General Editor's Foreword

It has been a rewarding experience coordinating the syllabus revision exercise and the induction of new Self Learning Materials (SLM) for the EEG Programme under the aegis of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of our University. The new syllabus and its attendant study materials are the result of concerted endeavours through workshops, repeated interactions, shared leadership and above all, protracted labour on the part of everyone who has been associated with this project.

The need for a thorough syllabus revision for BDP English was a long standing one, as the existing framework had long stood its time and needed to take a fresh look at the dynamically altered literary scenario. In framing the new syllabus, experts have been guided by the rationale of putting in place a curriculum that would effectively serve as proper foundations for a Graduation level course in English Literature, which by itself has come to be seen as a widely interdisciplinary area. The Learning Objectives envisaged in this syllabus include a periodic knowledge of History of English Literature spread across Papers that will be divided mainly in a chronology – genre pattern; acquaintance with literary texts in a similar sequence and logic; primary knowledge of relevant literary criticism/theory; essentials of History of Language and basics of pronunciation; and an introduction to the basics of Indian Writing in English which is the least that one can think of from the New Literatures arena at this level.

Being a University dedicated to Open and Distance Learning, the creation of SLM's is a corollary to the formulation of a new syllabus. This has traditionally been the mainstay of Student Support Services at NSOU and efforts have been made to produce SLM's that can be as learner friendly as possible. While the print material shall be inducted to begin with, there is in the pipeline a project for introducing multimedia learning aids for relevant portions of the syllabus, to augment SLM's at the earliest possible instant. This could include live audio-video interactions on select topics, on-screen and on-stage footage clips, readings of poetry and prose, recordings from classrooms and the like; all of it for widest possible dissemination among our learners. We would welcome suggestions on this from our BDP counsellors as well. It is hoped that since our Study Centres are now mostly ICT enabled, learners will be able to enjoy their studies with the help of both versions of study tools. While they can look upon NSOU materials thus provided on offline and online modes as primary aids, they will however be expected to equip themselves with thorough reading of texts and references on the lines indicated in the SLM's. After all, we presume that as a student of literature by choice, one has a predilection for literary texts and has taken up this Programme to augment his/her levels of understanding, along with the necessity of acquiring a degree that shall stand in good stead in life.

On behalf of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University, I stand to thank the experts on the Syllabus Committee, the content writers and the Paper editors for their constant support and adherence to timelines, the valuable academic inputs they have provided, and the numerous ways in which they have embellished the final print materials, their own engagements notwithstanding. It has I'm sure, been a labour of love for all of you, and we acknowledge your support for enabling us to see through the successful implementation of the entire project.

To all our learners, my dear students, I congratulate you on your choice of NSOU as the preferred institution for enhancing your academic pursuits. Here's hoping and wishing that you will make the most out of our blend of the serious acquiring of knowledge amidst flexible conditions and achieve your cherished goals in life. Let us make learning an enjoyable activity.

Dated: Kolkata
The 10th December, 2014

Srideep Mukherjee
Assistant Professor of English
School of Humanities & Social Sciences

Paper Editors' Introduction to Paper III

Dear Learner,

From Papers I and II to Paper III now, we hope it has been an interesting and enlightening journey for you as learners enrolled in the Bachelors Degree Programme in Elective English at Netaji Subhas Open University. In the chronological division and alignment of your syllabus, Paper III logically deals with the period of the Restoration in England.

In post Renaissance and Reformation England, the Restoration of monarchy after the overthrow of the Crown and the period of the Commonwealth is definitely the single largest event. This Paper, which dwells at length on contemporary 'Politics, Society and Culture' will guide you through the manifold perspectives that make this era one of the most complex, as far as literary representations are concerned. As in a relay race, we begin the detailed contents a little in advance of 1660, which was the year of the return of King Charles II from France to assume the throne. The purpose behind this is to help you understand the trends, ruptures and continuities from the overthrow of monarchy in England to its resumption. As a corollary, you will also be guided in detail how deeply social mores characterized the literary output of the period. Module 1 thus gives you a comprehensive view of all this.

As with your previous Papers, Modules 2, 3 and 4 take up representative poetry, prose and dramatic output of the period for detailed study. In addition to the Timelines chart, we have also provided a pictorial representation of the Stuart Line and the House of Hanover, that will help you to understand the ascendancy issue to the throne. You are to keep in mind that this Paper thematically covers also the Glorious Revolution of 1688, by which time accession to the throne had passed from being a divine right to being decided by the terms of Parliament. We are sure your counselors will guide you adequately on understanding this part of social history, without which no understanding of the literature of a period can be complete.

The Comprehension Exercises at the end of each Unit, the check boxes within the Units and the Suggested Reading lists are all meant to embellish your understanding. As in previous Papers, the question pattern for Paper III, both for Assignments and Term Ends remains the same:

a) 20x2 Questions (Out of a choice of 6 questions)
b) 12x3 Questions (out of a choice of 8 questions)
c) 6x4 Questions (out of a choice of 8 questions)

We hope that the new study materials, aided by counseling sessions, will bring out the best in you as students of literature. We conclude with the best of wishes in this learning endeavour.

10th December 2014 Editors
Kolkata

EEG 3. The Restoration

Module 1 - The Restoration in England: Politics, Society and Culture
Unit 1 – England in the wake of the Restoration
Unit 2 – Neo-Classicism: Impact on Literary Thought
Unit 3 – Puritanism and the Stage

Module 2 – Reading Poetry
Unit 1 – Dryden: *Mac Flecknoe*
Unit 2 - Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchilsea: 'The Introduction'; Aphra Behn: 'Song – Love Armed'
Unit 3 – Samuel Butler: Extract from 'Hudibras'. *The Oxford Anthology of English Poetry* (Vol. 1) ll 1 – 76.

Module 3 – Reading Prose
Unit 1 – Extract from John Bunyan: 'The Pilgrim's Progress'**.** *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Vol. 1) Pp 2146 – 48. Mr Christian's Dream of 'Vanity Fair'.
Unit 2 – Extract from 'The Diary of Samuel Pepys'**.** *New Oxford Book of English Prose*, ed. John Gross. Pp 144-45. 'The Great Fire of London'
Unit 3 – Extract from Dryden's 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy'**.** *English Critical Texts*, Ed. D.J Enright and Ernst De Chickera. Pp 88 – 91. ll 1496 – 1589. 'To begin with ...love Shakespeare.'

Module 4 – Reading Drama and Dramaturgy
Unit 1 – Features of Restoration Drama
Unit 2 – William Congreve: *The Way of the World*
Unit 3 – Extract from Dryden's *All For Love* – Act 1

BACHELORS DEGREE PROGRAMME: ENGLISH

[BDP: EEG]

New Syllabus effective from July 2015 Session

Paper - 3

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MODULE 1 – The Restoration in England: Politics, Society and Culture

Unit 1 – England in the Wake of the Restoration

1.1.0: INTRODUCTION

From the 16th to the 17th century is in many senses a major transition in the history of England and commensurately, in the literature of the period that we are now studying. The opening Unit of this Paper will acquaint you with the very basic question as to why these years are labeled as 'The Restoration' in England. You will see for yourselves how monarchy and nobility of this period was strikingly differently from the trends witnessed in Elizabethan and the subsequent Jacobean periods. Concurrently, the social picture of the times will be reviewed, as this is of vital importance in grasping the predominant tendencies witnessed in the literature of the Restoration period. It would ideally be a fitting study of the cultural milieu if we could study the resultant implications of polity and societal trends in their entirety; but from an academic point of view we shall limit ourselves broadly to the literature of the period. Looking upon literary texts as 'Cultural Texts' does indeed gain a new dimension in this period and they will give you a fitting idea of the times. For those of you who are interested in more, the Reading List will definitely provide keys to a wider comprehension of cultural trends of the period.

1.1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Authority and succession are the twin concerns of rulers everywhere, as also in England, To comprehend the complexities of this period, we shall have to cast serious look at the historical events and their political implications in some detail.

Elizabeth Tudor died unwed in 1603, thus bringing to an end the famous Elizabethan period, of which you have read in your previous Paper. Her cousin James IV of Edinburgh became James I of United Kingdom by joining the crowns of England and Scotland purely on a personal basis. This period is known in British history as the Jacobean period. The constraints of managing the genuine affronts of an English Parliament were much more than a weak Scottish Parliament that he was so long used to.

You must understand that Parliament in England at this time was fundamentally different from what we know of it today in the context of our country, as being a national body of elected representatives. Though it functioned as an advisory body and was summoned at the will of the monarch, yet the Parliament had both the power and the resources to raise revenues far in excess of any other means available at the disposal of the monarch. By the seventeenth century, Parliament's tax-raising powers had come to be derived from the fact that the gentry was the only stratum of society with the ability and authority to actually collect and remit the most meaningful forms of taxation then available at the local level. This meant that if the king wanted to ensure a smooth collection of revenue, he needed the co-operation of the gentry. For all of the Crown's legal authority, by any modern standard, its resources were limited to the extent that, if and when the gentry refused to collect the king's taxes on a national scale, the Crown lacked any practical means with which to compel them. Therefore, in order to secure their co-operation, monarchs permitted the gentry (and only the gentry) to elect representatives to sit in the House of Commons. When assembled along with the House of Lords, these elected representatives formed a Parliament. Parliaments therefore allowed representatives of the gentry to meet, primarily (at least in the opinion of the monarch) so that they could give their sanction to whatever taxes the monarch expected their electorate to collect. In the process, the representatives could also confer and send policy proposals to the king in the form of bills. However, Parliament lacked any legal means of forcing its will upon the monarch; its only leverage with the king was the threat of its withholding the financial means required to execute his plans. Against this backdrop, the fact that James I was an extravagant and peace loving man put him in perennial crisis of funds and it was imperative for him to seek extra-Parliamentary sources of income. He died in 1625 and was succeeded by his son Charles I.

Charles I (1625-49) took upon himself to unite England, Scotland and Ireland into a single kingdom in order to fulfill his father’s dream. This did not go down well with many English

Parliamentarians who had suspicions that such a move might destroy the old English traditions which had bound the English monarchy. As Charles shared his father's position on the power of the crown (James had described kings as "little gods on Earth", chosen by God to rule in accordance with the doctrine of the "Divine Right of Kings), the suspicions of the Parliamentarians did indeed have some justification.

Charles' marriage to a Roman Catholic, the French princess Henrietta Maria added further fuel to the already seething rage amongst parliamentarians. The Parliament refused to assign him the traditional right to collect customs duties for his entire reign, deciding instead to grant it only on a provisional basis and negotiate with him. The sending of forces to relieve the Protestant French Huguenots (French Protestants inspired by John Calvin) who were being persecuted by the French troops could have been a saving grace for the monarch's marriage to a Catholic; but that did not happen as Charles I arbitrarily conferred command of the English forces upon George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, who was immensely unpopular with the Parliament. When Parliament opened impeachment proceedings against Buckingham after the failure of the relief expedition, the King dissolved Parliament in 1627.

Obviously this was not well taken, and besides, the crown naturally fell short of revenues. A new Parliament was assembled in 1628, which included the likes of Oliver Cromwell and Edward Coke as elected members, and needless to say, monarchy was now challenged by the **Petition of Right**. This Petition imposed restrictions on non-Parliamentary taxation, forced billeting of soldiers, imprisonment without cause, and the use of martial law. Eminent jurists like Coke also used it to evoke **Magna Carta** extensively, which argued against the divine rights of monarchy.

The king's avoidance of calling Parliament for the next eleven years (infamously known as the Eleven Years Tyranny), his insistence on High Anglicanism, the Edinburgh riots over religious impositions, the Short Parliament (so called because it was dissolved after 2 weeks) of 1640, the Scottish invasion, the more hostile Long Parliament in late 1640 that was even more hostile to monarchy than the previous one – the reign of Charles had all the ingredients of misrule and a decadent crown. This progressive decay abetted by several other happenings, finally led to the King having to leave London for the north of the country in early 1642, and the beginning of the first Civil War. With conflicting loyalties, the Royalists and the Parliamentarians gradually began to take opposed positions even as the wars continued with altering fortunes. The

culmination came when the Army led by the commanding officer Thomas Pride marched on Parliament, set up a High Court of Justice with 75 anti-monarchial members in the name of the people of England, tried Charles I on charges of treason, and had him beheaded on a scaffold in front of the Banqueting House of the Palace of Whitehall on 30 January 1649. Fairfax, a constitutional monarchist and moderate, refused to participate whatsoever in the trial and resigned as head of the army, allowing Oliver Cromwell to ascend in power. For more details of the upheavals of this period, you are advised to read books on the social history of England, or consult the internet that could be a ready reckoner.

Cromwell was a good administrator and governed England as **Lord Protector** of the **Commonwealth** between 1653–1658. The term **Commonwealth** or **Commonwealth of England**, was the period from 1649 onwards when England, along later with Ireland and Scotland was ruled as a republic following the end of the Second English Civil War and the trial and execution of Charles I. At home Lord Protector Cromwell reorganised the national church, established Puritanism, readmitted Jews into Britain and presided over a certain degree of religious tolerance. Abroad, he ended the war with Portugal (1653) and Holland (1654) and allied with France against Spain, defeating the Spanish at the Battle of the Dunes (1658). Cromwell died on 3 September 1658 in London. After the Restoration his body was dug up and hanged.

At his death he appointed his son as successor. The people were unhappy with this arrangement and tired of repressive, unbending puritan rule, a period that the monarchists also called the **Interregnum**. Led by Anglican factious, Parliament offered the throne to Charles II, son of the beheaded king, then living in exile in France, Thus both monarchy and the Stuart dynasty were restored after what had been virtually a military dictatorship. The period 1660-1698 is hence known as the Restoration.

1.1.2 POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PERIOD

Religion and politics were greatly in English life for many years now and would continue so till the **Glorious Revolution** which placed William and Mary of Orange as joint rulers of England. The Tudors (Henry VIII and Elizabeth I) had assumed authority over Church and State. The early Stuarts relished their ‘divine right’ to rule but lacked the wisdom required in administration. Both James I (the wisest fool in Christendom”) and Charles I tactlessly annoyed

Parliament by defying, over ruling, even dissolving it for long periods. The Civil War of 1642 was English Parliament's rebellion against the crown, It has also been seen as a religious war: **Puritans** and **Presbyterians** (ROUNDHEADS COMMONERS) against **Anglo** – **Catholics** (CAVALIERS/ROYALISTS). Yet others describe it as the rebellion of the middle-class against the noble class; as a struggle between town and country interests.

Landing on English soil in 1660. Charles II was welcomed jubilantly by the public, but the old tensions remained. The religion of the king was suspect. Officially Anglican Protestant, his leanings and decisions gave reasons for doubt. His brother James was avowedly Catholic, and he was heir to the throne. There were constant fears that Catholic forces within England would regain power, aided and abetted by France and Spain – both Catholic countries. Holland was a Protestant ally with great naval and commercial strength, therefore a threat to England's commercial interests, Suspicions against Catholic favourites of the king were rife. Papist plots real or imagined, were unearthed almost daily. The lies of the unsavoury Titus Oates (an English perjurer who fabricated the "Popish Plot", supposedly a Catholic conspiracy to kill Charles II) brought matters to a head when Earl of Shaftesbury proposed the " exclusion" bill in Parliament to ensure that Duke of Monmouth replace James as heir to the throne. The monarchy was shaken yet again and Charles II managed to fend this off just barely.

Practically, the government came to be largely controlled by five Ministers – Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashle and Lauderdale – a **CABAL**, A cabal as we know is a small group of politicians working in secret. They were a kind of 'cabinet' government, and they reported to the king bypassing Parliament, thus a cause for disaffection. Two groups emerged. The 'Tories' were mainly royalist landed gentry who conservatively held that government should be appointed freely by the king, The 'Whigs' on the other hand were merchant squires with overseas. business interests, keen on modern methods and economic development. They believed that above everything, government must be controlled not by royal monopolies and nepotism but by the House of Commons, New elections were called and the fresh Parliament was almost entirely "Whig". The Whigs also insisted that war with Holland end, so royal expenditure would be reduced and their trading and colonial enterprises could flourish.

James II upon accession in 1685, almost immediately exposed his Roman Catholic bias. He was "replaced" by Protestant Sovereigns William and Mary in a "bloodless" (no battle was fought, no blood was shed), "glorious" revolution of 1688. Parliament came to control the governance of

England by appointing ministers, confirming the rule of law and the two party system. Most of the old power of the crown lay now in the hands of the Parliament, and the forms of control were listed in the Bill of Rights.

Thereafter, religious passions gradually faded from public affairs. It was victory for democracy and a marked shift from court-centric to people centric culture.

You must now have realized how eventful these years had been for British politics in particular and for a large chunk of Europe in general.

1.1.3. CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PICTURE

Popular English imagination thus rightly sees these years 1660-1698 as a watershed of history, Dryden in his poem *Astrea Redux* hailed Charles II as "Augustus" or emperor of Rome (31 BC). With the restoration of monarchy and under the 'auspices' of the king returned from France, the whole atmosphere of the nation changed from the mood of a gloomy prayer meeting to one of licence, ribaldry and unashamed pleasure. Country life remained largely the same, though mining and industry had increased Urban life gained prominence. The king set the tone for metropolitan life. You will find striking depictions of this town-country binary in comedies of the period. The royal courtiers and the upper class led a gay, cynical, permissive and profligate kind of life to match the "merry Monarch's" indecorum. New type of gentlemen 'fops' and 'rakes' crowded the court and London streets. They lived only for fashion in dress, appearance and manners. The 'town', that is to say fashionable London, became the centre of all social glitter. Provincial England and the middle classes did not, however participate in the brilliant life of this closed society. Everything favours the constitution of aristocratic or clique literature. We will study this in greater detail a little later.

1.1.4. URBAN GROWTH

As discussed in the earlier section, the predominant trend of the Age was an insistence on metropolitan culture. The economic and cultural heart of England was thus naturally the city of London. Between 1660-1780 London was transformed from a late medieval into an early modern city. The worst plague epidemic for centuries thinned the population; the great fire of 1666 (described vividly by Dryden, Pepys and others) flattened a large section of the walled city.

Rebuilding was mostly in stone: over fifty of its churches were designed by the great architect Sir Christopher Wren, and some of their woodwork was carved by Grinling Gibbons. Civic amenities were improved, streets lighted, houses had gardens and wealthy merchants moved outside the city walls into gracious, spacious mansions that were stately, airy, fit for leisure, study and energetic economy. Whitehall and Westminster gradually merged into a bustling centre admired by European visitors.

1.1.5. THE CULTURAL SCENARIO

The city soon began to flaunt concert rooms where music by composers like Purcell could be publicly performed. Theatres had re-opened but moved indoors though only two were licensed. Naturally the drama – audience had contracted though its attractions had increased. Actresses were now seen on stage that boasted sophisticated scenery and machines. Plays mostly reflected the cynicism and flippancy of the court circle. Characters were urban aristocrats; anyone outside the blessed circle was a booby, villain or a butt of ridicule. Writers of quality wrote more and better plays for them, often with naughty themes and titles like *She Would if She Could* and *An Evening's Love*. But we must remember that it was only a tiny segment of the nation that watched these "restoration comedies."

Sober elements of English society disapproved of the manners of the so called refined elite. Jeremy Collier's ***A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*** sternly condemned a theatre that was a sink of iniquity where virtue was ridiculed and vice recommended. Theatres in due course became move economically viable only when they began to make a definite appeal to the middle class with plays of a different category. But this happened some years later. We will study these Restoration play both tragedies and comedies in greater detail in the later modules. It is necessary to remember here that the plays of William Wycherley, George Etherege, William Congreve and Thomas Shadwell vividly reflect the fashionable worlds that they wrote for, often with liberal doses of humour and satire. Their plays share in the virtues and vices of that small segment of the English people that arose as a result of the foppish elegance set in by the Restoration of monarchy in England. Never in England since that time has literature belonged so exclusively to a limited class.

Yet already the classes were fluid in composition, and the rise of the middle classes began to change equations, both in terms of the distribution of wealth and morality. They shifted seamlessly as new monarchs rewarded new favourites to peerage. Quakers and dissenters began to acquire new fortunes in trade, old aristocrats in disfavor withdrew to farming in straitened circumstances, and their younger sons collaborated with merchants in business ventures which had gained respectability with prosperity. In later Restoration comedy the country squire was the uneducated, clumsy dupe, while a valet would be shown as intelligent and witty, Such pictures are however not to be trusted. A better knowledge of these times, both political and social, can be gained from the many diaries, histories, memoirs and autobiographies of the time.

1.1.6. LITERATURE OF DOCUMENTATION

While the subsequent modules of this Paper will deal with various genres of fictional and non-fictional literature of the period, the scope and purview of this Unit makes it imperative to focus on such literature that provides a chroniclers' viewpoint of the multiple strands of Restoration England. Accordingly, you will be acquainted with forms like diary writing, historical accounts and other miscellaneous writings of the age – things that are not much syllabised, yet are important in evolving a comprehensive understanding of this extremely complicated time.

- **DIARISTS:**

SAMUEL PEPYS (1633-1703)

A well – educated man in public life, he rose to be Secretary to the Admiralty, a Member of Parliament and also patronised the Royal Society. His celebrated diary covers a ten year span (Jan 1, 1660 – May 31, 1609) and records with a charming candidness the frailties and misconduct of himself and his contemporaries. It is a historical source book for facts, anecdotes, scandals, public events like Charles II's coronation, the Great London Fire of 1665, the Dutch naval threat and the plague. An intensely human document of everyday life, it contains comments on drama productions (of Shakespeare), published books and sartorial styles. Written in a fresh intimate conversational mode, it captures wholly the spirit of the times including critique of dissolute count life as damaging to public welfare.

JOHN EVELYN (1620-1700)

A distinguished man in public service, he was the author of many books of a practical nature on varied subjects such as forestry, agriculture, engraving and the evil of coal smoke over London. His conduct and his diary, unlike those of Pepy were both discreet and balanced. Sober in habit and style, his writing is lucid. It is dull reading but is a reliable source of information because both in character and taste he is rather representative of the best elements of English people as a whole - deeply committed to public welfare and governance, yet truly relishing the life of a country gentleman.

- **HISTORICAL WRITING**

A zealous preoccupation with the immediate and the present characterises Restoration life. Their works record daily life in choice of content and in manner – to be used as warning or delight or both. Hence chronicles, lives, treatises are aplenty.

EDWARD HYDE (1609-1674) First Earl of Clarendon

Possibly the foremost statesman of the 17th century, the keynote to Clarendon's whole career was respect for law, constitutional monarchy and the Church, Consequently he was a firm royalist. As advisor to Charles II and as Chancellor of England, he had seen the seasons change in politics. Nevertheless he was a stern critic of the excesses and laxities of governance of both kings. While in exile he wrote *History of the Rebellion* and later, his *Life*. They were written "with fidelity and freedom" – an unbiased version of circumstances leading to the Civil War, so that the mistakes would not be repeated in future.

He reported unflinchingly the unpleasantness of contemporary life, his own faults – all with honesty and a balanced vision – drawing the best historical portraits of his time, appreciating all types of characters yet retaining his personal integrity and courage. His easy prose style reflected both his strict principles and accurate judgment of minds and actions and an acerbic wit. Like a good journalist he wrote in his essay "On an Active and on a Contemplative Life", that a historian's essential quality was "a lively Perception of Persons and Actions which makes a Reader present at all they say or do".

GEORGE SAVILE: (1633-95) Marquis of Halifax.

Famous statesman, belonged to the latter part of the period. Like Clarendon, his level headedness was based on moral principles. Though a Whig, he disconcerted his contemporaries by seeing good points in both sides. His moderation and willingness to compromise earned him the label of 'THE TRIMMER'. He proudly titled his book *Character of the Trimmer*. It dealt with

contemporary problems, propounded no theories but maintained that change was essential for human progress. Balance between liberty and tyranny, tolerance and holding to a wise middle course were his watchwords. His prose comes across as sensibly colloquial with a fair degree of humour. Despite the ordinariness of style, his sentences echo Bacon's epigrammatic ring. His *Advice to a Daughter* is a more general work. In Savile we find an approach to the essay manner of Addison who was to illuminate the literary scene some time later.

Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715)

Learned, forthright and a good historian, for he traces and acknowledges his sources. He is memorable for *History of the Reformation of the Church in England* (Vol. 1 in 1679) and *The History of My Own Time* (begun in 1683) are both important works in this context.

The English statesman and essayist **Sir William Temple's (1628 – 1699)** *Memoirs of the Life, Works and Correspondence* (1691) must not be forgotten either.

1.1.7. SUMMING UP

You will by now have realized that these forty years distinctly fall into two parts, both from political and literary points of view. Having read this Unit, it will be your task to identify the dividing lines, matching political and literary scenarios. Recall the circumstances that led to the convoluted political spectrum, how the initial euphoria of the reinstating of royalty soon gave way to reactionary responses against the frivolity and nepotism ushered in by the Restoration. Sober civic feelings, social values infused into public life with emerging dimensions of class matrices, and a colourful divergent dynamic literature – a well marked transition leading to the age of classicism – these should be uppermost in your mind as you study these years from a literary point of view in the forthcoming modules.

1.1.8. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. Distinguish between the two Civil Wars of this period, giving dates and causes.
2. Explain the reasons behind the social changes of the Restoration.

3. How do you think the historical events of the period and their political implications affected the literature of the Restoration?

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Give a brief account of the historical events that led to the overthrow of monarchy in England.

2. What paradigm shift in the cultural milieu do you notice in moving from Elizabethan – Jacobean periods to the Restoration?

3. Write an account of the literature of documentation that flourished in Restoration England.

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. Who was Oliver Cromwell? What was his role in contemporary British politics?

2. What do you know about urban growth in the England of this period?

3. Mention the important diarists of the Restoration Age and discuss the significance of their works.

1.1.9. SUGGESTED READING LIST

Baugh, A.C. *A Literary History of England*. Pub. Longman
Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Supernova Pub.
Ford, Boris ed. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 4. 'From Dryden to Johnson'.
Richetti, John ed. The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660 – 1780. Pub. C.U.P.
Trevelyan, G.M. *English Social History*. Penguin Pub.

Module 1Unit 2

NEO-CLASSICISM: IMPACT ON LITERARY THOUGHT

1.2.0. INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit we have studied at length the socio-political-cultural implications of the Restoration of monarchy to England in 1660. The present Unit is a logical follow through to the earlier, where we shall be looking at the impact of this event on literature per se. We shall see how a totally new phenomenon called Neo-Classicism, which literally means a new and vigorous emulation of the classics, became the hallmark of this era. In our efforts to understand the intellectual cross-currents of the time, we shall note the major influences that affected the Age. Our attempts shall also be directed at enumerating the significant writers in prose and poetry who made signal contributions in this period. The genre of drama shall be dealt with in a separate Unit.

1.2.1. DEFINING NEO-CLASSICISM: IT'S PERVASIVE INFLUENCE

From your study of the Renaissance in Paper 2, you have a fair idea of how it was an all-embracive movement that ushered in the study of Classical Literature into English. Evidently, Neo-classicism means 'new-classicism' — that is to say, a fresh interest, admiration and emulation of the great writers of the past. Like the Renaissance, Neo-Classicism too is an umbrella term given to Western movements in the decorative and visual arts, literature, theatre, music, and architecture. It drew inspiration from the "classical" art and culture of Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome. The main Neo-Classical movement coincided with the 18th century Age of Enlightenment, and continued into the early 19th century, latterly

Activity for the Learner

As you read this sub-section on Neo-Classicism, work out in tabular form the differences between the revival of classical learning in the Renaissance and the new wave of classicism that came about since the Restoration. Take major texts from each genre to substantiate your findings. Your counselor will help you in this activity.

competing with Romanticism. In architecture, the style continued throughout the 19th, 20th and even up to the 21st century. For the present however, we are mostly concerned with its implications on literature and more immediately, why this movement took roots in English soil at this point of time. We shall also try to identify the major points of difference between the Renaissance understanding of classical literature and the Neo-Classical point of view.

You will definitely remember that Charles II was in exile in France before he was brought back to England and proclaimed the monarch. He had a long stint in France, during which he acquired French tastes and manners, along with an irresistible liking for French literature. And in this he was not alone; English writers and the nobility too had a great admiration for everything French! Since literature of this period was basically court and nobility centric, panegyrics to the king were aplenty. In keeping with the French manner, the focus of emulation was mainly the Roman writers like Horace, Juvenal and Martial. Contemporaries of Charles II even equated his reign with that of Augustus Caesar, and thereby the insistence on appropriateness and correctness in contemporary literature, following the high Roman fashion.

The English Neo-Classical movement was thus predicated upon and derived from both classical and contemporary French models, (see Boileau's *L'Art Poetique* (1674) and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711) as critical statements of Neoclassical principles). It embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence — ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, "correctness," "restraint," decorum, and so on, which would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman originals. Though its origins were much earlier (the Elizabethan Ben Jonson, for example, was as

indebted to the Roman poet Horace as Alexander Pope would later be), Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century, when the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the full emergence of Romanticism. In that sense the Neo-Classical spirit will be seen to pervade a large part of the time frame covered in Papers 3 and 4 of your syllabus. In this section, we shall bring out for your understanding the entire essence of Neo-Classicism.

For the sake of convenience the Neoclassic period can be divided into three relatively coherent parts: the **Restoration Age (1660-1700)**, in which Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden were the dominant influences; **the Augustan Age (1700-1750)**, in which Pope was the central poetic figure, while Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett were presiding over the sophistication of the novel; and the **Age of Johnson(1750-1798)**, which, while it was dominated and characterized by the mind and personality of the inimitable Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose sympathies were with the fading Augustan past, saw the beginnings of a new understanding and appreciation of the work of Shakespeare, the development, by Sterne and others, of the novel of sensibility, and the emergence of the Gothic school — attitudes which, in the context of the development of a cult of Nature, the influence of German romantic thought, religious tendencies like the rise of Methodism, and political events like the American and French revolutions — established the intellectual and emotional foundations of English Romanticism. You can well understand both the chronological and thematic expanse of Neo-Classicism. In the present Paper, we are basically concerned with the first phase of the movement, which is inherently important as laying the foundations for over a century of English literature that was to experience wide cross-currents.

To a certain extent Neoclassicism represented a reaction against the optimistic, exuberant, and enthusiastic Renaissance view of man as a being fundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. Neoclassical theorists, by contrast, saw man as an imperfect being, inherently sinful, whose potential was limited. They replaced the Renaissance emphasis on the imagination, on invention and experimentation, and on mysticism with an emphasis on order and reason, on restraint, on common sense, and on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. They maintained that man himself was the most appropriate subject of art, and saw art itself as essentially pragmatic — as valuable because it was somehow useful — and as something which was properly intellectual rather than emotional.

This would explain the Neo-Classical emphasis on proper subject matter; and their attempts to subordinate details to an overall design, to employ in their work concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace. All this, it was presumed, would facilitate the process of delighting, instructing, educating, and correcting the social animal which they believed man to be. Notice the dual insistence on delight and instruction, which is a direct adaptation from the classical debate on edification and gratification as twin ends of literature, as espoused by Horace. The favorite Neo-Classical prose literary forms were the essay, the letter, the satire, the parody, the burlesque, and the moral fable; in poetry, the favorite verse form was the rhymed couplet, which reached its greatest sophistication in heroic couplet of Pope; while the theatre saw the development of the heroic drama, the melodrama, the sentimental comedy, and the comedy of manners.

Neo-Classical Assumptions and their Implications

As students of literature you would definitely be wondering as to why this paradigm shift came along in the wake of the Restoration. The Neo-Classical thinkers came to use the past as a guide for the present because they assumed that human nature was constant - essentially the same regardless of time and place. Art, they believed, should express this essential nature. Of course, all great art has this sort of significance, but Neo-Classical artists more consciously emphasized common human characteristics over individual differences, as we see in the type-named characters of Moliere. If human nature has remained constant over the centuries, it is unlikely that any startling new discoveries will be made. Hence neoclassical artists did not strive to be original so much as to express old truths in a newly effective way. They aimed to articulate general truth rather than unique vision, to communicate to others more than to express themselves.

1.2.2. NEO-CLASSICISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE: THE FRENCH CONNECTION

To repeat something that has been stated earlier and yet merits repetition because of its importance, Charles II's long exile in France had enabled him to acquire an indefatigable interest in French tastes and manners. His admiration for French literature governed English writers as well. He was an intelligent monarch, personally involved with many distinguished intellectuals from all walks of life. The king's bias for the French dramatists Corneille, Racine and Moliere influenced Restoration heroic tragedy and comedy. Corneille's lengthy prefaces to his plays *Discours* and *Examens* were emulated by Dryden, as were the critical views of Boileau

expressed in *The Art of Poetry*. Boilean advocated "good sense" as a mark of good style in poetry; reduced versification to certain principles – that is, value workmanship for its own sake and stressed the need for sound judgment at every step, as opposed to excessive impulse or emotion. These stylistic standards and intellectual discipline were documented – almost codified in Dryden's critical essay "The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry, and Poetic Licence" as an accepted standard of the time.

From the exploration and expansiveness of the Renaissance to this reaction in the direction of order and restraint – this was the crux of Neo-Classicism that developed in France in the mid 17th century and was imported to England some thirty years later. Writers turned from inventing new words to regularising vocabulary and grammar. Complex, boldly metaphorical language, such as Shakespeare used in his major tragedies, is clarified and simplified--using fewer and more conventional figures of speech. Mystery and obscurity are considered symptoms of incompetence rather than signs of grandeur. The ideal style is lucid, polished, and precisely appropriate to the genre of a work and the social position of its characters. Tragedy and high comedy, for example, use the language of cultivated people and maintain a well-bred tone. The crude humor of the gravediggers in *Hamlet* or the pulling out of Gloucester's eyes in *King Lear* would no longer be admitted in tragedy. Structure, like tone, becomes more simple and unified. In contrast to Shakespeare's plays, those of the Neo-Classical playwrights such as Racine and Moliere develop a single plot line and are strictly limited in time and place (often, like Moliere's *The Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe*, to a single setting and a single day's time). In all, French Neo-Classical influence toned down and sobered the rhapsodic energy levels that characterized Elizabethan literature. Gradually, the composition of literature was turning to an organised and conscious activity that required immense learning and knowledge not just of classical texts but also the rules of composition.

1.2.3 CLASSICAL INFLUENCE

It is easy to be critical about something when it is seen from a distance and with a detached objective perspective. Thus in the light of subsequent times, one can be critical about the fact that Restoration thought was mostly status quoits in nature; and that contemporary society and

culture really meticulously shied away from change as progress, innovation or ingenuity in thought and expression. All these aspects are heavily reflected in the literature of the period.

But for the restored regime, it was first and foremost important to see itself as re-establishers of order and peace in society after years of passion and turmoil. The period is called Neo-Classical because its writers looked back to the ideals and art forms of classical times, emphasizing even more than their Renaissance predecessors the classical ideals of order and rational control. Their respect for the past led them to be conservative both in art and politics. Always aware of the conventions appropriate to each genre, they modeled their works on classical masterpieces and heeded the "rules" thought to be laid down by classical critics.

In political and social affairs, too, they were guided by the wisdom of the past: traditional institutions had, at least, survived the test of time. No more than their medieval and Renaissance predecessors did neoclassical thinkers share our modern assumption that change means progress, since they believed that human nature is imperfect, human achievements are necessarily limited, and therefore human aims should be sensibly limited as well. It was better to set a moderate goal, whether in art or society, and achieve it well.

Thus, moderation and balance were valued qualities tempered by reason and tolerance. Thinking minds turned to Latin writers for guidance and inspiration. Horace, Juvenal, Cicero and Quintillian became the models for prose, satirical poetry, odes and eclogues. Writers strove to emulate the ancients as “correctly” as possible by evolving a number of “rules” to be followed rigidly both in content and style. Disciplined expression, social/public themes (realistic evocation of contemporary events or issues) were the norms. Printing had by now widened readership somewhat and works were addressed no longer only to the beloved or a privileged group but to a public audience.

It was however another matter that the literature that was written did not have much of the common man as its subject. Regimented attempts at innovations in poetry and prose resulted in an abundance of epigrams, satires, odes, panegyrics. Blank verse lost its supremacy as it was too flexible and un-controlled. Emphasis was placed on the use of heroic couplets. The English creative spirit did retain its sway at a sub-liminal level but was disapproved of by many critics.

1.2.4. THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT

In 1660 Charles II gave a charter to the Royal Society, a club for scientists such as Isaac Newton Robert Boyle and Edmund Halley. (The society exists till today: remember doctors still aim for a MRCR/FRCS label) The members were intelligent men who aspired to widen knowledge by new ways of inquiry, but necessarily without negating religious orthodoxy. Their motto was NULLIS IN VERBA — "on the words of no one."

Experimental and empirical in method, they insisted that a proposition could be accepted only after examination, scrutiny and proof – NOT on the strength of clever argument. The only real truth was that discovered by inductive and mathematical means. You can also see here the beginnings in spirit of what later came to be called the Age of Prose and Reason. Like Descartes on the Continent, Francis Bacon, Hobbes and Locke analysed tenets of political systems on the basis of constant universal reason. To them, the universe appeared as a great machine and its functions explained the ultimate rationality of creation, In their understanding, fact and reason **illumined**, while "enthusiasm" **blurred**. Hobbes held that society needed authoritative control (a strong ruler) as man was naturally selfish "brutish" and "nasty." No humanistic idealism here as pervaded the Renaissance!. Locke however was more tolerant. In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) he stated the central idea that the legislative branch of government must control power. The authority of the governor, he said, derived solely from the consent of the governed and the boundary of his power was the welfare of those governed by him. Government was therefore a matter of practical usefulness.

In philosophy too, Locke used in his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1690) a scientific stance. With clarity he established that knowledge comes only from sense experience and from reflection upon that experience —NOT from innate ideas.

The Royal Society also sought to reform English prose and improve language. Committee members included the likes of Dryden, Evelyn, Waller, Pepys, Cowley, Duke of Buckingham and Christopher Wren — all persons of stature and learning and practitioners of literary craft. They set standards of style for English prose that eschewed florid ornate courtliness for "close naked natural way of speaking….." Positive, direct expressions, a mathematical plainness, a shortness and simplicity were advocated. These ideals, obviously essential to scientific exposition were reinforced by the conversational tradition of elegant French prose, and together initiated what came to be called the great age of prose and reason. You will learn more about this in Paper 4.

1.2.5. NEO-CLASSICAL IMPACT ON LITERARY CRITICISM

Aristotle's analytical method had been honoured from Renaissance onward. His emphasis was on 'form' and 'structure' of the epic and tragedy, not on how effective it was. Horace and Cicero's rhetorical focus came to be valued now. Poetry is seen as refined oratory —to change public opinion and to persuade. Extreme originality or "invention" to appeal to the "passions" was discredited in favour of "moral instruction".

- **JOHN DRYDEN (1631 – 1700):**

Towered over the age in every genre of literary production and was "the first great modern critic." Best known for the Prefaces to his plays and *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (which you will study in Module 3), **Reason** played a great part in Dryden's judgments.

- He stood apart from his contemporaries in his support of "Englishness."
- Despite their deviations from the ancients he admired Shakespeare, Chaucer and Jonson.
- He saw unity of structure as a prime aesthetic quality.
- He admired French rules of composition but realized they were "too tied up."

- Admitted 'irregularity' in structure can improve variety.
- Admitted that Roman comic plays lacked warmth of love.
- Abhorred a constricted imitation of the ancients and copy-book rules.
- Applauded "delight" to be the chief and ultimate end of poetry.

The material of art was **NATURE** which was variously synonymous with **TRUTH** (permanent truths about man and the universe) and **REASON** (good sense/balance or mere realism). Adherence to the practice or imitation of the ancient writers (different from Aristotle's imitation, meaning representation of the actions of men) was the mark of excellence.

STOP THINK RECALL MOVE ON

After Sidney in the Elizabethan era (Paper 2), Dryden is the second major theorist and literary artist to reckon with reverence in English literature. Notice how despite being an early Neo-Classical, he does not slavishly follow the trends of the Age. With help from your counselor, attempt a comparative study of Philip Sidney and John Dryden as literary critics. Analyse for yourselves, how both respond to the demands of their respective milieus and yet stand above it in their foresight, analytical prowess and understanding of the purpose of literature.

- **THOMAS HOBBES (1588-1679):**

Regarded as the father of Neo-Classical rationalistic aesthetics. His 'Answer' to Davenant's Preface, his own Preface and his translation of the *Odyssey*, and a few pages in his philosophical writings – all prove that he believed poetry modifies the minds of others. He insists on **control** in art and on **judgment** as a check to wild fancy and ornamentation.

- **THOMAS RYMER (1641-1713)**

Notable lawyer, able researcher in history but notorious as an unimaginative Neo-Classical critic who reduced poetic matters to "common sense" and "decorum". He attacked Shakespeare for lack of probability, and florid poetry. His obsession with rules subverted his keen perception of

design and plotting in epic and tragedy. His views are presented in his 'Essay Concerning Critical and Curious Learning' (1698). Rymer lauded the three unities wholeheartedly.

- **Sir William Temple**

He must also be remembered in this context as one wholly devoted to the ancient norms, as manifest in his 'Essay Upon the Ancient and Modern Learning'. (1690).

1.2.6. NEO-CLASSICAL IMPACT ON POETRY:

An age that discredited imagination or controlled it with prescriptions and rules, wouldn't naturally have much poetry of the lyric kind. Translations or other types of poetry can be seen. The noteworthy rhymers are: -

- **JOHN DRYDEN**

Together with other kinds of literary work, he produced abundant poetry of variety & freshness.

- Poetry celebrating public occasions – heroic in tone and using the new heroic couplet: -

  ASTREA REDUX (1660): Saluting Charles II's return

  ANNUS MIRABILIS (1667): Great Fire of London and the Dutch war.

- **Satires** on political themes in Horatian pattern. Brilliant satirical allegories *ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL* (1681); the 2nd part with Nahum Tate in 1682. Duke of Moumouth's aspiration for the throne was retold in the Biblical tale with deadly effect in this work.

  MACFLECKNOE 1682

  THE MEDAL 1682

- **Religious allegories**

  RELIGIO LAICI (1682)

THE HIND AND THE PANTHER (1687)

- **TRANSLATIONS –** His easy fluid translations of Virgil's *ECLOGUES, GEORGICS, AENEID*; Ovid, Boccaccio and Chaucer were so vigorous and free that much of it was Dryden's own and teems with individuality.
- **Lyric poetry** was perforce small in bulk but outstanding in its melody and variety.

  'SONG FOR ST CECELIA'S DAY' 1687

  'ALEXANDER'S FEAST' 1697

  'To The Pious Memory of the Accomplish'd Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew' (1686)

❖ **THE COURTIER POETS AND OTHERS**

Almost all of them of noble birth, they wrote madrigals, odes, treatises in verse very like the cavalier poets, but the gallantry and the ardour are more intellectual. These slight verses are superficial but possess metrical polish and a gift for language.

- John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-1680) is most memorable in his 'Ode to Solitude'
- Sir Charles Sedley (1639(?) - 1701)
- Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset (1638-1706)
- John Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire (1648-1721)
- Charles Cotton
- Mrs Aphra Behn

} Both wrote good pastorals and lyrics which were often inserted in the plays of the time.

❖ **SATIRISTS:**

Though Milton, Cowley, Denham and Waller (the last two are credited with the introduction of the heroic couplet to England) were alive and productive during these years, they are considered to belong to a pre-Restoration ethos. The most acclaimed poems were in general satirical or

didactic. Dryden apart, the most eminent writer was **SAMUEL BUTLER** (1612-1680) His reputation was based on ***Hudibras***, (1663-78) a satire on the puritans, in three parts. In general outline it is modelled on the adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and is written in an odd jigging octosyllabic couplet. It is believed he also wrote ***The Rehearsal*** (1670) jointly with Rochester, which parodied the literary vices of the time, especially those of the heroic play. You will learn more about *Hudibras* in Module 2 Unit 3. Suffices to say for now that the popularity of the text was so great that it gave rise to what is called Hudibrastic verse. For the poem, Butler invented a mock-heroic verse structure. Instead of pentameter, the lines were written in iambic tetrameter. The rhyme scheme is the same as in heroic verse (aa, bb, cc, dd, etc.), but Butler used feminine rhyme for humour. A **feminine rhyme** is a rhyme that matches two or more syllables, usually at the end of respective lines, in which the final syllable or syllables are unstressed. It is also commonly known as double rhyme. The hudibrastic has been traditionally used for satire. Jonathan Swift, for example, wrote nearly all of his poetry in this form.

JOHN OLDHAM's (1653-83) ***Satires upon the Jesuits*** (1681) written during the Popish Plot, owed its great success to the national hysteria that the event exited. He depicts Loyola on his deathbed instructing his followers on future behaviour.

JOHN WILMOT, EARL OF ROCHESTER

His devastating ***A Satire against Reason and Mankind*** is an un-sparing critique against public immorality. The poem addresses the question of the proper use of reason and is generally assumed to be a Hobbesian critique of rationalism. The narrator subordinates reason to sense. It is based to some extent on Boileau's version of Juvenal's eighth or fifteenth satire, and is also

indebted to Hobbes, Montaigne, Lucretius and Epicurus, as well as the general libertine tradition. Confusion has arisen in its interpretation as it is ambiguous as to whether the speaker is Rochester himself, or a satirised persona. It criticises the vanities and corruptions of the statesmen and politicians of the court of Charles II.

On the whole, this survey of the poetry of the period will have shown you that the cult of reason, intellectualism, an exaltation of norms and rules were all contributory factors to the rise in popularity of verse satire. The revival of classicism and admiration for Horace accelerated the rise of this genre in this period.

1.2.7. NEO-CLASSICAL IMPACT ON PROSE

The Restoration period shows a significant variety of developments in prose forms – the principal type in vogue being Christian **Religious writing**. Given the bent of the Age, it will be observed that such religious writing often strayed into the domains of political and economic writing, and vice versa. Among the major works of this kind, mention may be made of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (an extract from which is syllabised) and Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*. Both works use a veiled manner to suggest how the individual can prevail against temptations of mind and body in the search for salvation.

