Literary Forms
Unit II Stanza Forms

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Why study Literary Forms?

• Helps understanding genres
  • Poetry
  • Drama
  • Prose
  • Criticism
Under Poetry: Poetical Types

- The Sonnet
- The Epic
- The Ballad
  etc
Stanza Forms – Unit II

• How are stanzas arranged in a poem?
• How many lines for every stanza?
• Types of Stanzas
  • Couplet
  • Tercet
  • Quatrain
  • Octave
  • Sestet
  etc
1. What is a couplet?

- Stanza having two lines
What is a heroic couplet?

• Example:

We think our fathers fools so wise we grow,
Our wiser sons, no doubt will think us so.

-- Alexander Pope
Features of a Heroic Couplet

• Pause at the end of the first line shown by a comma
• Pause at the end of the second line shown by a fullstop
• Couplet is closed – meaning complete
• Single rhyme – ‘grow’ – ‘so’ – single syllables
• Number of syllables – 10
• 5 for each line
• Short followed by long -- Iambic
Variations in Heroic Couplet

- Use varied from time to time and poet to poet
- Alexander Pope himself made changes (three lines)
- Dryden: does not end with full stop, meaning continues, used Alexandrine (a line of six iambic feet) instead of five
History of Heroic Couplet

• First used by Chaucer
• Then by Spenser
• Shakespeare and Ben Jonson in their drama
• Became popular with Waller and Denham
• Pope and Dryden elevated the quality: used for epic, drama, satire and didactic poetry
• Romantic poets changed the couplet into a verse paragraph with four or five lines, since they wanted freedom and not rules
• Now used for narrative verse but has undergone many changes
2. The Terza Rima

• The Terza Rima is a tercet
• Tercet: stanza of three lines
• First and third lines rhyme together
• Second rhymes with first and third of the next tercet
O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariostest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:
Terza Rima

- Shelley, Byron and William Morris: other poets
- This stanza form was first used by Italian poets
- Romantic poets used it with some changes.
3. The Chaucerian Stanza or Rhyme Royal

- Stanza of seven lines
- Each line having five syllables (penta meter)
- Short followed by long (iambic)
- Rhyme scheme: ababbcc
- First used by Chaucer
- Suitable for narrative verse
- Used by Shakespeare in his narrative poem
- “Royal”: King James I of Scotland used it in his choir
The Ottava Rima

- Italian Stanza form
- Introduced into England by Thomas Wyatt
- Stanza of 8 lines in iambic pentameter
- 1-6 lines: alternate rhymes
- Final couplet: a separate rhyme
- a b a b a b c c—rhyme scheme
- 1-3-5: fellow-mellow-yellow
- 2-4-6: opinion-dominion-pinion
- 7-8: desk-burlesque
- The couplet brings in a change of idea or mood
- Byron in “Don Juan”
- Used by Shelley and Keats in narrative verses
The Spenserian Stanza

- Nine line stanza used by Spenser in The Faerie Queene
- Two linked quatrains in iambic pentameter
- Ending with an Alexandraine
- Rhyme scheme: a b a b
  
  b c b c  c

- Ninth line rhyming with eigth but longer by a meter
- Both the stanzas are linked by rhyme as well as meaning
- The Alexandrine adds freshness and completes the stanza.
- Used in narrative and descriptive poems
The Spenserian Stanza

- Disadvantages: 1. stanza encourages the poet to use unnecessary grand words and over-adornment
- 2. One rhyme repeated 3 times another 4 times which reduces the freedom of the poet
- Used by: Spenser, Thomson, Burns, Byron, Keats
- Shelley’s “Adonais”: 1. gone-3. tone
  2. year-4. reappear-5. bier-7. brere
  6. brake-8. snake-9. awake
Schools and Movements

• School: Poets following the same trend are said to belong to a school or movement. They are contemporaries.

• The Metaphysical School: Term first used by Dr. Johnson to refer to Donne. He borrowed from Dryden’s phrase, “affects the metaphysics”

• Metaphysics: Expresses something that is not simple in a suggestive manner.

