UNIT : 10

LITERARY MOVEMENTS-4
OXFORD MOVEMENT, WAR POETRY

(ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, IMPACT, MAJOR WRITERS AND LITERARY WORKS)

:: STRUCTURE ::

10.0 OBJECTIVES

- The Oxford movement as a religious movement and war poetry are the main topics of the unit.
- The Oxford movement aimed to highlight the importance of the Roman Catholic stance as an alternative to the Church of England position.
- Additionally, the war poets positioned and portrayed realities absent from the Victorian literary world by drawing on their experiences in conflict.
- The primary literary works connected to both the Oxford movement and war poetry will be examined in this unit.

10.1 ORIGIN OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

The Oxford Movement, an Oxford-based movement that challenged several core tenets of the Church of England's religious programme, emerged in the nineteenth century. Roman Catholic adherents were motivated to draw attention to the contradictions in the beliefs of the Protestant movement by laws that the British government introduced

between 1828 and 1832 that eased some of the restrictions on Roman Catholics. As a result, the movement brought up important theological and spiritual questions. John Henry Newman (1801–90), Richard Hurrell Froude (1803–36), John Keble (1792-1866), and Edward Pusey were the four most significant figures in the development (1800–82). Because John Henry Newman's edited publication 90 *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41) used tracts as the primary argumentative tool, the movement is also known as the Tractarian Movement.

10.2 ORIGIN OF WAR POETRY

Poetry underwent some fascinating excursions during the start of the twentieth century, which were accelerated by changes in the modern world. The writing of the collective known as the Battle poets, whose works reflect their reactions to war experience, saw its first significant transformation. The First World War was a significant political and cultural event that required instant answers from the poets. These poets demonstrated how the environment of conflict might be utilised to serve sincere poetic goals, ranging from promoting jingoistic ideology to evoking the meaninglessness of the entire experience of conflict.

It is noteworthy that Rupert Brooke (1887–1915), one of the first authors of the twentieth century, expressed interest in and appreciation for the work of the seventeenth-century Metaphysical poets. Brooke's poetry is frequently associated with his portrayal of the "young patriot" who sacrificed for his country. Since his early and celebrated death in the war, Brooke has always been associated with glamour in both his personality and his verse. At a time when the British used such glorifying imagery, Brooke was praised for the manner he expressed his kind of nationalism. However, later criticism was not as complimentary to Brooke and viewed the work of other war poets who opted for different ways of expression as having more depth. The most well-known poem by Brooke, "The Soldier," is based on nostalgic and romantic themes that Brooke packaged to imply the legitimacy of the British Empire.

Among Brooke's contemporaries who expressed their displeasure and outrage, there was Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967). In his anti-war poems “The Old Huntsman” (1917) and “Counter-Attack”, Sassoon employed a subtle but potent satirical stance (1918). In the latter stages of his writing career, Sassoon also produced some spiritual poetry, published in *Vigils* (1935) and *Sequences* (1956). In contrast to Brooke's poetics, Sassoon's realism style shifted the platform to support his interpretation of the war's futility. In contrast to some of the other war poets, Sassoon's literary output demonstrates the progression from a knowledge of the secular environment of human strife to the divine. Wilfred Owen (1893–1918), Ivor Gurney (1890–1937), Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), Edward Thomas (1878–1917), and Charles Sorley (1895–1915) were some of the other poets of the war period, who did not survive it.

Although the war poets are typically grouped due to their shared themes and chronological order, they were all pursuing the same idea or perspective. The case of Rupert Brooke is a fascinating example of the possibilities sparked by the First World War because historians have conveniently categorised his poetry as imperialist, even if that is not the only structure his rhymes reveal. Wilfred Owen, whose brief lyrical career was devoted to promoting another philosophy, exemplified by his poem "Futility," represents the other extreme.