At the other extreme perhaps, we could place a work like Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (1667) which was a candid setting forth of the principles of empirical science. He praised a spare, clean, and precise vocabulary for science and explanations that are as comprehensible as possible. In Sprat's account, the Royal Society explicitly rejected anything that seemed like scholasticism. For Sprat, as for a number of the founders of the Royal Society, science was Protestant: its reasons and explanations had to be comprehensible to all. There would be

no priests in science, and anyone could reproduce the experiments and hear their lessons. Similarly, he emphasised the need for conciseness in description, as well as reproducibility of experiments.

The Restoration also saw the publication of a number of significant pieces of political and philosophical writing that had been spurred by the actions of the Interregnum. Additionally, the court's adoption of Neo-classicism and empirical science led to a degree of receptiveness toward significant philosophical works. The works of William Temple and John Locke are significant in this context. Locke for one, makes an amazing synthesis between scientific methods and the social contract; it is understandable why his works became the corner-stone for quite many national and international events in the days to come.

Apart from this, we also see the beginnings of two new genres – **Fiction** and **Journalism**, both of which were to become very important in the forthcoming centuries. To talk of journalism first, the earliest efforts at news sheets and periodicals, though spotty, were noticed in *The News* and *City Mercury* by Roger L'Estrange. None of these were sustained efforts, yet were a significant development over the earlier broadsheets; and paved the way for Henry Muddiman's *London Gazette*. *The Athenian Mercury* in 1691 by John Dunton and the Athenian Society was the first regularly published periodical in England, begun just at the onset of the reign of William and Mary. This journal, which first published the poetry of Jonathan Swift and Elizabeth Singer Rowe, was thus the fore-runner of periodicals like publications like *Spectator, Gray's Inn Journal* and others. Thus the period saw the beginnings of the first professional and periodical (meaning that the publication was regular) journalism in England. Journalism per se develops late, generally around the time of William of Orange's claiming the throne in 1689. You will be

interested to know that England began to have newspapers just when William came to court from Amsterdam, where there were already newspapers being published.

- **PROSE FICTION**

The development of prose fiction was slight during these forty years and largely of little note, though its advent was significant. Roughly speaking they fall into two groups based on class, though this must be taken with a pinch of salt. One was the impact of the existing tradition of Romance fiction in France, as exemplified in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and the novels of Gauthier de Costes, seigneur de la Calprenède. Courtly readers imported romances from France. Some were translated into English or written in the same mould of escapist romances set in aristocratic life. Margaret Cavendish Duchess of Newcastle was one such writer who included philosophical and educational elements in her fiction and sub-titled them "serious romance." The pervasive presence of the romance element associated such novels with effeminacy; the second group that began to emerge dealt with ordinary men or picaresque figures. One of the most significant figures in the rise of the novel in the Restoration period is Aphra Behn. She was not only the first professional female novelist, but she may be among the first professional novelists of either sex in England.

- **APHRA BEHN (1640 – 1689):**

Short narratives known as shilling novels were popularly though confusingly known as NOVELS (In fact *Pamela* by Richardson was sub-titled "a dilated novel") The most praised and condemned single writer of such novels was Aphra Behn as she produced about twelve such works besides being a playwright. *Love Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), *The Fair Jilt*, *Oroonoko* or 'The Royal Slave' (1688) are the best known of her works. The last mentioned work is the love story of a Negro slave of noble body and mind, set in Surinam, - to

Holland, to England, has elements of the spy thriller and the exotic. *Oroonoko* is by common acclaim a fictional biography and there is recorded history of Behn herself having visited Surinam, a British colony then. Other novels are weak in psychology but focus on women characters quite heavily.

- **JOHN BUNYAN (1628-88)**

The only writer to achieve permanent distinction though writing chiefly for the artisans and merchants was the "mechanic" preacher, Bunyan the tinker. He made proletarian narrative forms into vehicles for spiritual instruction. All his works are forms of religious autobiographies voiced in allegorical form, combining travel story and conversion from ungodliness moving steadily towards epiphany. A born story-teller, the episodes and personages are vividly alive holding a natural suspense. Abstractions are made psychologically real. Much social satire exposing the vanity of the world indicates he was not naïve in his thinking. Always salvation of the soul is his prime aim. His major works are:

- *Grace Abounding*: 1666
- *Pilgrim's Progress* Part I : 1678
- *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*: 1680
- *The Holy War*: 1682
- *Pilgrim's Progress* Part II 1684

His prose style is powerful without being coarse, intense without being hysterical, homely but not vulgar plain but not monotonous. For more on Bunyan, see Module 3 Unit 1.

1.2.8. SUMMING UP

As you see, these forty years of the Restoration period are in their social and literary aspects closely related to the eighteenth century proper. A transition period, yet it laid the foundations for modern English national life. Politically we see the settling of the constitutional problem from the Commonwealth regime to the return of monarchy, however flawed that night have been. Socially the diluting of class distinctions by marking the rise of the middle class was an important phenomenon that had widespread implications on the cultural scenario as well. Intellectually we notice the growing impetus science and technology, thereby clearing the decks for the arrival of an age of reason. Stylistically, literature takes diverse avenues from now on. While we temporarily bid adieu to humanism and high flown imagination, the rise of new poetic forms remains an abiding aspect of the history of English literature. Most importantly, the Restoration marks the development of a wide variety of English prose that promises to be muscular in nature, to say the least.

1.2.9. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. What do you understand by the term Neo-Classicism? How did it turn into a pervasive influence on contemporary literature?
2. They were men of other professions, yet their writings illumine the times. Write on any two such men whom you have studied in this Unit in detail.
3. Highlight and comment on two significant factors that contributed to the rise of the Neo-Classical spirit in contemporary England.

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Analyse the contribution of two great diarists of the period to Restoration literature.
2. How would you account for the co-existence of the scientific spirit with the satiric mood in England of the Restoration?

3. Trace the changes in prose style that occurred during the Restoration. What were the reasons behind this change?

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. Briefly analyse why lyric poetry did not flourish during the reign of Charles II.
2. Write a note on a fiction writer of the period who appeals to you.
3. Why was there a phenomenal rise of the middle class in national life of the times? How did it contribute to cultural growth?

1.2.10. READING LIST

Albert, E. *A History of English Literature*

Baugh, A.C. *A Literary History of England*

Burton, K.M.P. *Restoration Literature*

Grierson, H. *Cross-Currents in 17th Century English Literature*

MODULE I UNIT 3

Puritanism and the Stage

1.3.0: INTRODUCTION

You have seen for yourselves in the two previous Units that the period we are studying was a complex one from the perspectives of politics and society and its resultant implications on culture. In understanding the convoluted polity of the period you have also understood by now that the role of religion has always been an important factor. In this Unit, we shall introduce you to Puritanism, a religious reform movement that arose in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and has had a varying degree of influence on manifestations in culture in general and literature in particular. We had kept apart our discussion on drama in Module 1 Unit 2; that will also be studied here in the light of the influence of Puritanism and the contemporary socio-cultural scene.

1.3.1. UNDERSTANDING PURITANISM

The terms ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism’ have their origin in the 1560s. At its simplest, Puritanism was a religious reform movement in the late 16th and 17th centuries that sought to “purify” the Church of England of remnants of the Roman Catholic “popery” (disparagingly used to refer to the over-arching role of the Pope in Catholic Christianity) that the Puritans claimed had been retained after the religious settlement reached early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Puritans became noted in the 17th century for a spirit of moral and religious earnestness that informed their whole way of life, and they sought through church reform to make their lifestyle the pattern for the whole nation. Their efforts to transform the nation contributed both to civil war in

England and to the founding of colonies in America as working models of the Puritan way of life.

Needless to say, they were a group of people who were on unhappy terms in the religious and social spheres in contemporary England, which however had by then embraced Protestantism and the Anglican Church (Church of England) had been founded. In that sense, Puritanism could be seen as a more radical movement that was felt necessary after the **Reformation** (Refer Paper 2). Puritanism in this sense was founded by John Calvin from the clergy shortly after the accession of Elizabeth I of England in 1558, as an activist movement within the Church of England. The Puritans, as stated earlier, were a group who had started a movement within English Protestantism in both the British Isles and the colonial America. Some even date it back to the activities of William Tyndale (1495- 1536).

The major impact of the movement was felt in the period between 1558 – 1658, that is, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. The Puritans were insistent on 'purity' of doctrine and ritual. In practice it meant purity from the corruption of both Canterbury and Rome. Their basic efforts were aimed at purging out Catholic elements (in spirit) of the Anglican Church, rather than to set up a rival church. An even more intense and astute Reformation was their sole object, though they had no independent identity. They thought of themselves as alien to their non- Puritan brothers. The Puritan theology comprised of righteousness and sovereignty of God. They thought that they were the chosen people to create the New Jerusalem and bring around the millennium.

Puritanism may be defined primarily by the intensity of the religious experience that it fostered. Puritans believed that it was necessary to be in a covenant (a formal and serious agreement or promise) relationship with God in order to redeem one from one's sinful condition. They further held that God had chosen to reveal salvation through preaching, and that the Holy Spirit was the energising instrument of salvation. Calvinist theology and polity proved to be major influences in the formation of Puritan teachings. This naturally led to the rejection of much that was characteristic of Anglican ritual at the time, these being viewed as "popish idolatry." In its place the Puritans emphasized preaching that drew on images from scripture and from everyday experience. Still, because of the importance of preaching, the Puritans placed a premium on a **learned ministry**. The moral and religious earnestness that was characteristic of Puritans was

combined with the doctrine of predestination inherited from Calvinism to produce a "covenant theology," a sense of themselves as elect spirits chosen by God to live godly lives both as individuals and as a community.

You will definitely get a hint from this that such radical views about religion were bound to have implications on politics. We take you a little back in time to the Elizabethan period to understand the root of this.

King Henry VIII you know, had separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, and the cause of Protestantism advanced rapidly under Edward VI (reigned 1547–53). During the reign of Queen Mary (1553–58), however, England returned to Roman Catholicism, and many Protestants were forced into exile. Many of the exiles found their way to Geneva, where John Calvin's church provided a working model of a disciplined church. Out of this experience also came the two most popular books of Elizabethan England—the Geneva Bible andJohn Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*—which provided justification to English Protestants to view England as an elect nation chosen by God to complete the work of the Reformation. Thus, Elizabeth's accession in 1558 was enthusiastically welcomed by these Protestants; but her early actions while reestablishing Protestantism disappointed those who sought extensive reform, and this faction was unable to achieve its objectives in the Convocation, the primary governing body of the Church.

Many of these Puritans—as they came to be known during a controversy over vestments (the Vesterian Controversy dealt with the question of whether clerical vestments—declared to be "popish" by some—were theologically important) in the 1560s and '70's — sought parliamentary support for an effort to institute a Presbyterian (Calvinist theory of church governance whereby Christ is the only head and all members are equal under him) form of polity for the Church of England. This naturally caused resentment amongst the ranks of the clergy. Other Puritans, concerned with the long delay in reform, decided upon a "reformation without tarrying for any." These "Separatists" repudiated the state church and formed voluntary congregations based on a covenant with God and among themselves. Both groups, but especially the Separatists, were repressed by the establishment. Denied the opportunity to reform the established church, English Puritanism turned to preaching, pamphlets, and a variety of experiments in religious expression and in social behaviour and organisation. Its successful

growth also owed much to patrons among the nobility and in Parliament and its control of colleges and professorships at Oxford and Cambridge.

Puritan hopes were again raised when the Calvinist James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth as James I of England in 1603, thereby ushering in what is known as the Jacobean period. But at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 he dismissed the Puritans' grievances with the phrase **"no bishop, no king"**. To James I Puritans were a sect rather than a religion. They were the people, as Trevelyan writes, "who wished either to purify the usage of property, or to worship separately by forms to be 'purified." The Puritans thus remained under pressure. Some were deprived of their positions; others got by with minimal conformity; and still others, who could not accept compromise, fled England.

The pressure for conformity increased under Charles I (1625–49) and his archbishop, William Laud. Nevertheless, the Puritan spirit continued to spread, and when civil war broke out between Parliament and Charles I in the 1640s, Puritans seized the opportunity to urge Parliament and the nation to renew its covenant with God. Parliament called together a body of clergy to advise it on the government of the church. But this body—the Westminster Assembly - was so badly divided that it failed to achieve reform of church government and discipline. Meanwhile, the New Model Army, which had defeated the royalist forces, feared that the Assembly and Parliament would reach a compromise with King Charles that would destroy their gains for Puritanism, so it seized power and turned it over to its hero, Oliver Cromwell. The religious settlement under Cromwell's Commonwealth allowed for a limited pluralism that favoured the Puritans. A number of radical Puritan groups appeared, including the Levelers, the Diggers, the Fifth Monarchy Men, and the Quakers (the only one of lasting significance).

After Cromwell's death in 1658, conservative Puritans supported the restoration of King Charles II and a modified episcopal (relating to a bishop or to bishops as a group) polity. However, they were outdone by those who reinstituted Laud's strict episcopal pattern. Thus, English Puritanism entered a period known as the Great Persecution. English Puritans made a final unsuccessful attempt to secure their ideal of a comprehensive church during the Glorious Revolution, but England's religious solution was defined in 1689 by the Toleration Act, which continued the established church as episcopal but also tolerated dissenting groups.

The Puritan ideal of realizing the Holy Commonwealth by the establishment of a covenanted community was carried to the American colony of Virginia by Thomas Dale, but the greatest opportunity came in New England. The original pattern of church organization in the Massachusetts Bay colony was a "middle way" between Presbyterianism and Separatism, yet in 1648 four New England Puritan colonies jointly adopted the Cambridge Platform, establishing a congregational form of church government. The hounded-out Puritans from England who migrated there, came to have a firm control on socio-cultural ethos. They rejected all that was associated with the Church of Rome. They discarded all that were adjuncts to the Catholic and the Anglican faiths, like music, incense, rich vestments, etc. Faith, Reason and Logic replaced the sensuous appeals of worship. All that was detrimental to concentration was rejected. Hence sensuous imageries in literary compositions were an anathema. The Bible to them was the highest form of literature. Naturally, by accepting the Bible as the guide and guardian, the writers were least concerned with the literary tradition which had so far made an alchemy of religious and secular aspects of culture and civilization. It was thus an insularity of approach to literature and life. Individual freedom of thought and expression was affected to the worst. Religion/Puritanism controlled law also, as shown by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*, which, in fact, is a satire on Puritanism. While this was the situation in America, mainland England however, could never again become the preserve of Puritanism. Yet, the Puritan influence during the Commonwealth became a factor to reckon with, both in politics and culture, as we shall now see.

1.3.2. PURITAN VIEW OF CULTURE

As with our understanding of the Puritan movement that began in England and gradually petered out to America, any attempt at understanding the cultural milieu they brought in should factor a historical perspective. We need to remember that these Bible believing Christians and their Evangelical spiritual movement dates back to the time when the English Bible was being smuggled into England, thereby giving rise to Biblical Christianity and the English Reformation! With time however and with the coming of new mores, their position did decline, so much so that in his ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesy,*** John Dryden calls the Puritans a **"barbarous race of men"**.

The question before us is, how and in what ways did the Puritan view of culture affect the course of English literature?

For one, the Puritans were a people who caused others sit up and listen. They were bound and determined to make an impact in their generation. Their dreams and their goals were both individual and national. They were quite vociferous in the way they engaged with the challenges of their time. The Puritans were inclined to express their opinion quite forcefully, even to the point of straining the social constraints of a rigid monarchical English society. This would cause them, and the mother country, some significant pains of travail. In their time, the Puritans were considered a formidable force in the socio- cultural sphere. They condemned not the drink, but the drunkard, they condemned not the sex but extramarital sex. They told about a unique life style. Hence there was a strong opposition to all the Italianate influences that were pervasive in England; just as their condemnation of the theatre as a place that fostered vice was very strong. It must be understood that more than the plays themselves, they were against the ways in which play-houses had turned into places of depravity and licentiousness. We shall learn more about this in the next sub-section. In all, the humanist spirit that pervaded the Elizabethan Age was randomly curbed under Puritan influence. The scenario however changed dramatically once the Puritans went out of favour with the Restoration in 1660.

Was Puritanism pervasive in contemporary English Culture?

Even as you read the history of Puritan England, here is some food for thought that you may like to discuss as students of Literature:

The two great poets of Puritanism in England – Milton and Marvell could neither totally adhere to, nor ignore the existing literary tradition. In *Paradise Lost* Milton mingles religious and secular aspects though his motto of 'justify(ing) the ways of God to men'. His adventure lies in treating a Biblical theme in a pagan genre, and subtly incorporating contemporary politics. Thus Satan becomes Cromwell whose Latin Secretary Milton himself was. And his style too smacks of both religious and secular aspects. The base is the Bible but the superstructure is Pagan/Classical. Milton's Renaissance humanism thus gets the better of his Puritan upbringing, failing which *Paradise Lost* would suffer the fate of a book of liturgy.

Andrew Marvell, another Puritan poet, also, Like Milton, could not disregard the national tradition of poetry and classical/Latin poetry as well. Marvell's *The Garden* in a Puritan's appeal to all to love nature which is the manifestation of God and also a most congenial place for meditation. But many lines show a Spenserian sensuousness and symbolic connotation which a Puritan would not ratify. He re-interprets *The Bible* as to how Eve destroyed Adam's perfect freedom and heavenly bliss. The purification of the soul thus happens not through *The Bible*, nor Puritanism, but by association with the garden. Here he deviates from Puritanism.

Even Bunyan was castigated by many for using an allegorical fictional style in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

With help from your counselor, try to analyse these contra-indicatory trends in contemporary literature and how these reflected upon the culture of the period.

1.3.3. PURITANISM AND THE STAGE

The English Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the worst enemies of English drama. The logic of the Puritans was both religious and social. The causes of the Puritan enmity the drama/stage can be enumerated thus:

- ✓ First of all, in The *Book of Deuteronomy*, Moses spoke to the Israelites, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." (***The Old Testament***).

And the Puritans saw how the English stage was encouragious and cheering the male actors dressed up as women, and women as dressed up as men. It was sharp violation of the Biblical injunction, and they looked upon this cross-dressing as inimical both to religion and the moral code..

- ✓ Secondly, the dramas were full of bawdy and blasphemy. Both pre marital and post marital love were given dramatic representation and the audience relished both, without any qualms. Here again, the Bible is the guide of the Puritans, and they did not take such violation kindly:

"If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman…"

- ✓ Thirdly, the theatres attracted lewd women and apprentices. They increased the danger of plague and lessened the scope of profit and salvation.

In his ***History of England***, Macaulay gives a picture of the Puritans of early 17th Century, which corroborates with the cause of general apathy and angst of the Puritans in relation to the stage:
"It was sin…to drink a friend's health, to hawk, to hunt a stag, to play at chess…to read the Fairy Queen…the fine arts were all proscribed."

- ✓ Fourth, Henri Fluchere wrote in ***Shakespeare and the Elizabethans***, "…Puritans had a horror of beauty, sensuousness and sensuality. The stage appeared to them a school of corruption and lies, a vast industry of debauchery, an ever- increasingly degenerate activity…"

- ✓ Fifth, many plays were staged on Sundays. And the playhouses drew away people from Sermons. It was a grave threat to the existence of religion, and the stage was doing all that was beyond religion.

- ✓ Last of all, the players were hated by the Puritans for another reason. The actors were regarded as superfluous sort of men. In their view, an actor might be a vagabond or a rogue, but evading legal hassles he was growing rich at the cost of the simple poor. He flaunted to be a gentleman with dresses costly and extravagant. Neither public nor the puritan eye could take these pleasure- seeking sections patronisingly.

For a long time the pulpit and the stage were looked upon as rivals. The Puritan preacher would brook no much rivalry. A play cannot be a match for a sermon, nor could it be allowed to create any trouble in matters sermonic – that was the viewpoint. It was rather taught by the preachers that the players on the stage would incur God's wrath. It was even argued that the annual plague in London was the effect of sin, and the causes of the sin were players. It therefore stood to reason that the cause of the plagues were players. The Puritans continued this belief and expected the people to follow them. They, however, had about hundred and seventy sects. It must be noted that not all of them were equally averse to pleasure and amusement.

1.3.4. BRIEF HISTORY OF PURITAN CONDEMNATION OF DRAMA/STAGE

The ordinance of September 2, 1642 is generally held to be the culmination of a protracted effort of the Puritans to ban drama. Or, rather reversely, dramatists/players after a prolonged struggle for survival finally gave in to the Puritans. The history of the efforts to stop performances of the dramas had started much earlier to 1642.

Roger Ascham was no Puritan. But he made his vehement outbursts against the popular Romances of the day. The tone of his invectives is akin to that of the Crusaders against plays which were dramatised versions of these romances. Then there was Witham Alley, Bishop of Exeter, who condemned the "Wanton Books" in ***The Poore Man's Librarie*** (1565). He was the first man in England to write against the stage. He cited the case of the City of Marseilles that did not allow any player to live within its territory for the sake of gravity. The contention was that plays are killers of soberness and sanctity of a place and a people. The writers of London harped on this example to bring home their point of condemnation of the stage. The third writer was Lewis Wager. In his Prologue to ***Life and Repentance of Marie Magdalene*** (1566), he defended his case as a dramatist. Efforts were there to suppress plays by bishop, preacher and mayor. London thus became an arena of the struggle between Puritan and player.

But the likes of Lodge and Heywood tried their best to defend plays. Lodge's ***A Defence of Stage Plays*** (1579-80) was against Gosson's ***Schoole of Abuse*** (1579). Heywood must have studied Lodge's tract before writing ***An Apology for Actors*** (1612). Heywood argues that The *New Testament* has no such passage to show that drama is a profane art. Moreover he was of the opinion that drama can well serve as a moral tonic and work decisively on a guilty conscience. He attempts to challenge the Puritans by referring to the ***Bible.*** In 1615 John Greene upheld the Puritan stand through ***A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*** and answers all the defensive points of Heywood. Overbury's ***Characters*** (1614) contains this Puritan- player controversy of the time. In 1616 the writer of ***The Rich Cabnit furnished with a varietie of exquisite Discriptions*** shows the excellent qualities an actor has to possess - dancing, song, elocution, wit etc. Nathaniel Field, actor and playwright, defended stage acting against the Puritan attacks. By a careful study of the ***Bible*** he learnt that no trade of life except "conjurers, sorcerers, and witches, ipso facts, are damned". He wrote the quoted words to a certain "Mr. Sutton, preacher att St Mary Overs.' In 1625 an anonymous Puritan wrote a petition to the Parliament, entitling it ***A Short Treatise Against Stage Players.*** It was an attempt to show how drama was the monster of vice and all sensuality.

William Prynne (1600-69) the pamphleteer and the writer of ***Histriomastix*** (1632) deserves special mention in connection with the Puritan attack on the stage. It is a book of eleven hundred

pages, summing up, as it were, the Puritan stand against drama as a whole. He went to the extreme by calling some French actresses "notorious whores", who were all Queen's persons. The result was that he was condemned to stand in the pillory, pay penalty, lose both ears, and get perpetually imprisoned. He was also to lose his Oxford degree and was expelled from Lincoln's Inn. His life sentence was afterwards cancelled by parliament. Prynne's objective was to suppress stage acting, though the royalty of his time was favouring drama. The fact is that drama before suppression in 1642 was in a prosperous condition, and it is evident from a tract named ***The Stage- Players Complaint*** (1641), which is an anonymous work.

The 1642 Ordinance was for full suppression of Stage plays. It brought to a close the glorious tradition and triumph of drama in the reign of Elizabeth and her two successors. Despite a long struggle for existence against the Puritans for three quarters of a century, the players and writers made themselves a laughing- stock as it was to the puritans that victory finally fell. By this ordinance the demolition of all play houses was decreed. All actors were seized and whipped. Every audience attending a drama was liable to a fine of five shillings. The two straight ordinances of the parliament in 1647 and 1648 created a fear psychosis among the writers, actors and audience. These ordinances, however, saw some protests in the form of two tracts: ***The Actors Remonstrance*** (1643), and ***The Players Petition to the Parliament*** (a piece of satirical verse). There was another book ***Mr William Prynne, his Defence of stage- players*** (1649).

The Puritan attack on the stage was not for reforming the theatre, but for abolishing it. To the puritans the stage served no ethical or moral function. It was rather posing a threat to all that was salubrious to mental, moral and spiritual health. Dramatists like Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe and John Heywood- on the other hand- regarded drama as an engine for moral instruction. They advocated for a synthesis of art and ethics. But their advocacy frittered away before the power of the Commonwealth and the tensions of the Civil War.

Did drama then die in full during Oliver Cromwell's rule?

So far as Foucault's theory of power is concerned, every power has its resistant power, otherwise autocracy or fascicism would never change. During Cromwell's rule, drama pulsated in noblemen's houses, "Drolls" or farces or humorous scenes adapted from plays and stages were enacted, e.g. '**Merry conceits of Bottom the Weaver'** from ***A Midsummer Night's Dream;***

'The Grave Diggers' Colloquy' from ***Hamlet;*** **'Falstaff, the Bouncing Knight'** from ***Henry IV*** and so on.

Rules banning the stage were however beginning to be relaxed towards the close of Cromwell's rule. William Davenant was allowed to stage his ***Siege of Rhodes.*** Part 1 of *The Siege of Rhodes* was first performed in a small private theatre constructed at Davenant's home Rutland House in 1656. Special permission had to be obtained from the Puritan government of Oliver Cromwell by calling the production "recitative music", music being still permissible within the law. When it was published in 1656, it was under the equivocating title *The siege of Rhodes made a representation by the art of prospective in scenes, and the story sung in recitative musick, at the back part of Rutland-House in the upper end of Aldersgate-Street, London*. The 1659 reprinting gives the location at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, a well-known theatre frequented by Samuel Pepys after the Restoration (1660). The Rutland House production also included England's first professional actress, Mrs. Coleman. Davenant went on to open the Cockpit theatre in Drury Lane, and produced two similar operas ***The Cruelty of a Spaniard in Peru*** and ***The History of Francis Drake.***

1.3.5. FROM THE PURITAN BAN ON PLAYHOUSES TO THE RESURGENCE OF DRAMA

You have by now formed a fair idea of the cross-currents that pervaded the cultural scene in general and the theatre in particular under Puritan influence. It would be interesting to cast a look at the events that surrounded the closure of playhouses in 1642, what followed, and how the resurgence of drama came about with the Restoration of monarchy.

In 1622 there were but four principal companies--the King's, which acted at the Blackfriars and the Globe; the Prince's, at the Curtain; the Palgrave's, at the Fortune; the Queen of Bohemia's, at the Cockpit. The year 1629 was significant in dramatic history; it being the first year in which a female performer was seen in the English theater. The innovation was introduced by a French company, but the women were hissed and booed off the stage. This was at the new theater just opened in Salisbury Court. Three weeks afterwards they made a second attempt, but the audience would not tolerate them. King Charles and his Queen had a great love for dramatic entertainments; the latter frequently took part in the Court Masques, which brought down upon

her the brutal language of that canting fellow Prynne. Yet in 1635 Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels, under whose jurisdiction all theatrical affairs were then placed, mentions only the King's company under Lowin and Taylor at Blackfriars, the Queens under Beeston at the Cockpit, the Prince's under Moore and Kane at the Fortune; in the next year he adds a fourth, doubtless Salisbury Court, to the list, which house was probably closed on the previous date.

On the 6th of September, 1642, the theaters were closed by ordinance, it being considered not seemly to indulge in any kind of diversions or amusements in such troubled times as the political turbulence indicated. In 1647 another and more imperative order was issued, in consequence of certain infractions of the previous one, threatening to imprison and punish as rogues all who broke its enactments. Close upon the heels of this second came a third, which declared all players to be rogues and vagabonds, and authorized the justices of the peace to demolish all stage galleries and seats; any actor discovered in the exercise of his vocation should for the first offense be whipped, for the second be treated as an incorrigible rogue, and every person found witnessing the performance of a stage play should be fined five shillings, as has been mentioned earlier. Verily, the reign of Praise-God Barebones had commenced. But not even these stringent regulations were found sufficient, and in the next year a Provost-Marshal was appointed, whose duty it was to seize all ballad singers and suppress all stage-plays. It is mentioned in *Whitelocke's Memorials,* that on the 20th of December, 1649, some stage players were seized by troopers at the Red Bull, their clothes taken away, and they were carried off to prison.

As you have read earlier, towards the end of Cromwell’s period in 1658, this paranoia began to wane wand with Davenant, theatrical acting began to resurface. Two years later came the Restoration, and a new order of things dramatic. Theaters began to revive, and plays were openly performed at the Red Bull, the Cockpit in Drury Lane, and the theater in Salisbury Court. The flamboyant Charles II was a huge patron of theatre and helped breathe new life into British drama. A **patent** was even issued for two new theatre companies, and these were allowed to organise ‘serious’ drama. Led by William Davenant, **The Duke's Men** was for younger performers, while older, more experienced actors were in **The King's Company**, led by Thomas Killigrew. While the two companies created new opportunities theatrically, their monopoly on performances hampered the growth of British theatre. Soon further letters patent were granted to theatres in other English towns and cities, including the Theatre Royal, Bath in 1768, the Theatre

Royal, Liverpool in 1772, and the Theatre Royal, Bristol in 1778. The theatres that were not patented had to be satisfied with showing only comedy, pantomime and melodrama. These monopolies on the performance of "serious" plays were eventually revoked by the Theatres Act 1843, but censorship of the content of plays by the Lord Chamberlain under Robert Walpole's Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737 continued until 1968.

Many scenic innovations developed during the Restoration. One of the most innovative and influential designers of the 18th century was Philip Jacques de Loutherbourg. He was the first designer to break up floor space with pieces of scenery, giving more depth and dimension to the stage. Other designers experimented with lighting by using candles and large chandeliers which hung over the floor of the stage. Actors began to get paid on how popular they were, and they usually played the same type of roles; for instance, tragic actors always played tragic roles. The female was known as the ingenue and the male came to be known as the juvenile. Playwrights got the proceeds from the third night's performance and also the sixth night's performance, but only for the original run of the show. Pantomimes would also be performed before and after a play.

On the thematic front Restoration theatre became a way to celebrate the end of Puritan rule, with its strict moral codes. To celebrate the opening of the theatres Restoration plays were lavish, often immoral by Puritan standards, and poked fun at both royalists and roundheads. The lightheartedness of the plays reflected a society recovering from years of division and unrest. Although the audience enjoyed tragedies, comedies were the hallmark of Restoration plays. Classics such as Romeo and Juliet were rewritten and given a happy ending! The theatre that re-emerged was however no longer national in character; there was the pervasive presence of French playwrights like Corneille, Racine and Moliere, and also Spanish tales and plays as were already popular on the continent. The age was not one of heroism, and this was naturally reflected in the parody of heroic drama that was produced. As corollary to this, comedy that inculcated the manners of restoration England became the widespread mode. You will learn more about this revived dramaturgy in Module 4 Unit 1. Though for thematic reasons, drama after the Puritan period has been put into a separate Unit, it is advisable that you read it as continuity.

1.3.6. SUMMING UP

In this Unit which is thematically a continuation of Module 1 Unit 2, you have learnt of

- Puritanism as a religious movement that came to assume widespread socio-cultural dimensions, though it has always enjoyed varying fortunes in England.
- The impact of Puritan strictures on culture in general and on drama in particular, leading finally to the closure of playhouses.
- Drama as subversive activity during the period of the ban from 1642b to 1660.
- The revival of dramaturgy in a changed form in Restoration England.

1.3.7. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. How did the Puritan movement mark a significant break from the humanist influence that pervaded Elizabethan England?
2. Write a brief essay on the impact of Puritanism on 17th century drama.
3. Show how the Restoration brought about a revival of drama after the Puritan ban. How was this drama different from earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre?

Medium length Answers (12 marks)

1. Write a brief note on the conditions that led to the Civil Wars in England.
2. Why were the Puritans strongly against the theatre? Write about some of the tracts written to substantiate their views.
3. From the cultural perspective do you feel Puritan rule was a cross between the Jacobean and Restoration periods? Give a reasoned analysis.

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. What do you know about the Long Parliament?
2. Write short notes on (a) Histriomastix (b) Seige of Rhodes
3. What is Patent Theatre? Write about the resurgence of theatres under Charles II.

1.3.8. SUGGESTED READING

Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Supernova Pub.

Ford, Boris ed. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 4. 'From Dryden to Johnson'.

Heinemann, Margot. *Puritanism and Theatre*

Wiley, Basil. *The Seventeenth Century Background*

MODULE 2 UNIT 1

JOHN DRYDEN- *MAC FLECKNOE*

2.1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Module 1 you have already read about the multi-pronged creative talent of John Dryden as a poet, a theorist of literature in his contemporary milieu, and as a dramatist. In course of this Paper, you will be acquainted with all three facets of this most illustrious among the Restoration litterateurs. For now, this Unit will introduce you to his famous satiric period piece poem *Macflecknoe*. As you get along with the text, you are expected to understand for yourself why he is considered a noted satirist and a representative writer of his time. For a comprehensive understanding, we provide a glimpse of the range of Dryden's works in this Unit itself.

2.1.1 JOHN DRYDEN AND HIS WORKS

John Dryden (1631- 1700) was educated at Trinity College Cambridge. He moved to London in 1654 and became a civil servant in the Government of Oliver Cromwell. His first published poem ***Heroic Stanzas Consecrated to the Memory of His Highness*** (1558) saluted the military exploits of his Lord Protector. This should give you a fair idea of how poetry of the Restoration period was steadily getting inclined to writing panegyrics (praise) of the court and the nobility.

Astrea Redux composed shortly after, celebrated the Restoration of Charles II in 1600 followed by a ***Panegyric*** on his coronation. This rather sudden transfer of loyalty exposed him to much sneering by his critics. Dr. Samuel Johnson however endorses Dryden saying "if he changed, he changed with the nation." (Lives of Poets 1779 Vol I "Life of Waller.")

Baring this initial shift, Dryden remained faithful to the cause of the Monarchy until his death. He was appointed poet laureate in 1671.

Though he was labeled "Dryden the poet" by his contemporaries, he was adept at writing prose, drama and many forms of poetry. Elegiac, panegyrics, satires, argumentative and narrative verse, lyrics exist in large numbers. The notable ones among these are ***To the Memory of Mr. Oldham, The Medal, Absalom and Achitophel, On St. Cecelia's Day.*** We study him mainly as a satirist in ***Mac Flecknoe.*** Among his significant plays we have ***Aurangzebe, The Conquest of Granada*** and ***All for Love. Essay of Dramatic Poesy*** is a work of literary criticism written in the form of a dialogue. It positions him as an arbiter of taste based on intelligence and sound reasonableness.

He passed away on 1st May 1700 and was eventually buried in Westminster Abbey- as a mark of honour.

2.1.2 OCCASION OF *MAC FLECKNOE*

Before we come to the text of the poem, we need to grasp the 'story' behind it. That will definitely aid our understanding of the lines.

Macflecknoe (1682) is a devastating attack on Dryden's fellow dramatist Shadwell. Originally a friend, Shadwell had quarreled with Dryden and attacked his play ***Aurangzebe***. The poem we study is Dryden's scathing retort. Shadwell is ridiculed by being represented as the '**Mac**' or 'Son' of Richard Flecknoe, a contemptible Irish minor poet and playwright whom Dryden addresses as the unchallenged monarch of "all the realms of nonsense" (L-6). Shadwell is therefore the true heir in meaninglessness and inconsequence.

We must however remember that Shadwell was actually a fairly successful and well-thought of playwright. The ignominy is undeserved.

2.1.3 POLITICAL BACKGROUND: CONTEXTUALISING *MAC FLECKNOE*

No significant literary work of the Restoration exists independent of strong connections with the contemporary political scenario. There is also a political undertone in this satire. Shadwell is a Whig, member of a political party that opposed the king. The pro-monarchy party was that of the Tories. You can definitely make out on which side Dryden's sympathies lay. A feud existed between the Whigs and Tories regarding the succession of the Duke of York, the Catholic brother of King Charles II, to the throne in 1680. A look at the pictorial depiction of the Stuart Line and the House of Hanover will help you understand the complex web. While the Tories were supporters of the King and Duke of York, the Whigs were opposed to the succession of the Duke of York to the English throne. It is believed that Charles II sought the help of Dryden in this connection, and shortly afterwards, ***Absalom and Achitophel***, a political satire was written.

The identity of Shadwell as a Whig is also ridiculed by Dryden who is a Tory, in ***Mac Flecknoe.*** Hence there is political satire mixed with personal satire.

As a learner, you will be expected to differentiate between these two, and reason for yourselves, the factors that have made Macflecknoe an abiding literary text despite its highly topical nature.

2.1.4 TEXT OF *MAC FLECKNOE*

Edition: Great English Poems, Ed. C.B Young, OUP, 1965.

Xerox of Text provided. Pls stick to line numbers & divisions as in original.

2.1.5 GLOSSARYAND NOTES

L2. Fate: Not destiny but Time that marches on beyond human wish or control.

L3. Augustus: Octavius Caesar elected Emperor of Rome at age 21 after the assassination of Julius.

L 12, L21. wit: Intelligence.

L13. resolved: Decided.

L25, L 187- 89. goodly fabric: Alludes to Shadwell's corpulence.

L28: supinely: Inertly.

L30. tautology: Repetition of idea and expression, eg. "returned back."

L29: Thomas Heywood (1575?- 1560?) and James Shirley (1596- 1660): Both contemporary playwrights of merit and popularity. This attack on them is uncalled for.

L32: "sent before … thy way": St. John the Baptist prepared the way for the advent of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

L33. Norwich: Shadwell came from this city.

L33. drugget: Coarse woollen material for clothes.

L35: whilom: Formerly.

L36: Flecknoe had lived for some time in Lisbon, and was treated kindly by King John of Portugal.

L42: ***Epsom Wells*** (1673), a play by Shadwell. 'Swelled', 'big', 'blankets toss'd' combine as a scandalous image.

L43: Arion: An ancient Greek bard saved from drowning by being carried ashore on a dolphin's back. He charmed dolphins by his music.

L51: St. Andre: A celebrated French dancing master of the day.

L55: Singleton A famous singer of the day.

L 57: Villerius: A leading character in Davenant's opera ***The Siege of Rhodes.*** (1663)

L58: sire: Shadwell's Flecknoe's literary disciple, no biological link.

L61: Ellipses: A figure of speech. Shadwell not yet but soon to be crowned king of dullness.

L62: Augusta: London was known as LONDONIUM AUGUSTA in the time of Augustus Caesar.

L65: Barbican: A London locality.

L65: hight: Was called.

L67: pile: Building.

L72: nursery: School for training actors.

L75: punks: Prostitutes.

L76: Maximin: Hero of Dryden's play ***Tyrannic Love*** (1670) who dying, defies the gods.

L77: Fletcher: John (1579-1625), wrote both comedies and tragedies; many of them in collaboration with Francis Beaumont.

L77: buskins: The high boots worn by ancient Athenian tragic actors; hence emblem of tragedy.

L78: Jonson: Ben (1573- 1637) the greatest writer of comedies, after Shakespeare, of the 16^{th} and 17^{th} centuries known for his 'humour' based characters.

L78: Socks: Low shows worn by ancient Athenian comic actors hence emblem of comedy.

L79: gentle Simkin: A cobbler in an Interlude (Remember the transitory phases of drama in Middle English literature). Shoemaking was called the 'gentle craft'. Cobblers patched shoes with bits and pieces similar to plays and performances found here.

L81: clinches: Puns.

L82: Panton: A noted punster.

L85: Dekker: Thomas (1570- 1632) well known Elizabethan comic dramatist, whose plays highlighted the common man.

L88-90: ***Psyche*** (1674), ***The Miser*** (1672), ***The Humorists*** (1671) are all plays by Shadwell. Raymond is a character in the last, and Bruce is a character in Shadwell's ***The Virtuoso*** (1676).

L95: Bunhill: Fields cemetery and poor area of London.

L95: Watling Street: Roman road running NW across England, through London, and a connection to the counties.

L98: Ogleby: John (1600-76), poet who translated Homer, Virgil and Aesop in verse.

L100: bilked: Unpaid.

L101: Herringman: Leading publisher of Charles II's reign and publisher to Shadwell.

L104: Ascanius: Virgil calls him Son of Aeneas, "Rome's second hope." Shadwell is second Ascanius, the hope of London. Needless to say, this is sheer mockery.

L108: Hannibal: (3rd B.C) Carthaginian general who crossed the Alps and defeated the mighty Romans.

L106-7: fogs: Symbolise dullness which envelops Shadwell's head instead of a saintly halo.

L114-15: At coronation, the highest Church dignitary anoints the King with oil. Flecknoe had originally been a Roman Catholic Priest.

L114: unction: oil

L116: sinister: Left.

L118: Love's Kingdom: A play by Flecknoe (1664).

L122: poppies: Signify Shadwell's sleepy dullness.

L126: Romulus: Legendary founder of Rome.

L127: vulture: Raptorial bird, like the eagle, associated with kingship and empire.

L130: the honours of his head: Respectable head of white hair.

L133: The notion and phrasing here are borrowed from classical poets. The idea is that the poetic impulse is the result of possession by a deity, which at first the poet tries to resist.

L147: gentle George: Sir George Etherege (1635-91) notable writer of comedies. The names that follow are of characters in his plays.

L159-60: Sedley: Sir Charles (1639- 1701) poet and playwright, famous for his wit, had written the prologue to Shadwell's ***Epsom Wells*** (1673). Dryden here hints that he helped Shadwell compose it.

L164: Sir Formal Trifle: A rhetorical character in Shadwell's ***The Virtuoso.*** Shadwell used 'type' characters in the main.

L166: northern dedications: Shadwell's dedications of works to the Duke of Newcastle and to his son the Earl of Ogle.

L175: Prince Nicander: A character in Shadwell's ***Psyche.***

L187-8: Ben Jonson like Shadwell, was bulky. However Jonson had wit while Shadwell's a flatulent distension of the abdomen (tympany). Notice how the satiric punch does not leave out even physical proportions!

L187: pretence: Claim.

L189: tun: A large cask or barrel for wine or beer.

L190: kilderkin: Cask for liquids containing 16 or 18 gallons measure.

L198: anagram: Word or words formed by rearrangement of the letters of another word and often in comment upon it.

L200: acrostic: Poem in which the initial letters of each line spell a word and were cleverly written in lines which formed different shapes, such as wings or altars.

L206-7: In Shadwell's ***The Viruoso,*** Bruce and Longville play this trick on Sir Formal Trifle.

L210-11: See ***The Second Book of Kings*** in the ***Bible II*** 1-15.

2.1.6 PARAPHRASE WITH CRITICAL COMMENTARY

Dryden imagines a situation where the aged king Flecknoe, monarch of "all the realms of nonsense" decides to ensure succession to his throne (This theme would be of great contemporary relevance in Dryden's time). Among his numerous progeny he selects Shadwell as most worthy. This is because Shadwell resembles him the closest, and "never deviates into sense". The extent of his inanity is presented in several ways through images of light and darkness and comparison of his actual corpulence and inertia with huge Oak trees. Notice carefully and you find a ring of Chaucer's style of humour and satire in Dryden too. We understand that the qualities Flecknoe looks for in Shadwell are negative qualities in a human being, nonetheless, these very aspects are glorified. You will definitely find parallels here with Chaucer's 'extolling' of the Wife of Bath (whom you have read) and other characters whose flaws/vices are censured not by criticism but by glorification!

Flecknoe sees himself as a mere forerunner (L30 onwards) preparing the way for the grand arrival of Shadwell from the north (Norwich). Popular playwrights Heywood and Shirley were only replicas of the prototype Shadwell. On a glorious ceremonial occasion Shadwell, leading a host of minor musicians, had sung before the royal barge of the English king during a Thames river pageant. Flecknoe considers this a greater achievement than his own stint at the court of King John of Portugal. Lines 40-62 elaborate mockingly on the performance- at Shadwell's desperate efforts to produce a semblance of rhythm and harmony by tapping his feet, waving hands while fingering a screeching lute. Aided by a crowd of similarly ungifted musicians, the final result is so unmusical and dull, that overcome with emotion, the father concludes that Shadwell alone is fit for the throne.

On the fringes of the walled city of London also known as Augusta where once stood a watchtower is now the haunt of prostitutes and brothel houses. Here existed a school for training of young actors and actresses. Dryden sneers at the rant, bombastic language and exaggerated mannerisms the players used to create an effect. This was the cradle of sub-standard actors, where great dramatists like Fletcher and Jonson could never be seen. Interestingly, Flecknoe deemed this as the most suitable platform or throne for Shadwell. It seems Dekker had foretold of such an event.

The following section (ll 92-129) is a description of the coronation in all its pomp and splendour. The tone is mocking of course but every step is faithfully presented. (You will see similar mock heroic effects later perfected by Alexander Pope in *The Rape of the Lock*) Crowds came from remote areas, (i.e countrified, unrefined dregs) from Watling Street and Bunhill Fields. (From the tone in which the multitudes are referred to, you can

well make out the intense elitism that pervaded poetry of this period, and also understand at a later point, why the Romantic revolution came about in poetry). The Guard of Honour was presented by petty officers (Yeoman), unpaid stationers, and captained by Herringman- Shadwell's real life publisher. The red carpet was a patch work cobbled from the works of Heywood and Shirley mutilated by Shadwell to construct his own dramas. Flecknoe appears in procession carried aloft on the chariot of his own dullness and Shadwell- aka Ascarius, the future hope of London, is seated on his right. Shadwell takes the oath of office- to uphold dullness and wage eternal war with good sense. Flecknoe anoints him. Instead of the customary orb and scepter that mark royal power, a tankard of beer and ***Love's Kingdom*** is placed in his hands and he is crowned with a wreath of poppies. At this climactic moment twelve owls fly past him, signifying the fulfillment of a prophecy. The crowds cheer at these signs of future empire.