• There is something new and strange in thought and style.
Metaphysical School

Comments made by Dr. Johnson:

- Learned poets who wanted to show off their learning
- They did not imitate life
- Their thoughts are new but not natural
- Totally different ideas are forcefully brought together
- They make comparisons and illustrations frequently but they are not appealing to the reader
- They write without emotion
Metaphysical School

Comments made by Dr. Johnson:

• There is no fondness in their love
• There is no sorrow in their sadness
• Highly intellectual but unnatural

Comments by Dr. Johnson were very harsh
Metaphysical School

Metaphysical Poets: John Donne

• Metaphysical style established by John Donne

• Followers of John Donne: John Suckling, John Cleveland, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan and Abraham Cowley

• Each critic likes one poet from the school
Metaphysical School

Characteristics of Metaphysical School:
1. Delight in novel thought and expression:
   -- wanted to say what has never been said before
   -- expressed thoughts in their own way
   -- played with thoughts
   -- playfulness by playing with words
   -- It does not appeal to the senses
   -- It does not evoke memories
   -- It tries to connect abstract and concrete, remote and near
   -- lovers-compass
   -- tears-maps or coins
   - both feeling and thought needed to appreciate metaphysical poetry
Metaphysical School

2. Far-fetched Images:
Wild comparisons
Takes information from all fields of knowledge
Two different ideas are brought together
Functions as a platform to achieve unity
3. Affectation and Hyperbole:

Affectation: artificial in order to impress

Hyperbole: exaggeration

Tears—salt seas

Fairness—moon

“more than moon”

“hundred years to praise your eyes and forehead”

“grave is a fine place but none embrace”
Metaphysical School

4. Obscurity:
Difficult to understand
Comparisons are simple for the poets but complex for readers

5. Dramatic Realism:
Use of direct speech
“Busy old fool, unruly Sun”
“For God’s sake hold your tongue”
Arouses the interest of the reader

6. Learning:
Poets are scholarly, one full book can be written on comparisons of Donne alone.
Metaphysical School

'No Man is an Island'

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.
Metaphysical School

Conclusion:
Religious poems and love poems were written by the poets.
The poets of the school followed the model of Donne.
They remain unique even to this day.
2. Cavalier Poetry

- Period: During the reign of Charles I
- Important poets: Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, John Suckling, Richard Lovelace

Features of Cavalier Poetry:

i. Poems of love and war
ii. Intelligent in nature
iii. Full of enthusiasm
iv. Show interest in the cosmos
v. Use of argument and dialogue
vi. Everyday language
vii. Influenced by classical poetry
3. Classical Poetry:

- Known by different names
  
  i. Classical: resembled classical age
  
  ii. Augustan Age: Emperor Augustus of Rome
  
  iii. Age of Reason and good sense: Poetry of brain

- Factors that encouraged classical poetry:
  Metaphysical poetry became boring; Charles II and his stay in France.

- Who are the original classical writers?
  Seneca, Plautus and Terence, Virgil and Horace

- Who are the new classical writers?
  Dryden and Pope
3. Classical Poetry:

- Characteristic Features:
  - i. Respect for rules: Drama, epic, satire, ode, pastoral: every form was written by following the rules. They aimed for perfect form.
  - ii. Intellectual Quality: Poetry of head than heart
  - Poetry of reason
  - Poetry of intellect not feelings
  - Marked by wit (quick and new way of saying things)
  - Pope’s lines are the most quoted (next to Shakespeare): very familiar that author is not known
3. Classical Poetry:

- Characteristic Features:
- iii. Importance for the poetic style: Artificial style
- Words used in everyday language not suitable
- New words not accepted
- iv. Heroic Couplet: Best medium for drama, epic and satire, very suitable for the intellectual mood of the age.
- v. Treatment of town life: London was the city for writers—they found patrons—coffee house, the meeting place (3000 coffee houses in London)—meeting between author-reader and author—author—Dryden and Pope met in coffee house—town life—satire—fashions and controversies of London life dealt with in satire—model: classical and French masterpieces.
4. The Romantic Revival:

Revolt against the Classical School:

• Classical school became boring and had to be replaced
• Change started in 1726 itself
• Romanticism: name given to a new tendency
• Walter Pater, “the addition of curiosity to the desire of beauty”
• Revolt against authority, tradition and convention
• From one direction to different directions
• A movement of liberation: breaking free and moving ahead
4. The Romantic Revival:

- The French Revolution:

The teachings of Rousseau in France: Importance to feelings, love for nature, dignity of the individual man. “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”—the motto.
4. The Romantic Revival:

• Characteristic Features:
  
  i. Reaction against Rule and Custom:
     
     liberal in nature
     
     classical poetry—same as if made by machine
     
     Romantic poetry—endless variety and individualism
     
     Inspiration from Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton
     
     Revival and not something new
  
  ii. Return to Nature and Simple Life:
     
     Real life of people in country side—ordinary lives of the farm people
     
     Poets of the Lake School (Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey)—as they lived in Lake district
     
     Used simple language
     
     Wordsworth, “a selection of language really used by men”
4. The Romantic Revival:

• Characteristic Features:

• iii. Variety and Individuality:
  • Each poet was different and each poem was different
  • Subjective and full of emotions: “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Emotions recollected in tranquility”

iv. Return of the lyric:
  • Lyric was the most preferred form
  • Musical, non-intellectual, sensuous

v. Interest in Middle Ages:
  • Poets fascinated by legends of middle ages
  • Keats and Scott – picturesque poetry
  • Ballad form suitable
4. The Pre-Raphaelites

- Characteristic Features:
  
  i. Medieval Outlook:
  - Followed the style of art before Raphael
  - D.G. Rosetti and his contemporaries
  - Picturesque, passionate and full of detail
  - Though beautiful and interesting like a painting on the wall, poetry was not close to real life

  ii. Art for Art’s Sake:
  - Art was their religion
  - Did not have didactic purpose
  - Their aim was to create and exhibit beauty
  - Critics have found fault with them

  iii. Vivid visual Presentation:
  - Poetry was like a picture

  iv. Sound and Sense:
  - Melody: full of music: use of rhymes and alliterations and onomatopoeic effects.
4. The Georgian Poets

- Characteristic Features:
- Beginning of Modern poetry
- Poets who lived between 1912-1922
- Rupert Brooke, John Masefield, Walter de la Mare are the famous poets
- Robert Frost though an American is also considered as a Georgian poet
- Use of images is the main feature
- Brings out the customs and traditions of rural England: “Dining Room Tea” by Robert Brooke
- Though the poets lived during the War they did not talk about it
4. Poets of the First World War

- Characteristic Features:
- In the early years of war starting from 1914, poetry expressed nationalism
- Praised the courage and bravery of soldiers: Rupert Brooke’s “The Soldier”
- Later it mourned the loss of young lives
- Pity of war
- Wilfred Owen’s “Anthem for Doomed Youth”

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
4. Poets of the First World War

• Characteristic Features:
  
• Owen’s “Strange Meeting”: A meeting between two enemy soldiers who died in the war
  
• “I am the enemy you killed, my friend. I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed. I parried; but my hands were loath and cold. Let us sleep now. . . .”
  
• Owen influenced many younger poets like W.H. Auden
  
• Siegfred Sassoon talks about dead bodies piled up and rotting in a trench
  
• Powerful pictures of the real effects of war
  
• War poetry marked the start of Modernist Movement
5. The Modernist Movement

• Modernism:
  • Influenced by social movements like strikes, women’s movements, unemployment and so on
  • Influenced by theories of Freud and Marx
  • Lack of faith in established institutions
  • Revolt against authority
5. The Modernist Movement

• Modernist Literature:

• Started from 1910

• Famous Modernist poems: T.S. Eliot’s Waste Land and James Joyce’s Ulysses

Characteristic Features:

i. Break from tradition: Poets wanted to be liberated. Tried new forms of poetry. They got ideas from psychology and cubist painting

ii. New Subject Matter: They rejected Romanticist ideas. They were interested in realism. Focus on city life.

iii. Poetic Style: Colloquial use of language.
5. The Modernist Movement

Characteristic Features:

iv. Discontinuous poems: No linking lines or phrases. It is interrupted. It is not a whole but a set of images

v. FreeVerse: Did not follow any rhyme or rhythm. They repeated words. They followed the model of Walt Whitman. They wanted poetry to sound like spoken language.

vi. Other Features: It portrayed problems of modern life. Man’s rootlessness, lack of identity and lack of confidence.

Poems were sometimes obscure
6. Poetry of the 1930s

• W. H. Auden was the important poet of 1930s.
• Stephen Spender was another important poet
• The poets wrote good poetry in simple style

Poets of the Second World War:

• These poets portrayed that was a terrible waste.