PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Bachelors Degree Programme, the opportunity to pursue Honours course in any subject introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Honours level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials, the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental–in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

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BACHELORS DEGREE PROGRAMME : ENGLISH

[BDP: EEG]

New Syllabus effective from July 2015 Session

EEG : Paper - IV

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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
15th April, 2015

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

Paper Editors' Introduction to Paper IV

Dear Learners,

By this time you are well acquainted with the system of modules and units within the modules that are guiding you along the Bachelor Degree Programme of Elective English Studies of the Netaji Subhas Open University. This is a Paper titled "The Eighteenth Century" that takes you half-way through your course.

We are following a chronological pattern of the development of English Literature and this paper is a direct continuation of the Restoration period. Certain trends that have already been explained (like the use of the heroic couplet, imitation as a literary mode, satire as an approach to social and political issues) in the previous paper, continue through this period that has been variously called the 'Age of Enlightenment', the 'Neo-classical Age' or the 'Augustan Period'.

The eighteenth century is a major watershed in the social, political, intellectual and literary life of Britain. It is directly associated with the rise of the middle-class, the development of the party system of governance and an empirical approach to knowledge that greatly influenced writing and the growth of new literary forms. In the aftermath of the prevalence of romantic sensibility in the nineteenth century, eighteenth century literature and poetry was considered as prosaic and unemotional. It was T.S. Eliot, the famous Modern literary genius, who asserted that the poetry of Dryden, Pope or Dr Johnson, far from being inferior (as Matthew Arnold had opined in the Victorian period) offered a new approach to experience - through wit and intellect. The transition from the social satire of Pope to the structured neoclassical aesthetics of Thomson to the restrained romantic sensibility of Gray is marked by the poems selected for you.

Since this period is also termed "The Age of Prose and Reason", the development of prose forms - the periodical essay, narrative satire, criticism and the novel, are well represented through the work of Swift and Defoe, Addison, Steele and Dr Johnson.

You have read how the very character of drama and performance had changed when the theatres were reopened after 1660. William Congreve's The Way of the World marked the high point of Restoration Manners Comedy. In the works of Sheridan and Goldsmith you move on to another phase in the history of eighteenth century comic theatre that needed to be revived after a degeneration of the spirit of laughter that sustains such theatre.

The Fourth Paper is divided in the following manner:

Module I -- Background and New Literary Forms

Module II - Reading Poetry

Module III - Reading Prose

Module IV - Reading Drama and Dramaturgy

Alongside the study material, you are also provided guidelines for handling the learning process so that you can competently complete Assignments and Term-End Examinations. The Comprehension Exercises at the end of each Unit will help you to meaningfully read and understand the text. The pattern of questions for Modules I, II and III and IV of Paper 4 are indicated below:

a) 2 essay type questions out of 6 of 20 marks each

b) 3 mid length questions out of 8 of 12 marks each

c) 4 short questions out of 8 of 6 marks each

The eighteenth century is indeed a complex period but we hope that from this paper you will learn to appreciate modes of writing that are diverse. Do enjoy this new challenge.

20 April, 2014 Editors
Kolkata

SYLLABUS

EEG 4. The Eighteenth Century

Module 1 - Background and New Literary Forms

Unit 1 - Features of the Enlightenment
Unit 2 - Characteristics of the Augustan Age
Unit 3 - Rise of the Novel

Module 2 - Module 2 - Reading Poetry

Unit 1 - Alexander Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*. Cantos 1 to 3
Unit 2 - James Thomson: 'Spring' from *The Seasons*
Unit 3 - Thomas Gray: 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'

Module 3 - Module 3 - Reading Prose

Unit 1 - Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*. Books I & II
Unit 2 - Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*
Unit 3 - Joseph Addison: 'Sir Roger at Church'; Richard Steele: 'Recollections of Childhood'

Module 4 - Reading Drama and Dramaturgy

Unit 1 - Oliver Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*
Unit 2 - Richard Brinsley Sheridan: *The Rivals*
Unit 3 - Dr. Samuel Johnson: Extract from *Prefaces to Shakespeare* - 'Shakespeare's World'; 'Shakespeare's Wordplay'.

NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

EEG - 4
Elective Course
in English

Module 1 Background and New Literary Forms

Module 2 Reading Poetry

Module 3 Reading Prose

Module

4 Reading Drama and Dramaturgy

s

Module - I
Background and New Literary Forms

Unit - 1 ❐ Features of the Enlightenment

1.1.0. Introduction

After the Renaissance and the Restoration in the previous Papers, here you will read about the period from the late 17th century to the mid 1780's which has been variously called the **Age of Enlightenment**, or simply the **Enlightenment** or even the **Age of Reason**. This introductory Unit will attempt to give you a fair idea of how and why these coinages came to exist, how the Enlightenment may be seen as a logical development of the preceding era that culminated in the Romantic Revolution, and of course how culture and literature came to be influenced by the phenomena in a mighty way. You can in fact look upon this Unit as a key to open up your understanding of the entire 18th century.

1.1.1. Background of The Enlightenment

If you look up the meaning of the word 'Enlightenment' in a dictionary, the following would be some of the meanings that it would give:

- the state of having knowledge or understanding : the act of giving someone knowledge or understanding
- the Enlightenment : a movement of the 18th century that stressed the belief that science and logic give people more knowledge and understanding than tradition and religion

(www.merriam-webster.com)

While the first is a generalised meaning, the second is more specific and obviously relates to the context that we are talking of. But it is interesting to notice that the second follows as it were, from the first. What we therefore need to understand in this sub-section is the phenomena that gave to Europe in general and England in particular this 'state' of 'knowledge or understanding' via an enhanced appreciation of science and logic.

On the face of it, we may regard 'The Enlightenment' as a pan-European progressive cultural and intellectual movement that swept across the continent from approximately the 1650s to the 1780s. Notwithstanding regional variations of impact and epistemological bias, Enlightenment thinkers all over Europe would perhaps accept the German philosopher **Immanuel Kant**'s (1724-1804) definition of the Enlightenment as **mankind's decision to come out of its self imposed immaturity**.

You definitely understand that such a 'decision' does not come overnight, nor does it fall from the skies like Manna in the Holy land of Biblical fame! By immaturity he meant dependence on external authoritative control for one's beliefs, actions and judgement. This implies that Enlightenment thinkers encouraged a spirit of enquiry even regarding the most fundamental assumptions of life. The end of the Enlightenment was marked by the onset of the French Revolution in 1789. We would do good to remind ourselves in passing that individualism and defiance of authoritative control, a trend of the Enlightenment, was also a characteristic feature of the Romantic revival which marked the end of the dominance of Reason and re-instated Imagination and Inspiration as the prime inspirer for all creative work.

We therefore need to address the vital question(s) as to how and why something like the Enlightenment came about in Europe.

Before we go on this fact finding mission, rewind your memory to the previous Papers and recall how the Renaissance/Reformation and thereafter the Restoration brought about a sea-change in literature and literary modes of articulation. The stranglehold of medieval Christianity was gone, literature was secularised and the old genres began to take on new forms in the wake of the Renaissance. The Restoration, while largely being the era of elitist and coterie literature, revived the age of the classics in myriad forms; while the politico-religious dissents of the period shaped its literary output like never before.

There are several ways of looking at the Enlightenment, and many of these views are not necessarily in agreement with each other. Given that the preceding eras had on the one hand unleashed avenues of new knowledge, and were on the other hand quite happening periods themselves, we might as well look at it this way that the period of relative stability in the 18th century gave space to rationalise and concentrate on provoking thought. The coming up of urban coffee houses and literary salons that became the popular haunts of philosophers and social thinkers; the widespread circulation of newspapers and periodicals; the formation of secret societies of the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians and the Bavarian Illuminati - were all interesting happenings round this time. These became the channels of brewing full-fledged challenges to the authority of institutions that were deeply rooted in society: especially the Catholic Church; as also all the talk of ways to reform society with tolerance, science and thereby rationality; not to forget scepticism.

As suggested earlier, there are differences of opinion over the evolution of the term 'Enlightenment' or even its exact nomenclature and scope; chronology and geographical expanse. For our purpose, it makes sense to go with Jonathan Israel's seminal work *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*. (Princeton, 2010) He focuses on the history of ideas in the period from 1650 to the end of the 18th century, and claims that it were the ideas themselves that caused the change that eventually led to the revolutions of the latter half of the 18th century and the early 19th century. Israel argues that until the 1650s Western civilization "was based on a largely shared core of faith, tradition and authority". Till this time most intellectual debates centred around "confessional" –

that is, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), or Anglican issues, and the main aim of these debates was to establish which block of faith would have the "monopoly of truth and a God-given title to authority". After this, everything that was rooted in tradition began to be questioned, and often replaced by new concepts in the light of philosophical reason. After the second half of the 17th century and during the 18th century a "general process of rationalisation and secularisation set in, which rapidly overthrew theology's age-old hegemony in the world of study", and thus confessional disputes were reduced to a secondary status in favor of the increasing tussle between faith and incredulity".

This view almost echoes that of the 20th century philosopher Bertrand Russel who looked upon the Enlightenment as a phase in progressive development that actually began in antiquity. He also held that reason and challenges to the established order were constant ideals throughout that period of the formation of modern societies in Europe. Russell argues that the **Enlightenment** as a specific happening as we demarcate in history, was actually born out of the Protestant reaction against the Catholic counter-reformation, when the philosophical views of the past two centuries crystallised into a coherent world view. He was of the opinion that many of the philosophical views, such as affinity for democracy against monarchy, originated among Protestants in the early 16th century to justify their desire to break away from the Pope and the Catholic Church. Though many of these philosophical ideals were picked up by Catholics, Russell held that by the 18th century the Enlightenment was the principal manifestation of the schism that began with Martin Luther.

Activity for the Learner

The preceding sub-section tries to trace historical continuities with what you have studied in earlier Papers, and place your understanding of the Enlightenment in perspective.

With help from your counselor, try to draw a chart of how and where old ideas were being overturned as a result of these progressive movements. Try to place the literary, philosophical and scientific texts against the proper backdrop of these developments. This will give you an expansive idea of History of Literature, far more than any conventional text book!

1.1.2. Understanding the Phases of the Enlightenment Principle(s)

Dating the Enlightenment

♦ The Early Enlightenment: 1685-1730

From the preceding section, you have gathered that the Enlightenment was a widely spread out affair both in time and space, and there are diverse opinions on this. Here we try to identify some phases to arrive at a detailed inderstanding of the phenomena.

D'Alembert, a leading figure of the French Enlightenment, characterizes the eighteenth century as "the century of philosophy *par excellence*", because of the tremendous intellectual progress of the age, the advance of the sciences, and the enthusiasm for that progress, but also because of the characteristic expectation of the age that philosophy (in this broad sense) would dramatically improve human life.

The early figures of the Enlightenment, as you will see in a later sub-section, included the Englishmen Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes, the Frenchman Renee Descartes and the natural philosophers of the Scientific Revolution, including Galileo, Kepler and Leibniz. Its roots are usually traced to late 17th C. England, where Isaac Newton published his *Principia Mathematica* (1687) and John Locke his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1690)—two works that provided the scientific, mathematical and philosophical praxes for the major advances of the time. We therefore date the Enlightenment as *beginning* with the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The rise of the new science increasingly undermined not only the ancient geocentric conception of the cosmos, but, with it, the entire set of presuppositions that new constrained and guided philosophical inquiry. This obviously meant a blow anew to the Church, coming as it did after the religious reformist basis of the Reformation, emboldened by the discoveries of Galileo. This time it was more firmly rooted in the scientific thought of Galileo who proved it was the earth that went round the sun, and not the other way round. All this raised philosophy (in the broad sense of the time, which included natural science) from a handmaiden of theology to an independent force. It now had the power and authority to challenge the old and construct the new, both in theory and practice. In this vein, the Enlightenment brought on the same platform John locke and Isaac Newton! While the former argued that human nature was mutable and that knowledge was gained through accumulated experience rather than by accessing some sort of outside truth; the latter's calculus and optical theories

provided the powerful Enlightenment metaphors for precisely measured change and illumination.