In an outburst of prophetic frenzy Flecknoe blesses his dutiful son (ll 130- 166): that he may hold sway in space and time from Ireland to Barbados and even beyond; that his works will better his father's in quantity and quality of meaninglessness. In the Prologue to his play ***Virtuoso***, Shadwell had regretted the many defects in composition due to lack of time. May Shadwell continue to labour long and hard for such inane results. George Etherege created foolish characters and heroes which delighted audiences and reflected his cleverness. May the characters he creates be clones (dummies) of Shadwell, serving to expose his innate dullness. Sir Charles Sedley had written the Prologue to ***Epsom Wells.*** Dryden hints perhaps he had helped Shadwell in the composition itself. Flecknoe advises Shadwell to rely on his innate lack of wit when creating the florid, bombastic speeches of Sir Formal (a character in Shadwell's play) and not imitate anyone else as these dialogues come very naturally and effortlessly to him.

Flecknoe continues with another reference to Shadwell's corpulence. Ben Jonson too had a large paunch. He warns Shadwell not to be swayed by friends who hail him as another Jonson, for similarity lies only in size and not in stature/ genius. He is a true son of his father in poor literary judgment, poor imitations of superior writers and in plagiary. These thefts however merely demonstrate the substantial worthiness of Etherege and Fletcher while scum- like Shadwell's works float on the surface. (ll 167- 180)

The list of Shadwell's assets continues. Whatever type of character he invents has a natural tilt towards dullness. His huge girth produces little sense. His poetry is weak and fails to move; his tragic plays are laughable and comedies boring and satires have no barb. Since fame will not come in writing poetry or plays, Flecknoe suggests Shadwell write lightweight trick verses (ACROSTICS) and sing them to himself. (ll 181- 204)

At this point Bruce and Longville (characters in a Shadwell play) pull Flecknoe down a trap door, and his cloak/ mantle borne aloft by the wind, alights on his son as a twofold blessing of longwinded emptiness.

2.1.7 DISCUSSION ON KEY ISSUES

We have gathered that ***Macflecknoe*** is intended to mock on or satirize Shadwell. All satire degrades- a person or a whole body- by evoking scorn, contempt and laughter. A satire can attack viciously or in a gentle manner using abuse or wit. Frequently the author use one of two models. They either employ elevated address or high- flown comparison to describe a petty subject or deflate pomposity, self- importance and arrogance by belittling them.

Dryden uses the first method in ***Macflecknoe*** treating the idea like an epic/ heroic poem in both form and style, only to ridicule Shadwell as trivial or unimportant. Like the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar, the minor poet Flecknoe too is ruler of the great realm of Nonsense. Epic poetry concerns great actions or events anvolving legendary heroes and is usually of national importance. Homer's ***Odyssey,*** Virgil's ***Aeneid*** or our own ***Ramayana*** and ***Mahabharata*** are such poems. The characters are presented as larger than life often by adopting formulas and fixed epithets; tracing a global lineage; the supernatural and the marvelous is associated with them, and along with an elevated tone similies, long comparisons or descriptions, invocations are standard devices.

Dryden uses the epic machinery with remarkable success. The introduction (Exordium) establishes the theme of 'succession', a matter of profound relevance to the contemporary British as well as Flecknoe. (This remark is a glance at the rumbles over royal succession elaborated in ***Absalom and Achitophel.***) Shadwell is chosen amongst a large family as most 'fit' to 'wage' 'immortal war' on 'wit' or intelligence and till "death true dullness to maintain."(Satan in ***Paradise Lost*** Book I vows to wage immortal war against God). Set passages feature in epics describing the valiant hero arming for battle or vast armies ranked behind his leadership. Milton for instance shows Satan as huge as Leviathan, his spear the tallest Norwegian pine, his shield the full Moon over Tuscany (***Paradise Lost*** book i). Dryden jeers at Shadwell's impressive physical size as flatulence and inertia of "thoughtless" i.e. lacking thought solemnly like "oaks". While riff- raff congregate for Shadwell's coronation; through soldiers or fallen angels numerous as fallen autumn leaves stand behind Aeneas and Lucifer. Supernatural happenings are often foretold

where heroes are concerned. In this case twelve owls fly past Shadwell, a parody of the twelve vultures saluting Romulus.

Many such parallels can be found on a close reading of the text.

Satire thrives on allusions especially if they are contemporary and local. These references heighten mockery by contrasts and similarities. Public memory will recall the pageantry on land and river associated with the Restoration and chortle over the parallels Dryden draws in his poem. In the political war, Shadwell, a Whig (i.e. opposed to royal politics) is exposed as dedicating his works to the Duke of Newcastle and to his son The Earl of Ogle, to seek patronage. References to plays running in London theatres, recently published poems, dramatis personae- their behavior, foibles and activities are liberally sprinkled through the lines adding to the bite of the lampoon. The given notes support this claim.

Dryden's skill in the heroic couplet is evident in this poem. It rises to a grand style as required by an epic but the balanced epithets and the rhythms of common speech permits the deadly scorn to blaze through. Though no real epic simile is to be found, we can spot images a plenty. Shadwell is presented in terms of less and more- 'beams' of light to 'fogs' and 'night', 'floats' and 'sinks', the fishes clustering for the 'breakfast toast' and finally the bathos of the coronation scene. Of his satires Dryden says "It is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough. I avoided the mention of great crimes, --- representing blind sides and little extravagances. Sadly ***Macflecknoe*** does lapse occasionally into coarseness and personal spite.

The position of Dryden in English literature is unquestioned. He made notable contribution in prose, poetry and drama- as a literary critic and as a satirist. In place of slipshod and loose blank verse he substituted the discipline of the heroic couplet as the Metre for all poetry for a whole century, and turned satire into a poetic form.

2.1.8. SUMMING UP

In this Unit you have learnt about:

·The predominant satiric modes of the Restoration period.

·The art of transcreating literary battles into abiding works of satire.

·The Neo-classical trends prevalent in the literature of the times, and how it became a medium of reflecting upon social mores.

·In comparison with literatures of other periods, you will also have noticed the remarkable absence of commoners from the elitist poetry of the times. In contrast, the foppery of the upper classes is a visible feature.

2.1.9. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. What in your opinion are the merits of *Macflecknoe* as a verse satire filled with ample doses of humour and geniality?
2. What picture of the contemporary literary scene does *Macflecknoe* present?
3. *Macflecknoe* is a "stinging, destructive personal lampoon". Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, with a close analysis of the text.
4. Discuss with suitable references to *Macflecknoe*, the distinctive features of Dryden's political satire.
5. What portrait of Flecknoe can you deduce from this poem? Give examples in support of your reading.

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Comment on Dryden's presentation of Shadwell in *Macflecknoe*.
2. 'Abuse enlivened by humour" - is this an apt way of looking at *Macflecknoe*?
3. How would you relate the occasion of the poem *Macflecknoe* to its textual context. Discuss relevant portions of the text to substantiate your views.
4. Discuss with reference to any two figures in the poem, how characterisation is an important aspect of Dryden's satiric art in *Macflecknoe*.
5. How many voices do you hear in this poem? How did you identify them? Explain the presence of each clearly.

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. Mention and analyse the significance of Dryden's reference to any two contemporary literary works in his long poem *Macflecknoe*.
2. Show with any two examples, the relevance of the use of classical allusions in *Macflecknoe*.
3. What is the significance of the title of this long poem?
4. Analyse and comment with reference to any two sections, the mastery of Dryden's handling of the heroic couplet in *Macflecknoe*.
5. What glimpses of the supernatural do you find in Dryden's *Macflecknoe*?

2.1.10. SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Read the poem thoroughly and recreate from Dryden's description, a picture of London of his times. Now read William Blake's poem 'London' and formulate a similar picture of the city. See for yourselves how different the conditions of life, the focus of attention,

the cultural mores were from one age to another. Your counsellor will help you in this activity.

2.1.11. READING LIST

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Dobree,B: *John Dryden*
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Module 2 Unit 2

Anne Kingsmill Finch: 'The Introduction'

Aphra Behn: Song – 'Love Armed'

2.2.0 INTRODUCTION

In Module 1 of this Paper, you have had a vivid idea of the manifold complexities, both socio-political and cultural, inherent in the period of the history of literature that is called 'The Restoration'. Coming as it does after the ushering in of new learning in the Renaissance, this was the period when the impact of classical thought and learning on the one hand and the influence of new social stratifications on the other, began to exert their influences on literature. While Dryden, whom you have studied in the earlier unit stands at one end of the poetic spectrum, Samuel Butler (Mod 2 Unit 3) represents the other extreme of poetic satire. In between, this Unit, which deals with two women poets, is an interesting section that explores a new and important strand – that of female articulation in literature. This section has been specially designed to give you a glimpse of how women start carving a space for themselves in the literary canon, and it is expected that at the end of it, you will be in a position to explore subsequent developments in this area.

2.2.1 WOMEN'S WRITING OF THE AGE: AN OVERVIEW

You have already read that it was during the Restoration that we first see actresses on the stage; this will give you some idea of the emergent position of women in contemporary society. Political and religious developments as well as changes in the circumstances of literary authorship led increasing numbers of women to write in many different genres and forms during the seventeenth century. However, cultural prejudices still attempted to limit women's creative achievements. For instance, when Lady Mary Wroth, an accomplished poet, dramatist, and prose writer published her monumental romance *Urania*, she received an insulting poem that instructed her to 'Work, Lady, Work. Let writing books alone. For Surely wiser woman never wrote one'. It may well be examined that the women writers' responses to this context were guided by their passions as a means to engage with literary discourse. Another question may as well be addressed: what is the role of the passions — love, envy, hatred, pride, anger — in literary creativity? What are the specific constraints and conditions of authorship for women in the seventeenth century? Is there a tradition of early modern women's writing and what are the advantages — and disadvantages — of defining such a tradition?

As you read along this Unit, you should be able to formulate your own responses to these issues.

2.2.2: Works of Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchilsea

Although she has always enjoyed some fame as a poet, Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, has only recently received greater praise and renewed attention. Her diverse and considerable body of work records her private thoughts and personal struggles but also illustrates her awareness of the social and political climate of her era. Not only do Finch's poems reveal a sensitive mind and a religious soul, they also exhibit great generic range and demonstrate her fluent use of Augustan diction and forms.

Descended from an ancient Hampshire family, Finch was born in April 1661, the third and youngest child of Anne Haselwood and Sir William Kingsmill. At the age of twenty-one, Finch was appointed one of six maids of honor to Mary of Modena, wife of the Duke of York, in the court of Charles II. Her interest in verse writing began during this period and was probably encouraged by her friendships with Sarah Churchill and Anne Killigrew, also maids of honor and women of literary interests. It was during her residence in the court of

Charles II that she met Colonel Heneage Finch, uncle of the fifth earl of Winchilsea and gentleman to the Duke of York. Finch fell in love with Anne and courted her persistently until they married. She resigned her post, although Heneage Finch continued to serve in various government positions. Their marriage was a happy one, as attested by his letters and several of her early poems. They led a quiet life, residing first in Westminster and then in London, as Heneage Finch became more involved in public affairs with the accession of James II in 1685. The couple wholly supported James throughout his brief and difficult reign and remained forever sympathetic to the interests of the Stuart court.

Following the revolution and deposition of James in 1689, Finch lost his government position and permanently severed himself from public life by refusing allegiance to the incoming monarchs, William and Mary. The subsequent loss of income forced the Finches to take temporary refuge with various friends in London until Heneage's nephew Charles invited them to settle permanently on the family's estate in Eastwell in 1689 or 1690, where they resided for more than twenty-five years. It was during the happy yet trying years of her early married life that Anne Finch began to pursue more seriously her interest in writing poetry. She adopted the pseudonym Ardelia, and not surprisingly, many of her earliest poems are dedicated to her "much lov'd husband," who appears as "Dafnis" in her work. Finch's poetry to her husband connects passionate love and poetry in subtle ways. In "A Letter to the Same Person," she makes explicit the intertwined nature of love and verse, insisting that one is dependent on the other:

> Love without Poetry's refining Aid
>
> Is a dull Bargain, and but coarsely made;
>
> Nor e'er cou'd Poetry successful prove,
>
> Or touch the Soul, but when the Sense was Love.
>
> Oh! Cou'd they both in Absence now impart
>
> Skill to my Hand, but to describe my Heart;

Finch's early poems to her husband demonstrate her awareness of the guiding poetic conventions of the day, yet also point to the problems such conventions pose to the expression of intimate thought.

In addition to celebrating her love, Finch's earliest verse also records her own frustration and sense of loss following her departure from court in 1689. She and her husband remained loyal to the Catholic Stuarts, a tenuous stance to assume given the popularity of the Protestant William and Mary in Britain in the 1690s. Finch's most explicit recognition of the problem of succession and of the difficulty of her relationship to the Stuarts appears in her first published poem, an elegy for James II anonymously published in 1701 and titled *Upon the Death of King James the Second.* The poem ends with an appeal to Britain's "Maternal Bosome"—an attack on William and possibly on the currently reigning queen as well—to honor "Rightful Kings" and "All who shall intend thy Good."

As her work developed more fully during her retirement at Eastwell, Finch demonstrated an increasing awareness of the poetic traditions of her own period as well as those governing older verse. Her work's affinity with the metaphysical tradition is evident in poems such as "The Petition for an Absolute Retreat," which represents the distanced perspective of the speaker through the image of the telescope, an emblem common to much religious poetry of the seventeenth century. Finch experimented with rhyme and meter and imitated several popular genres, including occasional poems, satirical verse, and religious meditations, but fables comprise the largest portion of her oeuvre. Most likely inspired by the popularity of the genre at the turn of the century, Finch wrote dozens of these often satiric vignettes between 1700 and 1713. Most of them were modeled after the short tales of Jean La Fontaine, the French fable writer made popular by Charles II. Finch mocked these playful trifles, and her fables offer interesting bits of social criticism in the satiric spirit of her age.

However, Finch's more serious poems have received greater critical attention than her fables. "A Nocturnal Reverie," for instance, is clearly Augustan in its perspective and technique, although many admirers have tended to praise the poem as pre-Romantic. Finch's poem opens with classical references and proceeds through characteristically Augustan descriptions of the foxglove, the cowslip, the glowworm, and the moon. Finch imitates Augustan

preferences for decorum and balance in her use of heroic couplets and the medial caesura in setting the peaceful, nocturnal atmosphere of the poem:

> Or from some Tree, fam'd for the *Owl's* delight,
>
> She, hollowing clear, directs the Wand'rer right:
>
> In such a *Night*, when passing Clouds give place,
>
> Or thinly vail the Heav'ns mysterious Face;
>
> When Odours, which declin'd repelling Day,
>
> Thro temp'rate Air uninterrupted stray;

While Finch's verse occasionally displays slight antitheses of idea and some structural balances of line and phrase, she never attains the epigrammatic couplet form that Alexander Pope perfected in the early eighteenth century. Her admission in "A Nocturnal Reverie" that her verse attempts "Something, too high for Syllables to speak" might be linked to the Romantic recognition of the discrepancy between human aspiration and achievement. But ultimately she retreats to God and solitude and displays a more properly Augustan attitude in the acceptance of her human limitations. At times her descriptions of natural detail bear some likeness to poets such as James Thomson, but Finch's expression is more immediate and simple, and her versification ultimately exhibits an Augustan rather than a pre-Romantic sensibility.

Another form Finch appropriates is the Pindaric ode. Between 1694 and 1703 she wrote three such odes in the form introduced in England by Abraham Cowley in the 1650s, following his preference for complex and irregular stanzaic structures and rhyme schemes. These poems—"All is Vanity," *The Spleen* (1709), and "On the Hurricane"—all depict metaphysical entities working against humanity to test its strength and faith in God. *The Spleen*, possibly Finch's most well-known poem, was first published anonymously in 1709. The ode was immediately popular and received much attention for its accurate description of the symptoms of melancholia—the disease often associated with the spleen—which Finch suffered from throughout her life.

In “Ardelia to Melancholy” Finch similarly presents a struggle against melancholy and depression, casting the disease as an “inveterate foe” and “Tyrant pow’r” from which “heav’n alone” can set her “free.” The poem shifts from the first to the third person, generalizing Ardelia’s particular experience to encompass all those who suffer from melancholia: “All, that cou’d ere thy ill got rule, invade, / Their uselesse arms, before thy feet have laid; / The Fort is thine, now ruin’d, all within, / Whilst by decays without, thy Conquest too, is seen.” The imperial language of the poem might also suggest a more abstract relation between her submission to the spleen and her status as a political exile.

Finch circulated two manuscripts of her work before she published *Miscellany Poems,* and several of her poems were published individually in broadsheets and smaller collections. Finch experienced some additional, though limited, recognition after the publication of her *Miscellany Poems*. Richard Steele, for instance, published several of her poems in his *Miscellanies* of 1714. She was personally acquainted with both Swift and Pope, though the full extent of her relationships with them is unknown. Finch is mentioned in several compilations, memoirs, and literary dictionaries during the 18th century, and to a lesser extent, in the 19th century, but has received sustained attention only recently. The first modern edition of her work, though incomplete, appeared in 1903.

Much of the recent interest in Finch arises from current academic efforts to recover the work of previously neglected women writers, exploring how those writers depict themselves as poetic subjects and examining the ways in which they adopt and alter the poetic standards of a particular period. In addition to her representations of melancholy and the spleen—an affliction common to women—Finch also called attention to the need for the education of women and recorded the isolation and solitude that marked women’s lives. In “The Bird and the Arras,” for instance, a female bird enclosed in a room mistakes the arras for a real scene and flies happily into it. But she is soon trapped, “Flutt’ring in endless circles of dismay” until she finally escapes to “ample space,” the “only Heav’n of Birds.” Such images of entrapment and frustration are echoed in Finch’s description of the limitations of women’s social roles in England at the turn of the 18th century. In “The Unequal Fetters,” the speaker notes her fear of fading youth, but later refuses to be a “pris’ner” in marriage. Finch admits that marriage does “slightly tye Men,” yet insists that women remain “close Pris’ners” in the union, while men can continue to function “At the full length of all their chain.” For the most

part, however, Finch's message is subtle in its persistent decorum and final resignation and consolation in God. Although she was certainly aware of the problems many of her countrywomen faced, and particularly of the difficulties confronting women writers, Finch offers a playful yet firm protest rather than an outspoken condemnation of the social position of women. And although she endured a loss of affluence with James's deposition, there is little evidence that she abhorred her twenty-five-year retirement in Eastwell, which afforded her the leisure in which to pursue her creative interests.

Finch died quietly on 5 August 1720 after several years of increasingly ill health. Following her funeral, Heneage Finch praised her Christian virtues and persistent loyalty to her friends and family, noting as well her talents as a writer: "To draw her...just character requires a masterly pen like her own. We shall only presume to say she was the most faithful servant to her Royall Mistresse, the best wife to her noble Lord, and in every other relation public and private so illustrious an example of all moral and divine virtues." Much of the immediate appeal of Finch's verse to a post-Romantic modern audience lies in the sincerity with which she expressed the Christian values her husband recalls in his eulogy. But clearly Anne Finch belongs to her age and merits greater appreciation for her poetic experimentation and her fluent use of Augustan diction and forms. Her voice is clear and self-assured, evidence of the controlled and confident poise of an aristocratic poet.

2.2.3: 'The Introduction'

Did I, my lines intend for publick view,

How many censures, wou'd their faults persue,

Some wou'd, because such words they do affect,

Cry they're insipid, empty, uncorrect.

And many, have attain'd, dull and untaught

The name of Witt, only by finding fault.

True judges, might condemn their want of witt,

And all might say, they're by a Woman writt.

Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,
Such an intruder on the rights of men,
Such a presumptuous Creature, is esteem'd,
The fault, can by no vertue be redeem'd.
They tell us, we mistake our sex and way;
Good breeding, fassion, dancing, dressing, play
Are the accomplishments we shou'd desire;
To write, or read, or think, or to enquire
Wou'd cloud our beauty, and exaust our time;
And interrupt the Conquests of our prime;
Whilst the dull mannage, of a servile house
Is held by some, our outmost art, and use.
  Sure 'twas not ever thus, nor are we told
Fables, of Women that excell'd of old;
To whom, by the diffusive hand of Heaven
Some share of witt, and poetry was given.
On that glad day, on which the Ark return'd,
The holy pledge, for which the Land had mourn'd,
The joyfull Tribes, attend itt on the way,
The Levites do the sacred Charge convey,
Whilst various Instruments, before itt play;
Here, holy Virgins in the Concert joyn,
The louder notes, to soften, and refine,
And with alternate verse, compleat the Hymn Devine.
Loe! the yong Poet, after Gods own heart,

By Him inspired, and taught the Muses Art,
Return'd from Conquest, a bright Chorus meets,
That sing his slayn ten thousand in the streets.
In such loud numbers they his acts declare,
Proclaim the wonders, of his early war,
That Saul upon the vast applause does frown,
And feels, itts mighty thunder shake the Crown.
What, can the threat'n'd Judgment now prolong?
Half of the Kingdom is already gone;
The fairest half, whose influence guides the rest,
Have David's Empire, o're their hearts confess't.
A Woman here, leads fainting Israel on,
She fights, she wins, she tryumphs with a song,
Devout, Majestick, for the subject fitt,
And far above her arms, exalts her witt,
Then, to the peacefull, shady Palm withdraws,
And rules the rescu'd Nation with her Laws.
How are we fal'n, fal'n by mistaken rules?
And Education's, more than Nature's fools,
Debarr'd from all improve-ments of the mind,
And to be dull, expected and dessigned;
And if some one, would Soar above the rest,
With warmer fancy, and ambition press't,
So strong, th' opposing faction still appears,
The hopes to thrive, can ne're outweigh the fears,

Be caution'd then my Muse, and still retir'd;

Nor be dispis'd, aiming to be admir'd;

Conscious of wants, still with contracted wing,

To some few freinds, and to thy sorrows sing;

For groves of Lawrell, thou wert never meant;

Be dark enough thy shades, and be thou there content.

2.2.4: Notes and Glossary

1. 1 Chronicles 15.
2. 1 Samuel 17-18.
3. Judges 4-5. The judge Deborah.
4. Lawrell: Laurel crowns were awarded as honours to famous poets.

2.2.5: Paraphrase and Critical Analysis

The picture of a woman poet frustrated by the restrictions imposed by society on her is seen clearly in "The Introduction". The poet begins by anticipating what critics would say about her lines: "And all might say, they're by a Woman writt." A woman writer is viewed as "an intruder on the rights of men" and a "presumptuous Creature" who should desire woman's proper accomplishments, namely, "Good breeding, fassion, dancing, dressing, play." In fact, the public would feel that "To write, or read, or think, or to enquire / Wou'd cloud our beauty, and exaust our time, / And interrupt the Conquests of our prime." This early feminist rejects the idea that "the dull mannage, of a servile

house" is woman's "outmost art, and use".

To support her idea that women can accomplish more than the public's limited view of the female role, the poet looks to ancient Israel for examples of women who excelled and includes them in "The Introduction." To the Biblical account of the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Israel, she adds "holy Virgins" to the crowds of people who sang joyfully and speaks of these virgins' completing "the Hymn Devine" with their soft notes. When victorious David returned from battle, the women greeted him with songs and with applause which made King Saul feel "itts mighty thunder shake the Crown." Saul's time on the throne is limited because "Half of the Kingdom is already gone; / The fairest half, whose influence guides the rest, / Have David's Empire o're their hearts confess't." The poet's last example from ancient Israel, the famous Deborah also had a song to sing, again one of victory. He describes her as follows: "A Woman here, leads fainting Israel on, / She fights, she wins, she tryumphs with a song." After the victory has been won, Deborah the judge "rules the rescu'd Nation, with her laws." Mallinson speaks of this "appeal to antique precedent" as "lengthy, substantial, and vigorous", and Rogers notes that Biblical examples "seemed called for in an age when the Bible was constantly used to keep woman in her place." Unfortunately, women in Finch's society are not expected to lead as these earlier women had done but instead have been hampered by poor education and by opposition from others if they desire to "Soar above the rest, / With warmer fancy, and ambition press't." Women are "Debarr'd from all improvements of the mind / And to be dull, expected and dessigned". Because of these negative conditions, this woman poet cautions her Muse to be content with just a small audience of friends. Mallinson interprets the phrase "with contracted wing" as including "a narrow range of song".

A poet of the early eighteenth century, Anne Finch composed in a variety of contemporary forms, including the verse epistle, the Pindaric ode, the fable, and occasional poetry, exploring issues of authorship, love, friendship, and nature. Her nature poetry celebrates the beauty of the country, especially in contrast to the superficial frivolity of London society, while her love poetry praises married life rather than the attentions of a lover. Finch defended the appropriateness of women writing and often adapted the conventions of male Augustan writers to female experiences and themes. Though rarely adopting the satirical tone of Alexander Pope or Jonathan Swift, Finch was nonetheless encouraged in her craft by these literary figures.

The majority of her poems are characterized by such themes as gender and politics. Marginalised through politics and her desire to write, Finch recognized the difficulties of an eighteenth-century woman assuming the public voice of a poet, while insisting that intellectual pursuits were not the prerogative of men. She commemorated the beauty of nature in "Nocturnal Reverie," "The Tree," "The Bird," and "Petition for an Absolute Retreat," the latter poem also suggesting her escape from political turmoil. In a similar vein, "Ardelia's Answer to Ephelia" lauds the value of rural retirement while criticizing the pretentiousness of London society and female vanity. In "The Introduction," "Circuit of Apollo," "Ardelia's Answer to Ephelia," and "To the Nightingale," she asserted the validity of women writing. In taking up the pen to write love poetry, she countered the tradition of arranged marriages and male infidelity by celebrating conjugal love in poems to her husband, though she criticised mercenary marriages in other poems. Her greatest eighteenth-century success, "The Spleen," examines both a generalized public understanding of the condition and treatment of melancholy and her private suffering.

"The Introduction" to her Miscellany Poems (1713) never was published with them, probably due to its direct challenge to the male-dominated

literary scene of her time. Her self-censorship in fear of public condemnation became a casebook example for feminist critics of the 'sixties and 'seventies who sought to explain why women weren't published more often. Those women were in fact writing, but they knew their work could be condemned or ignored (worse yet!) merely for being "by a woman writ" , perhaps her most famous single phrase. The chilling spectacle of a competent, perhaps even great poet thinking seriously about turning her back on publication and the chance to shape the English language reaches its peak in lines 59-64 in which she directly echoes Milton while rejecting the great poetic gesture for a deliberately lesser effect.

2.2.6: Comprehension Exercises on 'The Introduction'

1. Write an essay on the women writers of the seventeenth century with special reference to Anne Finch. (20 marks)

2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem ‘The Introduction’. (12 marks)

3. Annotate: (6 marks)

Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,

Such an intruder on the rights of men,

Such a presumptuous Creature, is esteem'd,

The fault, can by no vertue be redeem'd.

2.2.7: Works of Aphra Behn

Behn's contemporary reputation as a poet was no less stunning than her ‘notoriety’ as a dramatist. She was heralded as a successor to Sappho (a Greek lyric poet), inheriting the great gifts of the Greek poet in the best English tradition exemplified by Behn's immediate predecessor, Katherine Philips. Just as Philips was known by her pastoral nom de plume and praised as "The Matchless Orinda," so Behn was apostrophized as "The Incomparable Astrea," an appellation based on the code name she had used when she was Charles's spy.

Some of Behn's lyrics originally appeared in her plays, and there were longer verses, such as the Pindaric odes, published for special occasions. But the majority of her poetry was published in two collections that included longer narrative works of prose and poetry as well as Behn's shorter verses. *Poems upon Several Occasions: with A Voyage to the Island of Love* (1684) and *Lycidus: Or The Lover in Fashion* (1688) reflect Behn's customary use of classical, pastoral, courtly, and traditionally English lyric modes. Forty-five poems appeared in *Poems upon Several Occasions;* ten poems were appended to *Lycidus*. Ten more works appeared in the 1685 *Miscellany*. Posthumous publications include poems in Charles Gildon's *Miscellany Poems Upon Several Occasions* (1692) and in *The Muses Mercury* (1707-1708).

Behn's distinctive poetic voice is characterized by her audacity in writing about contemporary events, frequently with topical references that, despite their allegorical maskings, were immediately recognisable to her sophisticated audience. Although she sometimes addressed her friends by their initials or their familiar names, she might just as easily employ some classical or pastoral disguise that was transparent to the initiated. Behn's poetry, therefore, was less public than her plays or her prose fiction, as it depended, in some cases, on the enlightened audience's recognition of her topics for full comprehension of both the expression and implications of her verse. Such poetic technique involved a skill and craft that earned her the compliments of her cohorts as one who, despite her female form, had a male intelligence and masculine powers of reason.

Behn's response to this admiration was to display even more fully those characteristics which had earned her praise. Frequently her poems are specifically addressed to members of her

social community and might employ mild satire as commentary, present events of their lives, and detail or explore the emotional states of their frequently complex relationships, expecially those of love and sex. Less commonly Behn might use a translation or adaptation of another author's verse to discuss these issues in her own style. In these cases the poems are frequently redrawn to reveal Behn's own emphases and display more her artistic perspective than that of the original author.

Whatever the source of the texts, whether her plays, a political or personal occasion, an adaptation or translation, or an emotional or psychological exploration, Behn's verse style is particular and identifiable, with a very distinctive voice. The speaker is usually identified as a character or as "Astrea," Behn's poetic self, and there is usually a specific audience. There may be dialogue within a poem, but, unlike the dialogue in her plays, in the poetry the voices are joined in lyrical rather than dramatic expression. In fact, the musicality of Behn's verse is another identifying characteristic. Whereas many of Behn's predecessors and contemporaries, including Philips, to whom Behn was frequently compared, are known for the Metaphysical aspects of their verse, Behn's poems are more classical, in the tradition of Ben Jonson rather than John Donne. As such they rely more on the heritage of sixteenth-century ornate lyricism as practiced by Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare, along with the epigrammatic tradition of light Juvenalian satire in Jonson and Robert Herrick, than the Marvellian wit and Miltonic grandeur of later seventeenth-century verse. Behn shares with John Dryden a preference for the couplet, but she also uses a modified ballad stanza and more varied verse forms if the content permits. The decorum of her verse is based in a very traditional relationship between structure and meaning, so that her discourse has a sense of immediacy and directness despite the conventionality of her literary forms. Perhaps it is because her use of vocabulary and form is so traditional that Behn, who was in her lifetime criticised as outrageous for the content of her works, was able, nevertheless, to thrive as a successful author.

The breaking of boundaries in poetry, as in her life, caused Behn to be criticized as well as admired publicly. Her best-known poem, "The Disappointment," finely illustrates Behn's ability to portray scandalous material in an acceptable form. The poem was sent to Hoyle with a letter asking him to deny allegations of ill conduct circulating about his activities. Both the letter and the poem were reprinted in early miscellaneous collections. "The

Disappointment" has been traditionally interpreted to be about impotence. But it is also about rape, another kind of potency test, and presents a woman's point of view cloaked in the customary language of male physical license and sexual access to females. The woman's perspective in this poem provides the double vision that plays the conventional against the experiential.

One of her best-known verses, happily juxtaposed to "The Disappointment," is "Song: The Willing Mistriss." This poem describes how the female speaker becomes so aroused by the excellent courtship of her lover that she is "willing to receive / That which I dare not name." After three verses describing their lovemaking, she concludes with the coy suggestion, "Ah who can guess the rest?" The poem is a good example of Behn's treatment of conventional courtly and pastoral modes, as is the "Song. Love Arm'd," which describes Cupid's power to enamour.

2.2.8: Text of Song – 'Love Armed'

LOVE in fantastic triumph sat,

Whilst bleeding hearts around him flowed,

For whom fresh pains he did create,

And strange tyrannic power he showed,

From thy bright eyes he took his fire,

Which round about, in sport he hurled;

But 'twas from mine, he took desire,

Enough to undo the amorous world.

From me he took his sighs and tears,

From thee his pride and cruelty;

From me his languishments and fears,

And every killing dart from thee;

Thus thou and I, the god have armed,

And set him up a deity;

But my poor heart alone is harmed,

Whilst thine the victor is, and free.

['Love Armed' first appeared as 'Love in fantastic triumph sat' in *Abdelazer* (1677). It was reprinted in *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1684.]

2.2.9: Notes and Glossary

bleeding heart: rejected in love,

amorous world: lustful people,

deity: idol, god.

2.2.10: Paraphrase and Critical Analysis

The poem is an epitome of the love-lover relationship where love stands alone surrounded by the bleeding hearts of the lovers. It depicts how the lovers fall prey to the almighty in order to make the love perfect in the truest possible sense. It is a poem about the greatness of the love itself which is nothing but a form of aesthetic, that aesthetics which is very much part and parcel of that abstract, designated as the almighty. Both the male and the female lovers donate something precious in order to make the love reach its highest esteem. Thus the 'poor heart alone is harmed'. Finally it is that almighty gets the victory through the victory of the purest form of emotion. Thus there is in the poem a passage from the human subject to the supra-human, love being the vehicle for it.

Janet Todd, the biographer of Aphra Behn once wrote; "Behn has a lethal combination of obscurity and secrecy which makes her uneasy fit for any narrative, speculative or factual". So when a woman like her writes a poem of love, the theme certainly turns a little confusing and a shade controversial too. At a very first reading specially of the first stanza, it seems as

if the poet as a devotee of love goes on adoring the Love itself and describing the story of the lover's sacrifice for the sake of love. The first two lines stand for the aesthetic rather eternal value of love. As the purest form of emotion, love can only be relished for the cost of sufferings it bequeaths on the lovers. As the poet bows her head down to that almighty she says how that omnipotent creates so many obstacles on the way and takes away all those shields one after another, preventing the harm, to attain that love in its purest form. But as the poem develops, a certain question crops up. Is it simply an idealisation of love? No, not at all.

Shortly after her supposed return to England from Surinam in 1664, Behn may have married John Behn, who may have been a merchant from Hamburg. He died, or the couple separated soon after 1664. So in her personal life Behn was already very much offended and hurt by the failure in her love. May be in order to overcome her grief, she surpasses all those materialistic shortcomings and sees that entire event as a failure in the lovers' meeting. But as the poem develops, it no more stands as this mere binary but the gender issue adds a little extra icing to the cake. Aphra, who had a Catholic upbringing and announced herself as 'designed for a nun' may have had a different outlook to love, which denies the common binary of men dominating the love affair. It might also be that to her a successful love stands as a juxtaposition of some truest holy emotions. Afterall she belonged to the age just after that of the Elizabethan, when love got its highest esteem through the concept of metaphysical love- a love beyond the very physical virtues.
In one of her famous poems 'The Disappointment ' (referred to earlier) she depicts the story of a sexual encounter told from a woman's point of view that may be interpreted as a work about male impotence. Lysander, the male lover is shown here to be torn between his sexual desire and immense control. The battle between the mere physical urge and a sublime form of it is the primary motif of the poem. But later it turns out into some different issue altogether.

The question now is why she chose such a pessimistic title? Was she really disappointed in this theme of love? She may have tried her best to overcome her grief and got no better way than to hope for something aesthetic and eternal beyond these mundane realities. In her work 'The Unfortunate Happy Lady' she claims success in love as a combination of forgiveness, intense passion and endangered but inviolate virtue. The woman voice here is repeatedly seen to speak for herself in the latter part of the poem. All those polite, lovely forms of emotion like 'sighs and tears', 'languishments and fears' are taken away from the lady lover. While

those chauvinistic virtues like pride and cruelty have been a part of the male soul throwing all those sharp darts towards the pure female heart, making it deserted, harmed. So when the poet writes in the last line "Whilst thine the victor is...", does she refer to the male lover here? Or is it a victory of that almighty or love itself as an emotion as its purest form which always lies in its unrequited form? Afterall, the female virtue wins the battle in terms of human feelings and ethics here.

2.2.11: Summing Up - Subsequent and Contemporary Reception

The two poems discussed above belong to the seventeenth century when the women did not enjoy much prominence. Subsequently, their works, too, were treated to be minor among the prolific careers of the male writers, and soon went into oblivion. Later, the awareness of the unique poignancy of women writing made critics look into these works as some of the early specimens of women writing in English literature. The poems jointly confront the problematic situation of the women writers at that point of time, and discuss their views and aspirations at length. In the twentieth century, when the global literary scenario is often getting flooded by feminist waves, these poems serve their purpose, though as period pieces, properly.

2.2.12: Comprehension Exercises on 'Love Armed'

1. Discuss Aphra Behn's career as a poet, with special reference to her 'Love Armed'. (20 marks)

2. What do you consider to be the major theme in 'Love Armed'? Discuss. (12 marks)

3. Annotate: (6 marks)

But 'twas from mine, he took desire,

Enough to undo the amorous world.

2.2.13. SUGGESTED READING

Barash, Carol. *English Women's Poetry, 1649 – 1714: Politics, Community and Linguistic Authority*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

Boris Ford ed. *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, Vol. 4, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991.

Module 2 Unit 3

Samuel Butler: *Hudibras* (Extract)

2.3.0. INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we take up *Hudibras*, a satiric poem by Samuel Butler, published in several parts beginning in 1663. The immediate success of the first part resulted in a spurious second part's appearing within the year; the authentic second part was published in 1664. The two parts, plus "The Heroical Epistle of Hudibras to Sidrophel," were reprinted together in 1674. In 1678 a third (and last) part was published. The work is directed against the fanaticism, pretentiousness, pedantry, and hypocrisy that Butler felt was pervasive in militant Puritanism. In that sense you will find reflected in this work, the spirit of the Restoration that will be quite counter to say what we shall study in *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the very next Unit. Though an early purchaser of both parts of *Hudibras*, the diarist Samuel Pepys while acknowledging that the book was the 'greatest fashion' did not reportedly find any reason as to why it should be considered so witty!

The eponymous hero of *Hudibras* is a Presbyterian knight who goes "a-coloneling" with his squire, Ralpho, an Independent. They constantly squabble over religious questions and, in a series of grotesque adventures, are shown to be ignorant, wrongheaded, cowardly, and dishonest. Butler took the name of his hero from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Book II specifically); he derived his outline from Miguel de Cervantes and his burlesque method from Paul Scarron. However, his brilliant handling of the octosyllabic metre, his witty, clattering

rhymes, his delight in strange words and esoteric learning, and his enormous zest and vigour create effects that are entirely original. Let us read on for more on all this.

2.3.1. WORKS OF SAMUEL BUTLER

Samuel Butler is well-known for his satire *Hudibras*. Most of his other writings were never printed until they were collected and published by Robert Thyer in 1759. Butler wrote many short biographies, epigrams and verses, the earliest surviving from 1644. Of his verses, the best known is "The Elephant on the Moon", about a mouse trapped in a telescope, a satire on Sir Paul Neale of the Royal Society. Butler's taste for the mock heroic is shown by another early poem *Cynarctomachy*, or Battle between Bear and Dogs, which is both a homage to and a parody of a Greek poem ascribed to Homer, *Batrachomyomachia*. His supposed lack of money later in life is surprising, given that he had numerous unpublished works which could have offered him income including a set of Theophrastan character sketches which were not printed until 1759. Many other works are dubiously attributed to him. He is said to have received financial support in the form of a grant from Charles II, which might have been a justification behind Butler's strong anti-Puritan feelings as expressed in his work.

2.3.2. UNDERSTANDING SATIRE AS A GENRE

A satirist lives his life in a difficult position. He is more than usually conscious of the follies and vices of his fellows and he cannot stop himself from showing that he is. Like the preacher, the satirist seems to persuade and convince, but his position in relation to those he addresses is more delicate and more difficult than that of a preacher. He may seem to condemn too easily, even to enjoy doing so. He asks us to admire the skill with which he uses these weapons of exposing human flaws and superficiality, to recognise him as an artist and satire as an art.

As a genre, satire is defined primarily in terms of its inner form. In it, as Roger Fowler explains in his *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*, "the author attacks some object, using as his means wit or humour that is either fantastic or absurd. Denunciation itself is not satire nor, of course, is grotesque humour, but the genre allows for a considerable preponderance of either one or the other." Northorp Frye points out in his essay on satire and irony (*Anatomy of Criticism*) that satire is irony of a militant kind. "Irony is consistent both with complete realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author. Satire

demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard."

2.3.3. THE RESTORATION SATIRE AND *HUDIBRAS*

The Restoration period may be considered as the classical age of English satire, which extends from Dryden's time to the end of the eighteenth century. Critics argue that much of the literature written in the Restoration Period is guided towards ridiculing the corruption and flaws of the English society of the time. Many writers used satire to expose the moral corruption and crass commercialism of eighteenth-century England. This age thereby, was coined with the name "The Age of Satire". "Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own" (Jonathan Swift). Dryden was to create what was virtually a new type of satire, urbane and ironic in tone, instead of relying on violence of language and coarseness of abuse. At the same time, he abandoned that metrical roughness which his Jacobean predecessors had considered appropriate for this kind of poetry, and developed the balanced, epigrammatic and antithetical heroic couplet which was to be the characteristic verse form of the Augustan age.

Along with Dryden, Samuel Butler was another famous name among the Restoration satirists. Butler (1612 - 80) is chiefly remembered as the author of one poem, *Hudibras*. Appearing soon after the Restoration, its bitter satire on the Puritans gained it immediate and lasting popularity. It still recommends itself by the intellectual virtuosity of its wit, and its learning, which exhibits its descent from the metaphysical tradition. *Hudibras* is a long burlesque narrative, written in the short or octasyllabic couplet. Butler frequently makes use of double rhymes, with deliberately grotesque effect. This device was to be much used by later writers of comic verse, such as Byron and Hood. This form of the short couplet, with burlesque rhymes, came in fact to be known as Hudibrastic verse.

2.3.4. SHORT SUMMARY OF *HUDIBRAS*

The work is a satirical polemic upon Roundheads, Puritans, Presbyterians and many of the other factions involved in the English Civil War. You have come across these sects of the Puritan faith earlier. The work was begun, according to the title page, during the Civil War and published in three parts in 1663, 1664 and 1678, with the first edition encompassing all three parts in 1684. The epic tells the story of Sir Hudibras, a knight errant who is described

dramatically and with laudatory praise that is so thickly applied as to be absurd, and the conceited and arrogant person is visible beneath. He is praised for his knowledge of logic despite appearing stupid throughout, but it is his religious fervour which is mainly attacked. His squire, Ralpho, is of a similar stamp but makes no claim to great learning, knowing all there is to know from his religion or "new-light", as he calls it. Butler satirises the competing factions at the time of the protectorship by the constant bickering of these two principal characters whose religious opinions should unite them. The knight and his squire sally forth and come upon some people bear-baiting. After deciding that this is anti-Christian, they attack the baiters and capture one after defeating the bear. The defeated group of bear-baiters then rallies and renews the attack, capturing the knight and his squire. While in the stock the pair argue on religion.

The second part describes how the knight's imprisoned condition is reported by Fame to a widow whom Hudibras has been wooing, who then comes to see him. With a captive audience, she complains that he does not really love her and he ends up promising to flagellate himself if she frees him. Once free he regrets his promise and debates with Ralpho how to avoid his fate, with Ralpho suggesting that oath breaking is next to saintliness. Hudibras then tries to convince Ralpho of the nobility of accepting the beating in his stead but he declines the offer. They are interrupted by a skimmington, a procession where women are celebrated and men made fools. After haranguing the crowd for their lewdness, the knight is pelted with rotten eggs and chased away.

He decides to visit an astrologer, Sidrophel, to ask him how he should woo the widow but they get into an argument and after a fight the knight and squire run off in different directions believing they have killed Sidrophel.

The third part was published 14 years after the first two and is considerably different from the first parts. It picks up from where the second left off with Hudibras going to the widow's house to explain the details of the whipping he had promised to give himself but Ralpho had got there first and told her what had actually happened. Suddenly a group rushes in and gives him a beating and supposing them to be spirits from Sidrophel, rather than hired by the widow, confesses his sins and by extension the sins of the Puritans. Hudibras then visits a lawyer—the profession Butler trained in and one he is well able to satirise—who convinces

him to write a letter to the widow. The poem ends with their exchange of letters in which the knight's arguments are rebuffed by the widow.

Before the visit to the lawyer there is a digression of an entire canto in which much fun is had at the events after Oliver Cromwell's death. The succession of his son Richard Cromwell and the squabbles of factions such as the Fifth Monarchists are told with no veil of fiction and no mention of Sir Hudibras.

2.3.5. TEXT OF *HUDIBRAS* (EXTRACT)

PART I

CANTO I

THE ARGUMENT

———————————————————————————————-

Sir Hudibras[1] his passing worth,
The manner how he sallied forth;
His arms and equipage are shown;
His horse's virtues, and his own.
Th' adventure of the bear and fiddle
Is sung, but breaks off in the middle.

———————————————————————————————-

When civil dudgeon[2] first grew high,
And men fell out they knew not why?
When hard words[3], jealousies, and fears,
Set folks together by the ears,
And made them fight, like mad or drunk,
For Dame Religion, as for punk[4];
Whose honesty they all durst swear for,
Though not a man of them knew wherefore:
When Gospel-Trumpeter, surrounded
With long-ear'd rout[5], to battle sounded,
And pulpit, drum ecclesiastick,
Was beat with fist, instead of a stick;
Then did Sir Knight abandon dwelling,
And out he rode a colonelling.

