
 pink, the third, called Ivy League, tan
 with darker stripes, my first button-down collar.

We never write. But sometimes, knotting my tie
 at a mirror, one of those selves I had expected
 steps into the room. In the next room you
 are waiting (we have not yet taken back
 the life we promised to pour into each other's mouths
 forever and forever) while I choose between
 changes to surprise you.

Revolving days. My heart
 in my mouth again, I'm writing this for you, wherever
 you are, whoever is staring into your blue eyes. It is me,
 I'm still here. No, don't worry, I won't appear out of
 that old time to discomfort you. And no, at this
 distance, I'm not holding my breath for a reply.

The poem 'Revolving Days' is about the poet's firsthand experience when he was in love with someone special. Years later he tried to reminisce the same feeling he had for his love interest. He had a feeling that after years of separation his love interest must be in the next room where he was putting up. However, he did hesitate to confront her to avoid any kind of discomfort or displeasure. There is a hint in the poem that David Malouf had strongly vouched for homoeroticism. At a time when talking about sex, gay rights and similar other things was a taboo Malouf had expressed in his own subtle way. However, there is no denying the fact that Malouf had a different sexual preference and when much later in his life he crosses path with one of his old lovers he was awestruck and feared any kind of unpleasant encounter.

Here the speaker while pondering about his love interest in the past calls it a mistake. However, the feelings of his first love remained with him always. He even recalls the feelings of the past when he purchased the shirts with different colours. Both the speaker and his beloved didn't stay in touch with each other. Whenever he buys a new shirt and puts in the self he feels that it was only yesterday when he was in the relationship with his first beloved. Time passes and as days goes by the speaker feels that his feelings have been the same. Nothing could deter his feelings and the speaker even went ahead in assuming that his beloved might have moved on gracefully with someone else. He even assures her that he will never appear before him no matter what so that both do not feel embarrassed.

In this poem the poet makes extensive use of apostrophe and symbols to denote that it is very difficult and almost impossible to forget the lost love and move ahead in life.

"Revolving Days" is a suitable poem where the title absolutely fits in as, not only for the strength of its address to a former love, but for its reference of the different selves in one's life. An individual undeniably goes through various stages in one's life and in the process lives several lives knowingly or unknowingly. Hence, the attitude and behavioural pattern changes under different circumstances or situations.

Malouf is of the opinion that poems appear according to the places or events that "touched off" the writing and also it emphasizes the various nuances of life pattern. The book's four parts, then, reflect four broad stages of the poet's life, regardless of when particular poems were penned. "Like our First Paintbox," in which Malouf's child self-thumbs through the "Disney-gaudy" world of color, subsequently appears early in Part I, dealing with the author's Brisbane childhood and youth. That said, the period explored and the time of publication frequently coincide so that, for example, the poems in Part IV, dealing with the latter decades of the poet's life. The most notable aspect of Malouf's writings is his consistency in form and approach to subject matter across five decades. Not one to explore the outer reaches of free verse. Malouf's great art is in delicate variations on traditional forms - the couplet, tercet, quatrain. Parts II and IV deal directly with his years in Europe and specifically with village life in Tuscany, but throughout we see him informed by a northern hemisphere sensibility, drawing from classical antiquity, the Renaissance, the Bible and, more generally, Christian symbolism, the latter deployed as historical signpost and metaphor rather than as a belief system. In "Revolving Days" Malouf's composition speaks highly about how connected he was with Europe.

Structure of *Revolving Days*

Technically speaking the poem '*Revolving Days*' by David Malouf is devoid of a proper rhyme scheme. This is a poem which has three stanzas and is divided into uneven sets of lines. The first stanza contains ten lines, the second stanza has seven lines and the third stanza has six lines. Malouf did not give this poem a specific rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. Rather, the lines vary in the number of syllables and the number of words.

Although there is not a structured rhyme scheme there are moments of rhyme within the poem. These are seen through repetition such as with "lasted" and "lasted" in line two of the first stanza, as well as through half-rhyme. Also known as slant or partial rhyme, half-rhyme is seen through the repetition of assonance or consonance. This means that either a vowel or consonant sound is reused within one line or multiple lines of verse. For example, "green" and "League" in lines eight and nine of the first stanza.

Literary Devices in *Revolving Days*

David Malouf makes use of several poetic techniques in '*Revolving Days*'. The use of alliteration, anaphora, enjambment, and caesura can be seen abundantly in the poem. Caesura, occurs when a line is split in half, sometimes with punctuation, sometimes not. The use of punctuation in these moments creates a very intentional pause in the text.

The use of Alliteration is seen when words are in succession, or at least appear close together, and begin with the same letter. For example, "life as lover" in line eight of the first stanza and "writing" and "wherever" in line two of stanza three.

Malouf also makes use of anaphora, or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of multiple lines, usually in succession. This technique is often used to create emphasis.

Stanza one

In the first stanza of *'Revolving Days,'* the speaker looks back on his life and remembers the year that he “fell in love”. He explains it simply, it happened because he had nowhere to go. This frivolous start dissolves as he adds that it “lasted and has lasted”.

In the next lines imagery is used as a way of painting a picture of the past, as well as evoking in the reader an emotional response to the speaker’s personal life. He recalls what it felt like to be falling in love. Especially, the “boom under the pocket of a shirt” urging him on and the “old tug at the heart”.

In an original depiction of a lover’s mind, he describes buying shirts and using them as a way to understand himself as “lover”. These ranged in colour and one was his “first button-down collar”.