♦ The High Enlightenment: 1730-1780

With the appearance of French philosophers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Buffon and Diderot, the High phase of the Enlightenment truly began. As stated earlier, there was indeed no single, unified Enlightenment. It is rather both possible and plausible to speak severally of the French Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment and the English, German, Swiss or American Enlightenment. Individual Enlightenment thinkers often had very different approaches. Their differences and disagreements, in fact emerged out of the common Enlightenment themes of rational questioning and belief in progress through dialogue. The significant publication of the period was Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751-77), which brought together leading authors to produce an ambitious compilation of human knowledge. See for yourself how the tend of publications now began to equally veer into the producing and assimilating of knowledge.

The impact of such reasoned learning also impacted in positive ways the ruling class who began to meet with intellectuals and tried to apply their reforms, such as allowing for toleration, or accepting multiple religions, in what became known as **enlightened absolutism**. It was thus an age when enlightened despots like Frederick the Great (1712 – 1786) came to unify, rationalise and attempt to modernise Prussia in between brutal multi-year wars with Austria. The period also saw would-be revolutionaries like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, whose "Declaration of Independence" (1776) framed the American Revolution in terms taken from John Locke's essays. You thus see how fast the principles of the Enlightenment began to spread from continent to continent. The same flood also began to be felt in religion, that took on a rational approach and forwarded the belief that divine intervention was not the ultimate in the goings on of the universe. You might relate this to the use of the divine machinery in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* for instance, to see how divinity came to be undermined and subverted.

♦ The Late Enlightenment and Beyond: Into the 19th Century

The culminating act of the phases of Enlightenment is generally held as being reflected in the French Revolution of 1789. In principle, it sought to remake society along rational lines. It did begin with such an ideal before degenerating into bloody terror (known in history as the **Reign of Terror**) and led, a decade later, to the rise

of Napoleon. The subsequent failure does not however rule out the early goal of egalitarianism, that attracted the admiration of the early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and inspired much subsequent political-social activity on a global scale. In literature, as you will read in Paper 5, the Romantic Revolution was ushered in.

Thus you see that the Enlightenment was, to go back to Bertrand Russel's words, truly a 'phase' of continuous development or evolution; the roots of which stretch much beyond the 16th century and the offshoots of which have influenced thought ever after. For the purpose of academic study, we shall be concentrating on the 18th century proper. For those of you who would be interested to know more about the Enlightenment, the following web link could provide interesting inputs:

http://history-world.org/age_of_enlightenment.htm

1.1.3. Leading Figures of The Enlightenment – Their Influence

We shall now familiarise you with some of the leading figures of the Enlightenment, and their contribution therein. You have already come across some of these names. Notice, among other things, the wide fields of study that they hailed from – this will give you a fair idea as to why the Enlightenment was truly a multi-disciplinary affair.

- **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626): Chronologically speaking he was a Renaissance figure but his strong views on empirical knowledge as opposed to the Aristotelian deductive methodology, influenced later thinkers and scientists, particularly Isaac Newton. The emphasis on the inductive embodies the key to the Enlightenment spirit. All knowledge should be acquired through observation and experimentation. Nothing should be taken for granted. Students of literature are familiar with his terse and epigrammatic essays. Among his other famous scientific works are *The Great Instauration*, *Novum Organum* (New Method) and *Advancement of Learning* (Partition of Sciences).
- **Michel de Montaigne** (1533-1592): This Renaissance philosopher in his *Apology of Raymond Sebond* stated "Unless one thing is found of which we are completely certain we can be certain about nothing". Scientists and philosophers of the Enlightenment spend their lives observing, calculating and experimenting to arrive at certainties which were provided by religion at earlier ages.
- **Galelio Galilei** (1564-1642): The psychological groundwork for the most

towering of Enlightenment personalities Sir Isaac Newton was created in Italy by Galileo. In his *The Starry Messenger* (1610), *A Dialogue Between the Two Great World Systems* (1632) and The Two Sciences (1638) Galileo with the help of telescopic observations and experimentations propounded his own view of the universe and the laws of motion which was opposed to the orthodox Christian Geocentric view. Christian clerics refused to accept the view that the Earth revolved around the sun instead of being the centre of creation. Galileo was imprisoned as a heretic and was compelled to recant.

- **Sir Isaac Newton** (1642-1727): Sir Isaac Newton was much luckier than Galileo. He was the president of the Royal Society from 1703 till his death. The Society's motto, Nullius in verba, is Latin for "Take nobody's word for it". In his *Principia Mathematica* (1687) he used Mathematical principles to explain the working of the force of gravity in the operation of the solar system. He did not ruffle the feathers of orthodox Christianity. He was a strongly religious man though he believed in the religion that could be explained in rational terms. According to him a well ordered universe could only be explained in terms of an efficient operator. He did not believe in the power of the imagination and regarded poetic activities as a mere waste of time. This however did not detract the tremendous respect he commanded from all sections of educated society all over Europe. Newton epitomised the Enlightenment spirit which was neither about atheism not about revolt but all about taking anything for granted without questioning, observing and examining.
- **René Descartes** (1596-1650): Descartes was disturbed by Montaigne's assertion "Unless one thing is found of which we are completely certain we can be certain about nothing". While Newton took his step towards certainties through the discovery of numerous particles that constituted the universe, Descartes arrived at his own with the perception that the only certainty was the thinking self-"I think therefore I am". Both these great thinkers applied different sets of Mathematical reasoning which led them to the conclusion of a Supreme Power or First Cause operating the orderly universe. Many thinkers of the modern world still find the idea acceptable. For instance when a friend had asked Albert Einstein (1879-1955) if he believed in God, he had stated-"Not in the God that supposedly regulates our fates, but in a Spinozian God running an orderly universe". Thus we may conclude that both 18th century

and 20th century thinkers through divergent methods tried to arrive at a harmonious philosophical outlook.

- **Baruch Spinoza** (1632-1677): Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher. He is generally regarded as one of the foremost rationalists of the 17th-century. Spinoza's works were relatively unknown till many years after his death. He paved the way for 18th-century Enlightenment and modern Biblical criticism, through his ideas regarding the self. His most important and well-known work is *Ethics* where he has challenged Descartes's mind–body dualism.
- **David Hume** (1711-1776): David Hume the Scottish philosopher was a very important thinker. He like Descartes only considered individually acquired knowledge as valid. However, he believed that sensory experiences come before the thought process in defining knowledge. He rejected the Cartesian view of the universe and a creator based on back-calculations leading to the First Cause. According to him God is simply beyond perception because all knowledge is based on experience and God cannot be experienced. Hume may thus be regarded as a figure who embodied both the Enlightenment and the **Counter Enlightenment**. We can see the Counter Enlightenment factor in his refusal to give primacy to thought in favour of sensory experience. However his logical argument about the limitations of human knowledge accords well with the Enlightenment spirit. For instance Locke emphasized the futility of trying to move beyond the scope of human understanding. Swift, even as an Anglican priest emphatically stated that the function of religion should be limited to the guidance of human ethics and conduct and nothing more.
- **Voltaire (Francois Marie Alouet)** (1694-1798): Voltaire was a prolific French writer. In his *Philosophical Letters* (1734) he praised the liberal atmosphere of freedom in Britain. He used his English experiences as a basis for his attack on traditional French establishments. His dictum "ecrasez l'Infame" (crush the evil) became a slogan against superstition, intolerance and unjustified privileges supported by religious institutions.
- **Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1679): The best known of his works is *Leviathan*. The word means a whale or a sea monster. It symbolizes sovereign power. Hobbes believed that human beings are governed by two overwhelming concerns–**Fear** and **Love of Power**. His most important contribution to political

theory was the concept that the centre of power should be created on the basis of an agreement of the people. He said that people submit to sovereign power because only a controlling authority could prevent human life from being "Nasty, brutish and short". This is the beginning of the concept of the **Social Contract** theory or the evolution of power with the consent of the people. His analysis of the mechanical laws of production, distribution and exchange had a profound influence on British economic philosophy.

- **John Locke** (1632-1704): John Locke was one of the most influential Enlightenment philosophers. He followed Hobbes in his sceptical rationalism. Unlike Hobbes's pessimism however, he had an optimistic view of human nature. Here we can perhaps trace history acting upon philosophy. Hobbes lived through the decade of the civil war (1642-1652). He was painfully aware of human lust for power and his propensity for violence. Locke's sympathies identified with the Bloodless Revolution of 1688. It had ushered in greater Parliamentary power and curbs on Monarchy. Hobbes saw the state of nature as a state of war. Locke saw it as a peaceful condition where the Law of Nature and of Reason was spontaneously observed. Hobbes's idea of sovereignty though created by the people as a social contract had to be single and absolute. For Locke it was a responsibility towards society and the public could remove it at any time. Locke unlike Hobbes condemned state interference in religion. He believed it could incite civil conflict.

Locke advocated religious tolerance in his *Letters Concerning Toleration* (1689). It was consistent with his sceptical rationalism. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) he showed that the human capacity for knowledge is distinctly limited but the existence of God was a necessary hypothesis to be discovered by Reason. Christianity, therefore, is inherently reasonable and faith by revelation is indispensable because, for the majority of mankind, the use of Reason is unavailable. Locke expresses this view in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). He however emphasized that nothing unreasonable should be assented as a matter of faith. Locke's *Thoughts on Education* (1693) extols Reason at the expense of Imagination. He advocated education for its practical utility. Locke's thoughts had great influence on 19th century Utilitarian philosophy. Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) influenced liberal thinkers in Britain, the continent and the colonies. Revolutionary leaders took the cue from the idea of inherent Natural Rights to lead people to fight for their rights.

1.1.4. Political Thought of The Enlightenment

The age of Enlightenment, you have definitely understood by now, taught people to look at society they lived in, in a more analytical way. The then accepted idea about the Divine Right of Kings was questioned. This initiated a discourse regarding the nature and origin of society and the extent of the power of authority.

Hobbes and Locke were the most influential political theorists of the 18th century Enlightenment. Hobbes, while retaining the idea of absolute single sovereignty asserted that such power was not arbitrary or pre-ordained. People assented to the power to ensure protection for their lives and property. Thus Hobbes initiated the Social Contract theory or power by consent. While Hobbes had a distrust of human nature in isolation, he was also interested in justice. Consequently he advocated the grouping of people to make their voices heard. He went on to coin the phrase "voice of the people." Could it be an irony of fate that Hobbes the believer in strong central authority also unknowingly planted the germ of future organised protest which could also threaten to become violent!

Locke furthered Hobbes's view regarding Government by consent. Hobbes believed that without a strong controlling force society would recede into the primitive stage of chaos where human lives would become "…solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." He expressed this in his famous book *Leviathan* (1651). Leviathan as mentioned earlier, means a sea monster and here implies the State.

Locke believed that all human beings were born with equal rights. The duty of the Government was to protect these rights. He believed that any Government going against the interest of the people could be removed. He upheld the principles of Parliamentary Government which was true to the spirit of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Revolutionary leaders took the cue from the idea of inherent Natural Rights to lead people to fight for their rights. Political theory was also influenced by a newly emerging social class. They were the traders, who despite their humble origins could compete with the aristocracy and acquire land, given their monetary power. An identifiable powerful growing intelligentsia had to be reckoned with too. Many members of this class were the children of those moneyed traders and land owners who had access to the best education. They created what can be called a public space or civil society which acted as an intermediary between traditional seats of authority and the common people. They were largely responsible for the flourishing of the print media which exerted immense influence in society.

Locke's advocacy of civil freedom to be protected by law came to be increasingly equated with the right of the freedom to trade. We will discuss this in a different context. We will also discuss the more negative implications in Locke's second Treatise on Government in a later context.