A wight[6] he was, whose very sight wou'd
Entitle him Mirror of Knighthood[7];
That never bent his stubborn knee
To any thing but Chivalry[8];
Nor put up blow, but that which laid
Right worshipful on shoulder-blade;
Chief of domestic knights and errant[9],
Either for cartel[10] or for warrant;
Great on the bench, great in the saddle,
That could as well bind o'er, as swaddle[11];
Mighty he was at both of these,
And styl'd of war, as well as peace.
(So some rats, of amphibious nature,
Are either for the land or water).
But here our authors make a doubt
Whether he were more wise, or stout[12]:
Some hold the one, and some the other;
But howsoe'er they make a pother,
The diff'rence was so small, his brain
Outweigh'd his rage but half a grain;
Which made some take him for a tool
That knaves do work with, call'd a fool,
And offer to lay wagers that
As MONTAIGNE, playing with his cat,
Complains she thought him but an ass,
Much more she wou'd Sir HUDIBRAS;
(For that's the name our valiant knight
To all his challenges did write).
But they're mistaken very much,
'Tis plain enough he was no such;
We grant, although he had much wit,
H' was very shy of using it;
As being loth to wear it out,
And therefore bore it not about,
Unless on holy-days, or so,
As men their best apparel do.
Beside, 'tis known he could speak GREEK
As naturally as pigs squeek;
That LATIN was no more difficile,
Than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle:
Being rich in both, he never scanted
His bounty unto such as wanted;
But much of either would afford

To many, that had not one word.
For Hebrew roots, although they're found
To flourish most in barren ground[13], 60
He had such plenty, as suffic'd
To make some think him circumcis'd;
And truly so, he was, perhaps,
Not as a proselyte, but for claps[14].

He was in LOGIC a great critic, 65
Profoundly skill'd in analytic;
He could distinguish, and divide
A hair 'twixt south, and south-west side:
On either which he would dispute,
Confute, change hands, and still confute, 70
He'd undertake to prove, by force
Of argument, a man's no horse;
He'd prove a buzzard is no fowl[15],
And that a lord may be an owl[16],
A calf[17] an alderman, a goose a justice, 75
And rooks[18] Committee-men and Trustees[19].

2.3.6. WORD MEANINGS AND ALLUSIONS

1. Hudibras: named for the rash, morose knight who woos the pleasure-hating Elissa in Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* In Book II of Spenser, which is concerned with Temperaunce, Sir Guyon reaches a castle inhabited by three sisters. The youngest loves pleasure, the second moderation, while the third is a sour hater of all delights. Sir Hudibras, who is contrasted with Sans-loy, the wooer of the younger sister, makes his suit to the eldest.

2. Civil dudgeon: Presumably the reference is to the prolonged Civil Wars in England, and Butler's invective is directed against what he considers the meaningless issues of the Puritan sects.

3. 'hard words': not merely harsh words, but technical jargons. In this case, the cant words ("fears" and "jealousies") by which Puritans described events and motives.

4. 'punk': whore.

5. ‘long-eared rout’: epic diction for “asses”; applied to Puritans whose short hair (thus Roundheads) made their ears conspicuous and who sometimes cupped their ears with their hands to catch each word of an enthusiastic sermon, in this case a call to rebellion. Notice the intent nature of the poet’s observations and how keen he is to draw elements of satire from the smallest of details. The presentation of the Puritan as priggish is so very deliberate in Butler.

6. ‘wight’: romance diction for “man”.

7. ‘Mirror of Knighthood’: a chivalric romance admired by Don Quixote. The sarcastic tone is maintained even in the use of allusions and source materials.

8. ‘chivalry’: to the vision of himself as a knight, kneeling to be dubbed by his lord.

9. ‘domestic…errant’: As “domestic” knight, or Justice of the Peace “on the bench”, he could issue a “warrant” for arrest and “bind over” a prisoner for arrest trial; as knight “errant”, he could wander in search of righteous battle, i.e. look for vices to suppress.

10. ‘cartel’: knightly challenge.

11. ‘swaddle’: bind up, as in a diaper; but also cudgel.

12. ‘stout’: bold, brave (although Hudibras is also “stout” in the modern sense).

13. ‘barren ground’: the arid minds of pedants; or, since Hebrew was believed by some to be the natural language of man, the completely untutored mind.

14. ‘claps’: gonorrhea.

15.‘fowl’: domestic bird.

16. ‘owl’: a bird that may symbolize gravity or stupidity or both.

17. ‘calf’: fool.

18. ‘rooks’: crow-like birds, here swindlers.

19. ‘committee men and trustees’: appointed by Parliament to confiscate and sell of Church of England property, often high-handed and sometimes dishonest.

2.3.7: PARAPHRASE AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Published in three parts (1663, ’64, ‘68), *Hudibras,* as you know by now, is a satire on the Puritans, and while it ridicules the extravagances into which many of the party ran, it entirely fails to do justice to their virtues and their services to liberty – civil and religious. The plan of the poem is based on that of *Don Quixote*, though its tone is quite different. Hudibras and Ralpho ride out as knight-errant and squire to engage in a series of combats against the representatives of those popular amusements so much disliked by the Puritans, such as bear-baiting and fiddling. They also engage in long and learned theological disputes. Hudibras himself represents the Presbyterians. His grotesque appearance and character are given a lengthy description. Ralpho, on the other hand, represents the Independents (Congregationalists). The early Independents differed more sharply from the Presbyterians than is sometimes realized. This is well brought out by Butler. Whereas Hudibras relies on his immense scholastic learning, Ralpho’s interests are more esoteric.

2.3.8: THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Hudibras may be described as a mock-heroic poem dealing with the pretensions and hypocrisies of the Presbyterians, Independents and other sects which were subversive of the monarchy at the time of the great rebellion. Though it was not published till after the restoration of Charles II, Butler’s sympathies were ardently royalist; but his pen, so far as we know, was engaged only fitfully in support of his convictions. His object in putting

together in a considerable poem an account of the events and opinions which he had quietly recorded during the convulsive struggles of the nation must have been to ingratiate himself with the king after his return. The impelling motive may well have been poverty, together with the desire of fame.

The first known attempt at mock-heroic poetry was *Batrachomyomachia,* or the Battle between Frogs and Mice, a burlesque on the *Iliad,* which was at one time absurdly attributed to Homer. Butler, of course, was acquainted with this poem, and wittily parodies title and subject in his *Cynarctomachy, or Battle between Bear and Dogs.* He was probably influenced, also, by Skelton, who, although a man of learning, attacked Cardinal Wolsey and the clergy in short rimes of "convivial coarseness and boisterous vigour." But Butler's model in style, to a very great extent, must have been Scarron, almost an exact contemporary, whose *Virgile Travesti* was published in 1648–52; so Butler, who was versed in French literature, could easily adopt the salient features of this poem in *Hudibras,* which was not published till 1663. On the other side, Scarron shows acquaintance with English affairs, *e.g.* in the following couplet:

D'un côté vient le grand Ajax
Fier comme le milord Fairfax.
Virg. Trav., liv. ii.

His method is to modernise the language and actions of the ancient Virgilian heroes, and to put in their mouths the phrases of the (common) people of his own time. In the same mocking spirit, he introduces glaring anachronisms, such as the appearance of Mohammedans at the foundation of Carthage, Dido saying grace before meat, etc.

The name "Hudibras" is derived from *The Faerie Queene* (11, 2, 17), and the setting of the poem is obviously imitated from *Don Quixote,* save that the imitation is a complete reversal of the attitude of the original. Cervantes treats the vanishing chivalry of Spain in a gentle and affectionate spirit, while showing the impossibility of its continuance in the changed conditions of life. In *Don Quixote,* every element of grandeur and nobility is attributed to the most ordinary and meanest person, building, incident or surrounding; an inn is a castle, an inn-keeper a knight, flocks of sheep are armies; a barber's basin is a golden helmet in the vivid imagination of the knight; a mess of acorns set before him prompts a discourse full of regret at the passing away of the Golden Age, when Nature herself provided simple, wholesome fare for all, without necessity for resorting to force or fraud; and justice prevails

throughout. Notwithstanding the absurdity and impossibility of this revival, the reader's sympathy is ever on the side of the chivalric madman, even in his wildest extravagance. In *Hudibras,* on the contrary, the "blasoning" or description of the knight and squire, while following the most accredited forms of chivalric romance, serves only to set forth the odious squalor of the modern surroundings. The knight's mental qualifications are given in great detail and, after that, his bodily accomplishments—all in a vein of satirical exaggeration. Butler's purpose is to show everything in its vilest aspect. Instead of making common affairs noble in appearance, the poem reveals the boastful pretensions of the puritan knight by describing both his equipment and that of his squire squalid and beggarly. His purpose however, is not to excite pity for the poverty and wretchedness of these pitiful champions, but to provoke contempt for the disgusting condition of the wretched pair and to bring down further odium upon it. It is genre painting with a vengeance, and fully realises the account given by Pliny of the art of Piraeicus: "He painted barbers' shops and cobblers' stalls, asses and dishes of food, and the like, thus getting the name of 'painter of low life'; ([char]) and giving the highest pleasure by such representations." Our own Morland and Hogarth well answer such a description, and we are fortunate in possessing illustrations of *Hudibras* designed by the latter. The sympathy between the painter and the poet must have been complete.

That Hudibras going forth "a colonelling" is intended to represent Sir Samuel Luke is made pretty clear by the speech:

> 'T is sung there is a valiant Mamaluke
> In foreign Land yclept—
> To whom we have been oft compar'd
> For person, parts, address and beard.

He is described as a "true blue" presbyterian, ignorant, conceited, pedantic, crotchety, a pretender to linguistic, mathematical and dialectical learning, bent on a "thorough-going reformation" by means of "apostolic blows and knocks." In external appearance, he was of a most droll rusticity. His beard was orange tawny (perhaps copied from Philip Nye's thanksgiving beard, or from Panurge's beard in *Pantagruel*), and it was unkempt because he had vowed not to trim it till the monarchy was put down. He was hunchbacked and adorned by a protuberant paunch, stuffed with country fare of milk and butter. His doublet was buff, the colour much affected by his party, and was proof against blows from a cudgel,

but not against swordcuts. His trunk-hose were full of provisions; even his sword had a basket-hilt to hold broth, and was so little used that it had worn out the scabbard with rust, having been exhibited only in serving warrants. His dagger was serviceable for scraping pots and toasting cheese. His holster contained rusty pistols which proved useful in catching rats in the locks, snapping on them when they foraged amongst his garments for cheese. Don Quixote took no thought as to how he should obtain sustenance, while Hudibras was an itinerant larder.

All this is adapted from Cervantes or Rabelais, who themselves parodied the chivalric romances in the apparelling and blasoning of their heroes: in the same vein, Butler goes on to describe the steed and the squire. The horse was mealy mouthed, blind of one eye, like the mare of Rabelais's Catchpole, and wall-eyed of the other; there are also reminiscences of Rosinante and of Gargantua's mare. It was of a grave, majestic pace, and is compared with Caesar's horse, which would stoop to take up its rider, while this one stooped to throw Hudibras. The saddle was old and worn through, and the horse's tail so long and bedraggled that it was only serviceable for swishing mire on the rider.

Ralpho the squire is an independent, with a touch of the anabaptist, despising booklore and professing to be learned for salvation by means of "gifts" or "new-light," in the phraseology of those sects. Here comes in a loan from Rabelais in the account of Ralpho's mystic learning. Here Trippa in *Pantagruel* is based on Henricus Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, author of *De Occulta Philosophia;* these writers and Pythagorean numbers are employed in the description of the squire's accomplishments in quack astrology and almanac writing. Ralpho is a tailor and, like Aeneas and Dante, has seen "hell"—a sartorial term of the age, meaning a receptacle for shreds and scraps.

2.3.9: SUMMING UP

Hudibras was an extremely popular work with pirate copies and a spurious second part being issued before Butler could produce his genuine second part in 1664. It was highly praised with Voltaire in his *Letters on the English* saying "I never found so much wit in one single book". One reader though was distinctly unimpressed. On 26 December 1662 Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary that he bought *Hudibras*, but, despite its being extremely popular at the time, he admitted finding no humour in it

and selling it the same day. Two months later he bought it again to try to find what he was missing. He still found nothing funny about it, due to his finding its treatment of Puritans too vicious and being insensitive to the humour of the rhymes. This anecdotal summing up will help you get an idea of the mixed reactions that Butler's work elicited in his own age.

2.3.10. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. Discuss Hudibras as a mock-epic poem.

2. How in your opinion is the socio-political context of the times reflected in *Hudibras*?

3. What elements of satire do you find pervasively present in *Hudibras*?

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Comment on the art of characterization in *Hudibras* with reference to the two major characters you have come across.

2. Write a note on Butler's sources for *Hudibras* and his indigenous use of them.

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. Write briefly on the history of the composition of *Hudibras*.

2. Bring out two instances of parody in *Hudibras*.

3. Show with any two lines from the given extract, the impact of Butler's use of the octosyllabic couplet.

2.3.11. SUGGESTED READING

Ford, Boris ed. *The Pelican Guide to English Literature Vol. 4*: 'From Dryden to Johnson'
Kemmerer, Kathleen Nulton. Johnson's "Preface to Samuel Butler'.
Wasserman, George Russel. *Samuel "Hudibras" Butler*. Boston: Twaine. 1989.

Samuel Butler and The Earl of Rochester: A Reference Guide. Boston: G.K Hall. 1986

Module 3 Unit 1

John Bunyan: *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Extract)

3.1.0. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this Unit is to familiarise you with the allegorical mode as an important form of literary representation in 17th century English Literature. This is however fundamentally different from the manner in which one could understand 'allegory' in Middle English literature. We have in mind that this particular text, the author and the literary mode itself are not as well known to you as many other literary texts, whether prose, poetry or drama, in English Literature. But it is equally true that John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is, perhaps, one of such prose wittings as constitute the meaningful landmarks which one cannot easily ignore. Generically, thematically and structurally too, the work by Bunyan evades any type of specifications. You may call it an allegory, or even a theological tract within a framework of fiction.

The plan behind designing this Unit is to draw your attention to this varied multiplicity of the meaning of the text. At this level of your academic discipline, the reading of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a whole will be too heavy and ponderous. That is why an excerpt has been taken from the original work. The excerpt, however, is carefully chosen, since it is one of the core passages of this famous work. If you read it carefully, you will be able to understand its thematic richness, its allegorical signification and the Christian, theological/Puritanic ideas embedded in the text. But before guiding you to its multiplicity of interests, we would initially focus attention

on John Bunyan himself, the Puritanic background of the early seventeenth century, to be followed by a brief summary of the text, and lastly a few critical observations on the excerpt, recommended in your course.

3.1.1. BRIEF LITERARY BIOGRAPHY OF BUNYAN

The life of John Bunyan is such that we need to delve into a bit of personal details to understand his literary world. Bunyan came of a poor parentage, his father being a tin smith in the village of Elstow, near Bedford. He had very little schooling but learned the rudiments of reading and writing. From boyhood on, Bunyan experienced private visions that fed his brand of Christian devotion. He saw devils and heard inner voices talking about Christ and later in life felt driven to pray to trees and broomsticks. These visions and dreams would later serve as an inspiration for his writings. The major part of his early life was spent at a time when the English Puritans were experiencing almost a life and death struggle for their survival. Bunyan himself was a strong believer in Puritanic faith and he belonged to Baptist sympathies, to which he was induced by his first wife Margaret Bentley. He began to read the Bible and attend church on a regular basis. Bunyan was received into the Baptist Church in 1653. Bunyan advanced his knowledge of the Christian faith and scriptures by fasting and practicing solemn prayer. He started preaching in Bedford and nearby villages and gained an immense, popular following wherever he preached, earning the nickname “Bishop Bunyan” because of his stature as a religious teacher and thinker. His experience of religion was deeply individual. A pious young man, his strong sensitivity to sin was self-imposed and self-enforced. His personal standards were harsh and unforgiving. Bunyan did not commit many sins, but he did confess to using profane language, having danced, and having rung the bells of his local church without permission. These details will enable you to understand how the religious discipline inherent in the man must have motivated his writings in a large way. His severe and self-critical moral code provides the backdrop to Christian’s earnest and impassioned search for salvation in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Earlier, Bunyan had taken part in the Civil War (1642-1646), although nothing definite is known about his soldiering career. Religion and politics both dominated Bunyan’s life at all points of time. You already know that the Puritans, evangelical Christians with strict moral beliefs, had a great influence over the government and culture of England during Bunyan’s lifetime. Their

growing power culminated in civil war and the installation of the Puritan Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector of Britain in 1653. Religion in the seventeenth century as you know by now, was also highly political. It was not simply a matter of choosing one's faith to practice peacefully at home but a sign of political alliance with or rebellion against the ruling faction in public life. Religion affected one's career and one's family's prosperity, and Bunyan demonstrates this in *The Pilgrim's Progress* when Christian suddenly decides to leave his family behind to seek salvation in the Celestial City.

After the Restoration of Charles II, the Puritans had to face strong prosecution and Bunyan was sent to prison twice for his preaching to his congregation without having the state license to do so, one being for a lengthy period of twelve years. The long life of imprisonment ignited his creative impulse and he wrote part I of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The milder tone of Part II may be partly a reflection of the spirit of greater tolerance of religious differences prevailing in England later in his life. It is famously held that Bunyan's famous allegory about Pilgrim's journey to the Celestial City has been second only to the Bible itself in the number of copies sold worldwide over the three and a half centuries since it was first published. In this connection references may be given to his other works not as well known as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. These are *Some Gospel Truths Opened* (1656), *A Vindication* (1657), *Grace Abounding* (1666), *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), *The Holy City, or the New Jerusalem* (1666). The full title of the first part of the present text was *The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come* (First Part - 1672), followed by the second in 1684. His other better known works are *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682). Few writers in history have left such a wealth of Christ-centered writings as Bunyan has.

3.1.2. INTRODUCING *THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*

As mentioned earlier, Bunyan began writing *The Pilgrim's Progress* when he was behind bars after the Restoration; and the first part thus written was published in 1678. Bunyan's assurance in the validity of all his personal visions underlies *The Pilgrim's Progress,* which he disguises as a dream. The second part was published in 1684. In the six years between Parts I and II, his confidence as a writer grew visibly. The text is so fresh and original partly because Bunyan knew no great fiction writers to copy. Early editions of his work were often on cheap and coarse paper,

bought mainly by the poor. Bunyan thus had a hand in educating the class from which he himself came. The characters have no individual personality but are embodiments of moral qualities as illustrated by their names: Christian, Christiana, Great-heart, and Hopeful, to name a few. This might remind you of the naming of characters in the medieval morality plays.

Generically The Pilgrim's Progress is regarded as a prose allegory. Its full title is lengthy - *The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come*. The entire text is divided into two parts. The first part describes the religious conversion of Christian, and of his religious life in this world, his visit to the river of Death, and the Heavenly City which lies beyond it. The second part is concerned with Christiana, the wife of Christian, and their children. Like Christian they also undertake a similar type of journey with a group of friends.

The plot structure is episodic and several episodes symbolise real life experiences. For example the episodes of Slough of Despond, the valleys of Humiliation and the Shadow of Death represent the different stages of despair and depression, spiritual despondency and terror. Christian is also confronted with the derision and anger of public opinion, symbolised by the Vanity Fair The full text and its symbolic implication will be explained to you very shortly.

At first sight *The Pilgrim's Progress* allegorises the Puritan faith. Christian and his wife Christiana belong to the Puritan sects, of which in real life Bunyan himself was a member. Historically, the Puritans were to undergo the toughest and severe punishments in the reign of Charles II. Yet, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is much more than merely a dramatisation of the Puritan spirit. Because of its allegorical content, it may be related to the tradition of Middle English dream and allegorical literature, as we have already mentioned. These aspects make it closely aligned with the popular traditions of culture to an extent unequalled by any other major literary work of the period.

Another element of popular culture that Bunyan integrates and assimilates within the prose narrative in his use of the Bible, which was a popular household reading during the time. The significance of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is thus multi-dimensional. Within its allegorical framework, its characters – abstractions and moral virtues or vices personified - are reminiscent of the medieval tradition of Morality plays. The pronounced presence of dream elements makes

it comparable to other specimens of dream literature, chronologically both before and after Bunyan. In the introduction of dialogues in the lips of the characters, or the actions, reactions and interaction between and among different persons, and in specifying a distinctive storyline, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a work of fiction in its germinal/embryonic form. It is also part and parcel of contemporary popular literature by virtue of its unpretentious presentation of themes and easy, simple and lucid language.

We may now draw your attention to the excerpt recommended in the course.

3.1.3 TEXT (EXTRACT).

Vanity Fair

Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair; it is kept all the year long; it beareth the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than Vanity; and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither is Vanity. As is the saying of the wise, "All that cometh is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 11.8) [1]

This fair is no new erected business; but a thing of ancient standing; I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years agone, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City[2], as these two honest persons are; and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their companions, perceiving by the path that the pilgrims made, that their way to the city lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold of all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore at this fair are all such merchandise sold, as houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments[3], titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.

And, moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen juggling, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind.

Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false swearers, and that of a blood - red colour.

And as in other fairs of less moment, there are the several rows and streets, under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended; so here likewise you have the proper places, rows, streets (viz., countries and kingdoms), where the wares of this fair are soonest to be found. Here is the Britain Row; the French Row; the Italian Row; the Spanish Row; the German Row where several sorts of vanities are to be sold[4]. But, as in other fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair, so the ware of Rome[5] and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this fair; only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where this lusty[6] fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this town, must needs "go out of the world". (Corinthians 1, Chap 5 Verse 10)[7]

The Prince of princes[8] himself, when here, went through this town to his own country, and that upon a fair- day too, yea, and as I think, it was BEELZEBUB, the chief lord of this fair, that invited him to buy of his vanities; yea, would have made him lord of the fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town. (Matthew, Chap 4, Verse 8) Yea, because he was such a person of honour, Beelzebub had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure the Blessed One to cheapen[9] and buy some of his vanities; but he had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town, without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities.

This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great fair.

Now these pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this fair. Well, so they did; but, behold, even as they entered into the fair, all the people in the fair were moved, and the town itself as it were in a hubbub about them; and that for several reasons: for

First, the pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair. The people, therefore, of the fair, made a great gazing upon them: some said they were fools, some they were bedlams, and some they are outlandish men[10]. (Corinthians Book 1. Chap 2, Verse 7)

Secondly, and as they wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said; they naturally spoke the language[11] of Canaan[12]; but they that kept the fair were the men of this world: so that, from one end of the fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other.

Thirdly, but that which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares; they cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity", and look upwards, signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven. (Psalm 119, Verse 37)[13]

One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriages of the men, to say unto them, What will ye buy? But they, looking gravely upon him, said, "We buy the truth". (Proverbs 23, 23)[14]

At that there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more; some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully, and some calling upon others to smite them. At last things came to a hubbub and great stir in the fair, insomuch that all order was confounded. Now was word presently brought to the great one of the fair, who quickly came down, and deputed some of his most trusty friends to take these men into examination, about whom the fair was almost overturned. So the men were brought to examination; and they that sat upon them[15] asked them whence they came, whither they went, and what they did there, in such an unusual garb?

The men told them that they were pilgrims and strangers in the world, and that they were going to their own country, which was the Heavenly Jerusalem[16];

and that they had given no occasion to the men of the town, nor yet to the merchandisers, thus to abuse them, and to let them in their journey, except it was for that, when one asked them what they would buy, they said they would buy the truth. But they that were appointed to examine them did not believe them to be any other than bedlams and mad, or else such as came to put all things into a confusion in the fair. Therefore they took them and beat them, and besmeared them with dirt; and then put them into the cage, that they might be made a spectacle to all the men of the fair.

3.1.4. NOTES AND GLOSSARY

You will notice that the text has several Christian allusions mentioned in parentheses. For your convenience, we first put down the quotes from these sources as and where they occur in the text.

1.“But if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the day of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh *is* vanity."
~ Ecclesiastes 11:8 ~

Clearly Bunyan's insistence is on vanity as a cardinal vice that undoes the human pursuit of Heaven hereafter. This idea is pervasively present in The Pilgrim's Progress in general and of course the episode of 'Vanity Fair' in particular.

2. "Almost five thousand years agone…to set up a fair." The allusion is to Mark, Chapter V, verses 8 – 10. The "unclean spirit" is the Biblical phrase, particularly associated with Beelzebub, Prince of the Devils, Apollyon destroyer., also called 'the angel of the bottomless pit' in *Book of Revelation,* Chapter 9; Verse 11. At a time when we are all used to the culture of shopping malls where even the commonest of objects come to acquire a glitter, Bunyan's list of merchandise on sale at Vanity Fair appears interesting. You will notice that the exhaustive list contains in abstraction, allegorical references to all such objects, animate and inanimate, that comprise the various materialistic desires and acquisitions that modern (by any standards) life is made up of. To Bunyan the Puritan therefore, all such objects constitute impediments in the form of desires that tempt human beings in this transitory life, on the path to Heaven. And such is the law of faith that a 'pilgrim' must needs walk through such temptations to reach the promised salvation. The archetype for this was laid by Christ, who had to face the temptations posed by Satan in the desert; overcome them and only then could the Son of God get back to the Father. In this sense, 'Vanity Fair' is supremely allegorical.

3. Preferments, titles: Appointments and promotions to political or ecclesiastical positions.

4. Notice that Bunyan categorically mentions different European nations, each known for their national prejudices. Mention might be made in this context of the 18th century writer Oliver Goldsmith's famous essay 'National Prejudices', that you might as well read with your counselor in class. Bunyan perhaps is of the idea that these man-made prejudices and vanities are in a way deterrents in the path of achieving the universal goal of redemption of humanity by casting aside narrow pursuits in worldly life. But on the face of it, the different national rows make Vanity Fair a virtual world trade centre, if one were to use a modern analogy!

5. "…the ware of Rome and her merchandise…": The practices and the temporal power of the Roman Catholic Church. Bunyan's Puritan temperament would naturally be of this opinion.

6. "lusty": Cheerful, lustful. The glitter of the fair is here perceived through a Puritan vision.

7. "go out of the world": The phrase occurs in *Corinthians*: Chapter V, Verse 10. The exact words are:

"Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."
~ 1 Corinthians 5:10 ~

8. “The Prince of princes…”: The allusion is to one of the interesting episodes in *Matthew* Chapter IV; paragraphs 4 – 11 which relate to the Temptations of Christ, adored as ‘the Prince of princes’ by Satan in the wilderness. The exact words are:

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;"
~ Matthew 4:8 ~

9. To cheapen: To ask the price of

10. “Bedlams” and “outlandish” – Outlandish bears the meaning of foreign, while Bedlams would refer to lunatics from Bethlehem Hospital asylum in London. The reference is to the *Corinthians:*

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."
~ 1 Corinthians 2:7, 8 ~

The word ‘mystery’ is important here. Since people at Vanity Fair cannot understand the inherent wisdom in the words of the pilgrims, they find them quaint, subject them to inhuman treatment and cause all the suffering. This is a lot like what was done to Christ, because temporal powers failed to/ deliberately did not understand his sayings.

11. the language of Cannan: The Greeks and Romans so designated all those who speak in tongues other than Greek and Latin.

12. Cannan: The Promised Land, ultimately conquered by the Children of Israel.

13. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; *and* quicken thou me in thy way."
~ Psalm 119:37 ~

14. "Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding."
~ Proverbs 23:23 ~

15. “…they that sat upon them”: Interrogated and tried them (as in putting to trial)

16. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."
~ Hebrews 11:13-16 ~

3.1.5. CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF TEXTUAL PORTION

'Vanity Fair' is the best known episode in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The popularity of this section can be measured by the fact that William Makepeace Thackeray, a major Victorian novelist, titled his most popular novel as *Vanity Fair*. In a lighter vein, Vanity Fair is also one of the leading international magazines that carries news of Hollywood, politics, fashion, high society scandals and so on! It seems interesting to probe why Bunyan chose such a name.

The universal acceptability of the particular episode may be attributed to different reasons. First, it is written in a language which is easy to understand and lucid. Even when the readers fail to understand the underlying allegory of the text, they do not however detect anything in the text which is abstract, or highly philosophical or mystical. On the contrary, Bunyan turns one of the most familiar institutions in contemporary England – annual fairs – into an allegory of universal spiritual significance. Christian and his companion Faithful pass through the town of Vanity in the season of a local fair that is great and ancient. It is called Vanity Fair, an occasion for trade in tawdry products, and the worship of Beelzebub, one of the rebel angels against God in the army of Lucifer. At Vanity Fair, Faithful and Christian are mocked, smeared with dirt, and thrown in a cage. Given a chance to repent, they stay true to their righteous hatred of worldly possessions. They are condemned to death for belittling Vanity's false religion. Faithful tries to speak in his own defence but is burned at the stake and carried off to heaven. Christian is remanded to prison but escapes later.

In this context you may now like to take into consideration the opening sentence of the given extract – "Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them…" which situates the text in the tradition of Middle English dream Literature.

You are also requested to look at the title of the 'Vanity Fair'. The dictionary meaning of the word vanity refers to the emptiness or worthlessness of the soul. It may also signify the worldly pride – the conceit. Thus the title 'Vanity Fair' may be suggestive of the kind of fair where worldly men display or exhibit their pride and engage themselves in foolish and meaningless

activities – the kind of activity which degrades and degenerates, corrupts and perverts their social habits and characteristic tendencies.

At the beginning the author describes that the town of Vanity and the fair, which is located in that town are the contrivances of Beelzebub, Apollyon and Legion. It seems to resemble a large shopping centre, where, instead of consumable commodities everything that is sold is of mercenary, materialistic and morally depraved nature. They include such worldly items as "houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments." In fact the wares at the fair embrace both non-human and human objects – "lusts, pleasures and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones and what not."

It is clear from Bunyan's description that his theological intention is as much to uphold the theological context of the text as also its social perspective. The historical time to which *The Pilgrim's Progress* belongs was the time of social restlessness, moral depravity with the men and women in the society engaging themselves in superficial activities, as the Puritan perception went. The flippancy and frivolity induced by the Restoration of the Royal Court of Charles II filtered down the social scale and affected the lifestyle and characteristic habits of the common people. This is being allegorically suggested by the scenes and situations, sights and objects at the Vanity Fair. In fact, the word 'vanity' suggestively refers to flimsy social habits and engagements of the Restoration worldlings. It is significant to note that at the Vanity Fair there is hardly anything good or redeeming either in the persons who assemble there or in the nature of the commodities, arranged either for sale or consumption by the people. And to quote Bunyan, this comprises of "… whores, bawds… jugglings, cheats, … fools, apes, knaves and rogues" and also "houses, lands trades, places, honours, preferments…"

Bunyan's social vision is not merely confined to the contemporary English context but also extended to the European reality. This idea is particularly embedded/ registered in the following paragraph:

"And in other fairs of less moment… with some others, have taken a dislike thereat."

It is true that Bunyan is not a satirist in the strict sense of the term, but in the lines and passages quoted above, you will not possibly miss the unmistakable spirit of social satire.

3.1.6. PURITANISM IN *THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*: EVALUATING VANITY FAIR

Vanity Fair is overwhelmingly enriched with the Christian Puritan spirit. Now when we say 'Puritan', you must feel curious about the associational meaning of this particular world. The word 'Puritan' is derived from the word 'Puritanism'. Therefore our task at this point is to ascertain how the prescribed text is reflective of the spirit of Puritanism. For this, we shall repeat in short the basic facts of Puritanism that you have already come across in Module 1.

The terms 'Puritan' or 'Puritanism' are mostly used in a narrow sense of religious practice and attitudes and in a broad sense of ethical outlook, which is much less easy to define. In a strict sense 'Puritan' was applied to those Protestant reformers who rejected Queen Elizabeth's religious settlement of 1560. This settlement sought a middle way between Roman Catholicism and the extreme spirit of reform of Geneva – the European city which became famous as the centre of the most extreme of the great Protestant reformers, John Calvin the founder of Calvinism. The Puritans influenced by Geneva and other continental centres objected to the retention of Bishop and to any appearance of what they regarded as superstition in Church worship. Apart from their united opposition to Roman Catholicism, Puritans disagreed among themselves on questions of doctrines and church organization - the principal sects being Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and later Quakers.

Let us now cast attention to the meaning of Puritanism in the broader social and moral contexts. In this respect Puritanism has always represented strict obedience to the dictates of conscience and a strong emphasis on the virtue of self – denial. In this sense even an individual can be described as 'puritan', whether or not he belongs to the recognised Puritan sects, or even if one is an atheist. The Puritanic orthodoxy and conservatism, in general was opposed to any form of art or dramatic performance simply because the strict Puritan, in his intense love of truth, was much inclined to confuse fiction with lying. Thus Bunyan was criticized by some of his Puritan comrades for writing fiction in his allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This could be an interesting way of reading the present text which is by an avowed Puritan!

After having given you a very brief idea about Puritanism, we may now talk about how the spirit of Puritanism affects the text of 'Vanity Fair'. In course of reading the text of 'Vanity Fair' you have noticed how the fair ground is filled with objects and sights, sins and evils of mundane worldly life. The entire description corresponds to the Puritanic belief that the man's worldly life is full of temptations. At every step of life he stands vulnerable to temptations of all types, mostly moral and spiritual. But in order to achieve the ultimate or the final stage of salvation, man is to undergo this specific stage. Bunyan writes in this connection: "Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town where this lusty fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this town, must needs 'go out the world."

The Puritanic idea allegorised by Bunyan in this section of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is simultaneously allusive and suggestive. It alludes to the Temptations of Christ in the wilderness, and also the temptation of St. Augustine, narrated in *Soliloquies*. The immediacy of the Biblical allusion apart, the descriptions are also suggestive of the universal pattern of human life and existence – the encircling flames of Temptation, man's attempts at overcoming them, his self-salvation, as he succeeds in the task of conquering the evil allurements of worldly life. According to the Puritan, the human life represents the archetype of the pilgrimage and its progress towards self-enlightenment.

It has however been suggested that such a journey is neither smooth nor without any danger or adverse predicament. To the people around them, the pilgrims, who represent humanity appear to be strange and non – identifiable alien figures: "The pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair. The people, therefore, of the fair, made a great gazing upon them. Some said they were fools, some they were bedlams, and some they were outlandish men." The Pilgrims were also subjected to physical torture and humiliation, as Christ was before his crucifixion. If you look into the text, you will find these ideas substantiated: "At that there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more: some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully and some calling upon others to smite them… But they that were appointed to examine them did not believe them to be any other than bedlams and mad… they took them and beat them, and besmeared them with dirt, and then put them into the cage that they might be made a spectacle to all the men of the fair …" The

reference to such commercial terms as ‘merchandise’ and ‘merchandisers’ may stand for the commercialization of religion by the Catholic priests opposed by the Puritan Protestants.

3.1.7. BUNYAN’S STYLE

The allegoric design of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in general and of ‘Vanity Fair’ in particular, never appears to be dull or monotonous to the readers for two reasons. First, Bunyan hardly uses any word or expression which is tinged with philosophic abstraction. Bunyan states everything in a simple and lucid manner. He narrates the experiences with the delightful gusto of a story teller. Secondly, he dramatizes the narrative to capture the attention of his readers. The following passage may be cited to substantiate the statements:

> One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriages of the men to say unto them, What will ye buy? But they, looking gravely upon him, said, We buy the truth. At that there was an occasion taken to despise the more; some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully, and some calling upon others to suite them.”

3.1.8. SUMMING UP

To get back to where we began, should we denounce and criticize *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as a dull and uninteresting text? It is true that the text has obvious theological/moral/philosophical connotations. But Bunyan’s descriptive art, his technique and style of writing have hardly divested the text of its literary merit and sound aesthetic appeal. ‘Vanity Fair’ itself is a microcosm of life’s macrocosm with all its variety, contradictions, oppositional and diverse, differential elements.

3.1.9. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. The immediate contexts of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* are at once social and philosophical. Analyse ‘Vanity Fair’ in the light of this statement.

2. Write a critical note on the Puritanic elements in 'Vanity Fair' with close reference to the text.

3. What fictional elements do you find in *The Pilgrim's Progress*? How do they contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the text? You are expected to answer this with reference to the syllabised text extract.

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. How does Bunyan make use of Biblical elements in the text?

2. Why does *The Pilgrim's Progress* generically belong to the genre of dream literature? Analyse on the basis of your reading of the extract.

3. Comment briefly on the meaning of the title 'Vanity Fair'. Also relate it to the full title of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Short Anwer Types (6 marks)

1. Write a short note on Bunyan and Puritanism.

2. What do you know about the Valleys of humiliation and the Shadow of Death?

3. Briefly show how Bunyan's upbringing contributed to the makings of the writer that he became in life.

3.1.10. SUGGESTED READING LIST

Gillie, Christopher. *Longman Companion to English Literature*. (For a detailed idea of Puritanism)
Sharrock, R. *John Bunyan*
Talon, H. *John Bunyan: The Man and His Works*.

MODULE 3 UNIT 2

Extract from *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*: 'The Great Fire of London'

3.2.0. INTRODUCTION

From your study of Module 1 Unit 1 of this Paper, you have already formed an idea of the importance of what we have called the literature of documentation. Diary writing is one of the most prominent forms that can be included within this category. In this Unit, you will learn about the historical event of the Great Fire that broke out in the city of London, from the diary records of Samuel Pepys, one of the most important diarists of the period. As you read along this Unit, you should be mentally prepared to extend the horizons of your understanding of literature as going beyond fictional narratives. This will help you to appreciate how contemporary events of historical-social importance can also become the staple of literature in the broadest sense. The reading of diaries thus becomes an interesting addition to what is known as non-fictional literature of the Restoration period.

3.2.1. DIARY WRITING AND ITS LITERARY VALUE

Many of you might have been into the habit of writing personal diaries as you were growing up. In later years, these will become interesting sources of memory! There are also many people who keep diary record of daily things to do, or even write down their daily expenses in diaries. Ever wondered where this idea of the diary as a manifold documentation originated from?

The term *diary* evolves from the Latin expression *diarium* which meant 'daily allowance,' from *dies* 'day'. A diary is a kind of record-keeping which is normally in handwritten format. It normally consists of disconnected entries set in order by date, reporting on experiences over the course of a day or other period. Usually the term is today put to use to signify personal diaries which are intended to remain private or to have a limited circulation amongst friends or relatives.

The word 'journal' may be sometimes used for 'diary,' but generally a diary has daily entries (though not always), whereas journal-writing can be less regular. Diary can be seen as a personal history, a personal chronology. A keeper of a diary is called a diarist. A diary in the personal form attempts to chronologically record an individual's confessions, his or her private life, experiences, and interpretations of certain events that the individual has faced throughout a certain period of time, his feelings, and his philosophies too. The note-book structure allows the writer to be strictly honest and spontaneous about the representation of his feelings and experiences. And since the document is meant to be strictly personal, this way of recording one's experiences turns out to be autobiographical indeed. However, since the perception of a published autobiography is definitely to be understood as a personal document which is to be read by readers in a public domain, there exists a doubt whether or not the writer of the autobiography has remained spontaneously direct and honest in utterances and recordings of his experiences. Therefore, someone's diary seems to be the most honest form of confession and self-analysis, since the diary as a form of writing is not a public document which is to be read by any reader existing outside the domain of the writer.

However, we must also bring into the spectrum of our discussion not merely the use of diary as a means of personal recording, but whether or not the study of diaries can be a viable part of the study of literature. The first question that we may encounter is: 'Why do we take personal chronologies of personal experiences to be a part of our discussion on literature or its history?'. The answer is simple. Normally, when we discuss about literature we tend to identify literary works by means of locating and interpreting its various branches, genres, and sub-genres. Therefore, we generally tend to talk about epic, poetry in various forms, drama, various forms of prose literature. These forms do not merely allow us to look deep into the individual writer's mind, but work as a form of history of the contemporary world. There probably lies the social utility of all these forms of literature. Literature helps the reader to

build an image of the time and space of the literary work since all forms of literature directly or indirectly mirror the age, its customs, beliefs, and prejudices, its positive and negative sides. A diary is definitely a personal record, but the same can also be seen as a form of history, a kind of honest documentation of the social, religious, political, national events relevant not merely to the individual diarist but also to the mass of the time. More significantly, since most literary works of the earlier time did proceed under the patronage of the dominant class of people, and since such literary works were to be created for public entertainment and consumption, there can remain a possibility of a prevalent bias in the representation of the various events that affect a social life and outlook. The literary artist is a public figure who sometimes caters to the mass, and since the literary work is meant to be a product, it can sometimes be not the most honest form of documentation of the age. Therefore, the idea of a diary as a form of social history is to be conceived as a more honest and viable confession on the part of the diarist, and since his handwritten documentation of personal life and personal interpretation of the defining events of public life is not meant to be published for public consumption, the same can remain as a more truthful form of history. Therefore, diary too can be a part of literature, not merely on the basis of aesthetic value of the same, but also on the basis of its social viability as a medium of social, political, and psychological commentary on the society at large.

3.2.2 TRADITION OF DIARY WRITING IN ENGLAND: A SHORT HISTORY

If you remember Act I Scene iii of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, you find Macbeth indirectly referring to some personal documentation that may have signified a personal diary, as he assures Ross and Angus, who brought the news of the title of the Thane of Cawdor being conferred upon Macbeth after his noble and valiant services in the Rebels' War by. He says,

Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are register'd where every day I turn
The leaf to read them.

The earliest instance of the use of the term 'diary' to refer to a daily personal record occurs in Ben Jonson's comedy of humours *Volpone* in 1605. Bacon too advices the traveller to keep a diary to record the events of his journey:

> It is a strange thing, that in sea voyages, where there is nothing to be seen, but sky and sea, men should make diaries; but in land-travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it; as if chance were fitter to be registered, than observation. Let diaries, therefore, be brought in use. ('Of Travel')

Keeping personal diaries had been part of the individual's routine since earlier times, but it was the early modern period, more conveniently known to be the Renaissance, that saw the beginning and overwhelmingly sweeping widespread popularity of diary as a personal record-keeping medium. It is being estimated that there are three hundred and sixty three diaries existing in England during this period. Most of these were catalogued by William Matthews in his seminal work on British Diaries, entitled *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written Between 1442 and 1942*. The emergence and development of diary writing in England during the Renaissance leading to the Restoration and Neo-Classical periods was a result of many cultural factors and development in various fields. A gradual increase in literacy amongst the population, resulting out of the gradual decentralization of economic prowess and political power and the advent of the revival of learning, developed among the citizens the interest of keeping personal records through writing. On the other hand with the rise of Renaissance temperament in the literate class of people of England, diary writing was rising because of a growing self awareness, and definitely, this growth in diary writing was a marker of the growth of individualism in Renaissance Europe. Discussing the rise in diary writing, Roland Carter and John McRae in their *Routledge History of Literature in English* write:

> The growth of the writing profession coincided with a rise in writing which was private and not intended for publication. Diaries and letters were, for the new literate middle class, forms of expression which enjoyed increasing wider currency.

Essentially growing out of the rise of the middle class and the newly literate class's pastime adventures, diary took a more serious role in allowing the later readers of history in giving not mere personal knowledge about individual diarists but also a veritable treasure of social commentary and psychological scrutiny on the periods in which diary writing flourished.

With the growing rise in the popularity and quantity of diarists few very significant diarists rose who remained sources of great information for the readers of literature and social history. Among the most famous diaries of English literature are those of John Evelyn for

1641-1706; Samuel Pepys (1660-69), one of the most valuable and minute records in survival Jonathan Swift's *Journal to Stella*, 1710-13; John Wesley's *Journal*, 1735-90; James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785), the first to be published in the life time of its author and Fanny Burney's *Diary*, (1778-1840) the most notable English diary of the late 18th century. In the Twentieth Century, the Journal of Katherine Mansfield (1927), and the five-volume Diary of Virginia Woolf (1977-84) are mentioned among the most distinguished of examples.

3.2.3. SAMUEL PEPYS AND HIS DIARIES

Samuel Pepys, an English naval administrator and a Member of Parliament, was born on 23rd February, 1633, and died on 26th May, 1703. Pepys rose by patronage, hard work, and an immense talent in administrative affairs, and finally became Chief Secretary to the Admiralty under both King Charles II and later under King James II. However, in the field of English literary and cultural history Pepys is not remembered for his achievements in the administrative field, but for his *Diaries* that he kept from 1600 (the year of the Restoration of Monarchy in England) until 1669. The diary was written in almost unintelligible shorthand fashion, and it was only in the nineteenth Century that the diaries got published.

Pepys began to keep the diary from 1st of January, 1660, and in the entries that get registered for nearly ten years afterwards, the reader gets the notion that Samuel Pepys never intended to publish the same. Samuel Pepys frankly registers personal details of his insecurities, jealousies, the women he pursued, and so many other private affairs like his relationship with his wife. Besides being extremely personal, Samuel Pepys' diary also poses several commentaries on the contemporary politics and adds new light to the graphic and realistic accounts of London life of the Restoration period.

3.2.4. PEPYS' DIARIES AS SOCIAL DOCUMENTS AND HISTORICAL RECORDS

Though Samuel Pepys never intended to write a publishable document on contemporary London life, culture, and politics his diaries are of immense significance in adding variant perspectives and flavours to the historical portrayals of the period that he inhabited. Pepys opens the diary accounts in a rather too personal way as the following excerpt will tell you:

> Blessed be God, at the end of the last year I was in very good health, without any sense of my old pain but upon taking of cold. I lived in Axe yard, having my wife and

> servant Jane, and no more in family than us three. My wife, after the absence of her terms for seven weeks, gave me hopes of her being with child, but on the last day of the year she hath them again.
>
> (Diary of Samuel Pepys, January 1660)

However, Pepys records several significant events and experiences of London public life during the Restoration period like **The Great Plague** and **The Great Fire**. During the Great Plague, for example, Pepys was not someone who was directly affected, as he was definitely not an individual who mixed with the poor. Besides he also had the facility to get himself outside London during a crisis. He remained unaffected the most period of the plague, and on 31st December, 1665, in his annual summary he also notes: 'I have never lived so merrily (besides that I never got so much) as I have done this plague time'. While this shows a fairly unsentimental and insensitive way of portraying the great hardships that the nation's people went through during the Plague, it will be highly improper to state that Pepys was not at all concerned about the event. Pepys writes on 16th August that:

> But, Lord! how sad a sight it is to see the streets empty of people, and very few upon the 'Change. Jealous of every door that one sees shut up, lest it should be the plague; and about us two shops in three, if not more, generally shut up.
>
> (Diary of Samuel Pepys, Wednesday, 16 August 1665)

Similarly, in the diary entry of 23rd April, 1661, Pepys describes the Coronation of Charles II:

> The King in his robes, bare headed, which was very fine. And after all had placed themselfs - there was a sermon and the service. And then in the Quire at the high altar he passed all the ceremonies of the Coronacion - which, to my very great grief, I and most of the Abbey could not see. The crowne being put upon his head, a great shout begun. And he came forth to the Throne and there passed more ceremonies: as, taking the oath and having things read to him by the Bishopp, and his lords (who put on their caps as soon as the King put on his Crowne) and Bishops came and kneeled before him.