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds—
Woke once the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

The subtle interplay between the metaphors of "sun," "clay," and "soil" demonstrates how Owen undermines nationalist ideology by implying the futility of the entire endeavour. Most of Owen's mature poems profit from his gentle sensuality and interest in tragedy. Two poetry collections by Ivor Gurney—Severn and Somme (1917) and War's Emblems—collect his wartime memories (1919). Gurney was heavily influenced by Gerard Manley Hopkins, which is particularly clear in his dejected works. Since his passing, Isaac Rosenberg's reputation has significantly improved, and critics have drawn attention to his use of unusual imagery and dramatic effects in his poetry. Rosenberg distinguishes his poetic language from the other War poets by using a linguistic pattern that is worked out to convey the problematic setting of war.

10.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

Even more than 150 years after its peak, the Oxford Movement is still a potent illustration of faith in action. This Church of England catholic renewal movement, led by John Henry Newman, John Keble, Richard Hurrell Froude, and Edward Bouverie Pusey, was a turning point in the country's religious, political, and social history in the middle of the nineteenth century. Oxford has played a significant role in developing Western Christianity, from evangelicalism to Tractarianism to twentieth-century social Christianity. The group chose to launch a religious crusade against what they perceived as the liberal and Erastian spirit of the period

here, amidst the spires and quadrangles of Britain's first university, during the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign.

The Oxford Movement, as this crusade came to be known, posed profound and far-reaching questions about the nature of the relationship between church and state, the catholic heritage of the Church of England, and the church's social responsibility, especially in the new industrial society, starting symbolically in 1833 with Keble's "National Apostasy" sermon and lasting formally until Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845.

10.4 DEVELOPMENT OF WAR POETRY

The human condition has been brutalised by battle throughout history, and the bloodshed has worsened. Technology development has made it possible to terrorise the populace and kill foes more effectively. Many poets have written about conflicts in which they have not personally participated; the "soldier-poet" is the only one who has first-hand contact with war's psychological and physical effects. Homer's *Iliad*, which describes the history of the Trojan Conflict and goes back to approximately 800 BCE (English translation, 1616), is one of the most well-known poems about war.

While the *Iliad* is a significant example of Greek heroism, other, even older examples relate to the magnificent essence of battle and its cruel outcomes. In order to draw attention to the bravery at the heart of the heroic ideal, ancient poets wrote about legendary warriors. Poetry from this heroic era in antiquity was used to uplift people and civilisations with its best attributes. All fighters should aspire to have the quality of being willing to give the ultimate sacrifice for their nation or cause.

This heroic ideal started to fade in significance as warfare altered over time. It became increasingly difficult for poets to repeat the traditions with the same zeal after new, more brutal slaughter techniques were developed. While chivalry existed throughout the Middle Ages, by the seventeenth century, the valorous behaviour of warring parties had undergone a significant transformation. Since the enemies were now being blasted to pieces, scholars have claimed that the introduction of gunpowder changed how wars were conducted and made it difficult for poets to write about warfare with the same zeal.

Poets' experiences with the aftereffects of battle grew more significant in their writing as the nature of warfare evolved. Even more horrifying weaponry was available for armies to use by the nineteenth century. Thousands of wounded soldiers appeared to be doomed to painful deaths due to battlefield technology seemingly outperforming medical progress. Lord Tennyson was inspired by the fatal charge of British cavalry upon Russian artillery during the Crimean War to pen his renowned poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in 1854. He portrayed the incident as a brave act by the British, which appeared to be what the British audience

desired to hear. However, Tennyson was a long way from the battle's main lines. Even though his method transformed a careless incident into a brave deed, not all poets tackled the issue of war in this way. For instance, the poetry of Stephen Crane and Walt Whitman frankly depicts the anguish and heartache that resulted from the American Civil War. By the turn of the century, it was clear that the people were suffering greatly due to war, skirmishes, border disputes, and other problems.