1.1.5. Religion, Scientific Thought and The Enlightenment

All Enlightenment thinkers in Europe were united in their aim of logical pursuit of knowledge. Their concept of knowledge and the methodology required to acquire it differed. This was only natural. given the different strands of thought prevalent in the Enlightenment period. The Royal Society in England was founded in 1660, at first for the organised and methodical pursuit of all branches of knowledge and later it was modified for the enhancement of science alone. In France Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783) with the help of other 'philosophes' worked for 21 years (1751-1772) to publish a 28 volume encyclopedia which they dedicated to Sir Isaac Newton. Kant in Germany challenged the limits of human knowledge with the help of what he described as Transcendental Reason. Yet a difference in the attitude to religion separates British thinkers from their continental counterparts Thinkers and writers such as Voltaire and Diderot launched a vituperative attack on religion, while prominent philosophers and scientists such as Locke and Newton accepted religion as an essential part of their lives. They tried to prove that religion and science need not be mutually exclusive. Locke rationalised religion and asserted that it more a disciplinary rather than a mystical or supernatural force. In his *Letters Concerning Toleration* he categorically denounced any attempt at state intervention in religious matters for it could spark civil violence. However, true to the Enlightenment spirit in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* he had stated that nothing contrary to reason should be propagated as a matter of faith. Meanwhile, Newton through his scientific calculations proved how the myriads of particles that constitute our Universe are regulated by a central force. This proved that a supreme power regulated the cosmos.

The extent to which the Enlightenment pervaded and moderated the Church can be seen in the difference meted out to Galileo and Newton. Galileo as a pre-Enlightenment figure was imprisoned by Christian bigots because he went against the Biblically assented concept of a Geo-centric Universe. He was made to recant. Newton by contrast was a universally respected figure. The relationship between technology and religion is more problematic. Technology is science put to practical use. Pre-

Enlightenment thinkers solved the dichotomy of technology and religion by harking back to the Christian myth of the Fall. For instance Roger Bacon (1220-1292) one of the first experimental scientists was also a Franciscan friar. Bacon believed that ultimate knowledge was man's birth right lost through the original sin of Adam. Technology should aim at reaching the original Pre-lapsarian state of perfection. Viewed from this perspective religion could co-exist with science and technology. Enlightenment thinkers did not believe in myths but we have already seen they did not reject the idea of a supreme power. The thrust of many Enlightenment thinkers was not against religion but against the abuse of power by religious institutions and the nurturing of superstition in the guise of mysticism and faith. We may then assume that under an ideal condition, if the thoughts of all Enlightenment thinkers could converge, their collective reason would assert a single truth. The differences in perspective cannot do away with the idea of a creator behind the creation of the Universe.

We might justly regard the Renaissance figure, Francis Bacon [1561-1626] with his views on Empirical Science, so ardently practiced by Newton, as the original mover of the Enlightenment spirit. His idea of Knowledge is totally different from that of Descartes' rationalistic view of the universe. What however is most important in this context is the fact that all these thinkers though belonging to opposite ends of a spectrum ,questioned and doubted all accepted beliefs and conventions and used their reasoning powers to come to their conclusions. As Joshua Israel an eminent Enlightenment scholar states: After 1650, everything, however fundamental or deeply rooted, was questioned in the light of philosophical reason'.

We can trace a concrete example of the wide application of the Enlightenment spirit in the establishment of The Royal Society of London for Promoting Natural Knowledge in 1662.It grew out of a philosophical society. *It was composed of diverse worthy persons inquisitive into natural philosophy and other parts of human learning, and particularly what hath been called the New philosophy from different fields of knowledge, o*r *Experimental Philosophy*. The society took the whole field of knowledge for exploration. One of its aims was to achieve intellectual lucidity in writing prose. It was much later that it became a Society solely for promoting the sciences.

The Enlightenment affected various facets of life: Hospitals, schools, prisons and factories were reorganised. Communication became faster. The production of newspapers grew and commercial services improved.

The immense technological progress which followed the scientific discoveries of

the 18th and 19th centuries have laid the foundations for the modern technological advances; The spinning jenny, invented by James Hargreaves in 1764 followed by the invention of the power loom demonstrate the pragmatic use of scientific discoveries. The harnessing of steam and electrical power, the development of modern steel by Benjamin Huntsman and the discovery of rubber in South America in 1736 by Charles Marie de la Condamine also contributed towards the transport and industrial revolution, which for good or bad has led the world to 20th century modernism. Though we are mainly referring to the European continent, the progress was not limited to Europe. The far-flung colonies in America were also affected. For instance Benjamin Franklin, a trader of humble origin, experimented with electrical power far away in the American colonies. He devised the Franklin stove for more efficient house warming. Franklin also stood up for the democratic rights of the colonists. The Enlightenment spirit was percolating at all levels of society to make life more meaningful and comfortable.

1.1.6. Controversies Regarding The Enlightenment

We do find differences of views regarding the source or birth-place of the Enlightenment. Many scholars regard France, with Descartes and his rationalistic individualism, and Spinoza with his materialistic radicalism, as the prime inspirers of the rational spirit. Montesque, too, with his political liberalism expressed in *Spirit of the Laws* [1748], had a very practical impact on the movement, which was catalysed by Diderot and D'Alembert who worked for twenty-one years [1751-1772] to publish the 28 volume Encyclopedia. Meanwhile in Germany, Emmanuel Kant [1724-1824] in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) challenged the limits of human knowledge with the help of what he describes as transcendental reason. We will not go into any controversy regarding the degree of impact on the Enlightenment movement caused by various thinkers. We will simply refute one of the prevailing views that the idea of a British Enlightenment is an oxymoron or misnomer, and that Britain cannot boast about Enlightenment. This negative view about Britain has perhaps been encouraged by the absence of any radical intellectual revolution on the island. The civil war of 1642 and later, the so-called Glorious Revolution, were more ambitious and propelled by religious factions. Thus they did not have a strong intellectual bias. It was for the thinkers like Hobbes and Locke, and the professors of Gresham College, and not to say, the great Augustan writers such as Swift, Defoe, Pope, Addison, Richardson, Fielding and Sterne, to stoke up an intellectual ferment.

However, Voltaire [1694-1778] a very important French Enlightenment figure, who travelled in Britain extensively, effusively praised the atmosphere of intellectual freedom in England in his *Philosophical Letters* (1734). This should be more than enough to silence the critics who deny the idea of an English Enlightenment. After all, Enlightenment is not just about what philosophers thought in their studies, or what scientists experimented on, and observed in their laboratories. It is also about how the spirit of rational reasoning, freedom of speech, and the license to doubt any authoritative source for any kind of knowledge, affected people at large. Defoe and Swift proved that writers had the freedom to be ironical and critical about Christian sectarianism. *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), *Tale of a Tub* (1704)**,** and *An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* (1708)*,* perhaps could not have been written at an earlier period of history without the risk of their authors being burnt as heretics.

As we can see scholars will never agree about the respective importance of the thinkers and their works regarding the Enlightenment. Neither will they agree about the extent of its positive impact. Post modernist thinkers have blamed the Enlightenment for such varied evils as consumerism and fascism. They have gone to the extent of denying it the stature of a pan-European movement. They prefer to regard it in pluralistic terms as a series of localised movements with their own prejudices and preoccupations. Two eminent modern Enlightenment scholars Joshua Israel and Roy Porter though widely varied in their stance have shown how the Enlightenment spirit pervaded the intellectual atmosphere of the whole of Europe before crossing the seas and affecting the colonies of America in their struggle for independence. According to Porter we should understand that 'the Enlightenment was not a canon of classics' but 'a living language, a revolution in mood, a blaze of slogans ,delivering the shock of the now'. England began to apply the principles of the enlightenment before the continent did— the liberty of press, both male and female participation in social and political life, people of different regions living in peace together, the establishment of free market and the pursuit of happiness as the greatest human ideal-were a part and parcel of life in England. Porter goes on to show that England needed no revolution to apply the ideals of the enlightenment. Social interaction was of fundamental importance. Here people agreed to disagree. In this the English could be compared to modern Prometheus "for bringing philosophy down from the heavens' to sell it to the man of the world, to make it practicable and pleasing. British pragmatism 'embodied a philosophy of expediency, a dedication to the art, science and the duty of living well **Here** and **Now**. You will realise this was

in sharp contrast with the insistence on after-life that the Puritans had earlier prapagated. Desire thus became desirable and valid.

Joshua Israel and a few other Enlightenment scholars prefer to estimate the phenomenon in terms of the history of ideas rather than emphasise the historical and social contexts. But can we really ignore the role of history and society in directing our thinking processes? Can we assert with conviction that Descartes remained unaffected by a religious zealot's assassination of the King of France, Henri of Navarre in 1610 and the resultant thirty years of factional war that devastated central Europe? Can we convince ourselves that Locke's *A Letter Concerning Tolerance* (1689) and the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) were not influenced by the civil war in England that culminated in the beheading of Charles II in 1649 and the experiment of the Common Wealth, in the short but ruthless rule of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector?

It is extremely difficult in the context of the history of ideas and political and social history, to decide between the prime mover and the catalyst. All that we can say is that often cause and effect intertwine and strengthen each other. For instance the wide use of the printing press after its discovery during the Renaissance helped in the spread of knowledge that helped to spread the Enlightenment ideas. Conversely however, the Enlightenment helped in creating a larger reading public and a demand for setting up greater number of publishing houses. The English revolution of 1689 ended Absolute Monarchy and established Constitutional Monarchy with its two party system. True to the Enlightenment spirit of healthy exchange of different viewpoints, this arrangement encouraged debates and passionate exchange of varied opinions and as an important literary bi-product, allowed satire to flourish.

No doubt Locke and other thinkers helped in the democratic process within the conservative frame-work of monarchy, but is it not a possibility that the memory of the civil war earlier in the century encouraged a bloodless revolution instead of a more radical change? Meanwhile the less rigid stance of the House of Lords could well be the result of the prosperity of traders at home and abroad. They created a large prosperous group of leisured people who could read newspapers, periodicals and novels; visit clubs and coffee-houses and also purchase land and become a part of the land owning class and thus overthrow the monopoly of the aristocrats. Moreover, we cannot assert with certainty that Mandeville's *The Fable Of The Bees*, (1714) which scandalised moralists, by the argument that the pursuit of private vices to achieve prosperity could result in collective good, was not influenced by the rich

traders who worked for their own selfish gains. In the process, it also added to the wealth of the nation. Adam Smith, often regarded as the father of modern economics, has demonstrated this in his well known book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). The idea of free-trade and protectionism remained a hot bed of debates for the Whig and Tory parties. The concept of free-trade is important in our context because it forms a part and parcel of the general Enlightenment idea of the democratic freedom of an individual to pursue his goals without state interference.

1.1.7. Enlightenment and The Mercantile Class

We usually do not associate the money spinning traders with cultural currents but we cannot deny their great contribution to the Enlightenment spirit. We have already seen, they created the leisured class of readers who helped to popularise periodicals, journals, travelogues and even novels. Defoe in his journal *The Review* states: A true-bred merchant is a Universal scholar; his learning excels the mere Scholar in Greek and Latin…He understands language without books, Geography without maps, his journals and Trading Voyages delineate the World…''

The increasing prestige of the mercantile class is one of the hallmarks of the English Enlightenment. These merchants were all God -fearing people. This, at least partially, accounts for the acceptance of a more conservative and pragmatic enlightenment project in England. We would however wish that conservatism would not extend to the toleration of religious factionalism in governance. The Test Act, which prevented Roman Catholics from holding government office, was even supported by Swift, who 'Served Human Liberty', on the pretext that it was a disciplinary measure to prevent anarchy. A similar conservatism is reflected in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* where benevolent slavery and cultural domination over a weaker individual is accepted. Man Friday is robbed of his name, his language, his god, and is dominated by Crusoe with the help of his gun. This is however, not to deny Crusoe's extremely humane behaviour. But with our modern sensibilities can we deny the fact that Crusoe repeatedly refers to the captive man as 'creature' or 'savage'? Ironically however this same slave could be viewed as the anticipation of the Rousseau-esque prototype of the Noble Savage. Defoe generously praises his slave, whom he christens as Man Friday, for his mental and physical agility.

You will read about this in a subsequent Unit. Getting back to our context however, let us add that policy matters did not vitiate the general atmosphere of tolerance and

intervene at a personal level of relationship. Swift an Anglican priest and Pope a Roman Catholic recluse were best of friends. The Enlightenment spirit of agreeing to disagree created the stimulating, free-spirited discursive atmosphere in the clubs and coffee-houses praised so highly by Voltaire in his letters on England.