3.2.5. THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON (1666): HISTORICAL EVENT

Fire hazards in the old medieval City of London were normal since most of the city was overcrowded with timber built houses standing congested in narrow lanes with great flammable materials stored inside them. Before 2nd September, 1666, the date of the Great Fire of London, (which began in late night from a small fire on Pudding Lane, in the bakeshop of Thomas Farynor, baker to King Charles II), there were regular great fire hazards

in the city. There were great fire accidents prior to this massive one, the most recent being in 1632. Due to the very flammable nature of the materials used in house-building and because of the dry nature of such materials the fire spread in unexpected velocity and ruined a great deal for the next three days. Though the number of casualties was less than what was expected, there was an acute financial loss and an immense loss of property. Around 430 acres, amounting to 80% of the city was shattered, including almost 13,000 houses, 89 churches, and 52 Guild Halls. Numerous citizens were homeless and suffered great loss of property. The Great Fire, and the fire of 1676, which shattered over 600 houses south of the river, changed the face of London forever. The sole positive effect of the Great Fire of London was found in that the plague, which had London continued to suffer since 1665, reduced a great deal, due to the mass death of the infection-carrying rats.

You must be interested in knowing how exactly the fire broke out. On September 2, 1666, Thomas Farynor, baker to King Charles II of England, failed, in effect, to turn off his oven. He thought the fire was out, but apparently the smouldering embers ignited some nearby firewood and by one o'clock in the morning, three hours after Farynor went to bed, his house in Pudding Lane was in flames. Farynor, along with his wife and daughter, and one servant, escaped from the burning building through an upstairs window, but the baker's maid was not so fortunate, becoming the Great Fire's first victim. The fire then leapt across Fish Street Hill and engulfed the Star Inn. The London of 1666 was a city of half-timbered, pitch-covered medieval buildings and sheds that ignited at the touch of a spark--and a strong wind on that September morning ensured that sparks flew everywhere. From the Inn, the fire spread into Thames Street, where riverfront warehouses were bursting with oil, tallow, and other combustible goods. By now the fire had grown too fierce to combat with the crude firefighting methods of the day, which consisted of little more than bucket brigades armed with wooden pails of water. The usual solution during a fire of such size was to demolish every building in the path of the flames in order to deprive the fire of fuel, but the city's mayor hesitated, fearing the high cost of rebuilding. Meanwhile, the fire spread out of control, doing far more damage than anyone could possibly have managed.

Soon the flames were visible from Seething Lane, near the Tower of London, where Samuel Pepys first noted them, though without much initial concern, as his diary entry would reveal!

After the hazard was over it took London a great period to recover from the loss. Chares II later appointed six Commissions to rebuild and redesign the city. As a reminder of the great national hazard that took place in the Great Fire, a monument was built in the same baker's place from where the fire had started to spread. The old Pudding Lane is now known as the Monument Street.

3.2.6. Text of 'The Great Fire of London'

Pepys Diary Entry, September 2 1666

Some of our maids sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast today, Jane called up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose, and slipped on my night-gown and went to her window, and thought it to be on the back side of Mark Lane at the farthest; but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off, and so went to bed again, and to sleep. . . . By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down tonight by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish Street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower; and there got up upon one of the high places, . . .and there I did see the houses at the end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side . . . of the bridge. . . .

So down [I went], with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it began this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding Lane, and that it hath burned St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish Street already. So I rode down to the waterside, . . . and there saw a lamentable fire. . . . Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the waterside to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconies, till they some of them burned their wings and fell down.

Having stayed, and in an hour's time seen the fire rage every way, and nobody to my sight endeavouring to quench it, . . . I [went next] to Whitehall (with a gentleman with me, who desired to go off from the Tower to see the fire in my boat); and there up to the King's closet in the Chapel, where people came about me, and I did give them an account [that]dismayed

them all, and the word was carried into the King. so I was called for, and did tell the King and Duke of York what I saw; and that unless His Majesty did command houses to be pulled down, nothing could stop the fire. They seemed much troubled, and the King commanded me to go to my Lord Mayor from him, and command him to spare no houses. . . .

I hurried] to [St.] Paul's; and there walked along Watling Street, as well as I could, every creature coming away laden with goods to save and, here and there, sick people carried away in beds. Extraordinary goods carried in carts and on backs. At last [I] met my Lord Mayor in Cannon Street, like a man spent, with a [handkerchief] about his neck. To the King's message he cried, like a fainting woman, 'Lord, what can I do? I am spent: people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses, but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it.' . . . So he left me, and I him, and walked home; seeing people all distracted, and no manner of means used to quench the fire. The houses, too, so very thick thereabouts, and full of matter for burning, as pitch and tar, in Thames Street; and warehouses of oil and wines and brandy and other things.

3.2.7. DETAILED CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

Pepys, being absolutely unused to seeing and understanding the fire hazards, their causalities and their extent in realistic terms, could not at the first instance grab the magnitude of the Great Fire when in late night of 2nd September, 1666 he was woken up by the maids of his household. Of the maids Jane, who was busy arranging the meal in Pepys' household for the following day's feast, called him up about three in the morning to report to her master anxiously that a great fire across the city lies visible from her window. Pepys urgently got up and put on his nightgown to rush to her window and have a firsthand glimpse of what the matter was. However, at the first instance Pepys could hardly detect in it any possibility of further spread and thought it wise not to worry about the same. He notes:

> So I rose and slipped on my nightgowne, and went to her window, and thought it to be on the backside of Marke-lane at the farthest; but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and so went to bed again and to sleep.

Rising at about seven in the morning again and dressing ready to go out, Pepys saw the fire again and found in it nothing alarming until he had a report from Jane again regarding the fire's spread and demolishing almost three hundred houses in the city. Pepys urgently got up

to prepare for going to the London Tower to have the clearest view of the fire, and witnessed 'the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge. Being shaken up by the devastating sight, Pepys went straight to the Lieutenant of the Tower who told him about the genesis of the fire in the King's baker's house in Pudding Lane, and the fact that the same fire spread rapidly to burn down St. Magnus's Church and most part of the Fish-street by the night. It is significant here to note that Pepys was a public figure, a Member of the Parliament, and a Naval Administrator, who exceeded in administrative designs and responsibilities bestowed upon him. From his personal account in the diary we gather a sentimental mind which genuinely felt for the poor victims of the fire, and in his narration, we gather the glimpses of a graphic details of his eye-witnessing to the calamities. At the same time his diary also gives us vivid detailing about the duties that he spontaneously performed in order to reduce the extent and scope of the devastations caused by the 'lamentable fire'. The value of this diary extract lies not merely in its being a personal memoir of the individual experience during this civil hardship in London, but also in its being a graphic and authentic narration of the events as he saw them. This is truly a blend of realism and the individual's sensitive eye gathering and storing almost all aspects of loss and calamity. Thus while on the one side Pepys describes the fire that engulfed almost the whole city as he could see and the hardships of the commoners, his sensitive eye does not miss the pigeons during the fire:

> Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that layoff; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the water-side to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their wings, and fell down.

Being a natural administrator and a prudent thinker he first surveyed the spectacle of fire by having a boat journey and thereafter thought it wise to report to the King regarding the entire episode and took the charge of helping the quenching of the wide-spreading fire after he received command from the King. Pepys notes not merely the details of the public pathos. He also notes in his diary the personal threats that he felt having seen the spectacle of the rising fire and fearing at the same time regarding the whereabouts and threats to the lives of his near ones:

> Having staid, and in an hour's time seen the fire: rage every way, and nobody, to my sight, endeavouring to quench it, but to remove their goods, and leave all to the fire, and having seen it get as far as the Steele-yard, and the wind mighty high and driving it into the City; and everything, after so long a drought, proving combustible, even the very stones of churches, and among other things the poor steeple by which pretty Mrs. —— lives, and whereof my old school-fellow Elborough is parson, taken fire in the very top, an there burned till it fell down: I to White Hall (with a gentleman with me who desired to go off from the Tower, to see the fire, in my boat); to White Hall, and there up to the Kings closett in the Chappell, where people come about me, and did give them an account dismayed them all, and word was carried in to the King. So I was called for, and did tell the King and Duke of Yorke what I saw, and that unless his Majesty did command houses to be pulled down nothing could stop the fire. They seemed much troubled, and the King commanded me to go to my Lord Mayor ... from him, and command him to spare no houses, but to pull down before the fire every way.

During the period, London's street plan was almost medieval, and the old-fashioned houses made of willow and roofed with hay used to stand by each other in narrow lanes, and the houses standing congested and with hardly any considerable amount of gap between themselves were filled with potential flammable items, which were illegally kept in the houses. Therefore there was always the disadvantage in quenching even a small fire; there was always the possibility of the spread of the fire. If such fire broke out in such congested areas, there was only one solution to quench the fire and minimize the casualties and loss of property. The solution was simply to pull down and demolish all the houses so that the rising wind does not spread by having more flammable objects around it. The fire fighting instruments were definitely not modern, and the band of security personals were hardly equipped 8in dealing with such a crisis like the Great Fire. Pepys notes the same and shows beside these the callousness of the officials like the Lord Mayor who could not carry out the command of the Kind to pull down the houses immediately, so that the fire does not grow further. However, it was also to be observed that to pull down the houses at the command of the King was not essentially a very easy affair. Pulling down the houses of the poor citizens would mean that their livelihood and shelters are to be demolished just in an instance. Though it was rational to do so, and though it was the only natural solution available in such a disastrous scenario, with the administration not having enough machinery to fight the fire, it was also an idea which was not to be accepted by the people directly affected by the hazard on the ground since it did not appear to them convincing enough that their houses being pulled down would solve the problem. The Lord Mayor could not therefore carry out the

command of the King which was heartlessly rational in the context, as he was anxious of the public protestations against carrying out such process. Pepys notes both the irreversibility of the scenario and its aftermath as well as the callousness of the Lord Mayor who left the scene of fire, bothering no further to convince the people about the need of pulling down the houses, to have some rest, standing in natural contrast to Pepys's sensitive administrative gifts.

> At last met my Lord Mayor in Canningstreet, like a man spent, with a handkercher about his neck. To the King's message he cried, like a fainting woman, "Lord! what can I do? I am spent: people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses; but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it." That he needed no more soldiers; and that, for himself, he must go and refresh himself, having been up all night. So he left me, and I him, and walked home, seeing people all almost distracted, and no manner of means used to quench the fire.

When it was Twelve O'clock, it was time for Pepys to get back to his own household to attend to his guests for the feast, and though the meal was good, his sentimental and sensitive mind could not push away the sights that he visualized through the day. The disturbing noise, the images of horrific flames, the dilapidated spectacle of urban London, the misery of the people helplessly trying to store and save every possible item, the burnt houses, the spreading fire flames, all come graphically represented in his diary. This is not merely adding to the historical significance of his diary but also heightens the emotional temper of his writing being extremely subjective replete with genuinely felt sympathy for the poor victims of the fire and anxiety for the future of his own household in the ensuing moments and days.

The official authoritative report published in the *London Gazette,* from Whitehall, on 8th of September, for the period between Monday, September 3 to Monday, September 10, 1666, also records in detail the various aspects of this national crisis and the approaches made by the King to rescue as much as possible and quench the fire in a fairly journalistic manner citing both the horrific aspects of the hazard as well as the officially conducted rescue operations. It notes:

> The ordinary course of this paper having been interrupted by a sad and lamentable accident of fire lately hapned [happened] in the City of *London*....
>
> The people in all parts about it, distracted by the vastness of it, and their particular care to carry away their Goods, many attempts were made to prevent the spreading of it by pulling down Houses, and making great Intervals but all in vain, the Fire seizing

> upon the Timber and Rubbish, and so continuing it set even through those spaces, and raging in a bright flame all Monday and Tuesday, not withstanding His Majesties own, and His Royal Highness's indefatigable and personal pains to apply all possible remedies...
>
> (*London Gazette*, 8th September, 1660)

However, this piece of journalism, though detailed, probably misses out the emotional value of Pepys' diary notes. Pepys' sense of involvement and felt sympathy and anxiety probably nourishes in his notes the truly 'lamentable' nature of the Great Fire. Pepys notes how after the meal he had again got out of the house to witness the further spread of the fire, the chaotic spectacle being emotionally represented in his sensitive detailing. A few portions of his diary notes may be quoted in this context to show the intensity of his feelings of sympathy and anxiety aroused by the deplorable sight. Thus, he notes:

> River full of lighters and boats taking in goods, and good goods swimming in the water, and only I observed that hardly one lighter or boat in three that had the goods of a house in, but there was a pair of Virginalls in it.... so as houses were burned by these drops and flakes of fire, three or four, nay, five or six houses, one from another.... We staid till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruins. So home with a sad heart, and there find everybody discoursing and lamenting the fire...

Pepys also notes how poor Tom Hater came with his goods as his own house was burnt down by the fire, and took refuge in the household of Pepys who played the role of a responsible host while he was himself terrified by the ever-spreading fire that seemed to threaten the aristocratic areas of London where he lived. He himself rushed to safeguard his own possessions and gold and carry the expensive goods of his own house away, and at the same time felt sympathetic towards his failure in providing Tom Hater any substantial amount of rest since there was great noise in his house as they were all trying to carry away the goods in order to prevent loss of property in the context of the raging fire.

To conclude we may say that Pepys was not a historian, and the value of his September 2nd, 1666, diary note is definitely not significant solely because of the eye witnessing that it provides the reader with. It is important for not merely its objectivity, but also its subjective

outpourings that provide the reader with a detailed account of the Great Fire as well as the soft yet rational, subtle yet sensitive personality and mind of this diarist in Samuel Pepys.

3.2.8. GLOSSARY

- Mayds: maids
- Nightgowne: nightgown, a kind of an aristocratic night dress.
- closett: Closet
- Steeleyard: steel-yard
- Loth: loathe
- Balconys: balconies
- Newes: news
- Owne: own
- tallys: a current score or amount, in this case a sum of money.

3.2.9. EVELYN AND PEPYS COMPARED

Primarily, let us remind you that John Evelyn was a contemporary of Samuel Pepys, and an equally celebrated diarist of the Restoration period. However, his diary was not essentially a daily account, and from the same journal account we do not come across any significant mention about the genesis of the Great Fire on 2nd September, 1666. The scene of the actual genesis of the fire, Pudding Lane and the Bakery, does not get mentioned too much. However, by the following day, Evelyn's journal entry does throw light on the hazardous events that took place in the city of London. He writes on 3rd September, 1666 regarding the miserable spectacle that he witnessed:

> Oh the miserable and calamitous spectacle! such as haply the world had not seen since the foundation of it, nor be outdone till the universal conflagration thereof. All the sky was of a fiery aspect, like the top of a burning oven, and the light seen above 40 miles round about for many nights. God grant mine eyes may never behold the like, who now saw above 10,000 houses all in one flame; the noise and cracking and thunder of people, the fall of towers, houses, and churches, was like an hideous storm, and the air all about so hot and inflamed that at last one was not able to approach it, so that they were forced to stand still and let the flames burn on, which they did for near two miles in length and one in breadth.

On the following day, he also notes:

> The burning still rages, and it was now gotten as far as the Inner Temple.... The eastern wind still more impetuously driving the flames forward. Nothing but the Almighty power of God was able to stop them, for vain was the help of man.

And on the 5th of September, his journal again registers:

> The poor inhabitants were dispersed about St. George's Fields, and Moorfields, as far as Highgate, and several miles in circle, some under tents, some under miserable huts and hovels, many without a rag or any necessary utensils, bed or board, who from delicateness, riches, and easy accommodations in stately and well furnished houses, were now reduced to extremest misery and poverty.

Both Evelyn and Pepys note the hazard in pictorial and graphic realism, and their accounts are replete with felt misery and sympathy for the poor victims of the fire. Pepys records 15 fires in the total volumes of his daily diaries. His own house got destroyed in the fire of January, 1673. Pepys' experiences of the Great Fire did not abandon his diaries since 2nd September, 1666. Pepys continues to write about the same in diary notes of February 24th 1667, February 28th 1667, March 16th 1667, and May 5th 1667. On March 16th, 1667, he writes:

> The weather is now grown warm again, after much cold weather; and it is observable that within these eight days I did see smoke remaining, coming out of some cellars, from the late great Fire, now above six months since.

All these show the depth and scope of the scaring and terrible experiences of the hazard on the souls and memory of these two individuals.

3.2.10. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks):

1. Assess the historical value of Samuel Pepys' 'The Great Fire of London'.
2. What picture of the Restoration London do you gather from the text? Elucidate with references to the text.
3. Pepys' diary is a detailed document of the history of the Great Fire and is charged with personal sympathy felt for the victims. Do you agree? Give reasons.
4. Pepys was an administrator with sympathy and sensitivity. Do you agree? Answer with suitable reference to Pepys' reaction to commentary on the Great Fire episode.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions (12 Marks):

1. What picture of the 17th Century fire-fighting machinery do you gather from Pepys' account? Answer with reference to the text.
2. In what way did the fire ignite and how did it spread? Answer with reference to the text.
3. Briefly comment on the street plan of contemporary London and show if it could have been responsible for the Great Fire.

Short Answer Type Questions (6 Marks):

1. What was Pepys initial reaction to the Great Fire?
2. How did the fire originate?
3. What orders came from Charles II to extinguish the fire?
4. What impression of the Mayor do you draw from Pepys' diary note?

3.2.11. SUGGESTED READING

Coote, Stephen. *Samuel Pepys: A Life*. London. Hodder and Sloughton, 2000.

Trease, Geoffrey. *Samuel Pepys and His World*. Norwich, Great Britain: Jorrold and Son, 1972.

MODULE 3 UNIT 3

JOHN DRYDEN: *AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY* (Extract)

3.3.1NTRODUCTION

From Philip Sidney in Paper 2 to John Dryden in Paper 3 is indeed a long transition in the history of English literary criticism. While the rest of this Paper acquaints you with the multiple and complex nature of Restoration literature by example, this Unit will provide the theoretical base for understanding the nuances of the literary output of the period. To begin with, you will be provided with an outline of Dryden's critical thought and temperament, and then on, the textual portion that has been selected for detailed study will precisely formulate an understanding of his perspective on Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and two other Jacobean playwrights, Beaumont and Fletcher who wrote a number of plays mostly in collaboration, and at times individually. In effect therefore, at the end of this Unit, you should be able to develop a new point of view for looking back at some of the Elizabethan literature that you have already studied.

3.3.1 THE CONTEMPORARY LITERARY-CRITICAL SCENARIO

As you have gathered by now, the Restoration (also variously called the Age of Dryden, given his over-arching presence in almost all fields of literary productivity) pre-eminently took a Neo-Classical view of literature and concurrently its critical tendencies too veered on those lines. This naturally meant a close observance of the rules of classical decorum in the writing of poetry,

without really allowing much scope for humanistic thought as espoused by the post-Renaissance Elizabethan era; nor the imaginativeness that was to characterize Romantic poetry that followed more than a century later. In such a scenario we shall now try to place the critical acumen of John Dryden. To aid your understanding, we shall first acquaint you with Dryden's critical oeuvre (you have already come across Dryden the poet in Mod 2 Unit 1, Dryden the dramatist follows in Mod 4 Unit 3); then guide you on the thematic design of the 'Essay' and finally read the prescribed passages of the text in an easy intelligible manner.

3.3.2. JOHN DRYDEN: THE LITERARY CRITIC

As stated earlier, the period to which Dryden belonged is known as the Restoration period, and he remained/ stood out as an outstanding literary figure of the age because of his versatile and multifarious literary activities as a poet, playwright and a critic. It is on the third aspect of his career that we shall be concentrating in this Unit.

There are diverse opinions and views on the merit of Dryden's literary criticism. While Jonathan Swift wryly commented on them that they were "merely writ at first for filling, to raise the author's price a shilling", Dr Johnson spoke of his critical works as "the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction."

For more on this, you may log on to http://www.jstor.org/stable/456662?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

While the two opinions mentioned above show two ends of the spectrum and give you an idea of the divergent reception accorded to Dryden the critic, Dr Johnson's words bring out the age old classical ring of the dual functions of art – 'delight' and 'instruct' or gratification and edification. In *The Lives of the Poets*, Dr Johnson calls Dryden 'the father of English criticism', and this is clearly not meant just in the sense of chronology. For one thing, you will definitely remember that much before Dryden, Philip Sidney had written a tract theorizing on the function of poetry. Even if we leave out minor theorists, one cannot be oblivious of Sidney as an Elizabethan literary critic. Why then does Dr Johnson call Dryden thus?

Here again, it will be seen that the Neo-Classical principles of composition reign supreme in the consideration: Dr Johnson writes of Dryden that he was the 'writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition'. He brings into reckoning the treatises of Webb and Puttenham; mentions (Ben) Jonson and Cowley, but goes on to assert that 'Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry* was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing'.

As a literary critic Dryden establishes his scholarship, profound wisdom and erudition most often through his elaborate Prefaces. As a poet- critic, he invites comparison with Philip Sidney at the earlier stage of English criticism and with the succeeding generation of critics, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Matthew Arnold, to name only the more prominent ones. Dryden's uniqueness lies in the fact that his close familiarity with the classical literatures of ancient Greece and Rome notwithstanding (unlike Sidney), he has never tended to be Aristotelian in his critical arguments. On the contrary he has adopted for himself the critical principles of Neo- Classical France, particularly the French School of Boileau and Rapin. Even here, Dryden is free from any slavish adherence to what is often blindly held as the Neo-Classical principle. There is in him an easy adaptability to pragmatic necessities and the availability of clarity of thought backed by logical interpretation. His criticism is wide ranging, although the most- notable pieces are ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*** (1668) and ***Preface to the Fables*** (1700).

We shall definitely understand these generalized statements better when we relate them to the particular context of *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, an extract from which is our prescribed text for now.

3.3.3. OVERVIEW OF *AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY*

Written probably during the Plague Year of 1666 and published in 1668, Dryden's *Essay* takes up the subject that Philip Sidney had set forth in his *Defence of Poesie* (1580) and attempts to justify drama as a legitimate form of "poetry" comparable to the epic, as well as defend English drama against that of the ancients and the French. The purpose of the treatise is thus significant, coming as it does at a time that follows on the heels of the re-opening of theatres in London after the ardour of Puritan rule. It needs to be mentioned that Dryden's work, unlike Sidney's, is not in response to any assault per se on poetry or drama. It is, by and large, an exposition of several of

the major critical positions of the time, set out in a semi-dramatic form that gives life to what would otherwise appear as abstract theories. The *Essay* not only offers a capsule summary of the status of literary criticism in the late seventeenth century; it also provides a succinct view of the tastes of cultured men and women of the period. Dryden synthesizes the best of both English and Continental (particularly French) criticism; hence, the essay is a single source for understanding neoclassical attitudes toward dramatic art. Moreover, in his discussion of the ancients versus the moderns, in his defense of the use of rhyme, and in his argument concerning Aristotelian prescripts for drama, Dryden depicts and reflects upon the tastes of literate Europeans who shaped the cultural climate in France and England for a century.

At the beginning of the text, Dryden writes about "that memorable day". Historically and chronologically the day refers to 3rd June, 1665, when the famous Spanish Armada was defeated by the English Navy. Therefore, it was a day of national pride and glory. The inflated feeling of being English and the high patriotism that surrounded it are clearly evident in Dryden's famous critical discourse. If you look at the text in the full form, you will realize that right from the beginning, it is written in a dialogue form. This is indeed strategic, not only because the topic of conversation relates to drama; but also because he is dealing with and presenting opposed points of view that will finally need to be synthesised. So it makes perfect sense to keep the different points of view distinctly apart to begin with. Let us see how Dryden does this.

There are four speakers, all of them having classical names- **Eugenius** (the real- life counterpart being Charles Sackville, or Lord Buckhurst, to whom the 'Essay' is dedicated), **Crites** (the real life counterpart being Sir Robert Howard, one of the writers of the Restoration heroic plays), **Lisideius** (in real life Sir Charles Sadley), and **Neander**, the name has the meaning of 'new man'. It is interesting to note that Neander represents the new and upcoming generation of Englishmen, who glorifies the legacy and tradition of English drama and dramatic practices. The last one is Dryden himself! These four cultivated gentlemen have taken a barge down the River Thames to observe the combat and, as guns sound in the background, they comment on the sorry state of modern literature; this naval encounter will inspire hundreds of bad verses commending the victors or consoling the vanquished. The four speakers make comparisons between classical drama with that of contemporary England and France; French Drama with English, and English drama of Elizabethan period with that of Dryden's own day. Dryden's *Essay* is evidently the first

systematic discourse on dramatic principles in English, and for this reason it may be comparable with the French playwright Corneille's ***Examenes*** and ***Discours*** (1650-56).

Although it is clear in course of the treatise that Dryden uses Neander as a mouthpiece for his own views about drama, he is careful to allow his other characters to present cogent arguments for the literature of the classical period, of France, and of Renaissance England. More significantly, although he was a practitioner of the modern form of writing plays himself, Dryden does not insist that the dramatists of the past are to be faulted simply because they did not adhere to methods of composition that his own age venerated. For example, he does not adopt the views of the more strident critics whose insistence on slavish adherence to the rules derived from Aristotle had led to a narrow definition for greatness among playwrights. Instead, he pleads for commonsensical application of these prescriptions, appealing to a higher standard of judgment: the discriminating sensibility of the reader or playgoer who can recognize greatness even when the rules are not followed. Herein lies the greatness of Dryden as a Neo-Classic critic who showed the flexibility of privileging the demands of art over the rigour of rules.

For this reason, Dryden can champion the works of William Shakespeare over those of many dramatists who were more careful in preserving the unities of time, place, and action. It may be difficult to imagine, after centuries of veneration, that at one time Shakespeare was not held in high esteem; in the late seventeenth century, critics reviled him for his disregard for decorum and his seemingly careless attitudes regarding the mixing of genres. Dryden, however, recognized the greatness of Shakespeare's productions; his support for Shakespeare's "natural genius" had a significant impact on the elevation of the Renaissance playwright to a place of preeminence among dramatists. You can thus see for yourselves how balanced and honest criticism comes to play a major role in reorienting writers and their texts to particular social contexts.

Let us now proceed to the syllabised portion of the text for a more detailed understanding of what Dryden has to say.

Activity for the Learner

Since your syllabus has only a part of the *Essay*, you might find the beginning of the text all too abrupt. For this, you are advised to click on the following link and go through the lessons and self- check mode exercises that will wonderfully serve the purpose of introducing you to Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*:

http://wikieducator.org/Dryden_Dramatic_Poesy

3.3.4. TEXT (EXTRACT) FROM *AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY*

To begin then with *Shakespeare*; he was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul[1]. All the Images of Nature [2] were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily[3]: when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learn'd; he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; he look'd inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of Mankind. He is many times flat[4], insipid[5]; his Comick wit degenerating into clenches[6]; his serious swelling into Bombast[7]. But he is alwayes great, when some great occasion is presented to him: no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of the Poets,

Quantum lent a solent, inter viberna cupressi.[8]

The consideration of this made Mr. *Hales*[9] of *Eaton* say, That there was no subject of which any Poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better treated of in *Shakespeare*; and however others are now generally prefer'd before him, yet the Age wherein he liv'd, which had contemporaries with him, *Fletcher* and *Jonson* never equall'd them to him in their esteem: And in the last Kings Court, when *Ben's* reputation was at highest, Sir *John Suckling*[10], and with him the greater part of the Courtiers, set our *Shakespeare* far above him.

Beaumont and *Fletcher*[11] of whom I am next to speak, had with the advantage of *Shakespeare*'s wit[12], which was their precedent, great natural gifts, improv'd by study. *Beaumont* especially being so accurate a judge of Playes, that *Ben. Jonson* while he liv'd, submitted all his Writings to his Censure[13], and 'tis thought, us'd his judgement in correcting, if not contriving all his Plots. What value he had for him, appears by the Verses he writ to him; and therefore I need speak no farther of it. The first Play which brought *Fletcher* and him in esteem was their *Philaster*[14]: for before that, they had written two or three very unsuccessfully: as the like is reported of *Ben Jonson*, before he writ *Every Man in his Humour*[15]. Their Plots were generally more regular than *Shakespeare's*, especially those which were made before *Beaumont's* death; and they understood and imitated the conversation of Gentlemen much better; whose wilde debaucheries, and quickness of wit in reparties, no Poet can ever paint as they have done. This Humour[16] of which *Ben Jonson* deriv'd from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe: they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, Love. I am apt to believe the English

Language in them arriv'd to its highest perfection; what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous then necessary. Their Playes are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the Stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of *Shakespeare's* or *Jonson's*: the reason is, because there is a certain gayety in their Comedies, and Pathos in their more serious Playes, which suits generally with all mens' humours. *Shakespeares* language is likewise a little obsolete, and *Ben Jonson's* wit comes short of theirs.

As for *Jonson*, to whose Character I am now arriv'd, if we look upon him while he was himself, (for his last Playes were but his dotages) I think him the most learned and judicious Writer which any Theater ever had. He was a most severe Judge of himself as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and Language, and Humour also in some measure we had before him; but something of Art was wanting to the *Drama* till he came. He manag'd his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldome find him making Love in any of his Scenes, or endeavouring to move the Passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper Sphere, and in that he delighted most to represent Mechanick people. He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latine, and he borrow'd boldly from them: there is scarce a Poet or Historian among the Roman Authours of those times whom he has not translated in *Sejanus*[17] and *Catiline*[18]. But he has done his Robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any Law. He invades Authours like a Monarch, and what would be theft[19] in other Poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these Writers he so represents old *Rome* to us, in its Rites, Ceremonies and Customs, that if one of their Poets had written either of his Tragedies, we had seen less of it then in him. If there was any fault in his Language, 'twas that he weav'd it too closely and laboriously in his serious Playes; perhaps too, he did a little too much Romanize our Tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them: wherein though he learnedly followed the Idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours. If I would compare him with *Shakespeare*, I must acknowledge him the more correct Poet, but *Shakespeare* the greater wit.[20] *Shakespeare* was the *Homer*[21], or Father of our Dramatick Poets; *Jonson* was the *Virgil*[22], the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love *Shakespeare*.[23] To conclude of him, as he has given us the most correct Playes, so in the precepts which he has laid down in his *Discoveries*[24], we have as many and profitable Rules for perfecting the Stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us.

3.3.5. GLOSSARY AND NOTES

1. … the largest and most comprehensive soul- By the particular phrase it is suggested that Shakespeare's creative and imaginative faculty was all- embracing.
2. … the images of nature: the characters, objects and situations of real life.
3. Luckily: Perhaps in the sense of spontaneity.
4. Flat- lacking depth or intensity.
5. Insipid- dull
6. Clenches- clichés.
7. Bombast- Pretentious inflated speech or writing.
8. "Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupresse."- A quotation from Virgil's ***Eclagues.*** The English translation of the Latin sentence is "As cypresses oft do among the bending osiers."
9. Mr. Hales of Eton- John Hales (1584- 1656), scholar and divine. Born in Bath and educated at Oxford, where was a distinguished student of Greek and philosophy.
10. Sir John Suckling – English poet (1609 – 41) of the Cavalier tradition, best known for his poem 'Ballad Upon a Wedding'.
11. Beaumont and Fletcher- Francis Beaumont (1584- 1616), John Fletcher (1554-1625). Around 1608 Beaumont began the famous collaboration with Fletcher which lasted for about five years. Among the plays, produced by the Beaumont- Fletcher collaboration the most famous are ***Philaster*** (1610)***, The Maid's Tragedy*** (1611) and ***A King and No King*** (1611).
12. Wit- An intellectual person (in the archaic form).
13. Censure: Act of blaming.
14. ***Philaster***- A tragic- comedy by Beaumont and Fletcher, written in blank verse, and produced in 1611.
15. ***Everyman in his Humour***- The first important play by Ben Jonson, published in 1598. By 'humour' is to be understood a passion, generated by irrational egotism, and amounting sometimes to a mania.
16. Humour- the archaic meaning of ' whim' or 'mental inclination'is suggested here.
17. ***Sejanus***- A satirical tragedy by Ben Jonson, published in 1603. The central character is a historical figure, a favourite of the Roman emperor Tiberius.
18. ***Catiline***- A tragedy by Ben Jonson, published in 1611. The play may be considered as an example of Jonson's great classical scholarship.
19. Theft- In the sense of blind imitation.
20. "If I would …greater wit."- By this famous statement Dryden suggests that Shakespeare's dramatic genius is spontaneous and hence demands appreciation over and above rules; while the art of Jonson is strictly in keeping with classical (read

neo-classically) rules of composition.. There is very little that is conscious or constrained in Shakespeare's dramatic dramatic art. This is a line of thought that is later taken up by Dr Samuel Johnson as well. This explains Dryden's comparison, in the next line, with Homer, the great pioneer of classical drama, who has his relevance even in our own time. So with Shakespeare's plays, that never fade across ages and generations.

21. Homer (10^{th}c. B.C)- famous classical Greek poet, celebrated for his ethics.
22. Virgil (70 -19 B.C)- The well known classical Roman/ Latin poet. His poetic fame rests on the epic ***Aeneid*** and ***Eclogues***.
23. "Shakespeare was …love Shakespeare"- Dryden's attempt to equate Jonson with Virgil suggests that Jonson's dramatic art is more conscious and so less spontaneous than Shakespeare's. For the 'correctness'of his dramatic craftsmanship he is admired by Dryden. But looked at from the point of view of content (as over form), even a neo-classical like Dryden is bowled over by Shakespeare!
24. *Discoveries*- Published posthumously in 1640, written by Ben Jonson. It actually is a set of notes which he prepared for his lectures at Gresham College, London.

3.3.6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF TEXTUAL PORTION

Neander's comparative study of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher is earlier preceded by his emphatic assertion that the English dramatic practices are much superior to the French because English drama in every respect is original and is characterized by creative ingenuity. Thus Neander declares: "We have borrowed nothing from them (i.e. the French) ; our plots are weaved in English loans. We endeavour therein to follow the variety and greatness of characters which are derived to us from Shakespeare and Fletcher; the copiousness and well-knitting of the intrigues we have from Jonson...". Neander's statements seem to suggest a fusion of his natural pride and patriotic fervor with his close acquaintance with the immediately preceding playwrights of England. The same mood, feeling and attitude of Neander are expressed when, being requested by Eugenius, he continues to deliberate on Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher.

Neander begins his deliberation with Shakespeare. His is the representative voice of his own time and, therefore, it reflects the spirit of the Restoration in relation to Shakespeare and other

English dramatists. Neander initiates his discussion with words of appreciation for Shakespeare. The appreciative deliberation on Shakespeare contains Neander's unqualified admiration for the great English dramatist. For instance, Shakespeare, according to Neander, had "the largest and comprehensive soul."Shakespeare depicted the "images of nature" with essential care and spontaneity. There is nothing like constrained deliberateness or artificiality in his presentation of human nature, and human life in general. There were persons who accused Shakespeare of being ignorant of classical literature and language. But his lack of learning was simply a surface appearance. He was "naturally learned". His responses to life and nature were never bookish and they were rooted in his inwardness.

With critical neutrality and objectivity, Neander also points out some limitations in the dramatic art of Shakespeare. He comments, "He (i.e. Shakespeare) is many times flat and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, serious swelling into bombast."Despite these limitations, Shakespeare is always great because in the treatment of different subjects in his plays he stands far above the other English playwrights. In this connection, Neander refers to one of the comments, made by Mr. Hales of Eton, "that there was no subject of which any poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better than in Shakespeare."According to Neander however, Shakespeare's reputation as a dramatic artist far exceeds either Ben Jonson's, or Beaumont and Fletcher's.

Beaumont and Fletcher are the next two playwrights who come within the orbit of Neander's assessment of English dramatists. Beaumont and Fletcher, according to him, have the intellectual capacity of Shakespeare, which is "improved by study". Beaumont particularly had the critical acumen of his own, so much so that "Ben Jonson, while he lived, submitted all his writings to his censure."The particular play that made Beaumont and Fletcher famous, was ***Philaster***. As playwrights, according to Neander, they have maintained greater regularity in the plot-management than Shakespeare. The dialogues, exchanged among characters are essentially witty; the treatment of love in their plays, is essentially lively. Their comedies are enriched with a great amount of gaiety, while their tragedies are remarkable for their pathos. The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher agree with the taste of men of all types.

Neander now takes up Ben Jonson for his critical observations. He appreciates the quality of compactness and precision in Jonson's dramatic art. Wit, language, and humour are proportionally interlinked in his plays. Neander rightly points out that "Humour was his (i.e. Ben Jonson's) proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanical people."

Neander now focuses his attention on Jonson's close familiarity with the ancient writers, that is, the writers belonging to the classical past of Greece and Rome. Jonson as a playwright remains indebted to Greek and Latin writers, as it is evident in his plays, ***Sejanus*** and ***Catiline.*** Jonson has exploited the richness of classical legacy with bold confidence; "He (i.e. Jonson) invades authors like a monarch."In a play like ***Volpone***, he has faithfully represented old Rome, its rites, ceremonies and customs with flawless and meticulous details. Even the language in his plays is highly Latinised ("Romanize our tongue" is the expression used by Neander).

Now we come down to the most- meaningful and significant section of this particular unit in ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesy***- the brief comparison between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Neander admits that Ben Jonson is a "correct poet" from the neo- classical critical perspective, but Shakespeare has a greater dramatic genius and philosophical wisdom. Shakespeare, Neander claims "was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets". On the contrary Jonson, being more conscious and therefore, less spontaneous, "was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing". The statements are supplemented by the sentence, which is quite unlikely in a person with neo-classical critical attitude, since it breathes the spirit of subjectivism and impressionism: "I admire him (i.e. Jonson) but I love Shakespeare." Considering the excerpt chosen for your syllabus, these lines stand out as the most succinct proof of the fact that Neo-Classicism as a creed never chained down one like Dryden slavishly to rules. He always had the catholicity to look beyond the immediate and appreciate the greater context of art and its requirements.

Jonson, Neander declares, should also be remembered for his 'Discoveries' where he laid down some rules for the perfection of the English stage.

It has already been pointed out that Neander is the alter ego to Dryden, and for this reason we may consider Neander's arguments as Dryden's also. One of the interesting aspects of the

passages from ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesy***, prescribed in your syllabus, is that here Dryden introduces himself as a critic of Shakespeare together with Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher. Dryden's observations on these English dramatists reveal both his virtues and limitations as a critic. It is said of Dryden that his virtues are his own, his faults those of his age. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in his attitude to Shakespeare. When he judges according to those critical canons which the Restoration derived from Italian and French Aristotelian formalists of the 16th and 17th centuries, he deplores Shakespeare's irregularities, his lapses of good taste and the improper use of language. But when he speaks from the fullness of his intuitions, he reveres Shakespeare as "the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul."On the whole Dryden, however, remains an exceptional critic of the age of Restoration on account of his flexibility of critical temper.

3.3.7. SUMMING UP

- The first systematic theorizing on the nature of contemporary English drama vis-à-vis Elizabethan drama, the Neo-Classical impact factored in, continuities with and innovations upon classical drama traced with clarity. Continental influences are also analysed threadbare.
- The use of the dialogue form among 4 speakers, each representing a particular point of view, gives the whole essay a dramatic form itself. This also enables readers to distinguish between the respective points of view.
- It becomes evident why Dryden is justly called the 'Father of English Literary Criticism' – his rational thought process and unprejudiced freedom to steer clear of any Neo-Classical pedantry, while remaining true to its essence is amply revealed.
- New genres like the English Tragi-Comedy are justified. (This portion is strictly not within the given excerpt, but the treatise has a lengthy discussion on it.

3.3.8. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. Analyse Dryden's *Essay* and show how it can be looked upon as a text that is written within the Neo-Classical milieu and is yet not bound by its general rigour.

2. How does Neander sum up the achievements of Shakespeare as a dramatist? Do you agree with his view? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Summarise and present in your own words, the central arguments of each of the four speakers in Dryden's *Essay*.

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Why does Neander reach the conclusion that Beaumont and Fletcher are "more correct" than Jonson and Shakespeare?
2. What, according to Neander, are the special qualities of Jonson as a dramatist?
3. Comment on the following: "Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing."

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. Give the English meaning of the Latin quote: " Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi." From which classical text is it taken?

2. Write short notes on (i) ***Philaster***, (ii) ***Everyman in His humour.***

3. Write short notes on (i) ***Sejanus***, (ii) ***Catiline.***

4. Who are Homer and Virgil? Why are Shakespeare and Jonson respectively compared with them?

5. Why does Neander declare that he 'admires' Jonson but ' loves' Shakespeare?

3.3.9. READING LIST

D.J Enright and Ernst de Chickera eds. English Critical Texts
R.A Scott James. The Making of Literature
David Daiches. Critical Approaches To Literature

MODULE 4 UNIT 1

FEATURES OF RESTORATION DRAMA

4.1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study of drama in any period provides a vital index as regards the prevalent culture of the age. The assumption is based on the fact that drama being a vibrant medium, it provides a clue as regards the kind of audiences frequenting the theatres, the kind of plays being enacted and the responses of the ruling class and the audiences to it. In Paper 2, you have seen how Elizabethan drama virtually became a national theatre, drawing royalty and groundlings alike. You have also read how after Shakespeare and the likes of Ben Jonson, dramaturgy took a downward slide till finally theatres came to be closed down under Puritan injunctions in 1642. The Restoration, which marked the Neo-Classical Age, was, as you have already understood, an era of diminished personal glory and a far cry from the days of Renaissance Humanism. After the re-opening of theatres, what emerged was largely a ‘class drama’ (David Daiches) that was by and large a cultivation of upper class ethos that had no much links with the common man. In this Unit, we shall see the different forms that contemporary drama began to take, and how in a large way, it became a reflection of social mores.

4.1.1 THE RESTORATION AND DRAMA

You have already read about the handful of theatres that were somehow operative in a rather clandestine manner even during the closure years. Things began to change drastically after the Restoration on all fronts, and the revival of drama too got its share of such dues. John Rhodes, a

theatrical figure of the early and mid 17th century was permitted to form a dramatic company. He was connected with the King's Men during the final phase of the development of Renaissance drama, and might have been the 'keeper' of the Cockpit Theatre (you have read about this earlier) during the ban years. In the intervening period between the death of Cromwell and the return of Charles II, when General Monck was in charge, Rhodes obtained a license to open a theatre. He leased and refurbished the old Cockpit Theatre, gathered a troupe of young actors, and began to stage plays. His 1660 production of Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* was the first Shakespearean revival of the new era.

On assuming the throne, King Charles II issued patents to Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant, granting them the monopoly right to form two London theatre companies to perform "serious" drama. The letters patent were reissued in 1662 with revisions allowing actresses to perform for the first time. Killigrew established his company, the King's Company at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1663; Davenant established his company, the Duke's Company, in Lisle's Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1661, later moving to Dorset Garden in 1671. Killigrew was a privileged servant in the royal household. The plays written were ***The Parson's Wedding, Selindra, Pandora, The Siege of Urbin*** etc. All of these were however, acted. Davenant had many of his plays staged, like ***Love and Honour, The Wits, The Platonick Lovers.*** Some older dramas were also refashioned, ***Macbeth*** for example was altered, ***Measure for Measure*** was renamed ***The Law Against Lovers.*** And ***Romeo and Juliet*** was made into a comedy. Samuel Pepys records how old dramas were revived. He saw the dramas of Shakespeare, Jonson, Fletcher, Shirley staged before 1663. A taste for heroic in drama was evident in ***The Siege of Rhodes.*** Liking for tragic - comedy was evident in ***Love and Honour.*** As Puritans could no longer exert any grip on the stage, the writers could now extol monarchy. And lampooning of the Cromwellian regime and his personal life became the trend in many dramatists. For example, in a play like ***The Rump,*** Tatham boldly lampoons Lombert, Fleetwood, Hewson and other notable personages of the moment.

As the Puritans had almost made theatre- going a taboo, the post- Restoration period naturally saw the court hating the Puritans. The people were already weary with the restrictions imposed by the Cromwellian rule. They thought of it as a "nasty, gloomy, sullen, fanatical government." The Restoration was able to generate a feeling of deliverance from an intolerable religious and moral tyranny. People naturally began to throng the theatre halls once again for pleasure, and the

drama of wish-fulfillment (rather than that of a dream world) engendered by the attitude of the Court Wits catered to audience tastes well enough. Interestingly, this drama continued well into the 18th century, by which time both the French polished court wits and their ideals of social behaviour had by and large disappeared from the social scene.

But the paradox of the beginnings of Restoration Drama lies in the discovery of the citizens that the stage had eventually become a fashionable pastime of courtiers. They saw how there was no restraint in presenting the profligacy and licentiousness on the stage. The theatre was in fact run by 'gentlemen for gentlemen'. The gallants were crowding the halls more to see the actresses than the plays proper. The Puritan restrictions at least had been conducive to putting a rein on such profligacy of attitudes and attractions. That way, insipient reactions to the prevalent mode of class drama were always there; which later culminated in the rise of the Sentimental Drama. But we shall come to that at a later time.

The position of the playwrights was all the more precarious. They had to write according to the demands of the courtiers and the so- called gentlemen, and present everything to please their patrons. At the same time they also had to show the obligatory commitment to society at large. If the Puritan rule of Cromwell threw the writers out of their profession, the Restoration restricted their freedom of expression, for they had to write according to the demands of the patrons and the fashionable class. In the ultimate analysis therefore, it was the demands of art that were being compromised anywhichways.