Stanza Two

As the poem progresses it becomes clear that the love the speaker experienced is a little more complicated than it seemed. It “lasted” but not in the way one might immediately expect. He looks to the past, while also considering the future, in this stanza.

The past comes back to greet him while he’s in the bathroom looking in the mirror and he recalls the time they spent together and the promises they made. These have fallen to the wayside as has the relationship.

This is truly reflective of the post colonial aspect where one is trying to come to terms with the new age after the old regime hands over the power.

Stanza Three

In the final stanza of *'Revolving Days,'* the speaker makes use of the phrase “Revolving days” to depict the nature of his heart and memory. He is writing this for his ex-lover. They are no longer together. In fact, he doesn’t know where they are. They could be with someone new. Despite the changes that have happened he’s the same. Before the intended listener/the speaker’s ex-lover starts to worry, he says he’s not going to pop up from the past “to discomfort” them. They are at a distance and he knows there is very little chance he’ll be getting a reply to this letter in poem form.

4.5 THE TEXT WILD LEMONS

Through all those years keeping the present
open to the light of just this moment:
that was the path we found, you might call it
a promise, that starting out among blazed trunks
the track would not lead nowhere, that being set
down here among wild lemons, our bodies were
expected at an occasion up ahead

that would not take place without us. One
proof was the tough-skinned fruit among
their thorns; someone had been there before us
and planted these, their sunlight to be sliced
for drinks (they had adapted
in their own way and to other ends): another
was the warmth of our island, sitting still
in its bay, at midnight humming
and rising to its own concerns, but back,
heat-struck, lapped by clean ocean waters
at dawn. The present is always
with us, always open. Though to what, out there
in the dark we are making for as seven o'clock
strikes, the gin goes down and starlings
gather, who can tell? Compacts made
of silence, as a flute tempts out a few
reluctant stars to walk over the water. I lie down
in different weather now though the same body,
which is where that rough track led. Our sleep
is continuous with the dark, or that portion of it
that is this day's night; the body
tags along as promised to see what goes.
What goes is time, and clouds melting into
tomorrow of our breath, a scent of lemons
run wild in another country, but smelling always of themselves.

4.6 ANALYSIS

When he was going to Australia with friends the memory that he had in the track took them nowhere as there were wild lemons on the way. There was one road which would take them to the main road. The skin of the lemon is very thick as it was wild lemons. If there is wild lemons here then there must have been someone who visited this place earlier and must have planted these lemons plants. The poet talks at length about nature in this poem. Nature has lot of significance in this poem. There was an island in the location where they were stranded. The water of the island was hot and in the middle of the night they were thinking how to go out of this place. The waves of the island were heating back and forth and they could feel the warmth of it. They were able to see the reflection of the island. The night was drawing close. The fragrance of the wild lemons is still strong after many years.

The Wild Lemons in fact goes on to describe a path on an island, which seemed to show many indications of previous habitation and other vague but promising indications that it was worth taking. The poet does not specify what was at the end of the path, but it has led him to where he is now. In a final image, his dreams include the scent of the wild lemons on the island even after many years of his life.

As we can observe that the poem begins with a path on which the poet recalls treading on along with a friend among “blazed trunks” of trees, marked in such a way as to promise that the path must lead to some destination which is unknown to them. The poet and his friend took the path where the wild lemon trees were grown as they assumed that ahead of the lemon trees some event or some unknown destination is awaiting them.

The poet even observed that the lemon trees is evident of the fact that someone had been there before them and planted the trees to provide slices of lemon to quench the thirst or perhaps just for drinks. In addition to this the island promised something which is remotely distinct. The warmth of the island gave some positive vibes too. They were only under assumption as nothing laid bare as to what was stored for them ahead in their journey. There was no clarity of anything. There was a possibility deep down within that their life’s turn would be definitely for something better.

The track has led him to a place with a different climate. However, the person is same with the same body. When it is dark, he sleeps, saying that his body tags along with his dreams “to see what goes.” The irony is that the distinctive scent of lemons persists even after many days.

As we are aware of the fact that Postcolonial Poets used metaphors to explain even the slightest of situation. David Malouf extensively used metaphorical language in his compositions. The Poem, “Wild Lemons” is dedicated to the then Australian premier (which is known as Prime Minister now) Don Dunstan. This poem actually celebrates the grit and resilience of Dunstan. He thought for the welfare of the people especially of South Australia. The poem has an extensive use of Australian landscape, the climatic condition and the metaphor of wild lemons to explain the transition from one moment to another. He was a social reformer in the true sense of the term as he was very vocal and also action oriented when it comes to the Education sector, Health and Hygiene, Gender Equality, Homosexuality and most importantly Aboriginal rights. His tenure was so famous that its known as Dunstan Decade in Australian Political History.

4.7 GLOSSARY

Ivy League: A group of long-established universities in the eastern US having high academic and social prestige. It includes Harvard, Yale, Columbia

Homoeroticism: is a sexual attraction between members of the same sex

Metaphor: A figure of speech which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable

Aboriginal: Inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists

4.8 LET US SUM UP

From the above discussion am sure you are quite familiar with David Malouf and his life and times he lived. You also must have got a clear understanding of Australia and post colonial constructs. His two poems “The Revolving Days” and “Wild Lemons” are delved deep in this unit.

4.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. What is the major concern of David's Malouf's writings?
2. What is your idea about Aborigines of Australia?
3. Write a brief over view of post colonial Australia.
4. What is the gist of the poem The Revolving Days?
5. What does the poet actually mean by referring to lemons in the poem "Wild Lemons"?

4.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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