1.1.8. Summing Up

The purpose of this Unit has been to acquaint you with the key features of the 18th century, from the roughly dated end of the Restoration to the beginnings of the 19th century. The period is also called 'Long', not just in terms of the span of time covered, but also to allude to the momentous events during this time. The discussion of literature per se has been kept out of the purview of this Unit, which is aimed at providing an all-round understanding of the age. At the end of this, you are expected to be in a position to relate the literature that follows in subsequent Modules with the trends that the Enlightenment ushered in.

1.1.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long Questions (20 marks):

1. What in your opinion are the major features of the Enlightenment?
2. Comment on the important historical events in the continent and in Britain which might have had a strong impact on the Enlightenment thinkers, particularly Descartes and Locke.
3. How would you identify the successive stages of the Enlightenment?
4. Who were the major figures of the Enlightenment in Europe? Discuss their individual contributions.

Medium Length Questions (12 marks):

1. How would you support the view in favour of an active British Enlightenment?
2. How are the ideas of Hume and Descartes similar and dissimilar?
3. Write a note on Religion and Scientific Thought of the Enlightenment.

Short Answer Type Questions (6 marks):

1. Why do you think Galileo was punished for his discoveries while Newton was universally respected for his?
2. Mention a few important technological inventions which helped in the progress into the modern world ?
3. Whom would you consider to be a pioneering figure of the Enlightenment in Britain? Why?

1.1.10. Suggested Reading List

Gay, Peter. *The Science of Freedom.* New York: Norton, 1977.

Israel, Jonathan. *A Revolution of the Mind.* Princeton University Press. 2009.

Pancaldi, Guiliano. *Volta: Science and Culture in the Age of Enlightenment.* Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003.

Porter, Roy. *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.

Wokler, Robert, and Bryan Garsten. *Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment, and Their Legacies.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012.

Unit - 2 ❐ Characteristics of the Augustan Age

Structure

1.2.0: Introduction

In this Unit you will be introduced to the culture, literature and politics of England after the Restoration. Evidently, Neo-Classicism as a cult is deeply rooted in literature by this time, but the long standing effects of the restoration of monarchy that you have learnt about in Paper III, and some of its counter impacts begin to make themselves felt in the post-Restoration period. The essence of the age lies in an understanding of the term 'Augustan', and other allied nomenclatures like the 'Age of Prose and Reason'. Literary developments like the rise of the novel as a genre, or the predominance of political and social satire were influenced by several extra-literary factors like the philsophy of John Locke, the inroads of capitalism, the growth of the cult of sensibility and of course the early beginnings of Romanticism in the return to Nature and reflective modes of thought. These factors taken together make this era one of deep literary complexity. This Unit should be seen as a preliminary overview of multiple literary trends, shifts and transitions that link the age to the past and are a prelude to the nineteenth century.

1.2.1: Why The Term 'Augustan'?

In Paper III you have read about the Restoration of monarchy and the complicated series of events of succession following the succession of Charles II. In the context of the history of English literature, the Augustan Age refers to the post-Restoration (1660) period, roughly speaking from 1688 and the Glorious Revolution, to the death of literary stalwarts like Alexander Pope (1744). It could in fact be stretched further to cover the death of Samuel Johnson (1784) that also marked the beginnings of Romanticism. In a true sense therefore, the Augustan period provides the vital bridge between the Restoration and Romanticism, two important phases of English literature which, but for the initial alphabet in common between them, are all chalk and cheese for the rest!

The Augustan age comprises the reigns of three English monarchs -- William of Orange and Mary, Queen Anne and King George I. You must by now be wondering what the reasons could be for this nomenclature 'Augustan'. The term Augustan takes us back in time to the Roman period and the rule of Emperor Octavian Augustus Caesar (63 BCE -14CE). His reign brought to Roman civilization a period of peace and stability that ended the Civil Wars which was also celebrated by victory in the Battle of Actium. It was a time when literature and the arts flourished as poets like Virgil and Horace, Ovid, Propertius and Livy contributed substantially to the growth of Latin writing.

What then do you find in common between this classical period of history and the contemporary one in England?

The English Augustan Age brought in new modes of thought, changes in society and everyday life, modern approaches to knowledge that were expressed through new fashions in writing. Two very important treatises of the period that made a cutting edge difference to perspectives of life and thought were Isaac Newton's *Principia* (published in 1687) and John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (in 1690). You have read about both these warks in Unit I. The intellectual milieu was marked by a more rationalistic attitude and various genres of prose writing emerged while the styles of writing poetry were refashioned. Augustan literature was therefore shaped as much by the contemporary social, political and intellectual milieu as by a direct veneration for the writings of the Ancients. In fact, throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the debate *On Ancient and Modern Learning*

inaugurated by Sir William Temple, continued unabated. Jonathan Swift revisited this discussion in his satire *A Tale of a Tub*, published in 1704.

Activity for the Learner

As a project based activity with help from your counselor, you could make interesting charts of how expressions in literature gradually begin to get what we today call inter-disciplinary! With the help of the Timelines chart at the end of this SLM, you can trace the influences of emerging Sciences, Philosophy and Social History in giving rise to new literary phenomenon.

1.2.2. Neoclassicism – Links with The Restoration

Literature in the English Augustan age became self-consciously imitative of original classical writers, both Greek and Roman, but mostly of those belonging to the Latin Augustan era. This is the reason that the age is also called the Neoclassical Age or the 'new' classical period. This classicist trend began with John Dryden who is the link between Restoration and Augustan literature. Interestingly, his plays belonged to the popular theatrical trends of the time, but his verse satires, though topical, were steeped in the neoclassical spirit of Varro and Juvenal. It is in the poetry of Alexander Pope that neoclassicism as an aesthetic principle became clearly evident. These principles formed the foundations of classical art and literature-harmony and precision, balance and symmetry, form and urbanity.

1.2.3. Imitation as a Predominant Literary Mode

Imitation of classical models including Homer and Cicero, Virgil and Horace, Aristotle and Longinus was a much preferred method of literary composition. The concept of originality did not exist as the pleasure derived from a composition lay in recognising parallels and transformations and the witty adaptation of a traditional structure to a more topical subject. Addison in the *Spectator* stated very clearly the eighteenth century view on originality when he wrote:

> **Wit and fine writing doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable turn. It is impossible for us, who live in the latter ages of the world to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art or science which have not been touched upon by others.**

So according to Addison, originality could be shown in the treatment of the material. The mock-heroic or mock-epic (you will read more on this is Module 2 Unit 1) for instance, worked on this principle of imitating and parodying at the same time by using a particular form or structure. The mismatch between the theme or subject-matter and style/form was a source of wit and humour. The incongruity between the two was the satiric tool that a writer or poet manipulated. This meant that the poet/ writer was as conversant with classical models as the audience. The response to literature that was anticipated was intellectual rather than emotional.

The idea of Imitation also involved the representation of the general rather than the particular. Samuel Johnson remarked that "Great thoughts are always general" which corroborates the views of neo-classic critics following Aristotle, who brought the idea of mimesis. The artist did not therefore 'copy' what lay before him, but presented an idealised, often a more universal/general picture of life. Shaftesbury, a philosopher/ critic of the period argues that there is an astonishing variety in nature and every good poet and artist is aware of peculiarity and singularity. But if they were to reproduce these aspects of nature, their 'images or characters [would] appear capricious and fantastical'. So from the knowledge of the particular, a conception of the universal and ideal has to be derived.

1.2.4. Augustan Literary Terms

During the eighteenth century poetry was regarded as a conscious art rather than an imaginative experience and a poem was a thing that was **made** rather than an organic form. So critics could prescribe ways of writing verse which is evident from what John Dennis had to say:

> **In short, poetry is either an art, or whimsy and fanaticism. If it is an art, it follows that it must propose an end to itself, and afterwards lay down proper means for attaining that end: for this is undeniable, that there are proper means for the attaining of every end and those proper means in poetry we call the rules.**

Throughout the Augustan period genres and forms of writing were borrowed from classical models and a strict hierarchy was maintained. The **'Kinds'** of poetry or writing had their own specific **'Rules'** of composition that followed a set **'decorum'** even with a prescribed choice of **diction**. You must notice the abundance of terms associated with classical poetics that abound the rules of literary composition in this period. A balance among the components of writing produced the best mimetic

representation of Nature. The charge of 'artificiality' was refuted by suggesting that even art refined the crude and vulgar and upheld universal **'Nature'** and the 'natural'. On the one hand this is also an amplification of the ideas of Philip Sidney that you have read of in paper II.

This 'nature' of the Augustans, was thus not the spiritual or wild nature that romantic poets like Wordsworth or Shelley would later idealise, but nature as derived from classical theory: a rational and comprehensible moral order in the universe, demonstrating God's providential design. The literary circle that obviously centered around Pope considered Homer foremost among ancient poets in his descriptions of nature, and therefore held that the writer who 'imitates' Homer is also describing nature. Thus Pope himself famously put it in his *Essay on Criticism,* the following lines that have kind of become the buzz-words of poetic thought of this age:

Those *Rules* of old discover'd, not devis'd,
Are nature still, but nature methodis'd;

Notice for yourselves the tremendous restraint in form in the above lines that he exerts to communicate an equally restrained treatment of the content that he is talking about!

So an eighteenth century writer would set out to write by composing a poem that belonged to one of the recognized 'Kinds'. The poet was expected to know the achievement of predecessors within that Kind, the type of treatment required and the possible ends that could be expected. This gets as close as it can to the '**Impersonal theory of Poetry**' that T.S Eliot talks of in the 20th century in his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. It is important for you as students of literature to realise that this break from subjective content in literature remains one of the key features of literature in this era – a significant break from both the preceding and following epochs.

The language of writing and the diction of poetry expectedly became basic concerns in this age. There was a categorical difference espoused in the diction used in various Kinds of writing, and writers could even draw on a common pool of words and phrases. The distinct criteria followed for including or excluding words were identifying words and phrases as 'poetical' or categorising several to be too colloquial, 'low' and prosaic to be suited to literary works. There was a fear in Augustan minds about any form of vulgarity in art just as there was an apprehension about the 'uncivilised' in the context of society and community living. This should remind one of the strict

principles of **Decorum** that Horace had spoken of much earlier. All the same, much of this is challenged when one comes to Dr Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare, where as critic, Samuel Johnson upholds the ingenuity of Shakespeare. Johnson's own creative literature is however a different turf altogether.

The eighteenth century in England considered progress in terms of being civilized, refined and elegant and the writing moved towards these goals. Paradoxically trends of social and political realism penetrated into writing through various forms of satire where a lofty, normative exterior maintained the semblance of order and restraint. The criterion of **'taste'** was as important as the exercise of **'judgement'** in the composition and appreciation of art.

One of the characteristics of Augustan literature was that it was not expressive of personal emotions but more often **'occasional' or objective**. It was a response to society or public life, individuals, or institutions, religion or politics and therefore satire, both verse satire and narrative satire, became more popular during the age. Irony and sarcasm were used a literary devices in such writing rather than lyricism or subjective passion.

1.2.5. The Appeal to Reason and Good Sense

The Enlightenment privileging of Reason made good sense the test for a literary work and Pope sums it up succinctly in a heroic couplet (iambic pentameter couplet) which was the most preferred form of verse as it was considered to be stately and dignified.

Good-nature and good-sense must ever join;
To err is humane, to forgive, divine.

Since reason was given a new position of prestige, other kinds of mental activity that were not strictly rational were naturally suspect. Thomas Hobbes almost equated imagination with madness and it was important that any form of writing should have a purpose and move in a steady direction. So fancy and imagination were seen as typical forms of mind-wandering.

Much of Augustan writing is concerned with issues that affect humankind and this broad interest in human progress and development made literature distinctly didactic. The heroic couplet was also suited to the aphoristic style that marked the poetry. In prose, the periodical essayists Joseph Addison and Richard Steele and their periodicals

The Tatler (1709-11), and *The Spectator* (1711-12) were interested in improving the condition of the English middle-classes. Addison was an admirer of Locke and he used the periodical to glory to disseminate Locke's explanations about the working of the human mind. Apparently light-hearted debates were initiated in the periodical papers that seriously questioned popular beliefs in witchcraft and demonology, superstitions and dreams. Secular moralising thus came to be spread through the periodical essays, and this channel soon replaced formal religion and institutional sermons. Their express purpose was as Steele remarked "to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality."