The Puritan rulers had once sought decency and discipline in society by keeping the people off the 'evil' influence of the stage. In their residual form, they (playwrights) were trying to do the same thing now through the stage. They presented the real situation of the society and made a mild criticism of the same in a satiric tone. They were no Puritans as such, but, paradoxically, the desire for restoring order and good sense to the society was persistently present in them. What the Puritans wanted to do by dispensing with the stage, most of the Restoration writers wanted to attempt through the mechanism of the stage. The undercurrent of the spirit of Puritanism was thus evident in the writers even when the Puritans were dislodged from power at Restoration. If the writers had to face the authority of Puritan rulers, now they searched for the authority of Classical tales to combat the general enthusiasm for sensual and coarse joy. If the Puritans had thought return to Roman catastrophe, the Restoration writers went to French, Greek and Roman Literature to avoid social, moral and intellectual catastrophe. The "liberty of tender conscience"

was present among the Puritans and among the Restoration writers as well. If the Puritans made the ***Bible*** their rule of faith and conduct, the classics held the same position for the writers. And their tendency is more markedly present in Augustan literature of the following age.

In terms of dramatic influence, Ben Jonson was widely accepted, not for the morality component of his plays but for the comic tone and manner. Restoration theatre being a 'half-way' between Elizabethan drama and 19th century theatre, contemporary playwrights took up the aerated and dandified treatment of Jonson's plays that were started by the likes of Beaumont and Fletcher earlier on. The same was being done with plays by the French Moliere and the Spanish Calderone – the morality element and generosity of spirits edited and the humour component worked up to excess.

4.1.2 SALIENT FEATURES OF RESTORATION DRAMA

If eighteenth century literature has its greatest literary activity in novel and satire, the Restoration has undoubtedly had it in theatre. We have already discussed how the Puritans had closed the theatres by an Ordinance in 1642. For fourteen years there was no regular performance. Actually the Puritans banned all pleasure, and the Restoration quickly re-initiated it, which, however, suffered the charge of degenerating into licentiousness equally fast. Public festivals were re-established, popular entertainments got royal consent and the theatres were reopened. Coarse voluptuousness and utilitarianism replaced emotional exuberance and enthusiasm. Drama in this period has widely been perceived as the mirror of the society, the national temperament. On the one hand there was the attempt to please the patrons of drama (the courtiers and the aristocrats) by presenting what they expected; on the other, the search for discipline, rationality, and knowledge continued in somewhat subverted forms.

Charles II came from France and the restoration of monarchy and Catholicism took place. Naturally the influence of France on the Restoration theatre has been a much discussed issue. The influence of France on English theatre was quite inevitable for several reasons. First of all, since the fourth decade of the seventeenth century the English and the French coasts had frequent interactions. Many persons were banished to France after the civil war. They saw the essence of monarchial culture there, and on returning to England, they attempted to restore the prestige of French Monarchy to England with the restoration of the Stuart dynasty.

Secondly, many writers of Charles II's reign were exiled to France. They saw and imitated many manners of the French and trends of French Literature, particularly drama. The French influence, after the Restoration, was perceptible in the court, the fashionable circles of the capital and provinces, in fashions and manners of life, in modes of feeling and thinking, in language. Even aesthetic criterion and tastes of the Englishmen were determined by the French examples. So the exiled writers like Davenant, Waller, Denham brought to England the models, images and rhythms of the French. Corneille, Moliere, Scudery or Quinault, Racine were always followed by the dramatists, both in comedy and tragedy, many an influence of the French dramatists can be discerned. The King also wished that the plays should be written in French manner.

It would, however, be wrong to say that Restoration drama had nothing to do with the native tradition. How is it possible to forget the national tradition which saw about one thousand plays in sixty three years before 1642? Drama had its zenith of glory in the Elizabethan age. But it was weakened by an inward exhaustion with the passage of time. Tragi- comedies by Beaumont and Fletcher show this decadence. Now characters seem to have lost the Shakespearean depth and plots have negatively gained in complications. Love for adventure and heroism spread all over Europe and England was not exempted. The King himself was much responsible as a trend-setter of Restoration drama. He put his courtiers, court ladies, the men of fashion, gallants, men of chivalry in great favour. He liked exploits, hyperbolical language, heroism etc. And dramatists tried to fulfill these likings on the stage. The net result was the birth of comedy of manners and heroic tragedy.

The Restoration theatre/ drama was more an output of the King's interest and the likings of the selected audience than the taste of the general public. The scope of drama was narrowed down. And it becomes obvious when Restoration Drama is compared with the Elizabethan drama. There is neither that cosmic and general appeal, nor the participation of the milieu of all classes. Nevertheless the birth of modern stage is attributed to the Restoration period. The modern spirit is also first found in its drama. Actresses were first introduced on the stage. Sceneries were employed. There was the change of platform to picture frame stage. For more on restoration drama and the contemporary stage, you may look up the following websites:

http://www.theatrehistory.com/british/restoration_drama_001.html

dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/1703881.pdf

*www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/.../**Drama**TypesofStages01.htm*

However, of greater important than the stage was the new set of audience. For the first time a direct relationship of the actors with the audience was created. The actors and the audience knew each other. This close relationship was further enhanced by the elaborate prologues and epilogues to plays. The dramas were more for acting than reading. Naturally the audience and particularly the patrons were arbiters of dramatic aesthetics. It is said:" The drama's laws the drama's patrons give." As the courtiers made the theatre the meeting place, their fondness for licentiousness was included in the dramas. But the citizens who still retained some of the Puritan conventions thought of the theatre as no better than a sore plague, and hence avoided its evil contagion.

Restoration drama was actually meant for the courtiers and their satellites. As the King was much given to nepotism, the actors and artists were all nearest to the court. The result was that drama became a toy in the hands of the courtiers. To satisfy them, the sentiment of the court was reflected in drama. Coarseness and immorality were incorporated to set off the Puritan suppression and restrictions. Pleasure was the chief criterion of popularity of a drama. The greater the pleasure, the better the drama, became the prevalent attitude.

A good result even of this bad aspect of the theatre was that the art of acting was given utmost importance. Without a high standard of acting, a drama could not succeed on the stage. Along with the demand for higher histrionic skills, the demand for new plays was always increasing for the audience wanted more and more to satisfy their carnal desires. To cope with the demand the supply of new plays was uninterrupted. To make the stage a place of greater attraction, the Elizabethan traits of music, dance and song were revived.

Restoration drama thus apparently lagged far behind Elizabethan drama. Still the positive points added to the history of English drama were that the dramatists brought grace, wit, elegance, refinement of dialogue. These are the stuff that Restoration drama can boast of. The writers made a nice synthesis of the native and foreign dramaturgy and produced a drama no less interesting than Restoration non- dramatic prose or poetry.

4.1.3 RESTORATION COMEDY – AN OVERVIEW

David Daiches rightly finds in Restoration Comedy an illustration of 'the rise and decline of a deliberately induced pseudo-courtly ideal in England, or at least in London'. One sees in

Restoration comedy new types of characters, situations and language after going through Shakespearean and Jonsonian plays. The elements of humour in the former and the 'humours' of the latter are now replaced by 'manners' and what Lamb calls 'sports of witty fancy'. Restoration comedy is rightly called the 'Comedy of Manners'. But the manners refer not to the masses but to a class- the elegant class with all its features, dress, morality, speech and what not. This comedy represents only a part not the whole society. And this society demands drama to represent all the ethos they love- licentiousness, elegance of court life, absence of any standard of sexual morality, pleasure etc. Some features of this new type of comedy can be discussed for a proper understanding of the genre.

- Concerning theatre and drama the most striking difference between the Elizabethan and the Restoration ages is that **the Elizabethan period had fifteen playhouses, but after 1660 (Restoration), there were only two**- Killegrew's Theatre Royal and Davenant's Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre (Duke's House), owned by courtiers.

- Secondly, **some playwrights were themselves courtiers as we find with Etherege and Wycherley**. They were dramatists by fun and courtiers by profession. They tried to represent the sentiment/ likings of the court only. The inevitable result was the narrowing down of interest and vision. Gone is that concern for all classes of people or audience. A partial or parochial vision gripped the writers' attitude to society and the world. They were to serve the interests of a small aristocratic society, for this society was the arbiter of taste in theatre. David Daiches observes it nicely "Charles set the tone for the court wits, and the court wits set the tone, if not for all the literature of the period … notably dramatic comedy."

- Third, the **plots of Restoration comedy deal with complications that the age was conversant with**. Not only that, the pattern is followed in play after play. The writers harked back to the French dramatist Moliere for that art of plot construction. The Spanish drama also influenced the writers in the presentation of love of intrigue and incident. This element has already been found in Jonsonian Comedy. The difference between Jonsonian and Restoration comedy lies, inter alia, in the fact that Jonsonian

comedy is satirical and didactic, but Restoration Comedy is aristocratic, cynical, gay and witty. Plots are meant for witty discussion of manners. Several common devices of disguise, eavesdropping, forging of letters are found.

- Next, the **characters in Restoration Comedies are largely types**. Moliere no doubt was imitated but the influence of Jonson's 'humour' characters is also evident. Sometimes their names speak about their disposition. If we look at the characters in ***The Way of the World,*** the names denote their character:

  Fainall- feigns all
  Mirabell- admirable and also an admirer of female beauty
  Petulant- peevish, petulant
  Witwood- aspires to wit
  Lady Wishfort- One who aspires for something she cannot possess- a contraction of 'wish for it'
  Millamant- she has a thousand lovers
  Marwood- one who mars or harms.

- If we cast a look at most plays we see that Elizabethans or eighteenth century or even twentieth century comedies at times deal with the theme of love. In Restoration comedy however, love is straight-forward lust. It is denuded of its spiritual, mystical, emotional significance. Love is now gallantry, a game rather than an experience, not a passion but a fashionable pastime. If a lover wants to woo a girl, he has to possess grace, wit and elegance. Not only that, the comedies show if love is a game, marriage is a bore! Marriage in fine, checks a gallant from chasing a beautiful girl. Gallants want to be in no bondage which marriage officially imposes. Marriage destroys all variety and deprives the gallant of being a gallant. Reversely the wives understand how the husbands are all kill joys. Naturally, seduction of a lady is an object of gallantry. Elizabethan comedy could never think of a scene like the Bargaining (Proviso) scene in the case of love and marriage as in ***The Way of the World.***

- Restoration comedy is called **artificial comedy**. It is because people had forgotten to be natural. The only form they followed was that of manners or the observance of social proprieties. In this respect the representation of immorality on the stage was not at all liked by the middle class. They were rather shocked. Comedy thus was for an artificial class. It led Jeremy Collier to publish his famous Puritan attack ***Short View of the Immorality and profaneness at the English Stage*** in 1798.

- Restoration comedy was **confined to London only**. It made literature metropolitan. The plays praise London as the centre of the best of human culture and detest all that is provincial. The country people are ridiculed as they lack in sophistication. The country wives are dazzled by city gentlemen, and the country husbands face resentment (as in ***The Country Wife*** by Wycherley). Or in Etherege's ***The Man of Mode,*** the supreme test of Dorimants' love for Harriet is his willingness to follow her into the country- as if the villages of England are all prison houses for Londoners. This feature nicely synchronises with another aspect of Restoration theatre- that there was no theatre activity outside London. To draw more audiences of London to the theatre, the dramatists tried to present the Londoners as the epitome of all that is best in culture and civilization. The survival of the Restoration Drama or dramatists depended on the London audience. The dramatists thus tried to please the restored King, the courtiers, anti-Puritans and above all the London audience. This way they bade adieu to much that was celebrated in Elizabethan theatre. Paradoxically however, the Restoration theatre preserved a projection to the front of the proscenium onto which the actors and actresses could come to achieve a closer intimacy with the audience. And it was a common feature of Elizabethan theatre.

- Some mention is definitely deserved about the **language of Restoration comedy**. Everything is here well- chiselled. Even love here degenerates or regenerates into an intercourse of witty conversation. Dryden made it clear in his preface to ***An Evening's Love*** (produced in 1668 and published in 1671) that repartee is the

very "soul of conversation" and the greatest grace of comedy. As Restoration comedy was meant for the leisured and clever people, the language was to be polished and witty. Wit is obvious in the use of irony, simile, metaphor etc. The rhetorical devices make the audience think and understand and then decide.

- Last of all, it appears that Restoration comedy by trying to please the King, the courtiers, and the London audience, **made drama a cajoling medium**. But the fact is that the age gifted comedy with grace, wit, elegance, refinement of dialogue that, as Allardyce Nicoll observes, their forefathers never knew.

4.1.4 WRITERS OF RESTORATION COMEDY

You have by now understood that it was Restoration comedy that held the key to dramatic representation of the predominant ethos of the period. Among the prominent playwrights of this genre we must mention William Congreve, William Wycherley, John Vanbrugh, George Farquhar, Thomas Shadwell and of course Dryden.

William Congreve (1670- 1729) is, undoubtedly, the greatest of the Restoration comic playwrights. For understanding the true nature of 'comedy of manners', we have to go through his plays (except ***The Mourning Bride***). His comedies include ***The Old Bachelor*** (1693)***, The Double Dealer*** (1693)***, Love for Love*** (1695) and ***The Way of the World*** (1700), the last of these is included in your syllabus. The plays are marked by a faithful reflection of upper class society, the immorality balanced by artificial wit, cynicism, polish and brilliance. An air of artificiality hovers over all his comedies. The plots are carefully contrived but lack the naturalness of Shakespeare. Congreve's style is inimitable. His language is well adapted to character and situation. This would explain why Foible would not speak the cultured language of Millamant in ***The Way of the World.*** Every page of Congreve's plays is full of brilliant conceits, paradoxes, and antitheses that have an abiding appeal to the audience. In many ways, Congreve's plays are seen to prefigure those of Oscar Wilde.

William Wycherley (1640-1715) wrote ***Love in a wood*** (1671)***, The Gentleman Dancing Master*** (1672)***, The Country Wife*** (1674)***,*** and ***The Plain Dealer*** (1676). His contemporaries called his plays "manly". It is perhaps because every person in his plays is a fool and every clever man is a

rogue. Still he contributes to Restoration comedy by his wit and presentation of the follies of man.

George Etherege (1635- 91), a courtier, wrote his plays: ***The Comical Revenge*** or ***Love in a Tub*** (1664)***, She Wou'd if She Cou'd*** (1668) and ***The Man of Mode*** (1676). Etherege precedes Congreve. His plots lack the symmetry of Congreve. But he paints upper class with all realism and sincerity.

George Vanbrugh (1664- 1726), wrote such plays as ***The Relapse*** (1696)***, The Provok'd Wife*** (1697) ***, The Confederacy*** (1705). In his personal life he was a soldier, a herald and an architect. His architectonic skill is betrayed in his joy to construct a play of solid workmanship. He is fond of farce and is good at caricature.

George Farquhar (1678- 1707) died at an early age, just twenty nine years. He wrote seven plays, the best of which are his last two- ***The Recruiting Officer*** (1706) and ***The Beaux's Stratagem*** (1707). He brought a change to Restoration by (i) taking his material from beyond the upper classes, (ii) making the characters ordinary people who conversed in normal tones (iii) showed a growing respect for moral standards, and (iv) exhibited some traits that look forward to the sentimental comedies by Steele. Hence there is a unique mixture of laughter and tears in his comedies.

Thomas Shadwell (1642- 92) has been immortalized in a passage of ***MacFlecknoe*** by Dryden. He followed Ben Jonson more than Congreve. He wrote many plays for many years, the important ones are ***The Sullen Lovers*** (1608)***, The Squire of Algatia*** (1688)***, Bury Fair*** (1689). His plots are well constructed on everyday life. Like Farquhar, he avoids the artificial world. His wit is also real. Like Farquhar, he also prepares the ground for sentimental comedy of the eighteenth century.

As far as Dryden, the versatile talent of the period is concerned, he does not show much brilliance, in comedy. In 1663, ***The Wild Gallant*** appeared, but proved to be a play of mediocre merit. It showed that Dryden was not at all a promising comic playwright. Even in ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesie,*** he declared that he was incapable of achieving any much success in the dramatic art himself. Dryden's plays like ***The Spanish Friar*** (1681) and ***Marriage a- la- Mode*** (1673) are basically tragi-comedies. The latter contains double intrigue in contrasting plots, and some of Dryden's finest songs. ***Amphitryon*** was produced in 1690. It was adapted from the comedies of Plautus and Moliere on the same subject. It represents the story of Jupiter's

seduction of Alemena in the guise of her husband Amphitryon. ***Mr. Limberham*** was produced in 1679, but it was banned by royal decree after three performances. It was perhaps because the play attacked the patriarchal mindset of a sexually corrupt royal court and the blind hedonism of the nobility. ***Sir Martin Mar All*** (1667) was adapted from ***Etourdi*** of Moliere. ***The Assassination*** or ***Love in a Nunnery*** appeared in 1672. Dryden's comedies display a more marked freedom of tone than in his tragedies. He avoids farcical situations. And his dialogue has brilliance and grace.

In conclusion we might say that Restoration Comedy was the predominant theatrical mode no doubt, but many of its traits recur in sentimental comedy, anti- sentimental comedy of the eighteenth century. Even Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde could not avoid its influence.

4.1.5 RESTORATION TRAGEDY

The superficiality of the Restoration Age is largely reflected in its comedy, hence it is mostly artificial in tone and metropolitan in manner, as befitted the period. Having read in detail about the Age, you must be convinced that there was no scope as such of any heroic ideals to persist, yet the Tragedy of the period tried to inculcate certain pseudo-heroic traits. The result is that a similar kind of artificiality is present in most of the tragedies of the period.

The age introduces heroic tragedy into English drama. This form was introduced by Davenant and popularised by Dryden who stated that an "heroick play ought to be an imitation of an heroic poem; and consequently that love and honour ought to be the subject of it."

By its very nature the Restoration Age was the most unheroic age. Naturally its conception of heroism was artificial and inflated. The synthesis of heroic poem and tragedy made it a mongrel kind and could please neither their audience nor the modern readers. It was actually far away from social and real life.

Now we might consider some of the influences on the Restoration heroic tragedy to understand the worth of these generalized comments made earlier.

The influence of Beaumont and Fletcher's 'romantic dramas' of which you have read earlier, the tradition of violent deeds seen in the works of Webster, Marston and Ford constitute the native element of the so-called heroic influence.

Like Restoration Comedy, heroic tragedy also owes much to France. French romance and French tragedy of the reign of Louis XIV and particularly the dramaturgy of Racine made the English writers seek models in them. There were translation, and adaptations galore of the French plays. Along with France the melodramas of Italy also constituted a major foreign influence. In the French romances an unreal world is shown to be at the heart of the web of intrigues. The heroes are drawn in a grand scale and the tone is rather high. Davenant, Dryden and Orrey- the three founders of heroic tragedy took materials of the plots from these romances.

Some of the prominent features of heroic tragedy can now be summed up on the following lines:

- **Love and honour** constitute the mainspring of heroic tragedy. It is an idealistic love, removed from reality. And the **heroism of heroic tragedy lacks grandeur**. The heroes fail to arouse our wonder and admiration. Moreover all the heroes seem to be made up of the same stuff, a fatal resemblance among them, leading to some monotony.

- There is an **extravagance of action**. And Dryden defends it in his ***Essay on Heroic Plays*** in the Preface to ***Conquest of Granada***: "an heroic poet is not tied to bare representation of what is true, or … probable; … but he might let himself loose to visionary objects, and to the representation of such things … may give him a freer scope for imagination."

- **In characterization there is lack of variety**. The writers try to hood this failure by incidents, plot and material devices- exoticism, staging, machines etc.

- The **sentiment and style attain a height beyond the mediocrity of human life**. And naturally there is much rant and bombast.

- **Rhyme is the chosen medium**. In the period 1664-67 about fifty three rhymed heroic plays were written in sonorous style and rhetorical abundance. You can pretty well imagine how painstaking such a huge number of similar pieces of monotony would have been!

We might now mention some of the notable writers of heroic tragedy.

Dryden wrote ***Indian Queen*** (staged 1663)**,** ***Indian Emperor*** (1665)**,** ***Tyrannick Love*** (1669)**,** ***The Conquest of Granada, Aurangzebe*** (1675). The plays are marked by intricate plot, heroic

sensations bordering on the absurd numerous scenes of battle and murder and all of it in rhymed couplets. The lyrics in the plays, it must however be mentioned, did have charm and variety.

Roger Boyle, first Earl of Orrey (1621- 79) wrote ***Henry V, The General, The Black Prince Mustapha, Typhon, Herod the Great*** and the unpublished ***Zeroastres.*** Of these ***Henry V*** and ***The Black Prince*** are in the tradition of the native chronicle play. The other plays have an unreal romantic world. The influence of Corneille is evident in many characters and scenes. On the whole, Boyle is remembered for his presentation of conflicts and a language which is refined.

Thomas Otway (1651- 85) wrote ***Alcibiades*** (1675), ***Don Carlos*** (1676)***, The Orphan*** (1680)***, Venice Preserved*** (1682). ***The Orphan*** is a pathetic tragedy. ***Venice Preserved*** is not actually a heroic tragedy. It is a real tragic work in so far as its construction, characterisation and blank verse are concerned.

Nathaniel Lee (1653- 92) wrote ***The Rival Queens*** (1677)***, Nero*** (1674) and other plays. He has less artistic control and his rant often reaches a frenzied climax. But it must be admitted that he has a command over pathos.

Elkanah Settle (1648- 1724) wrote ***Cambyses; King of Persia*** *and* ***Emperor of Morocco*** (1673) to mention his most notable works. Dryden along with Crowne and Shadwell wrote a pamphlet of criticism of the last play. ***Cambyses*** has prison scenes, scenes of horror, supernatural elements, outlandish countries depicted and catalogue of names.

John Crowne (1640- 73) wrote the heroic plays ***Caligula*** (1698)***, The History of Charles the Eighth of France,*** or, ***The Invasion of Naples by the French,*** and ***The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titas Vespasion.*** The plays are mostly artificial and dull.

We should also mention the names of Nicholas Rowe, Mrs. Aphra Benn, D' Urfey, Pordage etc in this connection. Whoever might be the writer, the general impression about heroic tragedy is that here everything is preposterous. Naturally it had a very short longevity, dying a natural death in about 1677. Not only that, we see how the heroic drama's superhuman love and honour came to be satirised in James Buckingham's (1786- 1855) ***Rehearsal*** (1872 printed). He attacks both Davenant and Dryden in this farcical comedy. Later on Fielding also satirizes it in ***Tom Thumb*** (1730). It was a farce that ridiculed the bombastic greatness of heroic tragedies. In 1731 it was published in a different version under the title of ***The Tragedy of Tragedies.***

4.1.6 SOME OTHER TYPES OF CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

There were also some other types of drama besides 'comedy of manners' and 'heroic tragedy'. **Otway's *The Orphan*** and ***Venice Preserved*** have already been mentioned. The most important of such plays is **Dryden's *All for Love*** or ***The World Well Lost*** (1678). It is a blank verse tragedy, an imitation of Shakespeare's ***Antony and Cleopatra.*** It is Dryden's most performed and best known play. It is an exemplary neo- classical tragedy which is notable for an elaborate formal presentation of character, action and theme. **Thomas Southern** (1659- 1746) wrote ***The Fatal Marriage*** (1694) and ***Oroonoko*** (1695), both founded on novels by Aphra Behn (1640 - 89). **Mrs Behn** also wrote some plays as ***Forced Marriage*** (1670), followed by some fourteen others. There were also some serious plays like ***The Villain*** by Thomas Porter, ***The Fatal Jealousie*** by Nevil Payne, tragi-comedies like Mrs. Behn's ***The Dutch Lover*** or Sir William Killigrew's ***Selindra.***

4.1.7 SUMMING UP

We can safely conclude that neither Restoration Comedy nor Heroic Tragedy of the age went without criticism. None of the two could come close to the expectation levels of an audience that had a history of Elizabethan drama. But then, it must also be remembered that to equal the preceding era was not the avowed purpose of dramaturgy in the Restoration at all. Excess of polish and wit in comedy, rapacious grandeur and bombast in tragedy made both genres something alien to the native temperament. Still the Restoration of Charles II was also, historically speaking, the restoration of drama. And the dramatists, in this respect, deserve due recognition. Out of the excesses of contemporary drama would emerge much refinement in the ages to come. In that sense, Restoration Drama might as well be seen as an interregnum (virtual) in the history of British drama.

4.1.8 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. Write a brief essay on the impact of Puritanism on the seventeenth century drama.

2. How did the Restoration stage become a reflection of the Age? Analyse in retrospect the Puritan ban on the theatre.
3. Bring out the salient features of Restoration Comedy by referring in particular to the works of any two major dramatists.

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Why would you consider Heroic Tragedy no less an artificial picture of the Age than Restoration Comedy?
2. Assess the contributions of Dryden and Congreve in their respective spheres of Restoration drama.
3. What in your opinion are the salient features of Restoration drama? Would you consider it a truly national theatre?

Short Answer Types (6 marks)

1. Why do you think was the position of Restoration playwrights precarious? How did they try to strike a balance?
2. Mention in detail some of the continental influences that affected Restoration drama.
3. Write a brief note on other types of contemporary drama in Restoration England.

4.1.9 READING LIST

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*.
Cruttwell, Patrick. *The Shakespearean Moment*
Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*
Dobree, Bonamy. *Restoration Comedy*
Heinemann, Margot. *Puritanism and Theatre*
Legouis, E & Cazamian L. *A History of English Literature*
Nicoll, A. *A History of Restoration Drama 1660- 1700*
Willey, B – *The Seventeenth Century Background.*

MODULE 4 UNIT 2

WILLIAM CONGREVE: *THE WAY OF THE WORLD*

4.2.0 Introduction

You are by now well aware of the fact that the Restoration, as a period, takes its name from the Restoration of the monarchy, with Charles II assuming the throne in 1660. On a more specific note, the preceding Unit has also made you aware of the seminal importance of Restoration drama, which to many cultural historians, virtually epitomises the era. This was basically because, with the reopening of Theatres in 1662, play-going became a very significant part of the reaction against the Puritanism of the previous decades. In a variety of forms that included adaptations of Shakespeare and also new drama, the entire culture seemed to see itself as a kind of play on community life, as commentators repeatedly emphasized the ways everyone seemed to be playing roles as they negotiated new mores and social conditions. This Unit will acquaint you with William Congreve's *The Way of the World,* a play that exemplifies many of the key features of what became popular as the **Restoration Comedy of Manners**. The major feature to look out for in this and such other plays are the complex, multi-faceted characters who combine urbanity and wit in treating love and wealth as a game they play through concealment, artifice, and plotting. This Unit will also show how unlike some of the plays from the first decade of the Restoration that have been mentioned in the previous Unit, Congreve's play does not end up embracing all out cynicism. Instead, you will see that true love, devoid of sentimentality, even wins out and

leaves with wealth. Congreve's intent was not on writing the sentimental comedies that were later to become so popular on the eighteenth century stage. His works stood unique as it showcased the subtle balance that he achieved between the cool disenchantment of the Restoration and the emotional warmth of the 18th century. His characters have their moral failings and they more than handle themselves in a world of false appearances, banter, and sexual double-dealings, but they are redeemed in the end. As you go along with this Unit, you are therefore advised to look upon Congreve's play as a bridge between earlier Shakespearean drama and evolutions in dramaturgy that follow him.

4.2.1 THE RESTORATION COMEDY OF MANNERS

Module 4 Unit 1 has already given you a fair acquaintance with this type of comedy. Let us just take the threads of that a bit further and try understanding the basic features of what came to be known as the Restoration Comedy of Manners. We shall then try reading Congreve's play in that light.

- Comedy: Very broadly a light and humorous drama with a happy ending.
- From your reading of Shakespearean comedy, you already know that the genre also provides an ample view of contemporary life and times by way of motivations and actions of characters.
- The Comedy of Manners, in the same vein satirises the manners and affectations of a social class, often represented by stock characters. The plot of the comedy, often concerned with an illicit love affair or some other scandal, is generally less important than its witty and often bawdy dialogue. You will realize that this can be related to the volatile socio-cultural formations of the times. And the stage for one, in any era, is a dynamic representation of social life.
- Restoration Comedy is a kind of English comedy, usually in the form of the comedy of manners that flourished during the restoration period in England (i.e. from 1660 to about 1700), when actresses were first employed on the London stage. Appealing to a fairly narrow audience of aristocrats in the recently reopened theatres, Restoration comedy relied upon sophisticated repartee and knowledge of the exclusive code of manners in high society. Plots were based on the complex intrigues of the marriage market. The frequently cynical approach to marriage and sexual infidelity in Restoration comedy invited accusations of immorality. Significant examples are George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), and William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700).

4.2.2 WILLIAM CONGREVE: A SHORT BIO-NOTE

"Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned,
Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned…
Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast"
The Mourning Bride

William Congreve was born in 1670 in the village of Bardsey, in Yorkshire. When his father was commissioned a garrison four years later, the family moved to Ireland, and Congreve went to school at Kilkenny College, and then, at the age of 16, to Trinity College, Dublin. Congreve was lucky enough to have Jonathan Swift as schoolmate.

The family returned to England in 1688, and in 1691 Congreve began to study law at Middle Temple in London, although he employed much of his time writing. While writing poetry and working on translations of Latin Poetry, he became known to other writers in London. He published an essay, Incognita under the pseudonym "Cleophil" in 1692. He wrote *The Old Bachelour*, his first play during an illness. It was performed in 1693. Although the play was derivative, with no characters or plots, it was witty, the dialogue was clever and the play was widely acceptable by the audience. Dryden, the venerable playwright and poet, commented it to be the best first play he had ever seen, and Congreve became a celebrity overnight.

We can see with this first play the seeds of Congreve's later work: The Cambridge History of English and American Literature writes, "Congreve is playing supremely well the tune of the time."

Congreve wrote four more plays between 1693 and 1700:

- The comedy, *The Double Dealer*, which earned the approval of the queen. Influential 17th century man of letters John Dryden compared Congreve to Shakespeare;
- The comedy, *Love for Love*, which triumphantly opened Betterton's new theatre, only the third in London, in Lincoln's Inn Field in 1695;
- The poetic tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, which was a historical curiosity to us but in 1697 is hailed as a masterpiece and appeared on the stage for many years;
- And the comedy, *The Way of the World*, which appears in 1700, and was considered his masterpiece, although it was a critical failure at the time,

The poor reception given to *The Way of the World* may be the reason that Congreve stopped writing plays. He maintained his connection with the stage managing Lincoln's Inn Fields and collaborating in writing *Squire Trelooby* in 1704. He studied music, and won a prize for the libretto he wrote for *The Judgement of Paris*. He wrote the opera *Semele*, about a woman in love with Jupiter.

Congreve belonged to the Kit Cat Club whose members are amongst the most illustrious men of the age. They include eight Dukes, Earl, famous soldiers like Marlborough, and fellow writers, Sir John Vanbrugh and Richard Steele. William Congreve was interred in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, near the grave of Aphra Behn (the famous Restoration woman writer).

4.2.3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE PLAY

In 1700, the world of London theatre-going had changed significantly from the days of, for example, *The Country Wife*. Charles II was no longer on the throne, and the jubilant court that revelled in its licentiousness and opulence had been replaced by the far dourer and utilitarian Dutch-inspired court of William of Orange. His wife, Mary II, was, long before her death, a retiring person who did not appear much in public. William himself was a military king who was reported to be hostile to drama. The political instabilities that had been beneath the surface of many Restoration comedies were still present, but with a different side seeming victorious.

One of the features of a Restoration comedy is the opposition of the witty and courtly (and Cavalier) rake and the dull-witted man of business or the country bumpkin, who is understood to be not only unsophisticated but often (as, for instance, in the very popular plays of Aphra Behn in the 1670s) either Puritan or another form of dissenter. In 1685, the courtly and Cavalier side was in power, and Restoration comedies belittled the bland and foolish losers of the Restoration. However, by 1700, the other side was ascendant. Therefore, *The Way of the World*'s recreation of the older Restoration comedy's patterns is only one of the things that made the play unusual.

The 1688 revolution concerning the overthrow of James II created a new set of social codes primarily amongst the bourgeoisie. The new capitalist system meant an increasing emphasis on property and property law. Thus, the play is packed with legal jargon and financial and marital contracts. These new legal aspects allow characters like Mrs. Fainall to secure her

freedom through an equitable trust and for Mirabell and Millamant's marriage to be equal though a prenuptial agreement.

This shift in social perspectives is perhaps best shown in the characters of Fainall and Mirabell, who represent respectively the old form and new form of marital relations: sexual power at first and then developing into material power.

4.2.4: SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

A ribald tangle of deceit among upper-class English households is revealed as Mirabell, a philanderer, cynically comforts Mrs. Fainall, his mistress. Mrs. Fainall is complaining that she completely detests her husband, and asks why Mirabell compelled her to marry him.

Observing that it is well to "have just so much disgust for your husband as may be sufficient to relish your lover," Mirabell reminds her: "If the familiarities of our loves had proved that consequence of which you were apprehensive, where could you have fixed a father's name with credit but on a husband?" As for his choice of Fainall, he says: "A better person ought not to have been sacrificed to the occasion; a worse had not answered the purpose."

Mrs. Fainall's passion for Mirabell, nevertheless, leads her to help him in his next scheme, even though it involves her own mother, Lady Wishfort, also infatuated with Mirabell. Mirabell wants to marry the beautiful and wealthy Millamant, niece of Lady Wishfort, but her aunt--who is also her guardian--is jealously withholding her consent. With Mrs. Fainall's connivance, Mirabell arranges to have his servant, Waitwell, in the guise of an uncle called Sir Rowland, pay court to Lady Wishfort. Then, since he already has accomplished a secret marriage between Waitwell and Lady Wishfort's maid, Foible, he proposes to expose the scandal. His prize for silence is to be Millamant and her fortune.

The scheme perfected, Foible tells Lady Wishfort that Sir Rowland has seen her picture and is infatuated by her loveliness. A meeting is arranged, but the plot is overheard by a woman named Marwood, another of Mirabell's conquests and herself no mean schemer. Desiring Mirabell for herself, she promptly influences Lady Wishfort to agree that Millamant shall be married to Sir Wilfull, a rich and amiable dunce. Then Marwood, to make sure of success, enlists the help of Fainall who is infatuated with her and jealous of Mirabell. Fainall is a

willing tool, complaining: "My wife is an errant wife, and I am a cuckold....'Sdeath! To be out-witted, out-jilted, out-matrimoney'd!... 'Tis scurvy wedlock!"

Deceived by her caresses and angered by her reminder that Mirabell, his foe, may otherwise get Millamant's fortune, Fainall agrees to Marwood's plan: she will write a letter to be delivered to Lady Wishfort when Waitwell, as Sir Rowland, is with her. The letter will expose the fraud and Mirabell, she says, will be ruined. Marwood in the while, neglects to tell Fainall of her scheme to save Mirabell for herself.

Lady Wishfort is all gaga as she awaits the bogus Sir Rowland. She is informed by Foible that candles are ready, that the footmen are lined up in the hall in their best liveries, and that the coachman and postilion, well perfumed, are on hand for a good showing. Assured by Foible that she looks "most killing well," Lady Wishfort ponders on how best to appear before her beaux.

Sir Rowland arrives. He and Lady Wishfort get along famously at once, and Sir Rowland begs for an early marriage, declaring that his nephew, Mirabell, will poison him for his money if he learns of the romance. The jealous Lady Wishfort promptly agrees, suggesting that Sir Rowland starve Mirabell "gradually, inch by inch." Then Mrs. Marwood's letter, denouncing Sir Rowland as Waitwell, arrives, but Sir Rowland deftly declares the letter to be the work of his nephew, and he hies himself off "to fight him a duel."

Lady Wishfort learns of the deception that is being practiced, and turns on Foible: "Out of my house! To marry me to a serving-man! To make me the laughing-stock of the whole town! I'll have you locked up in Bridewell Jail, that's what I'll do!"

The frightened Foible confesses that it is Mirabell who has conceived the whole plot, and Lady Wishfort is planning a dire revenge when more trouble comes: Fainall, her son-in-law, demands that his wife turn over her whole fortune to him, else he and Mrs. Marwood will reveal to the world that Mrs. Fainall was Mirabell's mistress before her marriage and that she still is. Lady Wishfort is dazedly reflecting upon this new humiliation when Mirabell comes to her with another plan.

"If," he says, "a deep sense of the many injuries I have offered to so good a lady, with a sincere remorse and a hearty contrition, can but obtain the least glance of compassion, I am too happy.... Consider, madam, in reality it was an innocent device, though I confess it had a

face of guiltiness. It was at most an artifice which love contrived--and errors which love produces have ever been accounted pardonable."

The susceptible Lady Wishfort offers to forgive Mirabell if he will renounce his idea of marrying Mrs. Millamant. Mirabell offers a compromise: if she will permit her niece to marry him, he will contrive to save Mrs. Fainall's reputation and fortune. If he can do this, Lady Wishfort agrees, she will forgive anything and consent to anything. Mirabell then tells her: "Well, then, as regards your daughter's reputation, she has nothing to fear from Fainall. For his own reputation is at stake. He and Mrs. Marwood--we have proof of it--have been and still are lovers.... And as regards your daughter's fortune, she need have no fear on that score, either: acting upon my advice, and relying upon my honesty, she has made me the trustee of her entire estate.

In a closing observation to the audience, he adds:

> "From hence let those be warned, who mean to wed,
> Lest mutual falsehood stain the bridal bed;
> For each deceiver to his cost may find,
> That marriage frauds too oft are paid in kind."

4.2.5: THE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Mirabell: A young man-about-town, in love with Millamant.

Millamant: A young, very charming lady, in love with, and loved by, Mirabell. She is the ward of Lady Wishfort because she is the niece of Lady Wishfort's long-dead husband. She is a first cousin of Mrs. Fainall.

Fainall: A man-about-town. He and Mirabell know each other well. Fainall married his wife for her money.

Mrs. Fainall: Wife of Fainall and daughter of Lady Wishfort. She is Millamant's cousin and was Mirabell's mistress, presumably after her first husband died.

Mrs. Marwood: Fainall's mistress. It does appear, however, that she was, and perhaps still is, in love with Mirabell. This love is not returned.

Young Witwoud: A fop. He courts Millamant, but not seriously; she is merely the fashionable belle of the moment.

Petulant: A young fop, a friend of Witwoud's. His name is indicative of his character.

Lady Wishfort: A vain woman, the mother of Mrs. Fainall and the guardian of Millamant. She is herself in love with Mirabell.

Sir Wilfull Witwoud: The elder brother of Young Witwoud. He is Lady Wishfort's nephew, a distant, non-blood relative of Millamant's, and Lady Wishfort's choice as a suitor for Millamant's hand.

Waitwell: Mirabell's valet. At the beginning of the play, he has just been married to Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid.

Foible Lady Wishfort's maid, married to Waitwell.

The following list describes the characters by their type, since members of the same type often are either allies or opponents in the plot.

- **Rakes:** Fainall (the antagonist, now married to Mirabell's ex-mistress, though Fainall doesn't know it); Mirabell (the co-protagonist [with Millamant], now scheming with his ex-mistress to wed Millamant). Though their manners usually conceal it, they are both dangerous men, and like all competent non-servant males, armed with rapiers with which they can "demand satisfaction" for insults, real or imagined.

- **Would-be Rakes and Wits:** Witwoud and Petulant are nearly rendered asexual by drink and affectation, they live for wit--neither of the rakes can really be insulted by them though Petulant comes close). Their faulty manners give them away as not being real contenders for the role of "rake," but they do set themselves up to be "wits." As Witwoud's name suggests, he's a pretender to the title (compare "Sir Politic Would-Be" in *Volpone*, the play to which this play openly alludes in Act II). Petulant's name sums up his entire stock and trade, though he's a wonderfully useful "flat character" who satirizes any normal social convention he tries to imitate.

- **Country Aristocrat:** Sir Wilfull Witwoud (an elderly outsider), who talks about people's pasts and money and other things "one doesn't mention" while remaining both astoundingly shy around Millamant and yet courageous in a crisis--a bit of "old England" from the provinces among these "new men" of the Town. His one failing, apart from his country manners, is a complete lack of literary, musical, or artistic learning. In short, he is no "courtier," but he has deep roots in the *comedia del arte*tradition with origins in Greek and Roman type-character comedy as a fusion of the "*miles gloriousis*" (braggart warrior) and "*senex*" ("out-of-it" old man).

- **Established (older & more powerful) City Woman:** Lady Wishfort is an old rich woman who controls the wealth of her young, rich, widowed daughter-in-law,

Millamant. Before the play's action commences, she had discovered that Mirabell had only been pretending to love her in order to get closer to Millamant--she hates him fiercely for it. Nevertheless, she secretly believes that with the right make-up, dress, and seductive behavior, she can still compete with the younger women for sexual attractiveness.

- **Younger (marriagable or seducible) City Women:** Millamant's name means "loved by thousands." Congreve has made her well-educated, unlike Mrs. Fainall, but also so proud of her wit she nearly cannot accept any man's love lest he diminish her attractiveness. Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress, but also a double agent torn between loyalty to Fainall and her secret love for Mirabell, the sadest creature in the play because she has no money of her own and must live on Fainall's ability to fleece heiresses who are her friends. Mrs. Fainall, a widowed heiress who became Mirabelle's mistress before having to marry Fainall, is torn between her mother's power [Lady Wishfort], her past association with Mirabell, and her loveless marriage to Fainall. She tries to help Millamant escape a fate like her own but risks humiliating divorce if her scheming with Mirabell becomes public knowledge in court.

- **Servants:** Foible is Mrs. Wishfort's chief maid, but secretly an ally of Mirabell who offers her a chance to escape the tyrannically Lady Wishfort's household by marrying his servant, Waitwell, in return for helping Mirabell's scheme against Fainall and Wishfort. Peg, Mrs. Wishfort's underservant, subordinate to Foible, is an innocent foil to reveal Wishfort's vanity. Mincing, Millamant's maid, supports her mistress's vanity and helps her fend off suitors. Waitwell, Mirabell's servant and ally against Fainall and Wishfort, plays the part of "Sir Rowland," Mirabell's "uncle who hates him" in hopes that he will be rewarded by Mirabell with a farm and thereby escape being servant for the rest of his life. He is Mirabell's "Mosca" in the play's allusive relationship to Jonson's inheritance plot. Both Foible and Waitwell have deep roots in the *comedia del arte* tradition that arose from Greek and Roman type-character comedy as "the wily servant." Betty is a servant in the chocolate house, a good-hearted gal who keeps the boys happy, later a familiar type in the*film noir* tradition.

4.2.6: Act-wise Summaries

Act I

- Mirabell is not very happy to leave the company of Millamant.
- If Millamant marries against the will of her aunt she will lose half her fortune.
- Lady Wishfort plans to get Millamant married with Mirabell’s uncle to avenge Mirabell’s pretentious love affair with her.

Act 2

- Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall are trying to show false hatred for Mirabell.
- The embittered relationship between Mr and Mrs. Fainall is revealed.
- A strange situation advances as we see Mrs. Marwood coming to know about the intimate conversation between Foible and Mirabell.

Act 3

- Mrs. Marwood tells Lady Wishfort about the intimate conversation between Foible and Mirabell.
- Millamant expresses her anguish over Witwoud and Petulant because she doesn't like their company.
- Marwood talks about some strategy with her lover Mrs Fainall in order to acquire half of the fortune of Millamant.

Act 4

- Lady Wishfort looks well prepared to receive her so called admirer and suitor Sir Rowland (Dramatic irony when the reader knows the actual identity of Sir Rowland).
- Conversation between Mirabell and Millamant deals with conditions in marriage.
- Mr. Fainall threatens to divorce his wife Mrs. Fainall on the basis of infedility.
- Mr. Fainall puts condition in his relation with Lady Wishfort that her entire fortune will go to Mr. Fainall.

Act 5

- Last act of the play opening with an unpleasant scene – Lady Wishfort is aware of the identity of Sir Rowland, thanks to Mrs Marwood.
- Foible informs Mrs Fainall about the love affair of Mrs Marwood and Mr Fainall.
- Mr Fainall informs Lady Wishfort that he is thinking of a divorce from his wife.
- Mirabell emerges as the real hero – protects Lady Wishfort, saves the property of Millamant and foils the evil attempt of Mr Fainall and Mrs Marwood.
- Lady Wishfort forgives and allows the marriage of Mirabell and Millamant.

4.2.7: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT SECTIONS

- **The Dedication**

Congreve dedicates his play, *The Way of the World*, to Ralph, Earl of Montague, whose company and conversation have made it possible for Congreve to write this comedy. The dedication also constitutes a statement of purpose. Congreve writes that he is aware that the world may charge him with vanity for dedicating his play to the Earl. However, he is certain that the world cannot think "meanly" of a play that is meant for the earl's perusal. Conversely, if the play is attributed "too much sufficiency," it would be an extravagant claim, and merit the test of the earl's judgment. Congreve humbly states that the earl's favourable reception of the play will more than compensate for the play's deficiencies, and he praises the earl lavishly for his patronage.

Congreve does not expect the play to succeed on the stage, since he is aware that he is not catering to the current tastes of Restoration society. Congreve states his dissatisfaction with the kind of comedies being written. He points out that the characters meant to be ridiculed in these comedies are largely "gross fools" who can only disturb an audience, rather than stimulate their reflective judgment. Congreve asserts that instead of moving the audience to laughter, comic characters should excite compassion.

Congreve's dissatisfaction with the contemporary comic mode has led him to design comic characters who will do more than merely appear ridiculous. The "affected wit" of his characters shall be exposed and held up for the audience's ridicule. Congreve defines this as "a wit, which at the same time that it is affected, is also false." Congreve is aware of the difficulty involved in the creation of such complex characters. He is also aware that his play may not succeed on stage because many people come to the theatre prepared to criticize a play without understanding its purpose. Congreve then apologizes for his digression and entrusts his play to the earl's protection, claiming that only his patronage and the approval of like-minded people will provide recognition to writers of merit.