Every physically capable man was required to don a uniform and defend his nation during World War I. The poet-soldier was likewise dropped into the trenches. The English poets who took part in that battle wrote some of the most unforgettable poems about real war by genuine men in uniform. Writers like Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, Isaac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas, David Jones, Ivor Gurney, and Siegfried Sassoon drew from personal experience when they penned their works. Only Sassoon, Gurney, and Jones could survive the war these seven. The poetry these warriors left behind is a heartbreaking reminder of what combatants experience during conflict. Soldiers were vulnerable to mustard gas and trench combat during World War I. However, they did not view the event as an impersonal idea or a political stunt for the greater good. The soldier-poet managed to turn a common scary occurrence into poetry. Owen discusses his time at the front in the tragic poem "Dulce et Decorum Est," in which the first stanza depicts the bleak circumstances of a soldier:

Bent double, like beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

The poem's title, "pleasant and suitable it is to die for one's nation," is borrowed from one of Horace's *Odes* (23 BC, 13 BC; English translation, 1621). Poets' ability to express their experiences via poetry contributed to the public's understanding of conflict and gave the conversation a strong voice. Moreover, these poets represented the potential outcomes for all warriors.

10.5 MAJOR WRITERS OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT AND THEIR WORKS

John Henry Newman

Although the Oxford Movement began in 1833 as a result of politics, namely the debate over the Irish Church Temporalities Bill, it is necessary to look to religion and theology in order to understand the reasons that drove the movement. The Oxford Movement had a

significant lasting influence on the Church of England's theology and religious beliefs. The Tractarians accused the church of the eighteenth century of corruption and somnolence to emphasise their criticism's severity.

The Oxford men believed that Erastianism—the doctrine that the state has superiority over the church in ecclesiastical matters—and liberalism had debased Anglican religious practise and that the modern church could only be saved by making a concerted effort to revive the Church of England's lost patristic heritage. Their thought was permeated by the notion of the church's decline, and their goal of bringing about a revival was based on this notion. The high opinion of the Church that Keble, Pusey, and Froude always held and that Newman, a young man in the 1820s, acquired has its roots in the Oxford Movement. The Oxford men had a strong belief that the corporate Church was God's sacred instrument on earth, and their growing comprehension of this notion is what was at the core of their concern about the Church of England's compromised status as a religious body in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The Oxford men's religion was their source of strength, and the more vivid it could become for them and for others, the more likely they were to achieve their goal of a Church revival. According to Newman's autobiography *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, his existence was driven by "two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident creatures, myself and my creator." The more this acknowledged fact might be incorporated into Anglican religion and theology, and the more authentic such Anglicanism would be.

10.6 MAJOR WRITERS OF WAR POETRY AND THEIR WORKS

Rupert Brooke

Any evaluation of Rupert Brooke's poetic accomplishments must also consider his impact as a charismatic public personality in life and as a martyr and hero in death. This is not meant to minimise the depth of his best verse, as his canon is generally strong and the tragedy of his untimely death is magnified by the tragedy of his unrealised artistic potential. However, if ever a poet has been identified with a time, his physical and intellectual presence defining the attitudes of a country and its people, Brooke is that poet. The clamour surrounding his life, art, and death confuses and enriches any assessment of his output.

Sonneteering is Brooke's style preference, as is well known. His topics and concepts are less often original and shocking and more frequently quaint and familiar (an effect he often desired to achieve). The poem is elegantly romantic and classically charming, finally supported by a gift for language. Ultimately, though, Brooke's passing during World War I, the somewhat vulgar publicity that surrounded it and his memory, and the legendary stature afterwards bestowed upon him made it impossible for critics to divorce his life from his art to evaluate his legacy.

1914 and Other Poems

The sonnets that Brooke penned in 1914, just before he passed away, and which glamorised the destiny of sacrificed warriors, are what is most remembered about him. Because Brooke displayed thematic and structural flexibility while adhering to the rules of sonneteering, it is clear that he found considerable satisfaction in the sonnet form. It is also clear that the extended relationship was liberating rather than constricting. Along with evoking a specific location, Brooke also covered many topics in his sonnets, including death, memory, time, psychic phenomena, growing up, passion, and, of course, the agony and ecstasy of idealised love as found in the sonnet's grand traditions.