1.2.6. Wit in Literature

Though the word 'Wit' is difficult to define, it was a predominant characteristic of the literature of the period which prided itself on its intellectual content and ratiocinative approach. As Dryden wrote in the Preface to his poem *Annus Mirabilis*, "The Composition of all Poems is or ought to be of wit; and wit in the Poet, or wit writing (if you will give me leave to use a School distinction), is no other than the faculty of imagination in the Writer; which, like a nimble Spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of Memory, till it springs the Quarry it hunted after; or, without metaphor, which searches over all the Memory for the Species or Ideas of those things which it designs to represent."

In 1704, Alexander Pope spoke of 'True-Wit' as 'a justness of Thought, and a Facility of Expression'. Significantly the word refers to the various powers of the mind – Understanding and Memory, Imagination and Judgement. The balance between nature and art, imagination and reason is what the term connotes.

True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,

What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest,

Something, whose Truth convinc'd at Sight we find,

That gives us back the Image of our Mind.

There was a distinct distrust of a spontaneous association of individual ideas and a preference for conforming to universal truths. It is important to understand that Augustan literature has to be approached from a perspective that is wholly different from the way in which literature of any other period is read. Understanding the tenets followed by writers, the expectations of an audience from literature and the

way in which literature reflected the urbane and civilisational influences of the age will help you to identify the characteristics of Augustan verse and prose.

1.2.7. Summing Up

This Unit, as you must have gauged, is logically a continuation of what you have read in the previous one. The purpose has been to analyse the predominant literary trends in contiguity with the socio-cultural milieu and provide you a framework wherewith to approach the literary texts in this Paper. The literary trends already apparent in the Restoration, that you have read about in Paper III, become more entrenched in this period. The key issues that should be noted in the context of handling texts in this Unit are:

- Literature has moved out of the royal court into the coffee houses and public domain and is therefore more engaged with the common people
- The rising middle classes reshaped the character of writing and made literature more accessible
- With the growth of print culture, literature became a commodity especially because the patronage system was coming to an end
- Secular interests, politics and mundane everyday concerns were incorporated as themes in writing
- New understandings and adaptations of neoclassical concepts of imitation, originality and nature are noticed
- Literature became a conscious art that moved towards exploring universal laws about Nature and Man
- The insistence on objectivity and control defined writing in this age
- Reason and Good Sense were emphasized for maintaining order and discipline in life and literature

It is hoped that with help from your counsellor, you will be able to use these focal points as critical tools to understand and analyse the several literary types dealt with in this Paper.

1.2.8. Comprehension Exercises

Long Questions (20 marks):

1. Discuss the salient literary features of eighteenth century poetry and writing. Try to illustrate your points with illustrations from texts that you have read.
2. What do you understand by the concept of Imitation? How was it used in the literature of the age?
3. Why is this period called the neo-classical age?

Medium Questions (12 marks):

1. In what ways did the English eighteenth century resemble the original Roman Augustan Age?
2. What were the views of eighteenth century writers on originality?
3. How does 'wit' become the defining characteristic of the literature of the period?

Short Questions (6 marks):

1. Define what is meant by poetic diction. Give two examples from poems that you have read.
2. What do you understand by the term 'Kinds'? Give one example of how this functions from any text in your course.
3. Are 'Rules' important in neo-classical writing? Give reasons for your answer.

1.2.9. Suggested Reading

Rogers, Pat. *The Augustan Vision*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974.

Sutherland, James. *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry*. London: Oxford University Press, rpt. 1975. (Also available online at : http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/poet18/)

Unit - 3 ❐ Rise of the Novel

1.3.0. Introduction

The primary aim of this Unit is to introduce you to the conditions leading to the emergence of the novel in eighteenth century England, and to explore the idea of the novel as it evolved as a literary genre with gusto in this period. It is not that prose fiction did not exist before this period; and the novel has its literary precedents too, not only in prose but in other forms of narrative. It is however, at this critical juncture in the cultural history of Europe that we see the advent of a "novel" literary form with mass popular appeal. The reasons behind this phenomenal rise will be explored in this Unit. It will also acquaint you with the main theories of the novel and explore the ideological underpinnings of this literary form.

1.3.1. Factors Contributing to the Rise of the Novel

Investigations into origins are theoretically suspect since such queries lead to endless conjectures. It is therefore neither possible, nor is it our aim to identify "the first novel". In fact, you need to understand that it is not fruitful to rely on simple cause and effect analysis. Instead, it is more rewarding to study the coming together of certain conditions – social, political, economic and cultural – at a time when we also see the emergence of certain texts which are later identified as the first novels. A combination of two major overlapping social movements – the spread of

democratisation and the influence of the modern philosophical realism may be identified as most critical in understanding the rise of the novel. We shall now study the detailed implications of these two major factors:

- **The Rise of the Middle Class**: In your preceding Paper titled 'The Restoration', you have seen the highly complex class dynamics that had set in with the restoration of monarchy, and its concomitant implications on culture. As a follow through to it, the eighteenth century naturally emerged as a time of transitions and major social upheavals in class structure. Feudalism in Britain was noticeably giving way to a form of capitalism and a market economy dominated by trade. This in turn contributed to awareness among authors about their autonomous presence in a market-place that reflected middle-class values. You will definitely remember the beginnings of the rise of a middle class in the previous century; one that did not quite accept the prevalent social-moral codes that the court espoused with the revival of monarchy. The newly emergent literary forms thus reflect the sensibility and taste of the new aspiring class, a class eager to cultivate social prestige and personal success through education. In the novel therefore, realistic depiction of middle class experience takes the place of the adventures of an aristocratic class found in earlier forms of narrative.

- **Increase in Literacy and Readership**: Women and the working classes formed a significant part of the newly emerging class of the reading public. Spread of literacy and advances in print culture enabled greater access to the texts. On the other hand, increasing prosperity led to greater leisure, and increase in the number of readers. Women enjoyed not only leisure but also privacy, a key component leading to the development of the novel. Not only did women form an important section of the novel reading public, many of the early novels are women-centric, and many of the writers of this period were women. Excluded from other public social activities, they could devote their time to fiction writing.

- **Growth and Proliferation of a Universal Print-culture:** By the turn of the new century, reduced printing costs, the establishment of a distribution network, and an-ever increasing demand for popular literature provided a major impetus to the newly emergent form of prose-fiction. It is in the eighteenth century that the book trade acquired great relevance and books became widely available.

The spread of literacy and subscription libraries helped increase the readership manifold, and the book trade became sustainable by a parallel easing of legal restraints on printing. The transition from manual to mechanical mode of printing brought about what may be described as the print revolution, leading to an entirely new relationship between the text and the reader. At the same time, it brought about major changes in the arena of cultural production. The new technology made possible a more widespread dissemination of the traditional material of oral folk culture, and popular texts would often be read out to a collective audience. The exponential rise in book production also went hand in hand with an increase in literacy. The cumulative effect was a blurring of boundaries between elite print culture and popular oral modes of expression. Along with the circulation of information and knowledge, print engendered a spirit of debate and dialogue and enabled the emergence of new forms of literature.

- **Influence of other Forms of Prose Fiction and the Periodical Essay**: Periodical essays, autobiographies and diaries, histories and travelogues, conduct books, and other popular instruction manuals, philosophical essays and religious tracts, – diverse forms of prose, fiction and non-fiction, contributed to the making of the novel in the eighteenth century. Fielding's *Tom Jones*, one of the significant texts of the period, and one which, in its complex hybridity reflects the spirit of the age, draws on several literary traditions. The picaresque narrative comes together with the quest motif found in the medieval and Elizabethan romances in order to foreground the theme of love versus duty. Fielding's flair for drama and his fondness for the mock-epic form are also evident in dealing with the theme of appearance versus reality and in the portrayal of manners representing every social type.

A similar preoccupation with manners and "taste" is to be found in the periodical essay. A form which emerged in the early eighteenth century, it needs special mention in the context of the novel for the way it used fictional personae to address the issue of codes of conduct that was so important to the emerging middle-class readership. A significant component of the cultural background of the novel, this was an urban, scholarly form, aiming to discipline and create taste. It is not surprising then that like most other literary as well as popular forms, the periodical essay had a significant body of female readership, with much of its content addressed specifically to women. Similar concerns shape the discourse of the novel, a more inclusive form, one which

extended its reach to absorb features of lesser literary genres that were, however, equally adept at blending fact and fiction.

Activity for the Learner

As a project based activity, you may, with help from your counsellor, make a comparative study of cultural conditions in the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration periods with that of the 18th century, and try to account for the respective dominant forms of literary expression in each of these times. This will also help you to demarcate both the immediate and the long standing effects of the Renaissance. Try to refer to the first Modules of earlier Papers for this activity.

1.3.2. The Idea of the Novel

The name "novel" comes from French *nouvelle* / the Italian *novella*, both of which bear the meaning "new". However, the term was already in use to denote **short narrative pieces** (as opposed to the longer Romances). In this context, you need to understand that the novelty of this hybrid form is perhaps best understood in terms of its contemporaneity. It dealt with the "now" or relevant/recent past, a setting to which the new eighteenth century middle class readership could relate. This relative freedom from classical restraints led to the proliferation of prose fiction, and in the eighteenth century itself there are several forms of the novel.

A new form, the novel took to experimentation enthusiastically and self-consciously, and the early novels started distinct traditions - epistolary, confessional, sentimental, picaresque, rogue-biography - among others. The two competing (and often overlapping) types of the novel in this period were - the **Epistolary** novel, written in the form of letters, in first person narrative; and the **Picaresque** tale of adventure. Derived from the Latin word meaning letter, the epistolary/journal form of narration enabled a more personal perspective, with its emphasis on the protagonist's personal thoughts and reflections. It also provided scope for greater realism, unlike the third person omniscient narrator novel. The overtly confessional mode of these novels was particularly suited to the presentation of the heroine's feelings and very often this mode was deployed in novels with women protagonists. If the epistolary or confessional novel is introspective, the picaresque looks outward, charting a journey of adventure. The term "picaro" derives from Spanish, meaning "rogue", and while there were novels which are picaresque in the etymological sense, providing a cheerful

amoral perspective on settled middle-class life, the term in the broader sense implies an episodic, loosely structured narrative. Male heroes/anti-heroes are usually the central characters in these novels, although there are notable exceptions.

A literary genre dependant on print culture, the novel made for a private and intimate reading experience, parallel to the individuation of characters in the narrative. At the same time, working within the forces of a market economy meant relative freedom and isolation of the author, thus enabling experimentation. In spite of the universality and popularity of the novel, it is somewhat tricky to pinpoint its specific features, and this is perhaps because as a genre it permits immense scope for diversity. Yet certain general features need to be identified, if only to identify the departures from the conventional idea of the novel. These may broadly be classified on the following lines:

- The novel is usually a long prose narrative that is inclusive and large in scope. It therefore presents a number of characters engaged in a variety of situations.

- Formal realism has been recognised as one of the defining features of the eighteenth century novel and the novel in general. This convention prioritises particulars over abstractions and seeks to portray "real" situations and people. Another important aspect of formal realism is the cause and effect design of the plot. The novel therefore usually deals with predominantly middle-class protagonists in believable, everyday contexts, using familiar, colloquial language. Even *Robinson Crusoe*, the quintessential tale of adventure, which, for the large part deals with a single character isolated from society, presents his extraordinary endeavours in terms of everyday mundane and recognisable activities. It is however the works of Richardson and Fielding, the major practitioners of the genre in the eighteenth century, with their focus on characters from everyday life that best exemplify an engagement with contemporary society, its mores and norms.