Congreve holds Terence, an ancient Roman author of comedies, as his model. He states that Terence benefited from the encouragement of Scipio and Lelius. Congreve laments that the majority of Terence's audience was incapable of appreciating the purity of his style, his

delicacy of plot construction, and the aptness of his characters. Congreve then sketches a brief history of classical comedy in which he mentions Terence's models and traces the source of his inspiration back to Aristotle. Congreve emphasizes the importance of patronage and claims that contact with such superior people is the only means of attaining perfection in dialogue.

Congreve proceeds to attribute all that is best in his style to the society of Ralph, Earl of Montague. He further praises the earl by stating that if this play suffers from any deficiency, it is his (Congreve's) fault, since he could not rise to the stature of Terence even though the earl was his patron. Congreve then mentions that although poetry is "the eldest sister of all arts and parent of most," the earl has never before given a poet his patronage. Poetry addresses itself to the good and great. This relationship is reciprocal: it is the privilege of poetry to address them, and it is their right alone to grant it patronage.

Many writers dedicate their works to the good and the great. But Congreve pleads that his address may be exempt from all the trappings of a typical dedication. He states that he is dedicating his play to the earl because he considers him to be the most deserving and is aware of his "extreme worthiness and humanity."

- **Prologue**

In the Prologue, or the introduction to the play, Congreve categorizes poets as those who fare the worst among Nature's fools, for Fortune first grants them fame and then "forsakes" them. Congreve laments this unfair treatment meted out to the poets, who are Fortune's own offspring. Poets have to risk the fame earned from their previous work when they write a new work. If his new endeavour fails, the poet must lose his seat in Parnassus. (Parnassus was a mountain near Delphi in Greece, sacred to Apollo and the Muses. Apollo was the sun-god and patron of the arts, while the Muses were the nine goddesses of the arts. Parnassus was regarded as the seat of learning, poetry and the arts.)

Congreve states that although he has worked hard to write this play, if the audience does not like it, they should not spare him for his trouble but damn him all the more. He tells the audience not to pity him for his stupidity. He promises that he will blame the audience if they heckle any scene. He proceeds to state that his play has "some plot," "some new thought," "some humor" -- but "no farce." This is regarded as a fault by some. He comments wryly that

the audience should not expect satire since they have nothing for which to be reproached. Nobody can dare to correct them. His sole aim has been to "please" and not to "instruct," since this might offend the audience. He takes the role of a passive poet who has left everything to the judgment of the audience. He bids the audience to "save or damn" him according to their own discretion.

- **Exposition**

The title establishes the theme of the play straightaway and Congreve makes it clear that his play is concerned with the problem of social living. Act 1 gives us the exposition. It introduces practically all the male characters, informs us with others and supplies us with necessary background information. The opening scene between Fainall and Mirabellis echoed and paralleled by a similar duel of words between Mrs Fainall and Mrs Marwood at the beginning of Act II. With the progress of the play we get to know the love of Mirabell for Millamant. We then hear the practical obstacle to their marriage. Half of Mirabell's fortune is controlled by her aunt, Lady Wishfort whose prior consent to marriage is necessary if the money is to be claimed. This constitutes the main problem of the play and against this background the story begins.

- **Proviso Scene**

In the Proviso Scene of the play *The Way of the World*, we find Mirabell and Millament meeting together to arrange an agreement for their marriage. The scene is a pure comedy with brilliant display of wit by both of them, but, above all, provides instructions which have serious dimensions in the context of the society. Here, Congreve seems to come to realise the importance for providing an ideal pair of man and woman, ideal in the sense that the pair could be taken for models in the life-style of the period.

However, the Proviso Scene is one of the most remarkable aspects of Congreve's *The Way of the World* and this scene has been widely and simultaneously admired by the critics and the readers. In fact, it serves as an excellent medium through which Congreve conveys his message to his readers.

The most noteworthy aspect of the Proviso Scene is Millamant's witty style in which she puts her condition before her lover Mirabell. According to her first condition, she wants equal amount of love and affection on the part of her would husband throughout her life. Behind

her above mentioned condition we notice the pitiable condition of a wife after marriage. Just before marriage when men and women are lovers they declare full support and love for each other but things take a turn when they marry each other. So Millamant appears anxious because of this reason and that is why she puts this condition. Again, Millamant says that she hates those lovers who do not take proper care of their beloved. She further wants that her husband must be a loyal and good natured man.

She says to Mirabell that she wants her liberty after her marriage; she informs Mirabell that she can't forgo her independence, she says, "My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you adiue?... My morning, thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye douceurs,... Adieu -- I can't do it, 'tis more than impossible." She also adds that "I will lie a bed in a morning as long as I please"

Millamant on her part makes it clear that a lover's (Mirabell's) appeals and entreaties should not stop with the marriage ceremony. Therefore, she would like to be 'solicited' even after marriage. She next puts that "My dear liberty" should be preserved:

"I'll lye abed in a morning as long as I please…" she wants that she will have liberty "to say and receive visits to and from who I please; to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or Wry faces on your part ; and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste.....come to dinner who I please, find in my dressing room who I'm out of humour, without giving reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly whenever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in."

Millament then informs that she would not like to be addressed by such names as "wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweet-heart; and the rest of that nauseous can, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar." Moreover, they will continue to present a decorous appearance in public, and she will have free communication with others. In other words, after marriage they maintain certain distance and reserve between them.

Mirabell listens to all the conditions of Millamant with patience. Although he was not very happy with some of the conditions, he did not raise any objection. Now he informs Millamant about some of his own conditions. When we go through his conditions we observe that it is a

witty satire on the affectations of women in that society. Mirabell wants that after their marriage Millamant should follow some guidelines. Millamant should not be in company of any woman who has a notorious background or who indulges in scandalous activities. He says that " you admit no sworn confidant or intimate of your own sex; no she friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy-duck to wheedle you a FOP-SCRAMBLING to the play in a mask."

The next condition is that she should not use the artificial things to cover her real appearance. If says that " I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled skins and I know not what--hog's bones, hare's gall, pig water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. "

Mirabell's conditions are quite different: they are frankly sexual in content, directed to his not being cuckolded or to her bedroom manners. "Just as Millament's are developed femininely" as Norman N. Holland points out, "Mirabell's are developed in a typically masculine way." Each of Mirabell's provisos begin with its item: first, the general principle, "that your Acquaintance be general", then specific instructions, "no she-friend to screen her affairs", no fop to take her to the theatre secretly, and an illustration of the forbidden behaviour, "to wheedle you a fop-scrambling to the play in a mask". Nevertheless, Mirabell denounces the use of tight dresses during pregnancy by women, and he forbids the use of alcoholic drinks. The conditions are stated by both parties in a spirit of fun and gaiety, but the fact remained that both are striving to arrive at some kind of mutual understanding.

Through this scene appears very funny but it is a serious comment on the degradation of conjugal relations. The conditions as set down by the two lovers, confirm the sincerity of their motives and their wish to live a married life which was different from others. Both of them accept each other's conditions. It is a guideline or memorandum of understanding between a husband and a wife, which would enable them to spend a happy married life. After following these guidelines there will have no possibility of misunderstanding. Thus Congreve throws light on the vital aspects of married life. This is a parody on the social expectations of men and women upon becoming husband and wife. The requirements make the union far from romantic. Instead, the parties involved are expected to comply with formalities that continuously remind them that their union is one based on networking and convenience, rather than love.

Another important significance is that they both discover each other's penchants with this behavior pact, and wonder about each other. Again, this is satirical. Millamant says that she wants to be free, and allowed basically to do as she pleases. Mirabell takes this sourly and says that his future bride better not be scandalous nor a "fashion victim". In turn, Millamant takes that personal and cannot believe he would think her to be that way. Even funnier is the fact that all this weird transaction has to be rushed as another character, Fainall, enters the scene.

Yet, it is possible that one of the most important parts of the bargaining scene is the underlying shallowness of the pact. Mirabell says that, upon marriage, he would be exalted to the rank of husband. Contrastingly, Millamant says that she will be demoted to the rank of wife. This is a clear indicator that Millamant is not marriage material, and that Mirabell may not be the dream husband that we assume he wants to be. Hence, the significance here is that Mirabell and Millamant are rushing through the very complex process of pre-nuptial planning with very little evidence of what they really want out of their marriage.

- **Ending**

We see in the fifth and the final act the climax of the drama. Lady Wishfort turns Foible out of the house. Fainall and Mrs Marwood are now totally in ascendant and they bear down upon Lady Wishfort's demanding, with threat and blackmail, the fortunes of both Millamant and Mrs Fainall. Mirabell has not however been idle, and the first hint of recovery appears in the person of Sir Willfull. He and Millamant appear before Lady Wishfort, and consent to her wish that they should marry. Millamant's share of money is thus retrieved. The play ends with these lines:

From hence let those be warn'd, who mean to wed;
Lest mutual Falsehood stain the Bridal Bed:
For each Deceiver to his cost may find,
That Marriage Frauds too oft are paid in kind.

This conclusion echoes the lines from Horace which Congreve quoted on the title page of the play – "Audire est Operae pretium… Metuat doti deprensa," through which Congreve expects his audience to remember that disasters wait on adulterers and that they are hampered on all sides.

- **Epilogue**

The Epilogue is spoken by Mrs Bracegirdle, an actress of great repute of that day. Congreve has created the role of Millamant for her. She speaks with the spectators expressing her concern about how the essential insufficiency of critics who criticise plays without knowledge, and how the present audience will criticise this play without showing any mercy.

4.2.8: CENTRAL THEME(S) AND KEY ISSUES IN THE PLAY

- ✓ **Themes**

- **Social Convention**

Congreve's "comedy of manners" takes the fashionable or conventional social behaviour of the time as the principal subject of satire. Conflicts that arise between and among characters are prompted by affected and artificial social mores, especially with respect to relationships between the sexes. Social pretences and plot complications abound in *The Way of the World*. Women are compelled to act coyly and to dissemble in courtship, couples deceive one another in marriage, friends are double-dealing, and conquests have more to do with dowries and convenience than love. All moral principle is risked for the sake of reputation and money. However, what makes the action comic is the subterfuge. What one says is hardly ever what one really thinks or means. To judge by appearances, for example, no one could be happier in his marriage than Fainall, who in reality disdains his wife and is carrying on an adulterous affair with his wife's close friend. Congreve intimates that, in fashionable society at the turn of the eighteenth century, it is crucial to preserve the outer trappings of beauty, wit, and sophistication no matter how egregious one's actions and words might prove.

- **Dowries, Marriage, and Adultery**

In the male-dominated, patriarchal society of Congreve's time, a woman was little more than property in a marriage transaction. Her dowry (money, property, and estate) was relinquished to her husband at marriage and she became, by law, his chattel. In the upper classes, women had little voice in their own fate, and marriages were usually arranged according to social status, size of fortune, and family name. In the play, Millamant's dowry is at the centre of the struggle that pits Mirabell, her true lover, against Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, the two adulterers plotting to gain control of Millamant's fortune as well as Fainall's wife's.

Cunningly, Mrs. Fainall has had a large part of her estate signed over in trust before her marriage to prevent her husband from acquiring it.

While marriages are important economic contracts, they are also convenient vehicles for protecting social reputations. Mrs. Fainall has made such a marriage, which is socially acceptable and even expected, as long as the pretense of civility is maintained. However, getting caught in an adulterous relationship puts both reputation and fortune at risk. Hence when the relationship between Fainall and Mrs. Marwood is discovered, the two become social outcasts. Fainall has staked his reputation on a plot to disinherit his wife. As punishment, he will have to bear the humiliating exposure, continuing to live with his wife and depend on her for his livelihood. Mrs. Marwood's reputation is ruined, her future hopes destroyed. Congreve's intent is to reflect the way of the world in all its manifest greed. The lesson is that those who cheat get their just desserts in the end.

- **Marriage**

After Charles II revived theatre in 1660, a new kind of comedy, the comedy of manners exploded onto the English drama scene and remained the preferred style of theatre for the rest of the century. The aim of these plays was to mock society, or rather to hold it up for scrutiny by those very people whose social world was being characterized on stage. *The Way of the World* reflects Congreve's personal view of Restoration society and city life, full of its artificiality, rigidity, and formality. As is typical of Restoration Theatre, this play's main themes are centred on that of marriage and the game of love. However, unlike the relationships depicted in earlier works, the couple at the heart of the play - Mirabell and Millamant, have the potential to become a true partnership even by modern standards. The love and trust shared between two intelligent and independent characters, set against the tableau of falsehoods, greed, and jealousy that was exemplified by the social world around them, was revolutionary for Restoration comedy. By comparing and contrasting Mirabell and Millamant with the characters and relationships surrounding them, Congreve reveals his view of the true meaning of marriage and how it should be seen by Restoration society.

The strength of character of our two protagonists is crucial to their status as an almost ideal couple. The stark contrasts set up between them and the secondary characters, especially the contrast between Fainall and Mirabell, allow Mirabell and Millamant's individual characters and the ensuing relationship to hold that much more merit in the eyes of the audience. At first

glance, Fainall and Mirabell appear to be similar, but even as their first conversation progresses at the beginning of Act I, their distinct personalities emerge. Both are witty and rakish. It is only by the gradual revelation of their inner natures that one is able to distinguish between our hero and the villain. Fainall's cynicism is contrasted with Mirabell's role as commentator on the society of which he is also a part. If Mirabell is to be seen as our representative as the ideal Restoration gentleman, Fainall is that of the antagonist and compilation of all that is wrong with the social scene at present. As the action progresses, he reveals himself to be only a manipulator and a fortune hunter. Throughout the play, his character is unredeemed by a single act of humanity. His cynicism is revealed in his very first remark to Mirabell, "I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill fortune than I'd make love to a woman who undervalued the loss of her reputation". His attitude towards marriage is equally negative. He recommends marriage as a remedy for love, "be half as well acquainted with her charms as you are with her defects and my life on that, you are your own man again". Fainall is a backstabbing, money-grubbing man who admits to having married his wife for her fortune, and is eager to get his hands on funds intended for other characters within the play. Love doesn't exist for him, except for that of himself and money.

Fainall provides a perfect contrast for the chief male protagonist. At first glance, Mirabell appears to be the typical Restoration beau, envied by the other characters for his wit and attractiveness. But Mirabell is far from perfect, and is much more real and human than that description would imply. He has had his share of debauchery and indulgence, as seen with his affair with Mrs. Fainall. He is also a manipulator, controlling events to his advantage, often resorting to being devious or amoral. In spite of his weaknesses, Mirabell follows a gentleman's code of honor, never losing control of his emotions. He also balances his desires with consideration for the needs of others. When the play opens, the audience learns that Mirabell has already failed in his first attempt to obtain Millamant. His "sham addresses" to Lady Wishfort have earned him the matron's hatred. His vivid portrait of his courtship of Lady Wishfort seems to go against the very values that he apparently cherishes. He declares that he "proceeded to the very last act of flattery with her" and that "an old woman" cannot be "flattered further, unless a man should endeavor downright personally to debauch her; and that my virtue forbade me". His wooing of Lady Wishfort clearly shows the shady side of Mirabell. Although Mirabell is not a saint, he shows himself to be a completely decent fellow at the end of the play, when he gives Mrs. Fainall back her money. He is aware of his own

failings and has the ability to laugh at himself, which makes a more human and humane character.

Mirabell definitely loves Millamant, but his love for her is not that of the sentimental kind portrayed in many Restoration comedies. Instead of praising Millamant's virtues, he engages in an analysis of her faults. He tells Fainall that once, when he was angry with Millamant, he "took her to pieces, sifted and separated her failings; I studied 'em, and got 'em by rote. The catalogue was so large that I was not without hope one day or other to hate her heartily". He, therefore, is realistic about his true love, but loves her in spite of her faults, that her flaws make her even more appealing in the end. Mirabell claims, “her follies are so natural, or so artful, that they become her”. At times, Millamant's weaknesses test his patience, and he comes close to losing his control; but Mirabell always reigns himself in, even when Millamant's wit outshines his own. It can be safely said that Mirabell's feelings for Millamant are more motivated by true love than by considerations of money, unlike any of the other relationships within the context of the play.

Mirabell's love interest, the formidable Millamant is the ideal comic heroine, ideal for both her time period and today. She has beauty, wit, intelligence, and vivaciousness, and is a perfect match for Mirabell. At first glance she appears to be a very coquettish woman, who plays the role of the belle effortlessly. But beneath the mask of the coquette, Millamant possesses a deep understanding of the seriousness of life and a depth of character that distinguishes her from her contemporaries both within this play and others. She dislikes superficiality and realizes that she needs both emotional and physical companionship in marriage; however, at the same time, she values her freedom and independence. It is evident that Millamant enjoys the power she has over Mirabell. She knows he loves her, she asks him what he would give that he "could help loving" her. During the battle of wits in the park, she laughs at his moralized tone and asserts her independence, declaring that she will not "endure to be reprimanded nor instructed; 'tis so dull to act always by advice, and so tedious to be told one's faults - I can't bear it". It’s of no wonder that Mirabell is so taken with her. An intelligent woman, Millamant insists on choosing her own marriage partner instead of simply marrying whoever is chosen by her aunt, Lady Wishfort. Since she is capable of whole-hearted love, she wants to find the perfect match who can love her for who she is and allow her to retain her individualism after marriage. She believes Mirabell is such a man.

Both Millamant and Mirabell take marriage very seriously, rejecting the sentimental kind of union normally depicted in Restoration comedy. The infamous "proviso" scene characterizes their relationship. They love each other very dearly; however, fortunately, the lovers temper their romance with realism and rise above the typical sentimentality of plays of this time period. Mirabell does not propose to Millamant before discussing the conditions under which they will be able to live together. Millamant insists that she will not be "called names . . . as wife, spouse, my dear, jewel, love". She also requests that they shall not be "familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks". After Millamant has stated her conditions, Mirabell lays down some of his own. They decide in a business-like manner to retain their independence after marriage. But this entire scene is conducted in a witty, flirtatious tone, and Mirabell rounds it off by telling Millamant that "when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband" (p.367), relaying that he hopes he can grow to be a husband that matches the wife she will be to him. The two characters are presented as equals, and see themselves as such. They both enjoy the power they have over the other, particularly Millamant, and live for the flirtatious battle-of-the-wits banter that characterizes their conversation. Mirabell and Millamant seem to be an ideal match for each other.

In of itself the relationship between Millamant and Mirabell seems to be idyllic. They love each other, they respect each other, and they treat each other as equals. When placed in the context of the play, their relationship represents more than just a happy couple; it speaks to the progress of the view of marriage from being merely a contract, a way of gaining money or of saving one's honor, to a more modern conception. Now, in present times, marriage is seen as an affirmation of the mutual love and respect between two people. This is what the leading couple in *The Way of the World* seems to be aiming at, and what Congreve would claim should be a model for Restoration society. Though Mirabell and Millamant's relationship is not completely devoid of negative influence, for Millamant's six thousand pound fortune is repeatedly an issue, they are still honourable in contrast to the relationships surrounding them. Marriage is depicted as entirely centered around greed for money, and protection of honor. Debauchery, greed, and deceit permeate this social world and all its interactions. It is exactly this "way of the world" that Congreve believes should be improved.

Congreve offers a critique of this whittled down and desensitized view of marriage by using the secondary characters to flesh out the negative aspects of society. He contrasts the situation those characters find themselves in at the conclusion of the play with that of

Mirabell and Millamant. All of the characters who married with false intentions, or who stood in the way of the marriage of the two protagonists ended up unhappy or dissatisfied upon the closing of the play. In particular, the key antagonist of the play, Mr Fainall characterizes this obsession with money and as previously mentioned, he provides great contrast to Mirabell. Furthermore, all of his relationships are full of falsehood and deceit. He admits to never having loved his wife "wherefore did I marry but to make a lawful prize of a rich widow's wealth", and he has already squandered the wealth of his mistress, Mrs. Marwood. His jealousy and greed drive him to ruthlessly blackmail Mrs. Wishfort who only wants to protect the reputation of her daughter. However, his debauchery comes full circle in the end, when he finds his reputation preceded him in marrying his wife. Not only did he lose all moral standing with his social world, but lost all chances at acquiring any money from any of the women in his life and is finally left to fend for himself. The parasite finally got his due. Similarly all those who married under false pretenses, such as Mrs. Fainall, or who was an obstacle to the model couple, such as Mrs. Marwood, were punished in the end. Mrs. Fainall, even though she recovered her fortune from Mirabell, is left with an ambiguous and not entirely joyful future. She has officially lost the one love of her life. It is also unknown whether she will try to fix her disintegrating marriage or even if she wants to. This punishment is due to her marrying Fainall not because she loved him, but because she needed to cover up her affair with Mirabell, in case she was with child. Her receiving the money in the end is justified by her having benevolently supported Mirabell in his quest to win Millamant, even though she still loves him. Mrs. Marwood, on the other hand, never redeems herself, and has backstabbed all of her friends, and was a leading figure in the counter-plot to prevent the marriage of Mirabell and Millamant. She is rewarded for her efforts at the end of the play, when Foible and Mincing reveal her adulterous affair with Fainall. She loses her sole possession of value, her flawless reputation.

In contrast to their compatriots, Mirabell and Millimant, exemplifying the loving, realistic, and modern couple, are allowed happiness and each other. By allowing them to end up together, Congreve is claiming that this type of union should be favored and sought after by members of Restoration society. Rather than being boiled down to the mere desire for wealth, or looked at as a cover for some dishonorable affair, marriage should require the mutual love, respect, and appreciation that exist between Mirabell and Millamant. In addition, he seems to be claiming that this union can only take place between those who are equally matched in wit

and appearance, and who are human in that they each have flaws of their own. Both lovers are just such characters, and each accept and love the other, complete with their faults. Mirabell elucidates Congreve's claim about marriage in the final four lines of the play,

> "From hence let those be warned who mean to wed, Lest mutual falsehood stain the bridal bed; For each deceiver to his cost may find That marriage-fraud too oft are paid in kind…"

- **Decorum and Wit**

Congreve invents several characters who, as fops, dandies, and fools, provide fitting foils to the romantic hero and heroine. He pits these purported "wits" against Mirabell and Millamant to comment on the social decline of manners. Since the play is a comedy, audiences are to take it both as serious social satire and also as an amusing romp. No one, of course, escapes Congreve's satirical pen entirely. All people are sometimes fools, Congreve suggests, or sometimes too earnest or too busy inventing counterfeit personas in order to hide their own moral turpitude. Petulant and Witwoud make good fools for they epitomize the shallowness and silliness of fashionable society, but they both also are capable of voicing through their wit the real motivations behind people's actions. They mistake fashionable behaviour for decorum and good manners, but they are basically harmless. The comic hero, Mirabell, unscrupulously uses blackmail and trickery to promote his own interests, yet he also represents what is wise and decent in society, and he protects and thoughtfully provides for his friends. Millament, while she acts capriciously and spends time with fops, is inherently thoughtful and able to distinguish between fashion and principles. Lady Wishfort is perhaps the most sympathetically comic character in that, for all her desperate attempts to preserve decorum and for all the power she wields as the wealthy matriarch of the family, she is at heart a lonely widow who will do anything for a husband.

4.2.9: *THE WAY OF THE WORLD* AND RESTORATION DRAMA

The Restoration, as a period, takes its name from the Restoration of the monarchy, with Charles II assuming the throne in 1660. The Restoration of the monarchy meant the end of the Puritan Parliament's rule, but it also meant the return of the theatre. Because of the theatre's long-standing connection with royalty and aristocracy and because of the Puritans'

view of the theatre as licentious and blasphemous, theatrical performances were banned during parliament's rule. In 1662, the theatres re-opened, and play-going became an important part of the reaction against the Puritanism of the previous decades. Restoration theatre, for many cultural historians, epitomizes the era. While many plays from the Shakespearean era were reproduced, new plays commenting on the renewed monarchy and a new culture of performance, wealth, and more open sexuality flourished. In a variety of forms, the entire culture seemed to see itself as a kind of play, as commentators repeatedly emphasized the ways everyone seemed to be playing roles as they negotiated new mores and social conditions.

While the theatre of the Restoration era attempted to return to its earlier form, it innovated on the theatre of the first part of the 17th century in many ways. First, it became accessible and respectable, as the theatres themselves moved into better parts of London and started to attract a broader array of patrons. At the same time, playhouses opened up professionally for women, as they began to appear on stage in large numbers for the first number and several women, most famously, perhaps, Aphra Behn, became successful playwrights. The presence of women on the stage and in larger numbers in the audiences directly contributed to the intensive exploration of sexual themes in the theatre of the period. Actresses were often seen as little more than prostitutes, and many famous actresses were well-known consorts of the king and other nobles. Their performances on stage often played with their supposed sexual availability, while women in the audiences often similarly were seen or displayed themselves as performers as they traded witty conversation laced with double entendre with men about town. In many accounts, the flirtations in the audience mirrored or rivalled the performances on stage.

The Restoration comedy of manners reflected and commented on this culture of performance. These plays often featured rakes—men on the prowl for sexual conquest—who elaborated complicated schemes for bedding as many women as possible. Over the course of the play, their attempts were often forwarded, rebuffed, and foiled by various women whose sexual knowledge and wit frequently equalled their male counterparts. These comedies usually featured incredibly complex plots and counterplots—emphasizing their characters' ability to manipulate others through their self-display, control of language, and psychological calculations as they attempted to win both sexual favours and wealth. Yet, even as the plays displayed the power of performance that their very audiences indulged in, they often critiqued

that culture for its duplicity and depravity. With the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the return to power of parliament, a reaction against the excesses of the Restoration set in, with much of the focus on the theatre and the culture of performance and display and, in particular, its sexual licentiousness.

Appearing in 1700, Congreve's play represents a late version of the Restoration comedy of manners, one that consolidates many of the features of earlier plays even as it responds to increasing critique of the theatre (the play mentions one of the most famous critiques in Act 3. Implicitly describing the way of the world as one of cynical self-interest, the play follows the reformed rake Mirabell as he attempts to win the hand of Millamant, the woman he actually loves. Before the play begins, Mirabell, we later learn, has had an affair with Mrs. Fainall, whose husband married her only for her wealth and is having an affair with Mrs. Marwood; we only learn most of this in the second act. Millamant is the niece and ward of Lady Wishfort, who is Mrs. Fainall's mother, and stands to inherit a great deal of money, but only if Lady Wishfort approves of her suitor. Mirabell has offended Lady Wishfort, so he needs not only to win Millamant's hand but also to win over Lady Wishfort. As with most Restoration comedies, Mirabell creates a complicated scheme involving impersonation and artifice to get both wealth and love. He has his valet, Waitwell, pretend to be his uncle and woo Lady Wishfort. His plan is to then rescue Lady Wishfort from being seduced by a servant and thus gain her approval. While Millamant knows of the plot and does love Mirabell, she takes pleasure in teasing him about the uncertainty of their eventual union.

However, things go awry for Mirabell when Mrs. Marwood learns of the plot and of Mirabell's former affair with Mrs. Fainall. Mrs. Marwood informs Mr. Fainall, and they begin a plot against Mirabell. Millamant has accepted Mirabell's proposal, turning down Sir Witful Witwoud (Lady Wishfort's choice). Fainall uncovers the plot to Lady Wishfort and attempts to blackmail her by threatening to reveal her daughter's (Mrs. Fainall's) adultery. He wants all of Millamant's fortune as well as complete control of Mrs. Fainall's potential inheritance. Millamant then decides she will marry Sir Witwoud in order to save her fortune, and Mirabell appears with two servants to prove Mr. Fainall's adultery with Mrs. Marwood. Fainall, however, is not cowed and continues to threaten Mrs. Fainall's reputation. Then, Mirabell plays his last card. Before she married Mr. Fainall, Mrs. Fainall, out of fear of Mr. Fainall's character, had made Mirabell the trustee of her fortune. Without control of that

money, Mr. Fainall is left without any resources, and the play ends with Mirabell and Millamant engaged.

The Way of the World exemplifies many of the key features of the Restoration comedy of manners— complex, multi-faceted characters who combine urbanity and wit in treating love and wealth as a game they play through concealment, artifice, and plotting. Unlike some of the plays from the first decade of the Restoration, however, Congreve's play does not end up embracing the cynicism of some of its characters; instead, true love—while far from sentimentalized—wins out and leaves with wealth. His characters have their moral failings and they more than handle themselves in a world of false appearances, banter, and sexual double-dealings, but they are redeemed in the end.

4.2.10: SUMMING UP

So as we reach to the end of the play we learn quite much about William Congreve's *The Way of the World,* a play that exemplifies many of the key features of what became popular as the **Restoration Comedy of Manners**.

- Congreve's intent was not on writing the sentimental comedies that were later to become so popular on the eighteenth century stage. His works stood unique as it showcased the subtle balance that he achieved between the cool disenchantment of the Restoration and the emotional warmth of the 18th century.
- The representations of the old form and new form of marital relations we see sexual power at first and then developing into material power.
- Congreve's "comedy of manners" takes the fashionable or conventional social behavior of the time as the principle subject of satire.
- While marriages are important economic contracts, they are also convenient vehicles for protecting social reputations.
- Congreve invents several characters who, as fops, dandies, and fools, provide fitting foils to the romantic hero and heroine.

- *The Way of the World* exemplifies many of the key features of the Restoration comedy of manners— complex, multi-faceted characters who combine urbanity and wit in treating love and wealth as a game they play through concealment, artifice, and plotting.

4.2.11: ACTIVITY FOR THE LEARNER

Make an extensive reading of the text and try to answer the following multiple choice questions:

- Act I Scene I of the play The Way of the Word takes place in –
  1. St. James Park
  2. A Chocolate House
  3. A Room in Lady Wishfort's House
  4. In a tavern

- The dedicatory preface to the first edition of The Way of the World is a –
  1. Letter to Oliver Goldsmith
  2. Letter to Jacob Tonson
  3. Letter to the Earl of Montagu
  4. Letter to Dryden

- The Restoration form owes much to the brilliant dramas of the French writer –
  1. Jean Racine
  2. Moliere
  3. Oliver Goldsmith

4.2.12: COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Long – answer type (20 marks each):

1. How would you apply the main features of 'Comedies of Manners to *The Way of the World*?
2. 'The Proviso scene between Millamant and Mirabell is a significant event which strengthens the plot of the play'. Illustrate.
3. Highlight the vices and follies of contemporary society that Congreve hints at through his play *The Way of the World*.

Mid – length questions (12 marks each):

1. Comment on the minor characters of the play, bringing out the significance of any two of them.
2. Give a comparison between Comedy of Manners and Comedy of Humours.
3. Show how verbal wit contributes to the overall humorous intent in *The Way of the World*.

Short answer type questions (6 marks each):

1. Comment on the character of Lady Wishfort.
2. Comment on the Dowry, Marriage and Adultery as a theme in *The Way of the World*.
3. Bring out the significance of the Prologue of the play.

4.2.13: READING LIST

Chakrabarty, Shirshendu (ed). *The Way of the World* by William Congreve
Dobree, Bonamy. *Restoration Comedy 1660 – 1720*
Hill, Howard Erskine & Alexander Lindsay eds. *William Congreve: The Critical Heritage*
Sengupta, Kajal (ed.) *The Way of The World* by William Congreve

MODULE 4 UNIT 3

JOHN DRYDEN: *All for Love* (Act One)

4.3.0 INTRODUCTION

You have already come across John Dryden as a verse-satirist and a literary theorist of the Restoration Period in England. The very fact that you are now studying an excerpt from a play by him will give you a fair idea of Dryden's multi-faceted genius. The Restoration, you must have realised by now, was not an age where heroism could be looked upon in the same vein that you could do in earlier periods. Hence it is natural that the tragic plays of the period, which were popularly known as Heroic Tragedies, would not be on the same wavelength as tragedies of the Renaissance or the Elizabethan period. The strain of artificiality is pervasive in this genre. You may recall Dryden's own conception of a heroic play, that according to him, ought to be 'an imitation of an heroic poem; and consequently that love and honour ought to be the subject of it'.

This Unit introduces you to Dryden's *All for Love*, which is sub-titled 'The World Well Lost'. Your syllabised portion is the first Act of the play only, but we will be giving an overview of the entire play and related issues in a nutshell. To begin with, it is a heroic drama that first appeared in 1677. It is written in a free adaptation of Shakespeare and modelled upon the design of classical tragedy. It is considered to be an approved imitation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* In fact, re-workings of Shakespeare's plays have been a common feature in subsequent ages, till our own times. In terms of thought and content,

Shakespeare is so rich that he has always lent himself to adaptations in subsequent periods, albeit story lines have changed in keeping with temporal spatial frameworks.

4.3.1 HEROIC TRAGEDY AND JOHN DRYDEN

If you look back at the sub-section on 'Restoration Tragedy' in Module 4 Unit 1, you will remember that as a type, this form of drama had a rather short life span. Given the artificiality of the age and the kind of elements that such drama tried to depict, this was perhaps pre-destined. Yet, within this brief period, there were quite a handful of playwrights, just as there were a number of plays written; though not all attained equal popular acclaim. To repeat certain facts that you already know but would do good to recollect, heroic drama dealt with exalted spectacles and almost superhuman attributes and activities of a hero, and was modelled on the themes of heroism, courage, love and honour. This genre was primarily modelled after the French Neo-Classical tragedy and was normally written in rhyming pentameter couplets. Chronologically, Dryden's *All for Love* is a Heroic Drama written in the final phases of the existence of this mode and with his genius, he naturally produced one that stands above most of the rest. This is however not to say that this play manages to completely elude the inherent limitations of the genre. One interesting variation in Dryden's work is that he does not use the rhyming couplets, but writes in **blank verse** as Shakespeare did.

Dryden however rigorously follows Aristotle's idea of Unity of Action, mentioned in *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, a tragedy must have a single course of action without any subsidiary plot. Dryden strictly adheres to this, and the unity of place is also maintained as the scene of action never shifts from Alexandria. This is unlike Shakespeare who takes us across the world from Rome to Egypt in his play! In case of the unity of time, there exists in the play a case of illusion of reality. The acts do not have any scene division, and the unity of unbroken time is maintained by such an illusion separately in every act. Dryden's play may thus be seen as having certain interesting experimentations by way of re-doing Shakespeare with classical precepts in mind.

4.3.2 DRYDEN'S 'PREFACE', 'PROLOGUE' AND SHAKESPEAREAN ADAPTATION

- **Preface:** Dryden's *All for Love* has a Preface that tries to introduce the audience with the intentions that the author had in imitating Shakespeare's drama. He also says that in portraying the hero and the heroine he has not described them too moral (since it will be unjust to make them suffer). At the same time the lovers are not projected as unscrupulous villains as then they shall not be able to arouse the desired sympathy from the audience. He mentions that in the construction of the plot he has adhered to the Classical unities, and the story does not deal with any subplot outside the realm of the main action of the play. He also mentions that introducing Octavia is an error, since the character takes away a considerable amount of audience's sympathy. He thinks that by imitating 'divine' Shakespeare he has transcended his earlier achievements. He also mentions that as practitioner of art he does not consider it morally right to arouse too much of sympathy for the lovers who are engaged in illicit and improper love.
- **Prologue:** In the Prologue to *All for Love* Dryden wittily states that he is expecting adverse comments from the critics, and later on he also states what kind of heroes and heroines the audience should see and search for in dramas. However, finally Dryden submits himself and humbly says that the audience should not expect great mastery from him in the portrayal of the heroes and heroines since he is lower in standard when compared to great writers.

4.3.3 THE SUBTITLE OF *ALL FOR LOVE*

All for Love has a subtitle ---- 'The World Well Lost' ---- which makes it clear that the play does not deal with the high moral assumptions where heroism and honour depend primarily on virtue and responsible action on the part of the heroes and heroines by sacrificing their personal peace and pleasures. The subtitle rather shows that Dryden here is not interesting to portray the illicit love between Antony and Cleopatra as wrong and immoral. Though the outcome of such a love affair is bound to be tragic, Dryden does not dismiss the same, and appears to celebrate how Antony and Cleopatra lost everything that they possessed for the sake of their love. However, this very approach appears contradictory to the high moral claims made by Dryden in the Preface. This can also be seen as a deliberate way of ignoring morality on the part of the dramatist.

Activity for the Learner

With help from your counsellor, read the opening Act of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Dryden's play. Find out for yourselves, the differences of orientation between the two playwrights, and match their dramatic output (with reference to their respective periods) with this text in focus.

4.3.4. SYNOPSIS OF *ALL FOR LOVE*

The play is set in Alexandria in Egypt, and deals with the last hours of Antony and Cleopatra. The play opens with Serapion describing mysterious happenings like storms and supernatural scenes which are omens for the future doom of Egypt. Alexas, Cleopatra's eunuch, dismisses the claims and seems critical of Cleopatra's affection towards Antony who is secretly hated by the Egyptians. Ventidius appears and knowing from another gentleman regarding Antony's despondent state, blames Cleopatra for such a downfall. On the other hand he prepares to help Antony and manages to pull out Antony from his despondency when Antony appears first on stage. By the end of the first act Antony regains his warlike spirits and decides to leave Cleopatra.

In the second act, Cleopatra appears mourning. Charmion, Cleopatra's waiting woman, tries to arrange a meeting between Antony and Cleopatra in vain. Cleopatra tries to win back the love of Antony by gifts and jewels, including a bracelet. Alexas suggests that the Egyptian queen should tie the bracelet in Antony's wrist herself. In a meeting between Antony and Cleopatra, Ventidius reappears to proclaim that Cleopatra is not the right partner of Antony as she can use guile and is going to abandon Antony to find her own safety. Cleopatra proves this argument wrong by showing a letter from the Roman authorities asking her to surrender Antony to them as a prisoner of war and lets Antony know that in spite of such an invitation she did not betray Antony. Antony is overjoyed and proclaims his love for Cleopatra.

In the third act, Antony is seen returning from battle overwhelmed with love for Cleopatra. Ventidius appears to speak with Antony, who attempts to flee unsuccessfully. Antony shows signs of having no desire to resume the war but doesn't know how to stop it. He believes Dolabella can assist him and Ventidius brings Dolabella out. Dolabella, Antony's friend, appears after Antony succeeds in the battle. Dolabella was earlier banished since he loved Cleopatra, but he returns to a warm welcome from Antony. Dolabella appears with a solution by which Antony must reunite with his rightful wife Octavia (Octavius Caesar's sister) by which there will be an end in the villainy shared between Antony and Octavius. Cleopatra learns how this turn of event has defeated her, and appears to be defeated by the political

scenario. Alexas advises Cleopatra to ignore the presence of Octavia. Cleopatra, however, faces Octavia in an argument as a rival in Antony's love where it becomes clear that though Antony does not wholeheartedly love Octavia, it is she and not Cleopatra to whom Antony rightfully belongs.

In Act Four, Antony appears to be convinced by Octavia's persuasion that his rightful place is in Rome with his children. Even then Antony does not find the emotional courage to tell Cleopatra himself. Antony asks Dolabella to inform her. Ventidius overhears that Dolabella will be going to Cleopatra to bid her farewell. He also sees her working out a strategy with Alexas to make Antony jealous by way of Dolabella. Ventidius and Octavia see Dolabella taking Cleopatra's hand, but when the time comes to make a move romantically, both of them fall apart from the guilt of their betrayal. Ventidius tells Antony that Dolabella and Cleopatra have turned lovers and with this piece of information Antony turns infuriated. This makes Octavia leave Antony permanently since she is not believed by Antony. However, Antony even refuses to believe Cleopatra and Dolabella when they try to explain the actual strategy.

In the final act, Antony is seen taking Cleopatra's fleet and going to Caesar by whom he is greeted graciously. Then they come back to Alexandria. When Cleopatra is informed of this, Alexas advises her to flee and assures her that he will attempt to make amends with Caesar. Cleopatra considers this as a way in which he will look like a traitor and he must not go to Caesar. Cleopatra escapes and Alexas is left behind. Antony and Ventidius get together and prepare to fight. Alexas informs Antony that Cleopatra is dead. Antony turns grief-stricken and tells Ventidus to end his life, but Ventidius refuses and kills himself. With Ventidius dead, Antony tries and fails to commit suicide. Cleopatra appears to see Antony living on the verge of death. Cleopatra commits suicide. Serapion conveys their tribute.

4.3.5. DETAILED SUMMARY OF ACT ONE

Dryden's *All for Love* opens with choric documentation of the mysterious happenings in contemporary Egypt. Serapion, who is the priest of the temple of Isis, describes the world of nature in Egypt and the uncanny turn of events which are definitely against the climate and geological norms of the locale. According to him, River Nile has flooded quite suddenly ahead of usual time, leaving all creatures like seals, hippopotami, and dolphins to the land.

He further notes in front of Myris (another priest) that previous night the domes were blown off the tombs of ancient Egyptian kings by a furious whirlwind, adding to the nerve raking tension caused by such a spectacle, he also announces that from the tomb came out the ghosts and started groaning. He reports that he has heard a grief-filled voice telling that Egypt has reached its extinction, and to Serapion, these are omens which seem to suggest the nemesis of the Egyptian order under Cleopatra and Mark Antony.

Alexas, a eunuch and a courtier of Cleopatra, appears and ridicules Serapion's narrative as superstitious, though later on as it comes out from his deliberations it is certainly a period of grave political unrest in Egypt. He says that Octavius Caeser's troops are continually threatening Egypt, and to Serapion, if Antony is defeated Egypt will turn out to be a Roman colony. It is also certain that even if Antony is united with Octavius, the same would not lead Egypt to any greater prosperity, since even in that scenario Egypt will be kept as a part of the Roman province. Alexas wishes to see all these tyrants fight each other and get demolished. He also notes that all these would have not happened if Cleopatra would have agreed to his suggestion of making peace with Rome by surrendering Antony as a prisoner to Rome.

Meanwhile, Ventidius, a noble and hardy Roman general and friend to Mark Antony arrives on the scene. Alexas mentions that Ventidius is a hardy general like Antony, and dissimilar to him as well, since unlike Antony Ventidius does not indulge in any of the sensual pleasures by refusing to follow his duties. The Egyptians remain behind as Ventidius continues to learn from an attendant gentleman the current position of Mark Antony and Egypt in general. He learns that Antony has grown despondent and neither sleeps nor eats and it appears to Ventidius that since Antony is by nature brave and hardy his introspection regarding his own misdeeds has made him despondent. Later when Alexas and the priests come forward, Alexas instructs the priests to carry out the orders of Cleopatra by arranging the celebrations of Antony's birthday throughout Egypt. Ventidius argues that Cleopatra has been the instrument behind Antony's downfall, and the Roman forefathers of Antony find it shameful to see a courageous Roman general to be led to seeking pleasures by forgetting his duties and doting on the Egyptian Queen. He also tells Alexas to tell Cleopatra that he has arrived to end all her charms and he also dismisses the Egyptians telling them to celebrate their cowards' holiday in temples.

Ventidius then meets Mark Antony even though Antony had previously declared that he is in no mood of meeting with any person. Ventidius is certainly aggrieved to see Antony in such a deplorable condition, and when he approaches Antony, instead of being happy to see a old friend of his, Antony turns irritated. Antony appears to have lost all his energies and warlike spirits and Ventidius is deeply hurt to see Antony's degradation, and shedding tears he tries to move and inspire Antony to believe that he can still defeat Octavius. Antony is shameful for his cowardly act of fleeing from the battle of Actium. Ventidius manages to inspire the spirits of Antony and suggests that Antony should not grow despondent any further, and must thereby fight and regain the glory that he had previously acquired. He also informs Antony about the military assistance he has brought from Parthia for him though curtly mentions that the soldiers are willing to fight for Antony, and not for Cleopatra. He tries to arouse Antony's temper against Cleopatra by announcing that the soldiers think that Antony might give away the spoils of victory to buy jewels for Cleopatra. Antony is deeply affected and enraged by such negative remarks about Cleopatra. Ventidius though finds it highly improper of Antony to have doted on such a worthless woman, and severely accuses her for his downfall. Antony warns Ventidius, but again understands that Ventidius has grown critical of Cleopatra because of the fact that he loves his emperor and friend. Ventidius is deeply hurt by Antony's warnings and says that he could have gone and united with Octavius had he been not Antony's true friend. He further accuses Cleopatra, and Antony appears to have understood the genuine nature of concern and loyalty in Ventidius. Later he embraces Ventidius and agrees to give up Cleopatra for the sake of regaining his supremacy and royal self. However, even though Antony has announced that he shall leave Cleopatra, he also asks Ventidius not to disparage her, since Antony is essentially in deep love and has great passionate intensity felt for Cleopatra. Ventidius agrees and says that by deciding to leave Cleopatra, Antony has already regained his spirits and grandeur, and like a true Roman, he has turned out to be a man of honour. Even though Antony finds it to be a political necessity to get rid of the despondent state of mind that he has been into he appears to be regretful of his decision of leaving Cleopatra since he has deep and genuine emotions of love felt for her. However, he also acknowledges Ventidius's inspiring statements and says that it is he who has given him an impetus to transcend his despondent state and behave in a manner which is glorious. He feels stronger and is bent to fight and prove his mettle and defeat Octavius. He announces in a heroic manner that in company with Ventidius, he will lead the soldiers like Time and Death, and devour the enemies.

- **Historical Persons Mentioned in the First Act:**

Mark Antony: Marcus Antonius, commonly known in English as Mark Antony, was a Roman politician and general who formed an official alliance between himself, Octavian, and Lepidus, which broke up in 33 BC. Antony was defeated by Octavian in the Battle of Actium (31 BC), and committed suicide with his beloved Cleopatra shortly after the defeat.

Cleopatra: Cleopatra was the last Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt. After the defeat of Antony whom she supported against the legal heir of Caesar, Octavian, she committed suicide by means of an asp bite on August 12, 30 BC and thereafter Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

Octavius: More popularly known as Augustus, Octavius (Octavian) was the founder of the Roman Empire and its first Emperor, ruling from 27 BC until his death in 14 AD.