He grasped the English form and the challenging final couplet of the Shakespearean sonnet, wrote in the Petrarchan style with the necessary imagery of the distant and taunting inamorata, and had the logical assurance and strength characteristic of the Miltonic brand. When he became bored, he experimented with different forms, such as beginning a sonnet with a couplet (as in "Sonnet Reversed"); his attempts are never disruptive but rather suggestive of the form's strength and foreshadowing of inventions that would come later in the 20th century.

Wilfred Owen

More than any other soldier-poet of World War I, Wilfred Owen showed the most remarkable ability to advance and broaden the art of poetry, according to many experts. Long before he was an honourable soldier, a frightened combatant, and a victim, he was a technician, an innovator, and a "poet's poet." The criticisms levelled at Siegfried Sassoon (restricted, more propaganda than art) or Rupert Brooke (immature, too much style, too little content) do not apply as much to Owen. Several poets of the 20th century, including W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender, have openly expressed their respect for Owen's work and approaches despite his early death and small canon.

The poetry about the battle is horrific. They continue to affect minds that are said to have been dulled by exposure to the twentieth century, and they are undoubtedly among the most detailed and horrific of their time. Owen stated, "Above all, I am not concerned with Poetry," in what would eventually serve as the preface to his first book of poetry. My topic is war and how tragic it is. The pity is where the poetry is. It does indeed seem true that Owen's cries are the loudest and most agonising among the numerous horrible events endured by the artists who documented their experience in World War I (Robert Graves, Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas, Brooke, and others).

Owen appears to have been more horrified than the majority by the tragic loss of honourable young men in the conflict. The astonishing thing is that the resulting lyric never indulges in self-pity; instead, Owen could direct his attention outside. Sadly, he stated in the preface that "all a poet can do now is warn" as his conclusion. Although Owen's hatred for the

battle he witnessed and detested is blatant, it transcends the present and is raised to prophesy.

“Strange Meeting”

The inspiration for a highly regarded piece of art comes from yet another nightmarish vision. "Strange Meeting" describes a terrifying dream where two soldiers cross paths in hell. Their clash, brought together by dramatic dialogue, is motivated by the horrors of war. However, it also gives Owen a chance to comment on poetic ideas and make a (very correct and dismal) prophecy about the character of the coming century.

Owen details his journey via "some depth dull tunnel," where he eventually arrives at a demolished location where "encumbered sleepers groaned." When one of these men leaps up, he is startled; they both suddenly realise they are "standing in Hell" and share this circumstance. In a dramatic understatement, Owen consoles his adversary by stating that there "is no cause to lament" even when they are here, dead in hell. That was the awful truth of being above ground while fighting. Nevertheless, because he, too, had been a poet who sought "the wildest beauty in the world," the stranger is not in the mood to be comforted.

As future generations will not be aware of the truth of war that the poet could have described, the ultimate sorrow is not passing but eternal. Those generations will likely embrace the past with terrible efficiency rather than reject it. The poet would have fought if he had lived, not with weapons of war, but rather with his "courage" and "knowledge." When men grew weary of blood and death, his would have been a war to rule men's thoughts, with a comforting message of "truths that lie too deep for taint" flowing from his "spirit."

Isaac Rosenberg

A group of young poets included Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, Edward Thomas, and Rupert Brooke, whose lives were brutally cut short by World War I. Early poems by Rosenberg were brief; nonetheless, as a war poet, he became well-known, immense thanks to the work of Gordon Bottomley, his instructor. His Jewish background sets him apart from other British poets, particularly war poets. His poetry differs from the Georgian tones of Thomas or Brooke, as well as the upper-class tones of Siegfried Sassoon or Robert Graves, due to this feature and his working-class upbringing.