- These protagonists of the eighteenth century novel therefore are not stereotypes or stock characters; rather they are individuals with distinct identities. Focus on the individual's experiences and interiority is thus crucial in the novel. Naming is a key device in this process of identity construction, and the newness of the eighteenth century novel made it possible to draw names from

real life, rather than from tradition. This enabled identification of the readers with the characters as well as with the novelist.

- While realism is repeatedly invoked in the context of the early novel, the spirit of experimentation and movements in directions wholly opposed to realism need to be acknowledged in order to understand the scope and diversity of the genre at the time of its emergence. The parodic mode was enthusiastically adopted by authors such as Fielding and Sterne, and the latter took this self-conscious, ironic manner to its extreme with his innovations. Completely disregardful of established conventions, Sterne uses diverse modes such as autobiography, fantasy, the sentimental narrative, travel accounts - only to subvert all with an exuberant display of mock learning. In many ways, he was much ahead of his times, while at the same time making use of many of the popular traditions of his period, including the picaresque, the travelogue and the sentimental novel of sensibility. Like Fielding, his model too is Cervantes, and he is similarly adept at parody, all the more at parodying the very conventions he employs. The most remarkable characteristic of Sterne's style in his masterpiece *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* is unpredictability: the reader is constantly thrown off guard by the play with language and narrative techniques. Comedy and earnestness combine in this dazzling display of experimentation, with its underlying theme of misuse of learning. Sterne's thematic concerns and stylistic innovations anticipate the works of modern novelists, such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Among his major devices are the use of association of ideas to present the chain of thought in a character's mind, playing with different kinds of temporalities and rejecting the rules of grammar. The eponymous protagonist-narrator of the novel routinely invokes Locke's concept of the association of ideas, only to subvert Locke's hierarchy. Sterne rejects the "normal" procedure of thought whereby simple ideas unite to form complex ones. Instead, he embraces irrationality and spontaneity in the chain of associations, a process considered inferior by Locke. Such a style defies the conventions of storytelling to such an extent that characters, events, the narrative itself – become unreliable and are constantly subject to change. Added to this is the rejection of linearity and chronology – demonstrating the impossibility of beginning a first person account of the protagonist's life from the time of his birth. The effect of such a radical mode of narration is to draw attention to the idea of the alienation of the individual and the impossibility of communication through language.

- One of the features that Sterne shares in common with most other eighteenth century novelists is the persona of the publicly oriented narrator characterised by a conversational style, directly addressing the reader in a familiar manner. Such a feature also pulls against the realistic fabric of the novel, drawing attention to its fictionality. From its very inception, the novel has struggled with the fact-fiction dichotomy in its attempt to present fiction as truth. Apart from formal realism, eighteenth century novelists made use of narrative strategies such as sentimentalism, which worked contrary to the referential principle of realism and relied instead on the agency of emotions.

1.3.3. Representative Themes In The Eighteenth Century Novel

❖ **Social Realism and the Middle Class:** Modern philosophical realism of this period rejected the idea of understanding reality in terms of universal truths and in its place privileged observable particular details. The emphasis shifted to the individual's perception of experience and a notion of identity developing through memory. Realism is most often identified as the dominant mode in eighteenth century representation, and the novel is the form which best exemplifies this desire to project a realistic and authentic vision of everyday middle-class experience. The concerns and values of this new upwardly mobile class, gaining in confidence and desirous of seeing itself represented, is reflected in the realistic novel, which replaced the earlier forms of heroic literature.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe (1719)*, often regarded as the seminal work in the history of the novel, is perhaps better understood as a transitional text: while it is obsessively taken up with the notion of authenticity, it remains, in many ways, an extraordinary tale of adventure and heroism. It disguises itself as a record of everyday experiences, presented in minute realistic detail. The exceptional feats achieved by Defoe's protagonist are made to appear normal and commonplace, so much so that Crusoe becomes Everyman, the representative of the enterprising eighteenth century individual. The most remarkable feature of Defoe's mode of representation is his audacious insistence on factuality: he denies altogether the fictional status of his account and denounces the very genre he is credited with pioneering. It is perhaps this obsession with realism that qualifies *Robinson Crusoe* as an eighteenth century "novel", although in most other ways, this story of the marooned hero isolated

from society does not quite share the ideological space of the "novel" genre.

It is with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740-41) that we enter the arena of the novel proper, sited firmly in the internal mindscape of the aspiring middle class individual. Both Defoe and Richardson deploy the technique of denying the fictionality of their texts; Richardson, however, shows greater concern for the novel form in his dexterous handling of the epistolary technique and the resulting multiple points of view such a strategy enables. The first person mode of narration continues to be important, and this may be related to the bias towards realism in this period. The autobiographical mode here leans towards the confessional, taking us into the minds of women who inhabit the domestic space. As in Defoe, the themes of social aspiration and individuals carving their own destinies are central to the plot, and the marriage of Pamela to her aristocratic persecutor at the end of the novel demonstrates the ascendancy of the new middle class ethics of virtue and respectability over the libertinism of the nobility.

Fielding's variety of realism is different from that of Defoe and Richardson: he abandons the literal realism of his predecessors to practise a more selective kind of representation which aims to present the truth about human nature. At the same time, the more obvious fictionality of his account is balanced by the sheer energy and spirit that informs the text, making it one of the most enjoyable novels combining romance and comedy. In his masterpiece, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749), he further expanded his theory of the novel defining it as a "heroical, historical prosaic poem". He emphasises the comprehensiveness of the new genre and insists on lifelikeness and a realistic mode of presentation. The first of the novelists to consciously articulate a theory of the novel, Fielding presents us with a broad canvas, giving the novel epic scope and a well-defined structure in keeping with the eighteenth century notion of universal order and reason. At the same time, such a perfect design and the technique of the omniscient narrator directly engaging with the reader works against plausibility, adding to the idea of a fictional construct, a form designed to present a moral vision.

- **Didacticism and the influence of Puritanism**: Among other things done by Puritanism that you have read of in Paper 3, it also provided a major boost to literacy and individual reading, with its emphasis on the reading of the Bible in the vernacular. Protestantism prioritised the book along with the

emphasis on the experience of solitary reading. At the same time, there was almost a paranoid obsession with the dangers of unsupervised literacy, specially the effect this may have on impressionable young women. The eighteenth century novel is shaped by the dual concerns of morality and nature. While it was imperative to represent nature in realistic terms, it was also equally important for the author to be conscious of his social responsibility as an instructor. Both Richardson and Fielding, in their own ways, work within a shared framework of the idea of the novel: the idea of a moral universe, in which the actors serve as examples. Fielding's parody of Richardson may thus be understood as both critique and tribute – a rejection of the excessive sentimentality of Richardson did not necessarily mean disagreement with the moral scheme presented in his works. Fielding, more so than Richardson perhaps, was aware of engaging with a new literary form, and entered the literary arena with robust good humour, challenging Richardson's overly sentimental and moralistic sense of propriety. His first novel begins with an intertextual parodic nod to Richardson's hugely popular *Pamela*, and exhibits his characteristic flair for satire combined with easy-going tolerance of human frailty. Yet, the moral ambiguity of a protagonist such as Tom Jones does not go against the overall didactic design of the novel.

Although there were moral concerns about the new genre of the novel, the radical nature of the form was easily disguised by the novel's participation in the discourse on instruction and moral improvement. As the novel gained respectability, literature became a commodity, a profitable venture for authors and publishers. London was the centre of publishing, although there was a steadily growing provincial market for morally uplifting tales such as that of the servant girl Pamela who climbs her way up the social ladder and into respectability. In the figure of one of the pioneers of the novel, Samuel Richardson, we find the dichotomy between instruction and entertainment resolved as he makes easy transition from publisher to author, via the publication of a series of instructive letters. A successful printer, he grew in rank by publishing moral manuals and journals to encourage learning. Later, he also published novels by other writers, including Defoe, Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier.

- **The anti-novel discourse**: The propensity for literature would edify (teach morals) led to the anti-novel discourse, a phenomenon which grew concurrent

with the rise of the novel. The fear of the novel was, in many ways, a continuation of the fear of the theatre, the earlier form of Puritan response to popular entertainment. The novel became a greater cause for concern because of its intimate association with print, a technology that made for widespread dissemination, anonymity and preservation. While the novel was recognised as a popular and effective form of entertainment, there existed, at the same time, a fear of this young genre, very often regarded as being contrary to knowledge and philosophy.

Dr Johnson, in spite of his own familiarity with the major novels of his period, dismissed the novel-reading public of his time as "the young, the ignorant, and the idle". You can understand that this reflected a common anxiety about the 'corrupting' effects of the radical new genre which did not have any literary pedigree in an age when lineage mattered most. At the same time, he was acutely aware of the value of "publishing", an activity he tellingly defined as "to put a book forth in the world". This dichotomy is discernible in the text which is often identified as the first novel: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which is a work of fiction cleverly disguised as *fact*, and one which deliberately rails against fiction as dangerous untruth. Richardson and Fielding, and the later writers, continue to play on the theme of fact versus fiction, making clear the intent to instruct and improve. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759), published not long after the carefully designed narratives of Richardson and Fielding, presents a picture of disarray, subverting the idea of realism by taking realism itself to another level.

If Richardson's focus is on the inner life of the individual, presented in its multi-layered complexity through manipulation of the epistolary technique, and in unfolding a plot through correspondences in order to present different points of view, Fielding's comic vision seeks to present a vivid picture of mid-eighteenth century England in all its diversity, teeming with satirical sketches of stock characters, representing the truth about nature in an "epic" manner. Sterne's narrative style, on the other hand, celebrates experimentation for its own sake, while constantly engaging with the question of the relationship between reality and realism. The major novelists of the eighteenth century therefore engaged with the anti-novel discourse in their own ways, most often attempting to justify their craft in terms of an overriding moral consciousness. The most subtle and innovative engagement with the current

cultural anxieties centring round the novel is seen in the writings of Sterne.

- **Class:** Questions of rank and social status occupy a prominent place in eighteenth century literature. The three most important novels by Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders* (1722) *and Roxana Or The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) are fictional autobiographies of characters living in the margins of society and take the form of tales of adventure in which the heroic and the commonplace come together. Sharply realistic and moralistic at the same time, his world is populated by solitary protagonists who survive immense odds within the social order or outside it. Though often immoral and unscrupulous, they are shown to be penitent - in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, both the heroines are fallen women, and their struggle to negotiate between money and power on the one hand, and marriage and respectability on the other, acts as a commentary on contemporary society. In his other novels, Defoe experiments with other genres, including travel literature and the historical novel. While *Colonel Jack* (1722) traces the familiar trajectory of the eighteenth century novel of social mobility – from poverty to prosperity and criminality to respectability, *Captain Singleton* (1720) uses travel narrative and account of piracy to yet again raise questions about existing socio-economic practices. If the character of Roxana sharply brings into focus the economic vulnerabilities of eighteenth century women, the character of hero-outlaw Captain Singleton shows how there is not much to choose between legitimate trade and piracy. *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), written in the form of a journal, blends fact and fiction to present a fascinating glimpse into a period of the city's past, yet again sympathising with victims and survivors, characters who earn admiration for their perseverance.

  If Defoe's narratives tell the story of the sufferings and the rehabilitation of marginalised members of society, Samuel Richardson's novels trace the passage of individuals from one social class to another, showing a society in transition. Success-stories such as that of the servant girl Pamela and tragedies such as that of the high-born Clarissa can be understood as part of the context of social change, at a time when the rising middle class was consolidating its position with its emphasis on the notion of virtue. As in Defoe, the themes of social aspiration and individuals carving their own destinies are central to the plot. The eponymous heroine of Richardson's first novel, *Pamela; Or,*

Virtue Rewarded (1740-41), shocked contemporary readers with her questioning of class hierarchies. At the same time, it illustrated the possibility of success in a society that placed great premium on self-help and enterprise, while adhering to the middle –class notions of respectability. Written in the forms of letters and journal, this novel was the outcome of a commissioned project to compose a manual of letter-writing for the semi-literate. Richardson's next novel *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* (1748) is a psychological masterpiece, again using the epistolary form. Structurally, it is a tragedy, nullifying the idea of the reformed rake. Clarissa, unlike Pamela, is from a prosperous background; her persecutors are her family who attempt to marry her off to a detestable wealthy man.