4.3.6. TEXT – *ALL FOR LOVE*, ACT 1.

(Preceded by part of the Preface and the Prologue)

- ✓ **PREFACE(Part)**

The death of Antony and Cleopatra is a subject which has been treated by the greatest wits of our nation, after Shakespeare; and by all so variously, that their example has given me the confidence to try myself in this bow of Ulysses amongst the crowd of suitors, and, withal, to take my own measures, in aiming at the mark I doubt not but the same motive has prevailed with all of us in this attempt; I mean the excellency of the moral: For the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate. All reasonable men have long since concluded, that the hero of the poem ought not to be a character of perfect virtue, for then he could not, without injustice, be made unhappy; nor yet altogether wicked, because he could not then be pitied. I have therefore steered the middle course; and have drawn

the character of Antony as favourably as Plutarch, Appian, and Dion Cassius would give me leave; the like I have observed in Cleopatra. That which is wanting to work up the pity to a greater height, was not afforded me by the story; for the crimes of love, which they both committed, were not occasioned by any necessity, or fatal ignorance, but were wholly voluntary; since our passions are, or ought to be, within our power. The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place, and action, more exactly observed, than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only one of the kind without episode, or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it. The greatest error in the contrivance seems to be in the person of Octavia; for, though I might use the privilege of a poet, to introduce her into Alexandria, yet I had not enough considered, that the compassion she moved to herself and children was destructive to that which I reserved for Antony and Cleopatra; whose mutual love being founded upon vice, must lessen the favour of the audience to them, when virtue and innocence were oppressed by it. And, though I justified Antony in some measure, by making Octavia's departure to proceed wholly from herself; yet the force of the first machine still remained; and the dividing of pity, like the cutting of a river into many channels, abated the strength of the natural stream. But this is an objection which none of my critics have urged against me; and therefore I might have let it pass, if I could have resolved to have been partial to myself. The faults my enemies have found are rather cavils concerning little and not essential decencies; which a master of the ceremonies may decide betwixt us. The French poets, I confess, are strict observers of these punctilios: They would not, for example, have suffered Cleopatra and Octavia to have met; or, if they had met, there must have only passed betwixt them some cold civilities, but no eagerness of repartee, for fear of offending against the greatness of their characters, and the modesty of their

sex. This objection I foresaw, and at the same time contemned; for I judged it both natural and probable, that Octavia, proud of her new-gained conquest, would search out Cleopatra to triumph over her; and that Cleopatra, thus attacked, was not of a spirit to shun the encounter: And it is not unlikely, that two exasperated rivals should use such satire as I have put into their mouths; for, after all, though the one were a Roman, and the other a queen, they were both women. It is true, some actions, though natural, are not fit to be represented; and broad obscenities in words ought in good manners to be avoided: expressions therefore are a modest clothing of our thoughts, as breeches and petticoats are of our bodies. If I have kept myself within the bounds of modesty, all beyond, it is but nicety and affectation; which is no more but modesty depraved into a vice. They betray themselves who are too quick of apprehension in such cases, and leave all reasonable men to imagine worse of them, than of the poet.

- ✓ **Prologue**

What flocks of critics hover here to-day,
As vultures wait on armies for their prey,
All gaping for the carcase of a play!
With croaking notes they bode some dire event,
And follow dying poets by the scent.
Ours gives himself for gone; y' have watched your time:
He fights this day unarmed,--without his rhyme;--
And brings a tale which often has been told;
As sad as Dido's; and almost as old.
His hero, whom you wits his bully call,
Bates of his mettle, and scarce rants at all;
He's somewhat lewd; but a well-meaning mind;
Weeps much; fights little; but is wond'rous kind.

In short, a pattern, and companion fit,
For all the keeping Tonies of the pit.
I could name more: a wife, and mistress too;
Both (to be plain) too good for most of you:
The wife well-natured, and the mistress true.
Now, poets, if your fame has been his care,
Allow him all the candour you can spare.
A brave man scorns to quarrel once a day;
Like Hectors in at every petty fray.
Let those find fault whose wit's so very small, They've need to show that they can think at all;
Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls, must dive below.
Fops may have leave to level all they can;
As pigmies would be glad to lop a man.
Half-wits are fleas; so little and so light,
We scarce could know they live, but that they bite.
But, as the rich, when tired with daily feasts,
For change, become their next poor tenant's guests;
Drink hearty draughts of ale from plain brown bowls,
And snatch the homely rasher from the coals:
So you, retiring from much better cheer,
For once, may venture to do penance here.
And since that plenteous autumn now is past,
Whose grapes and peaches have indulged your taste,
Take in good part, from our poor poet's board,
Such rivelled fruits as winter can afford.

ALL FOR LOVE

or

THE WORLD WELL LOST

A TRAGEDY

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MARK ANTONY.
VENTIDIUS, his General.
DOLABELLA, his Friend.
ALEXAS, the Queen's Eunuch.
SERAPION, Priest of Isis.
MYRIS, another Priest.
Servants to Antony.

CLEOPATRA, Queen of Egypt.
OCTAVIA, Antony's Wife.
CHARMION, Cleopatra's Maid.
IRAS, Cleopatra's Maid.
Antony's two little Daughters.

SCENE.--Alexandria.

Act I

Scene I.--The Temple of Isis

Enter SERAPION, MYRIS, Priests of Isis

SERAPION. Portents and prodigies have grown so frequent,
That they have lost their name. Our fruitful Nile
Flowed ere the wonted season, with a torrent
So unexpected, and so wondrous fierce,
That the wild deluge overtook the haste
Even of the hinds that watched it: Men and beasts
Were borne above the tops of trees, that grew
On the utmost margin of the water-mark.
Then, with so swift an ebb the flood drove backward,
It slipt from underneath the scaly herd:
Here monstrous phocae panted on the shore;
Forsaken dolphins there with their broad tails,
Lay lashing the departing waves: hard by them,
Sea horses floundering in the slimy mud,
Tossed up their heads, and dashed the ooze about them.

Enter ALEXAS behind them

MYRIS. Avert these omens, Heaven!

SERAPION. Last night, between the hours of twelve and one,
In a lone aisle of the temple while I walked,
A whirlwind rose, that, with a violent blast,
Shook all the dome: the doors around me clapt;
The iron wicket, that defends the vault,
Where the long race of Ptolemies is laid,
Burst open, and disclosed the mighty dead.
>From out each monument, in order placed,
An armed ghost starts up: the boy-king last
Reared his inglorious head. A peal of groans
Then followed, and a lamentable voice
Cried, Egypt is no more! My blood ran back,
My shaking knees against each other knocked;
On the cold pavement down I fell entranced,
And so unfinished left the horrid scene.

ALEXAS. And dreamed you this? or did invent the story,
[Showing himself.]
To frighten our Egyptian boys withal,
And train them up, betimes, in fear of priesthood?

SERAPION. My lord, I saw you not,
Nor meant my words should reach you ears; but what
I uttered was most true.

ALEXAS. A foolish dream,
Bred from the fumes of indigested feasts,
And holy luxury.

SERAPION. I know my duty:
This goes no further.

ALEXAS. 'Tis not fit it should;
Nor would the times now bear it, were it true.
All southern, from yon hills, the Roman camp
Hangs o'er us black and threatening like a storm
Just breaking on our heads.

SERAPION. Our faint Egyptians pray for Antony;
But in their servile hearts they own Octavius.

MYRIS. Why then does Antony dream out his hours,
And tempts not fortune for a noble day,
Which might redeem what Actium lost?

ALEXAS. He thinks 'tis past recovery.

SERAPION. Yet the foe
Seems not to press the siege.

ALEXAS. Oh, there's the wonder.
Maecenas and Agrippa, who can most

With Caesar, are his foes. His wife Octavia,
Driven from his house, solicits her revenge;
And Dolabella, who was once his friend,
Upon some private grudge, now seeks his ruin:
Yet still war seems on either side to sleep.

SERAPION. 'Tis strange that Antony, for some days past,
Has not beheld the face of Cleopatra;
But here, in Isis' temple, lives retired,
And makes his heart a prey to black despair.

ALEXAS. 'Tis true; and we much fear he hopes by absence
To cure his mind of love.

SERAPION. If he be vanquished,
Or make his peace, Egypt is doomed to be
A Roman province; and our plenteous harvests
Must then redeem the scarceness of their soil.
While Antony stood firm, our Alexandria
Rivalled proud Rome (dominion's other seat),
And fortune striding, like a vast Colossus,
Could fix an equal foot of empire here.

ALEXAS. Had I my wish, these tyrants of all nature,
Who lord it o'er mankind, rhould perish,--perish,
Each by the other's sword; But, since our will
Is lamely followed by our power, we must
Depend on one; with him to rise or fall.

SERAPION. How stands the queen affected?

ALEXAS. Oh, she dotes,
She dotes, Serapion, on this vanquished man,
And winds herself about his mighty ruins;
Whom would she yet forsake, yet yield him up,
This hunted prey, to his pursuer's hands,

She might preserve us all: but 'tis in vain--
This changes my designs, this blasts my counsels,
And makes me use all means to keep him here.
Whom I could wish divided from her arms,
Far as the earth's deep centre. Well, you know
The state of things; no more of your ill omens
And black prognostics; labour to confirm
The people's hearts.

Enter VENTIDIUS, talking aside with a Gentleman of ANTONY'S

SERAPION. These Romans will o'erhear us.
But who's that stranger? By his warlike port,
His fierce demeanour, and erected look,
He's of no vulgar note.

ALEXAS. Oh, 'tis Ventidius,
Our emperor's great lieutenant in the East,
Who first showed Rome that Parthia could be conquered.
When Antony returned from Syria last,
He left this man to guard the Roman frontiers.

SERAPION. You seem to know him well.

ALEXAS. Too well. I saw him at Cilicia first,
When Cleopatra there met Antony:
A mortal foe was to us, and Egypt.
But,--let me witness to the worth I hate,--
A braver Roman never drew a sword;
Firm to his prince, but as a friend, not slave,
He ne'er was of his pleasures; but presides
O'er all his cooler hours, and morning counsels:
In short the plainness, fierceness, rugged virtue,
Of an old true-stampt Roman lives in him.
His coming bodes I know not what of ill
To our affairs. Withdraw to mark him better;

And I'll acquaint you why I sought you here,
And what's our present work.
[They withdraw to a corner of the stage; and VENTIDIUS,
with the other, comes forward to the front.]

VENTIDIUS. Not see him; say you?
I say, I must, and will.

GENTLEMAN. He has commanded,
On pain of death, none should approach his presence.

VENTIDIUS. I bring him news will raise his drooping spirits,
Give him new life.

GENTLEMAN. He sees not Cleopatra.

VENTIDIUS. Would he had never seen her!

GENTLEMAN. He eats not, drinks not, sleeps not, has no use
Of anything, but thought; or if he talks,
'Tis to himself, and then 'tis perfect raving:
Then he defies the world, and bids it pass,
Sometimes he gnaws his lips, and curses loud
The boy Octavius; then he draws his mouth
Into a scornful smile, and cries, "Take all,
The world's not worth my care."

VENTIDIUS. Just, just his nature.
Virtue's his path; but sometimes 'tis too narrow
For his vast soul; and then he starts out wide,
And bounds into a vice, that bears him far
>From his first course, and plunges him in ills:
But, when his danger makes him find his faults,
Quick to observe, and full of sharp remorse,
He censures eagerly his own misdeeds,
Judging himself with malice to himself,

And not forgiving what as man he did,
Because his other parts are more than man.--
He must not thus be lost.
[ALEXAS and the Priests come forward.]

ALEXAS. You have your full instructions, now advance,
Proclaim your orders loudly.

SERAPION. Romans, Egyptians, hear the queen's command.
Thus Cleopatra bids: Let labour cease;
To pomp and triumphs give this happy day,
That gave the world a lord: 'tis Antony's.
Live, Antony; and Cleopatra live!
Be this the general voice sent up to heaven,
And every public place repeat this echo.

VENTIDIUS. Fine pageantry!
[Aside.]

SERAPION. Set out before your doors
The images of all your sleeping fathers,
With laurels crowned; with laurels wreath your posts,
And strew with flowers the pavement; let the priests
Do present sacrifice; pour out the wine,
And call the gods to join with you in gladness.

VENTIDIUS. Curse on the tongue that bids this general joy!
Can they be friends of Antony, who revel
When Antony's in danger? Hide, for shame,
You Romans, your great grandsires' images,
For fear their souls should animate their marbles,
To blush at their degenerate progeny.

ALEXAS. A love, which knows no bounds, to Antony,
Would mark the day with honours, when all heaven
Laboured for him, when each propitious star

Stood wakeful in his orb, to watch that hour
And shed his better influence. Her own birthday
Our queen neglected like a vulgar fate,
That passed obscurely by.

VENTIDIUS. Would it had slept,
Divided far from his; till some remote
And future age had called it out, to ruin
Some other prince, not him!

ALEXAS. Your emperor,
Though grown unkind, would be more gentle, than
To upbraid my queen for loving him too well.

VENTIDIUS. Does the mute sacrifice upbraid the priest!
He knows him not his executioner.
Oh, she has decked his ruin with her love,
Led him in golden bands to gaudy slaughter,
And made perdition pleasing: She has left him
The blank of what he was.
I tell thee, eunuch, she has quite unmanned him.
Can any Roman see, and know him now,
Thus altered from the lord of half mankind,
Unbent, unsinewed, made a woman's toy,
Shrunk from the vast extent of all his honours,
And crampt within a corner of the world?
O Antony!
Thou bravest soldier, and thou best of friends!
Bounteous as nature; next to nature's God!
Couldst thou but make new worlds, so wouldst thou give them,
As bounty were thy being! rough in battle,
As the first Romans when they went to war;
Yet after victory more pitiful
Than all their praying virgins left at home!

ALEXAS. Would you could add, to those more shining virtues,
His truth to her who loves him.

VENTIDIUS. Would I could not!
But wherefore waste I precious hours with thee!
Thou art her darling mischief, her chief engine,
Antony's other fate. Go, tell thy queen,
Ventidius is arrived, to end her charms.
Let your Egyptian timbrels play alone,
Nor mix effeminate sounds with Roman trumpets,
You dare not fight for Antony; go pray
And keep your cowards' holiday in temples.
[Exeunt ALEXAS, SERAPION.]

Re-enter the Gentleman of M. ANTONY

2 Gent. The emperor approaches, and commands,
On pain of death, that none presume to stay.

1 Gent. I dare not disobey him.
[Going out with the other.]

VENTIDIUS. Well, I dare.
But I'll observe him first unseen, and find
Which way his humour drives: The rest I'll venture.
[Withdraws.]

Enter ANTONY, walking with a disturbed motion before
he speaks

ANTONY. They tell me, 'tis my birthday, and I'll keep it
With double pomp of sadness.
'Tis what the day deserves, which gave me breath.
Why was I raised the meteor of the world,
Hung in the skies, and blazing as I travelled,

'Till all my fires were spent; and then cast downward,
To be trod out by Caesar?

VENTIDIUS. [aside.] On my soul,
'Tis mournful, wondrous mournful!

ANTONY. Count thy gains.
Now, Antony, wouldst thou be born for this?
Glutton of fortune, thy devouring youth
Has starved thy wanting age.

VENTIDIUS. How sorrow shakes him!
[Aside.]
So, now the tempest tears him up by the roots,
And on the ground extends the noble ruin.
[ANTONY having thrown himself down.]
Lie there, thou shadow of an emperor;
The place thou pressest on thy mother earth
Is all thy empire now: now it contains thee;
Some few days hence, and then 'twill be too large,
When thou'rt contracted in thy narrow urn,
Shrunk to a few ashes; then Octavia
(For Cleopatra will not live to see it),
Octavia then will have thee all her own,
And bear thee in her widowed hand to Caesar;
Caesar will weep, the crocodile will weep,
To see his rival of the universe
Lie still and peaceful there. I'll think no more on't.

ANTONY. Give me some music, look that it be sad.
I'll soothe my melancholy, till I swell,
And burst myself with sighing.--
[Soft music.]
'Tis somewhat to my humour; stay, I fancy
I'm now turned wild, a commoner of nature;
Of all forsaken, and forsaking all;
Live in a shady forest's sylvan scene,

Stretched at my length beneath some blasted oak,
I lean my head upon the mossy bark,
And look just of a piece as I grew from it;
My uncombed locks, matted like mistletoe,
Hang o'er my hoary face; a murm'ring brook
Runs at my foot.

VENTIDIUS. Methinks I fancy
Myself there too.

ANTONY. The herd come jumping by me,
And fearless, quench their thirst, while I look on,
And take me for their fellow-citizen.
More of this image, more; it lulls my thoughts.
[Soft music again.]

VENTIDIUS. I must disturb him; I can hold no longer.
[Stands before him.]

ANTONY. [starting up]. Art thou Ventidius?

VENTIDIUS. Are you Antony?
I'm liker what I was, than you to him
I left you last.

ANTONY. I'm angry.

VENTIDIUS. So am I.

ANTONY. I would be private: leave me.

VENTIDIUS. Sir, I love you,
And therefore will not leave you.

ANTONY. Will not leave me!
Where have you learnt that answer? Who am I?

VENTIDIUS. My emperor; the man I love next Heaven:
If I said more, I think 'twere scare a sin:
You're all that's good, and god-like.

ANTONY. All that's wretched.
You will not leave me then?

VENTIDIUS. 'Twas too presuming
To say I would not; but I dare not leave you:
And, 'tis unkind in you to chide me hence
So soon, when I so far have come to see you.

ANTONY. Now thou hast seen me, art thou satisfied?
For, if a friend, thou hast beheld enough;
And, if a foe, too much.

VENTIDIUS. Look, emperor, this is no common dew.
[Weeping.]
I have not wept this forty years; but now
My mother comes afresh into my eyes;
I cannot help her softness.

ANTONY. By heavens, he weeps! poor good old man, he weeps!
The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheeks.--Stop them, Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death, they set my shame,
That caused them, full before me.

VENTIDIUS. I'll do my best.

ANTONY. Sure there's contagion in the tears of friends:
See, I have caught it too. Believe me, 'tis not
For my own griefs, but thine.--Nay, father!

VENTIDIUS. Emperor.

ANTONY. Emperor! Why, that's the style of victory;
The conqu'ring soldier, red with unfelt wounds,
Salutes his general so; but never more
Shall that sound reach my ears.

VENTIDIUS. I warrant you.

ANTONY. Actium, Actium! Oh!--

VENTIDIUS. It sits too near you.

ANTONY. Here, here it lies a lump of lead by day,
And, in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides my dreams.--

VENTIDIUS. Out with it; give it vent.

ANTONY. Urge not my shame.
I lost a battle,--

VENTIDIUS. So has Julius done.

ANTONY. Thou favour'st me, and speak'st not half thou think'st;
For Julius fought it out, and lost it fairly.
But Antony--

VENTIDIUS. Nay, stop not.

ANTONY. Antony--
Well, thou wilt have it,--like a coward, fled,
Fled while his soldiers fought; fled first, Ventidius.
Thou long'st to curse me, and I give thee leave.
I know thou cam'st prepared to rail.

VENTIDIUS. I did.

ANTONY. I'll help thee.--I have been a man, Ventidius.

VENTIDIUS. Yes, and a brave one! but--

ANTONY. I know thy meaning.
But I have lost my reason, have disgraced
The name of soldier, with inglorious ease.
In the full vintage of my flowing honours,
Sat still, and saw it prest by other hands.
Fortune came smiling to my youth, and wooed it,
And purple greatness met my ripened years.
When first I came to empire, I was borne
On tides of people, crowding to my triumphs;
The wish of nations, and the willing world
Received me as its pledge of future peace;
I was so great, so happy, so beloved,
Fate could not ruin me; till I took pains,
And worked against my fortune, child her from me,
And returned her loose; yet still she came again.
My careless days, and my luxurious nights,
At length have wearied her, and now she's gone,
Gone, gone, divorced for ever. Help me, soldier,
To curse this madman, this industrious fool,
Who laboured to be wretched: Pr'ythee, curse me.

VENTIDIUS. No.

ANTONY. Why?

VENTIDIUS. You are too sensible already
Of what you've done, too conscious of your failings;
And, like a scorpion, whipt by others first
To fury, sting yourself in mad revenge.
I would bring balm, and pour it in your wounds,
Cure your distempered mind, and heal your fortunes.

ANTONY. I know thou would'st.

VENTIDIUS. I will.

ANTONY. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

VENTIDIUS. You laugh.

ANTONY. I do, to see officious love.
Give cordials to the dead.

VENTIDIUS. You would be lost, then?

ANTONY. I am.

VENTIDIUS. I say you are not. Try your fortune.

ANTONY. I have, to the utmost. Dost thou think me desperate,
Without just cause? No, when I found all lost
Beyond repair, I hid me from the world,
And learnt to scorn it here; which now I do
So heartily, I think it is not worth
The cost of keeping.

VENTIDIUS. Caesar thinks not so;
He'll thank you for the gift he could not take.
You would be killed like Tully, would you? do,
Hold out your throat to Caesar, and die tamely.

ANTONY. No, I can kill myself; and so resolve.

VENTIDIUS. I can die with you too, when time shall serve;
But fortune calls upon us now to live,
To fight, to conquer.

ANTONY. Sure thou dream'st, Ventidius.

VENTIDIUS. No; 'tis you dream; you sleep away your hours
In desperate sloth, miscalled philosophy.
Up, up, for honour's sake; twelve legions wait you,
And long to call you chief: By painful journeys
I led them, patient both of heat and hunger,
Down form the Parthian marches to the Nile.
'Twill do you good to see their sunburnt faces,
Their scarred cheeks, and chopt hands: there's virtue in them.
They'll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates
Than yon trim bands can buy.

ANTONY. Where left you them?

VENTIDIUS. I said in Lower Syria.

ANTONY. Bring them hither;
There may be life in these.

VENTIDIUS. They will not come.

ANTONY. Why didst thou mock my hopes with promised aids,
To double my despair? They're mutinous.

VENTIDIUS. Most firm and loyal.

ANTONY. Yet they will not march
To succour me. O trifler!

VENTIDIUS. They petition
You would make haste to head them.

ANTONY. I'm besieged.

VENTIDIUS. There's but one way shut up: How came I hither?

ANTONY. I will not stir.

VENTIDIUS. They would perhaps desire
A better reason.

ANTONY. I have never used
My soldiers to demand a reason of
My actions. Why did they refuse to march?

VENTIDIUS. They said they would not fight for Cleopatra.

ANTONY. What was't they said?

VENTIDIUS. They said they would not fight for Cleopatra.
Why should they fight indeed, to make her conquer,
And make you more a slave? to gain you kingdoms,
Which, for a kiss, at your next midnight feast,
You'll sell to her? Then she new-names her jewels,
And calls this diamond such or such a tax;
Each pendant in her ear shall be a province.

ANTONY. Ventidius, I allow your tongue free licence
On all my other faults; but, on your life,
No word of Cleopatra: she deserves
More worlds than I can lose.

VENTIDIUS. Behold, you Powers,
To whom you have intrusted humankind!
See Europe, Afric, Asia, put in balance,
And all weighed down by one light, worthless woman!
I think the gods are Antonies, and give,
Like prodigals, this nether world away
To none but wasteful hands.

ANTONY. You grow presumptuous.

VENTIDIUS. I take the privilege of plain love to speak.

ANTONY. Plain love! plain arrogance, plain insolence!
Thy men are cowards; thou, an envious traitor;
Who, under seeming honesty, hast vented
The burden of thy rank, o'erflowing gall.
O that thou wert my equal; great in arms
As the first Caesar was, that I might kill thee
Without a stain to honour!

VENTIDIUS. You may kill me;
You have done more already,--called me traitor.

ANTONY. Art thou not one?

VENTIDIUS. For showing you yourself,
Which none else durst have done? but had I been
That name, which I disdain to speak again,
I needed not have sought your abject fortunes,
Come to partake your fate, to die with you.
What hindered me to have led my conquering eagles
To fill Octavius' bands? I could have been
A traitor then, a glorious, happy traitor,
And not have been so called.

ANTONY. Forgive me, soldier;
I've been too passionate.

VENTIDIUS. You thought me false;
Thought my old age betrayed you: Kill me, sir,
Pray, kill me; yet you need not, your unkindness
Has left your sword no work.

ANTONY. I did not think so;

I said it in my rage: Pr'ythee, forgive me.
Why didst thou tempt my anger, by discovery
Of what I would not hear?

VENTIDIUS. No prince but you
Could merit that sincerity I used,
Nor durst another man have ventured it;
But you, ere love misled your wandering eyes,
Were sure the chief and best of human race,
Framed in the very pride and boast of nature;
So perfect, that the gods, who formed you, wondered
At their own skill, and cried--A lucky hit
Has mended our design. Their envy hindered,
Else you had been immortal, and a pattern,
When Heaven would work for ostentation's sake
To copy out again.

ANTONY. But Cleopatra--
Go on; for I can bear it now.

VENTIDIUS. No more.

ANTONY. Thou dar'st not trust my passion, but thou may'st;
VENTIDIUS. Heaven's blessing on your heart for that kind word!
May I believe you love me? Speak again.

ANTONY. Indeed I do. Speak this, and this, and this.
[Hugging him.]
Thy praises were unjust; but, I'll deserve them,
And yet mend all. Do with me what thou wilt;
Lead me to victory! thou know'st the way.

VENTIDIUS. And, will you leave this--

ANTONY. Pr'ythee, do not curse her,
And I will leave her; though, Heaven knows, I love

Beyond life, conquest, empire, all, but honour;
But I will leave her.

VENTIDIUS. That's my royal master;
And, shall we fight?

ANTONY. I warrant thee, old soldier.
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron;
And at the head of our old troops, that beat
The Parthians, cry aloud--Come, follow me!

VENTIDIUS. Oh, now I hear my emperor! in that word
Octavius fell. Gods, let me see that day,
And, if I have ten years behind, take all:
I'll thank you for the exchange.

ANTONY. O Cleopatra!

VENTIDIUS. Again?
ANTONY. I've done: In that last sigh she went.
Caesar shall know what 'tis to force a lover
From all he holds most dear.
VENTIDIUS. Methinks, you breathe
Another soul: Your looks are more divine;
You speak a hero, and you move a god.
ANTONY. Oh, thou hast fired me; my soul's up in arms,
And mans each part about me: Once again,
That noble eagerness of fight has seized me;
That eagerness with which I darted upward
To Cassius' camp: In vain the steepy hill
Opposed my way; in vain a war of spears
Sung round my head, and planted on my shield;
I won the trenches, while my foremost men
Lagged on the plain below.
VENTIDIUS. Ye gods, ye gods,
For such another honour!

ANTONY. Come on, my soldier!
Our hearts and arms are still the same: I long
Once more to meet our foes; that thou and I,
Like Time and Death, marching before our troops,
May taste fate to them; mow them out a passage,
And, entering where the foremost squadrons yield,
Begin the noble harvest of the field.
[Exeunt.]

4.3.7. GLOSSARY

- Portends: Omens.
- Prodigies: Strange uncanny happenings.
- Sea horses: Hippopotami
- Long race of Ptolemies: The Greek Kings from Alexander's times to Cleopatra's son are known in history as Ptolemy.
- Maecenas and Agrippa: Roman generals.
- Isis' Temple: The Goddess of Moon, worshipped in Egypt.
- Parthia: Ancient Persia.
- Cilicia: A district in Asia-minor.
- Progeny: Descendant.
- Perdition: Ruin.
- Egyptian timbrels: One faced drum played with hand.
- Roman trumpets: A wind instrument of powerful tone which was used by Roman army for signalling.
- Glutton: An over-eater.
- Octavia: Octavius Caesar's sister whom Antony married.
- Sylvan: Something from the woods, or the woodlands.
- Mistletoe: A parasitic plant used in Christmas for decoration.
- Tully: Marcus Tullius Cicero.
- Lictors: Officers who attend magistrates bearing fasces.
- Minion: subordinate, favourite.

- Hercules: An exclamation.
- Posterity: oncoming generation.
- Blasphemer: One who engages in profane talk.
- Gewgaw: showy and valueless.

4.3.8. CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON ACT 1

- **Use of Supernaturalism, Imagery of Nature and Premonitions:**
  Like in Shakespeare's plays like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, in Dryden's play too, nature imagery plays a huge role in showing the effect of human deeds on the greater cosmos. These are definitely symbolic details. Dryden begins the play by Serapion's address to Myris regarding mysterious happenings in Egypt which have a mysterious element of premonitions and foreboding. Dryden utilizes the images of whirlwinds, the sudden flood in Nile as symbolic premonitions which are supposed to be prophetically representing the terror that hangs in the political atmosphere of Egypt. Antony's doting on Cleopatra, and Cleopatra's affection towards him have doomed the future of Egypt which is about to face its nemesis by being defeated and taken as a province of Rome in the near future. The rise of the ghosts of late Egyptian emperors from their tombs is definitely a supernatural event which arouses the audience's attention to the graver political chaos that Egypt has found itself surrounded by. The rise of these deceased souls by being aroused by the sudden whirlwind reflects the very unpatriotic nature of the Egyptian Queen who has not surrendered Antony as a prisoner to Rome simply because of her personal love and deeply felt affection for Antony. These chaotic events and their representations also hint at an omen, while at the same time this chaos in nature also reflects the despondent and chaotic psychological state of Mark Antony. Thus all these details with which the play opens have grave political and psychological implications in the context of the ensuing political crisis that Egypt is about to face, and the personal tragedy that the play's hero and the heroine are about to experience.

- **Chorus and Its Role:**

The function of the first act of any drama is always to expose in front of the audience the main themes, ideas, issues, and the larger atmosphere involving the protagonists of the drama. There are various methods of such exposition, and Dryden here employs the choric characters and their dialogues to exhibit the main tenets of the action that is about to take place in Egypt. Thus, the political unrest that is already evident in the state due to Cleopatra's neglect towards the state affairs, and Antony's act of doting on the pleasures obtained from Cleopatra, is largely represented through the dialogue taking place among the choric characters right at the onset of the play. The play opens with Serapion describing before Myris the abnormalcy that he has witnessed in the nature surrounding Egypt, and as it turns out these are definitely signs of greater turmoil that is about to shape in the future of Egypt. These disturbing images with which the play opens are the omens hanging in the air of Egypt, and Dryden skilfully through choric utterances tries to elaborate on the unnatural behaviour of Antony and Cleopatra resulting into possibilities of a heavy crisis in the entire macrocosm:

Portents and prodigies have grown so frequent,
That they have lost their name. Our fruitful Nile
Flowed ere the wonted season, with a torrent
So unexpected, and so wondrous fierce,
That the wild deluge overtook the haste
Even of the hinds that watched it: Men and beasts
Were borne above the tops of trees, that grew
On the utmost margin of the water-mark.
Then, with so swift an ebb the flood drove backward,
It slipt from underneath the scaly herd:
Here monstrous phocae panted on the shore;
Forsaken dolphins there with their broad tails,
Lay lashing the departing waves: hard by them,
Sea horses floundering in the slimy mud,
Tossed up their heads, and dashed the ooze about them.

This method employed by Dryden is essentially a way of indirectly beginning with the main concerns of the play. The political unrest, its causes, commentaries on the nature of the two protagonists, the way the Egyptian folk is perceiving the entire scenario, all such details are been put forward by these descriptions given by these

choric characters like Serapion, Myris, and Alexas. Alexas also comments on the inappropriate nature of Cleopatra when she refused to surrender Antony as a prisoner to the Roman authorities even when she was advised by Alexas. All these details brought forward right at the beginning of the play by the choric characters are employed for the expository function. And thus the role played by these choric voices are not merely informative, but these characters also comment on the turmoil that is taking place in the country due to the political infertility resulting out of the passionate love of Antony and Cleopatra.

- **Character of Alexas:**

  Alexas is the eunuch and a courtier in Cleopatra's court, and in the opening act he acts as a choric character serving in two specific directions. Dryden utilises him in informing the audience about the current political affairs of Egypt; at the same time he is used as a pragmatic political thinker who elaborately comments on the supposed brain-sickness of his queen. This helps us to characterise Cleopatra and Antony, and their bonds of love in the context of the political military crisis in Egypt. It is Alexas who functions as a medium for the audience to be aware of the fact that Roman military forces have actually surrounded Egypt and continuing to threaten it. Alexas is a prudent thinker and shows signs of rationality in dismissing Serapion's elaborate description of the mysterious happenings in nature as a sign of omen. He appears to be politically wise as it is he who had earlier proposed before Cleopatra the idea of surrendering Antony as a prisoner to Rome. He is definitely a wise courtier, and imparts valuable and rational commentary on the issues involving the political instability in Egypt. However, though he is critical of his queen, he is also at the same time loyal and obedient. It is he who reacts sharply against Ventidius's remark that Egypt is responsible for Antony's downfall, and says that Rome must be thankful to Egyptians for loving Antony so well. Though he is definitely not in agreement with decisions made by Cleopatra, he understands prudently that as an official he must carry out all the instructions that he gets from the queen and therefore it is he who passes on Serapion Cleopatra's instruction of celebrating Antony's birthday with pomp and glory.

- **Character of Ventidius:**

Ventidius is a Roman general, who appears in the opening act as a staunch critic of Cleopatra's bewitching capabilities of enticing Antony and push him towards his downfall, and the un-heroic degradation of Mark Antony. Ventidius appears to be an exemplar of the old Roman virtue of heroism, dutifulness, and honour. Being unquestionably heroic in warfare and hardy, he is critical of Antony's un-heroic practice of doting on pleasures in Egypt, and he is determined to drive away Antony's despondent state by first assisting him with military support (as he has come to Antony with an army with which he has travelled from Parthia to Syria) and secondly, his aim is to make Antony firm enough to come to a decision of leaving Cleopatra. When he first appears before Antony he does not care much to announce his criticism of Cleopatra, and being a true friend of Antony and understanding the intensity of his sentiments he also does not extend his criticism of Cleopatra when Antony asks him to stop villainizing Cleopatra. He seems to have over Antony a friendly authority, and tactfully he manages to convince Antony that he can still defeat Octavius, and for the same he must find it necessary to come out of the nets created by Cleopatra.

- **Character of Mark Antony:**

  Dryden's art of characterization of Mark Antony in the opening act of the play is based on two devices employed. The first one is an indirect way of characterization where choric commentary develop in the audience a sense of the character of the male protagonist before he has appeared on the stage. The second one is of direct action of the character after Antony has appeared on stage. Serapion informs the audience that the Egyptians pray for Antony. However, they secretly respect Octavius. Commenting on the pleasure-seeking attribute of Antony, Myris adds that he is accustomed to 'dream out his hours'. Alexas hints at Antony's despondent state by stating that he has no friends. While all these portray Antony in a strictly negative light, Serapion also notes that if Antony is defeated then Egypt will turn out to be another province of the Roman Empire. One the other hand, Alexas places Antony as a tyrant who should perish and considers Cleopatra to be absolutely reckless in having such intense affection for this disreputable 'vanquished man'. After Ventidius appears on the scene, we get an idea of the Roman perspective on Antony's character. Ventidius considers Antony to be an honourable man with brave qualities and heroic

achievements, and he thinks that the sole reason behind Antony's despondent state is because of his attachment towards Cleopatra. Ventidius presents Antony in a more balanced manner, and considers him as a virtuous person who has indulged in vices because his soul is too large to be merely confined in virtues.

Later, with the appearance of Antony on the scene, we get an idea of his sense of resignation and his sordid state of despondency. In his soliloquy, Antony appears to be a man who has found himself defeated, and hopelessly, he has succumbed to this scenario nonchalantly:

They tell me, 'tis my birthday, and I'll keep it
With double pomp of sadness.
'Tis what the day deserves, which gave me breath.
Why was I raised the meteor of the world,
Hung in the skies, and blazing as I travelled,
'Till all my fires were spent; and then cast downward,
To be trod out by Caesar?

Ventidius has listened to this and he finds the state of Antony 'mournful'. Antony appears to be from the beginning an introspective character, and when he faces Ventidius, he submits and says that he is unequivocally sorrowful and ashamed because of the un-heroic manner in which he escaped from the Battle of Actium. Antony is then suddenly aroused by Ventidius who disparages Cleopatra, while later on, though he does not completely blame Cleopatra for his downfall, he realizes that he must regain his warlike spirits and shed off this state of despondency. He thinks it is going to be emotionally and politically appropriate for him to distance himself from Cleopatra. Though he thinks so, he is also not in any position to blame and disparage Cleopatra. He never loses his emotional intensity and love towards his beloved. The very vacillating nature of Antony's mind and actions which are part of his character in the following acts is retained by Dryden, and Antony from the beginning of the play is shown as a character struggling with dual responsibility, dual loyalty, and a struggle between love and honour.

- **The Turn of Events at the End of the First Act:**

Dryden fully utilized the dramatic method of suspension. He keeps the audience interested by ending the act on a note of severe dramatic suspense. The act ends with Antony's announcement of his decision to leave Cleopatra, and the audience is kept in a nerve raking tension regarding the outcome of this supposed separation between the two protagonists of the play.

4.3.9. COMPARING DRYDEN AND SHAKESPEARE: ACT 1

(*All for Love* and *Antony and Cleopatra*)

In his *Preface* to *All for Love* Dryden writes:

> In my style, I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disencumbered myself from rhyme.

Dryden's play is definitely a reworking of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and therefore a close analysis of how Dryden has managed to 'imitate' 'divine Shakespeare' is of necessary interest. There are points of similarity and dissimilarity between the two. Shakespeare's play was an adaptation from the historical material available to him regarding the unlawful love between Antony and Cleopatra, and the tragic outcome of the same from Plutarch, Dion Cassius, and Appian. Dryden's Antony, like Shakespeare's, is a man of virtues and vices. Dryden draws Antony in the classical pattern where the tragic hero is neither absolutely saintly, nor is he devilish. However, in the portrayals of the characters there are some departures that can be found in Dryden's manner of treatment. Dryden concentrates more on the last phase of Antony and Cleopatra's lives, and does not deal with the expansive historical time frame that Shakespeare dealt with. In this way, Dryden, though not strictly following Aristotle's idea of Unity of Time, appears at least closer to the classical norms. On the other hand, Dryden, following Shakespeare's method, begins the play by choric commentary on the protagonists, and the theme of the oscillations between love and duty is highlighted. In Shakespeare's play, the opening statements made by Philo, represent Ventidius's disgust felt at the sight of Antony's degradation in Dryden's *All for Love*:

His Captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great Fights hath burst

The Buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the Bellows and the Fan
To cool a Gypsies Lust.

Dryden too shows the amount of contempt felt on the part of Romans at the sight of Antony's dotage. Dryden also follows Shakespeare's method of portraying Cleopatra from the Roman perspective as a reason behind Antony's fall. However, Dryden departs from Shakespeare in another very significant way. Shakespeare's Cleopatra appears to be at the opening of the play as a shrewd defender of her state. Shakespeare's Cleopatra uses her body as a shield against Roman aggressors. The enticing and bewitching beauty of Shakespeare's Cleopatra were means to defeat Antony and defend Egypt. However, as we gather from the conversations between Serapion, Alexas, and Myris in Dryden's Cleopatra (though she remains absent in the opening act) there is from the beginning a projection of absolute unalterable intensity of love felt for Antony. It is mentioned that Cleopatra has instructed Alexas to declare Antony's birthday as a day to be celebrated throughout Egypt with pomp and glory. These are definitely marks of Cleopatra's genuine emotion felt for Antony. Dryden departs slightly from Shakespeare's portrayal of Antony as well. In the opening act of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Antony appears to be absolutely ignoring his political duty as a Roman official. In Shakespeare, he is seen terribly unpatriotic, and completely bewitched by Cleopatra's beauty. Shakespeare's Antony famously declares:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide Arch
Of the rang'd Empire fall: Here is my space,
Kingdoms are clay

However, in Dryden, Antony is seen introspective from the beginning about his cowardice. He appears despondent and thereafter, unlike in Shakespeare, he is swiftly turned to understand his follies and even goes to the extent of deciding to leave Cleopatra.

Dryden's handling of Shakespeare is definitely not constrained by a blind imitation of *Antony and Cleopatra*. He freely imitates Shakespeare, and conforms and departs according to his needs.

4.3.10. SUMMING UP: ACT 1 AS EXPOSITION

Gustav Freytag analyzed the structure of Greek and Shakespearean drama (especially tragedy) by dividing the dramatic action in five parts: Exposition, followed by Rising Action, Climax or Crisis, Falling Action, and ending in Resolution or Denouement or Catastrophe. This structure is popularly known as Freytag's Pyramid. An exposition of the dramatic action occurs right at the beginning of a drama, and the first act serves the expository function. Exposition must be both of the dramatic action that is about to be revealed before the audience, and also of the thematic core of the play. Dryden's first act exposes the main characters and the action of the play along with the play's atmosphere. The choric comments on the main characters serve the function of indirect narration of the events that have already taken place in Egypt, and they build the context of the dramatic action. Antony's dotage, Cleopatra's neglect towards state affairs, the Egyptians' dissatisfaction at the turn of events, the lovers' impending tragic end, all are hinted at. The reporting of the mysterious happenings in Egypt by Serapion serves the symbolic purpose of foreboding and premonition. On the other hand on the thematic level, the very struggle of love and honour is hinted at. The issues of love, loyalty, duty, honour, political responsibility, heroism, cowardice which run throughout the play, are all mentioned in detail and with great introspection.

4.3.11. SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

In order to have a comprehensive idea about the first act which is part of our syllabus, it is first necessary to read the full text of Dryden. Moreover, since it is a reworking of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, Shakespeare's play appears to be a must-read. We can also have a look at Plutarch and his historical documentation of the Roman figures to have an idea about the main characters of the text.

4.3.12. COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

Broad Questions: (20 marks)

1. Comment on the themes of love and honour as you find in the first act of Dryden's *All for Love*.
2. Describe the character of Antony as available from the first act of *All for Love*.
3. Do you think that the first act is an effective exposition? Justify your answers by giving suitable references to the text.

Medium Answer-type Questions: (12 marks)

1. Comment on the character of Ventidius.
2. What dramatic function does the Chorus serve in the first act of *All for Love*? Elucidate with reference to the text.
3. Comment on the use of supernatural imagery in the beginning of the play?
4. Delineate the character of Alexas as you find in the first act of *All for Love*.

Short Answer-type Questions: (6 marks)

1. What impression of Cleopatra do you gather from the portion of *All for Love* that you have read?
2. Why didn't Cleopatra surrender Antony to Roman authorities?
3. Why did Antony decide to leave Cleopatra?
4. What impression do you gather of Antony in the eyes of the Egyptians?

4.3.13. SUGGESTED READING

Garnett, Richard. *The Age of Dryden*

King, Bruce. *Dryden's Major Plays*.

King, Bruce (Ed.). *Twentieth Century Interpretations of All for Love*.

Winn, James Anderson: *John Dryden and His World*.

Date	Major historical events	Date	Major literary figures and their works
1625	Death of James I; accession of Charles I	**1625**	Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes, contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travell by Englishmen and others*
1629	Charles I begins his personal rule with dissolution of Parliament.		
		1634	Milton (1608-74), *Comus* performed. His major prose works are: *The Reason of Church Government* and *An Apology for Smectymnuus* (both 1642), *Areopagitica* (1644), *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660); and his important poetical works include: *Lycidas* (1638), *Paradise Lost* (1667), *Paradise Regained* (1671); *Samson Agonistes* (1671).
1640	Long Parliament summoned in November. It is so named to distinguish it from the Short Parliament that was convened earlier that year.		
1642	King attempts to arrest the five members; raises royal standard at Nottingham beginning the Civil War. The first major battle between the King's army and the Parliamentary Army was fought at Edge Hill with no decisive result.	**1642**	Theatres closed by order of the Parliament.
1644	The second major battle of the Civil War takes place at Marston Moor; a decisive victory for the Parliamentary Army.		
1645	Victory of Parliamentary Army at Naseby. This was the third major battle of the Civil War.		
1646	King Charles I surrenders to the Scots, who in turn sells him to the Parliament for £400,000.	**1646**	Crashaw, *Steps to the Temple*
1647	Putney debates to discuss the nature of the English Constitution	**1647**	Cowley, *The Mistress*
1649	Trial and execution of Charles I	**1649**	Lovelace, *Lucasta*
		1651	Hobbes, Leviathan
1653	Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector of England.		
1658	Death of Oliver Cromwell; Richard Cromwell succeeds his father.		

1660	Following the overthrow of Richard Cromwell in 1659, Charles II ascends the throne of England. This event is known as the Restoration of Monarchy.	**1660**	Theatres open. Dryden, *Astrae Redux* Samuel Pepys begins his diary. This keeps a record of all the major historical events of England till 1669.
1665	Plague in London. Plague was a recurrent problem of 17th century, a result of the poor civic condition of the city.		
1666	City of London is destroyed by the Great Fire. The fire raged for three days, destroying most of the medieval architectures.		
		1667	Dryden, *Annus Mirabilis* Milton, *Paradise Lost*
		1675	The well-acclaimed play of Wycherley (1641-1715), *The Country Wife*, is enacted. His other important play is *The Plain Dealer* that was presented in the following year.
		1677	Dryden, *All for Love*, the famous adaptation of a Shakespearean tragedy.
		1678	Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*
1681	Lord Shaftesbury or Lord Ashely, a founder of the Whig party is tried for high treason. He was later acquitted.	**1681**	First part of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* is published. The second part is published in the next year.
1685	Death of Charles II and accession of James II. James Scott or the First Duke of Monmouth leads a rebellion to oppose the succession of James II. He was defeated and beheaded.		
		1687	Newton, *Principia*
1688	'Glorious Revolution': James II flees and William III and Mary II succeed. This event is also known as the Bloodless Revolution. Roman Catholicism was permanently rejected and the Parliament was established as the ruling power of England.		
		1690	Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
1694	Death of Mary		
		1700	The most popular play of William Congreve (1670-1729), *Way of the World*, is enacted. His earlier plays include: *The Old Bachelor* (1693), *The Double Dealer* (1693), *Love for Love* (1695).