“Night and Day”

The lengthy introductory poem, "Night and Day," from the 1912 collection, apostrophises the stars as the speaker exits the city and enters the woods. The poet looks for metaphorical significance in nature because he feels "put aside." The apparent similarity is with Keats' "Sleep and Poetry." Leonard Bast, a character from E. M. Forster's book Howards End, also makes an appearance (1910). Other poems in the collection discuss "Desire" and make an interesting religious allusion;

other poems express sympathy for the ordinary people, which Rosenberg would later express in his war poetry.

Siegfried Sassoon

According to Bernard Bergonzi, Siegfried Sassoon was the only soldier-poet who was extensively read during the actual conflict. Sassoon was given a rare chance to have an impact on other war poets, which he took use of. Sassoon's poetry was a total departure from previous war poetry in terms of style, subject matter, and tone. Sassoon depicted the sufferings of the front-line soldier and the staff's incompetence with unwavering realism and biting humour to persuade his readers to oppose the continuation of the war. Due to poems like "The General," which violated the taboo against criticising those in charge of the war effort, his *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* were almost banned.

"Repression of War Experience"

Although there is no comparison for the brutality of this account, Sassoon truly shines in his accurate depiction of the psychological ramifications of the war. The poem "Repression of War Experience" from *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* is maybe his best in this genre. The poem, which takes the form of an inner monologue, examines a mind that is on the verge of hysteria and is struggling to keep its composure as even the most unassuming, peaceful events—such as a moth fluttering too close to a candle flame—bring nightmare-inducing thoughts of violence into the persona's mind. He hears ghosts in the garden, but as he sits in solitude, he can only hear the firearms. Ultimately, his control breaks down; he wants to rush out "and screech at them to stop—I'm going crazy;/ I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns."

10.7 KEYWORDS

Adherents	somebody who supports a particular idea
Allusion	an indirect or passing reference
Artillery	large-calibre guns used in warfare on land
Chivalry	high moral and social code
Clamour	a loud and confused noise, especially that of people shouting
Crusade	each of a series of medieval military expeditions made by Europeans to the Holy Land in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries
Debased	reduced in quality or value
Erastian	characterized by, or advocating the doctrine of state supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs
Excursions	a short journey or trip that a group of people make for pleasure
Foes	Enemies
Futility	pointlessness or uselessness
Imperialist	relating to, supporting, or practising imperialism
Jingoistic	characterized by extreme patriotism

Nostalgic	a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past.
Potent	having great power, influence, or effect
Psychic	relating to the soul or mind
Quadrangles	a four-sided plane figure, especially a square or rectangle
Subtle	so delicate or precise as to be difficult to analyse or describe
Valorous	showing great courage in the face of danger, especially in battle
	Zeal - enthusiasm

10.8 LET US SUM UP

The Oxford movement and war poetry have significantly influenced English literature. The Oxford movement is a significant religious movement. Also, over the centuries, poets have felt obligated to take on all that makes up a war. Whether through first-hand experience or from a distance, these poets have come to terms with man's very nature and capacity to brutalise his fellow man on an ever-increasing scale.

10.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Choose the correct option:

1) *Tracts for the times* is a work of:
a) John Henry Newman b) Richard Hurrell Froude
c) John Keble d) Edward Pusey
2) "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is a work of:
a) Alfred Lord, Tennyson b) Siegfried Sassoon
c) Wilfred Owen d) Robert Graves
3) Who wrote *Illiad*?
a) Virgil b) Homer c) Sassoon d) Rosenberg
4) “Strange Meeting” is a poem by _____.
a) Wilfred Owen b) Isaac Rosenberg
c) Rupert Brooke d) Siegfried Sassoon
5) “Night and Day” is a poem by _____.
a) Wilfred Owen b) Isaac Rosenberg
c) Rupert Brooke d) Siegfried Sassoon

Answers:

1) – a 2) – a 3) – b 4) – a 5) – b

Answer in brief:

1) What is the contribution of Wilfred Owen?
2) Examine the reasons that led to the origin of Oxford movement.
3) Write a note on the literary contribution of John Henry Newman.

Write short notes on:

1) Oxford movement as religious movement
2) Sentiments reflected by major war poets

10.10 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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