The double-edged nature of the social construct of virtue is best highlighted in Henry Fielding's first foray into fiction *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews* (1741) which presents a parodic portrait of Richardson's Pamela as a scheming social climber while constantly drawing attention to her virtue. His next work, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742) also begins as another parody of *Pamela*, recounting the attempted seduction of Pamela's brother by the aunt of Mr B, the villain-hero in Richardson's novel. However, the novel develops independently, presenting the comic escapades of Joseph Andrews and his companion Parson Adams. Fielding abandons the epistolary form of Richardson and introduces the third person omniscient narrator to present a gentle satirical commentary of his time. For this, his model was the picaresque tradition of Cervantes, best illustrated in his masterpiece *The History of Tom Jones*, *a Foundling* (1749) which is best remembered for its ironic presentation of social hypocrisies and its blend of satire and sentiment. The question of class is raised in the title itself, with the author seeming to question accepted notions of respectability by selecting a roguish orphan as his protagonist. Yet the radicality of such a choice is undermined at the end: the foundling hero who faces numerous obstacles when he falls in love with the daughter of a wealthy neighbour is revealed to be the nephew of his benefactor, the kind-hearted country gentleman Squire Allworthy. His respectable parentage serves to demonstrate that beneath outward roguery lies essential goodness, and also ensures the restoration of the stability of the social order and class hierarchies.

❖ **<u>Gender/The Woman Question</u>:** Related closely to the question of class was the question of gender, with the latter perhaps giving rise to more debate. The evolution of the novel is intimately linked with the construction of notions of femininity and the ideal of domesticity. Contemporary advice literature constantly emphasised the need to define and regulate women's behaviour and sexuality, and these concerns are echoed in the related genre, the novel. Blatantly didactic in nature, fiction of the period sought to protect its literary space and ward off criticism about the ill-effects of novel-reading. The misogynistic critique of the novel focussed primarily on the ill-effects of a genre popular especially among women, both in the role author and reader. It was therefore often regarded as a trivial, even a corrupting medium, leading to idleness and immoral behaviour. Women were regularly warned about the pitfalls of reading novels and romances and as if in an attempt to pre-empt such criticism the eighteenth century fictional heroines are almost universally portrayed as embodiments of domestic virtue or at least aspiring towards this ideal.

Defoe's women protagonists are anything but virtuous, and are often regarded as transgressive proto-feminists, following their own desires. Drawing on the conventions of rogue autobiography, he unfolds the life and escapades of Moll (*Moll Flanders*) as a character more to be admired for her liveliness rather than condemned for her lapses. *Roxana* presents a darker and more cynical vision, without providing any easy resolution or answers. The events of the novel are presented from Roxana's perspective; yet she does not emerge as a likeable heroine. Although the portrayal of his heroines is marked by moral ambiguity, the didactic framework in his novels ensures conformity to society's expectations.

The epistolary mode, which became more popular as the novel as a literary form evolved, particularly suited the need to articulate the answers to society's unease over the secret desires and motivation of women protagonists. At the same time, such a point of view also justified the novelist's craft, by virtue of functioning as either a confessional or a manual for improvement of women. Letters were a popular and legitimate form of literature from the time of Aphra Behn, whose prose fiction prefigures the rise of the novel proper in the eighteenth century. It is the epistolary mode which again enabled the authors to subvert the dominant patriarchal ideology of passive femininity and modesty

and present their heroines as enterprising individuals aspiring to break free from their conventional social roles.

Richardson's protagonists are women, caught between social restrictions and personal desire. The didactic scheme of his first novel is indicated in the title itself, which presents the heroine as the model of virtue which ultimately emerges victorious. Pamela's trials begin when the elderly lady of the estate where she is employed as a servant dies: the latter's son, Squire B, attempts to seduce and kidnap her, but she resists his advances, and in the end succeeds in reforming him when he comes to know of her concern for his well-being. Nonetheless, Pamela remains an unreliable narrator, and we cannot be completely sure of her motives. Richardson further complicates these notions of class, gender and virtue in his next work, *Clarissa*, which presents a reversal in the didactic scheme, with the punishment of the guilty in place of "virtue rewarded". Clarissa's tragedy begins when she escapes with the help of the villain-hero Lovelace, who increasingly reveals himself as a brutal tormentor, determined to take advantage of the vulnerability of Clarissa. She wards off his advances but is raped and dies of a broken heart. Pamela and Clarissa are both ideals of virtue, yet their personal narratives cannot be taken at face value. Clarissa claims to be wholly truthful, but secretly cherishes feelings for Lovelace just as the latter's cynical amorality is shaken by Clarissa's principles. These tragic protagonists, though they are deeply attracted to each other, represent opposed value-systems. A complex web of correspondences, between Lovelace and his confidant on the one hand and between Clarissa and her friend Anna on the other bring out the moral ambiguities in the central relationship. These "readers" within the text provide us with multiple perspectives, and though the tale is seemingly one of a virtuous heroine violated by an amoral libertine, the subtext draws attention to the ambivalence in the narrative.

Though often left out from accounts of the eighteenth century novel, the women novelists of the period were very popular in their time and played an important role in the development of the genre. Among the major names are: Sarah Fielding (1710-1768), Frances Sheridan (1724-1766), Charlotte Lennox (1730-1804), Frances Burney (1752-1840), and Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823). Like the other novelists of their time, they experimented with different traditions. The work of the women novelists provides a unique perspective

on eighteenth century life. Frances Burney not only presents a satirical portrait of social hypocrisies, but more importantly, explores the question of female identity through her women-centric novels such as Evelina (1778) and *Cecilia* (1782). Charlotte Lennox's famous novel *The Female Quixote, or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752) offers a parallel perspective through parody, and sets up a dialogue between the novel and the romance, denouncing the latter. Sarah Fielding, the sister of Henry Fielding experimented with genres such as the sentimental novel and didactic literature for young readers, specifically girls.

- **Spirit of Enterprise:** The early novel betrays a certain restless energy, both in terms of form and content. The Protestant spirit of enterprise and hard work that formed the guiding principle of the upwardly mobile working and middle classes during this period of quick transitions is clearly manifest in the themes and subject matter of these novels. The popularity of *Robinson Crusoe*, the landmark text that in many ways defined the agenda of the novel, attests to the importance of labour and self-help in a society geared towards progress in terms of social mobility. Defoe's protagonists display a characteristic initiative for action and flair for adventure in spite of their marginalised status. Though obviously related to the religious ideology of Protestantism, such exuberance is clearly in excess of any straightforward notion of virtue, as can be seen in the accounts of Moll and Roxanna. The relationship between the notions of virtue and enterprise forms the subject matter of Richardson's *Pamela,* the exemplary story of a servant-girl who succeeds by marrying her aristocratic persecutor. This also serves as a testimony to the overriding value of work-ethic in a culture that prioritised tenacity and enterprise over rigid class hierarchies.
- **Travel/Quest motif:** From Robinson Crusoe to Roderick Random or Tom Jones, the protagonists of these early novels eagerly embrace the life of adventure. Perhaps this accounts for the widespread use of forms such as the bildungsroman, the picaresque and the romance in these novels. The popularity of travel literature in this period is evident from the proliferation of historical and semi-fictional accounts. Defoe capitalised on this trend in *Robinson Crusoe* by not only sourcing material from actual memoirs but also by creating a framework which lends credibility to the fictional narrative. Fielding redefined the novel by accommodating the spirit of picaresque within a broad moral

vision. In the works of the later novelists, Smollett and Sterne, the novel mostly moves in the direction of the episodic tale of adventure, lacking the tight structure of the works of Richardson and Fielding. Smollett's rogue-heroes are, in the end, also reformed and assimilated into the mainstream. The escapades of the tellingly named Roderick Random or Peregrine Pickle enable the author to launch a sharp satire against the prevalent malpractices and hypocrisies of his time. *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771) is a more experimental work, combining the epistolary and picaresque traditions in which a set of characters write to each other, describing their travels. The different perspectives provided by the diverse characters add up to a delightfully comic picture. Smollett's innovations can also be seen in this use of multiple perspectives and intertextual references - to his own earlier novel *Ferdinand Count Fathom*. Combining satire, sentimental correspondence and ludicrous humour, this text has an overall effect of sheer gaiety.

- **Realism versus Sentimentality**: Realism and sentimentalism are often understood as diametrically opposed traditions, with realism's focus on the mundane and the everyday, and sentimental literature's emphasis on affective storytelling. While formal realism generally prioritises the public sphere or man in society, in sentimental fiction the emphasis is on the individual's interiority and subjectivity. The affective appeal of sentimentalism, as opposed to the referential logic of realism, made the former particularly apt for voicing the desires of women characters. Women novelists of the period therefore readily adopted the mode. Sarah Fielding's *Adventures of David Simple* (1744) is an early example in this genre, although the sentimental novel became increasingly more popular in the latter half of the century. Richardson's first two immensely successful novels *Pamela* and *Clarissa* present the woman of feeling, while his later work *Sir Charles Grandison* in a way demonstrates how the portrayal of a virtuous hero with focus on the public life of action fails to sustain interest. Nonetheless, the ideal of the man of feeling was an important construct in eighteenth century culture with its emphasis on refinement and taste. "Sentimental novel" was a label frequently used by the writers of the time, whose highly charged and emotive fiction can be understood in part as a reaction to Enlightenment ideas of reason and also in terms of the influence of philosophers such as Rousseau, David Hume and Adam Smith. Rousseau's idea of the natural goodness of man and Adam Smith's

and Hume's stress on the relationship between morality and action find reflection in these novels of sensibility.

As a genre, the novel of sensibility became predominant in the second half of the eighteenth century, and towards the end of the century the ideal of sentimentality had moved towards a pejorative notion of excess of feeling. Parodies of the sentimental novel began early, Fielding's *Shamela* being an important example. In Sterne we find a more complex blend of wry humour and sentiment, with his witty take on Smollett's *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766). Sterne's *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) parodies not just Smollett's ill-humoured account, but the very genre of the travelogue with greater focus on the protagonist's experiences and interactions than on descriptions of travel or destinations. The narrator is Parson Yorick, the "sentimental traveller", through whom Sterne engages with the contemporary notion of sympathy to present a nuanced understanding of the various aspects of such a philosophy. The well-meaning protagonist who is at the same time readily susceptible to amorous scrapes makes for a text which combines irony with genuine feeling. In place of the usual easy equation between virtue and feeling, in Sterne we find an awareness of the double-edged nature of sentimental benevolence, the possibilities of self-indulgence under the cover of tenderness and charitable fellow-feeling.

While the novel of sensibility developed later in the century, it has to be remembered that sentimentalism is one of the driving and defining forces of the eighteenth century novel in general. If realism insists on authenticity, sentimentalism relies on emotion in such a project. The rivalry between the two modes is seen in the proliferation of parodic and satirical literature which ridiculed excessive sentiment and hypocritical posturing in the name of virtue. The target of these attacks is the manner of presentation or the surfeit that is associated with sentimentalism, not the moral consciousness underlying it. Although realism and sentimentalism are often regarded as opposed traditions, eighteenth century prose fiction therefore saw the coming together of these modes in a way that ultimately points to their unity of vision. Both traditions share a common agenda of moral action as ideal, with both attempting to define virtue and moral agency in diverse ways. These modes seldom operated in isolation; instead, eighteenth century literature shows how the politics of suffering and sentiment lends itself to effective realistic presentation.

1.3.4. Major Theories of The Rise of The Novel

The seminal work on the theory of the novel is Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, first published in 1957. Since then, several other theoretical works have attempted to explain areas not explored by Watt's thesis. Watt links the emergence of the novel to the rise of the middle class and its requirements, and emphasizes the notions of originality and authenticity in the idea of the eighteenth century novel. He relates modern philosophical individualism to realism, a mode which he considers to be foundational in the evolution of the novel as a form. Later theorists of the novel have questioned the linearity and the gaps in Watt's account and have drawn attention to forms of the novel that do not adhere to the conventions of formal realism. Watt has also been critiqued for failing to take into account the sizable number of women novelists of the period. Later theories point out the importance of other modes such as the satirical and the sentimental, which trace their lineages from traditions different from realism. The eighteenth century English novel is perhaps best understood as a hybrid form, combining features of multiple traditions. The search for prototypes of the novel will take us back to the sixteenth and seventeenth century prose narratives or to the even earlier popular verse narratives of the Middle Ages, the Romances. At the same time, the novel borrowed liberally form current literary and non-literary forms, thus bringing together old and new traditions.

1.3.5. Summing Up

In this Unit you have learnt about the factors behind the rise of the novel as a literary genre at this point of time, its earliest beginnings and the ways in which the new genre contributed to a unique trend in literary history hereto. You must have noticed how closely, right from its beginnings, the novel has come to be associated with ways of life of a large section of society in a way that no literary type has ever been. This will be a major ground behind the abiding popularity and interest of the novel in succeeding times. With help from your counsellor, you may analyse why this is so. Remember, Northope Frye called the novel a 'low mimetic form'. You are definitely expected to relate this in the larger context of the literary type.

1.3.6. Comprehension Exercises

Long questions (20 marks):

1. What were the factors leading to the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century? Discuss the rise of the new genre in the context of the larger intellectual and social changes in the period.
2. Discuss literature's relation to reality in the light of the emergence of realistic fiction in the eighteenth century.
3. What were the major genres and traditions that contributed to the shaping of the novel in the eighteenth century? Write your answer with reference to the major novels of the period.
4. Critically comment on the diverse eighteenth century concepts and forms of the novel, with reference to the defining texts of the period.
5. Show how the discourse of didacticism and sentimentality formed a central part of the novel writing enterprise in the eighteenth century. Comment on the relation between realism and sentimentalism in the fiction of the period.

Medium Length Questions (12 marks):

1. Show how and why the picaresque tradition gained prominence in 18th century fiction.
2. Write a note on the major women novelists of the period and give reasons for their popularity.
3. How did the print culture evolve in the 18th century? What was its contribution to the spread of the novel?
4. Write a short note on the major theories on the rise of the novel.

Short Questions (6 marks):

1. Show with reference to any two texts how the travel or quest motif formed an important trend of the period.
2. Write a short note on the parodic and satirical fiction of the period.
3. Discuss in brief Fielding's idea of the novel.
4. Write a short note on Sterne's anti-novelistic techniques.

1.3.7. Suggested Reading

Basil Wiley, *The Eighteenth Century Background*.

Walter Allen, *The English Novel*.

Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*

John Richetti ed._*The Cambridge companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel*.

Terry Eagtleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction*.

Paula R. Backscheider & Catherine Ingrassia Ed. *A Companion to the Eighteenth Century English Novel and Culture*

Module - 2 : Reading Poetry

Unit - 1 ❐ Alexander Pope: *The Rape of the Lock* (Cantos 1 – 3)

2.1.0. Introduction

To talk of Augustan literature is to talk of Alexander Pope, whether as poet or as a literary critic. This Unit will acquaint you with one of the abiding poetry texts of Augustan England, that captures in form and content the perfect ethos of the Age. From a trivial social quarrel between the social elites, Pope culls out a long poem that is mock-heroic in nature, forms a dispassionate critique of contemporary society, and yet charms the reader with wit, undeniable female beauty and of course the grace of the heroic couplet. As you read through this Unit, you should be able to apply in practice the Augustan poetic ethos that you have theoretically read in Module 1 Unit 2. You must also be on the look-out for marks of poetic excellence with rhetorical devices, and the deft blend of a romantic strain amidst all the neo-classical satire.

2.1.1. Alexander Pope - Brief Literary Biography

Alexander Pope was born in 1688 to Catholic parents in London. For the record, he was the son of a linen draper! The contemporary law that banned Catholics from education on pain of perpetual imprisonment also hampered Pope's education. He mostly educated himself by reading the works of classical writers such as the satirists Horace and Juvenal, the epic poets Homer and Virgil, and the major English authors like Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and John Dryden. He was also proficient in French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. Pope was closely associated with the London literary society including figures like William Wycherley, William Congreve and Joseph Addison. At an early age Pope was afflicted with Pott's disease (a form of tuberculosis that affects the bone) that deformed his body and stunted his growth, leaving him with a severe hunchback.

In 1709, Pope's *Pastorals* brought him instant fame. This was followed by *An Essay on Criticism*, published in May 1711. Pope was part of the satirical Scriblerus Club with Tory writers John Gay, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell and John Arbuthnot. The aim of the club was to satirise ignorance and pedantry in the form of the fictional scholar Martinus Scriblerus. His poem *The Dunciad* was a ruthless attack on inferior poets in London society. It pilloried a host of other hacks, scribblers and dunces including his rival poet Theobald and Colley Cibber. From your reading of Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* in Paper III, you have already formed an idea of how vitriolic such attacks could get.

Pope's magnum opus was *The Essay on Man*, a philosophical poem, written in heroic couplets and published between 1732 and 1734. The poem is an attempt to **'vindicate the ways of God to Man,'** a variation on Milton's attempt in *Paradise Lost* to 'justify the ways of God to Man'. Many of the ideas of the Enlightenment here coalesce with the ideas of Christianity.

2.1.2. Composition of *The Rape of The Lock*

In 1712 a curious incident rocked the English Catholic community. Lord Petre (the Baron of the poem) mischievously cut off a lock of hair from Arabella Fermor (Belinda of the text), a young *belle* and a cousin of Pope's friends, the Blount sisters.

The Catholic community (marginalised in England) was divided on the issue and Pope's friend John Caryll requested the poet to write a poem that could generate laughter and dissolve the social tension. Pope dedicated the poem to Arabella Fermor with the comment that "the character of Belinda, as it is now manag'd, resembles You in nothing but beauty". While Arabella seems to have been pleased initially with the idea, the ensuing publicity caused a degree of bitterness. The first (two-canto) version of the poem was published on 20th May 1712 in *Lintot's Missellany*. In 1713, Pope expanded the poem to include the 'Machinery' of the sylphs and the game of ombre, thereby giving completeness to the mock-heroic mode that he used in writing this long poem. This revised edition in five cantos that was even accompanied by six engravings was published in March 1714 and proved enormously popular. Never before had a social brawl produced such a comic yet sublime literature.

STOP, THINK THEN READ ON …

From this brief publication history of The Rape of the Lock, you should be able to deliberate on:

1. **The coordinates of relation between society and literature.**
2. **The pervasive virility and triviality that characterised elite English society.**
3. **Gender relations in Augustan England.**
4. **The use of neo-classical literary forms to portray social trivia.**

2.1.3. The Rationale Behind The Mock Heroic Poetic Mode

As a literary term 'mock-heroic' might be new to you. You must also be wondering - why did Pope choose the style of the mock heroic for his text? Pope himself commented that the "use of pompous expression for low actions ... is the perfection of the mock epic". The typical mock heroic chooses a trivial incident which is then described in epic terms with the use of epic features, metaphors and language. The discrepancy between the subject and style generates laughter and highlights the critical point that the text wants to make. In this case, by deliberately highlighting

a minor social brawl in epic terms, Pope was offering a subtle critique of Belinda's actions and advocating good nature and sense over rage and hysteria.

Activity for the Learner

Before you move on with this Unit, try and find, with help from your counselor, instances of the use of the mock-epic mode in earlier literature, starting from the Classical Age. You can also make a comparative chart between Epic and Mock-Epic practices. This will help you to understand the two literary modes for yourself. Notice how the mock-epic does not in essence, diminute the largesse of the epic scale of grandeur, but builds up its theme by contrast, as has been stated earlier. Your counselor might engage you in a discussion on what different forms the epic and mock-epic modes have taken in subsequent literature and why.

You might as well consider the fact that Pope's predecessor John Dryden also used the mock heroic in *Mac Flecknoe*. While the poets of the age held up the ancients as a subject of imitation, they raised contemporary social issues as the subject of their satire with the Horatian idea that poetry 'instructs while pleasing'.

The polite society of urban London demanded a culture of 'peace' and 'moderation' and Pope's poem offered reconciliation rather than conflict. But you will notice in course of the poem the elaborate and intricate use of the heroic parallels – Belinda is Helen of Troy and the theft of the lock is akin to the rape of her body; the elaborate ritual of the toilette is compared to the dressing of epic heroes; the supernatural figures are transformed into sylphs. It is this intricacy that provides such an aesthetic merit to the text. If you look at the ending, the conflict is resolved in the epic apotheosis where the lock is transformed into a star that is then immortalised by the poem! Thus the mock heroic is aestheticised by Pope – it achieves three things – **draws attention to the triviality of the quarrel and argues for good sense**, **satirises conflict** and **makes a case for reconciliation and intricately generates both great beauty and laughter**. All this is achieved at the base level, by the decision to employ the mock-heroic mode within the epic framework.

Notice for yourselves the stylistic features used by Pope. The epic tone merges with the aesthetic in a sublime hyperbole – "Belinda smil'd and the world was gay".

At the same time the triviality in Pope is brought out in the coexistence of the heroic and the feminine in Belinda's toilette. "Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet doux". The figure of speech of *bathos* (anticlimax) is recurrently used with irony and

zeugma. You might also say that Pope is minutely inflating the female domestic space and feminising the mock heroic.

You will also have noticed the quality of wit and humour in this poem. In a mock heroic satire the basic mood of attack and disapproval needs to be softened to some extent and made more palatable; wit and humor serve this end by making the criticism entertaining, and even attractive. In the words of Swift, 'As Wit is the noblest and most useful Gift of humane Nature, so Humour is the most agreeable, and where these two enter far into the Composition of any Work, they will render it always acceptable to the World'

Could you now make a list of specific literary techniques and constructions that lend themselves easily to satire because they can contain a measure both of wit and humor, and of the necessary irony or satiric association (Suggestions: exaggeration, distortion, understatement, innuendo, paronomasia, zeugma, ambiguity, simile, metaphor, oxymoron, parable, and allegory)? Does the contradiction between the heroic style and the trivial matter give you an idea of the satire and the humour that the poem seeks to convey? Your counselor will again help you to identify and understand these terms, as also explain their specific usages in the text of *The Rape of the Lock*.

2.1.4. Preview to The Text

Let us now take you through the first three cantos of the poem. The poem begins with an epic *sententia* or a statement of purpose.

> "What dire offence from am'rous Causes springs,
> What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things".

Notice how the sententia highlights the mock heroic quality, the dire offence and the amorous causes, the mighty contest and the trivial things. Pope seems to be highlighting that this is the pattern the poem will follow.

Dedicated to Pope's friend John Caryll, the poem proceeds to suggest that the entire episode is based on a moment of *amour* (desire) that can be resolved through marriage. There is also however a continuous undercurrent of sexuality – you might have already noticed it in the title! Pope is also arguing that women should not possess 'mighty Rage' in their 'soft bosoms'.

The poem then describes the tender moment of Belinda rising from her 'downy Pillow'.The fact that she gets up so late in the morning and the rich array of objects that she is surrounded with, suggests a world of aristocratic excess. Read carefully the episode where Belinda is introduced. Pope describes her as a woman with great beauty whose 'Eyes must eclipse the day'. It is through her beauty then that Pope introduces the heroic and the sublime quality in Belinda. Interestingly Belinda's morning dream is that of "A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau". The fact that Belinda is dreaming of the young handsome man is an indicator of the desire that she harbours within her. Yet she is willing only to flirt and not submit herself in marriage. The supernatural machinery is then described through the image of the miniscule sylphs. The sylphs are described as the 'light militia of the lower sky' and are former coquettes transformed after their death. They 'guard the purity of melting maids' and make them resist masculine advances. Pope later in Canto II describes them as objects of beauty, refracting sunlight through their tiny wings as they guard Belinda in military formation. You might wonder why Pope uses the machinery here. Firstly the sylphs add to the mock heroic quality – the supernatural is reduced to a minute level. They also add to the aesthetic quality of the text. But more importantly they create a hierarchy of coquettes across time through which Pope can direct his satire against female follies. Thus Belinda is not one single flirtatious woman; she is part of a tradition of women who are vain about their beauty and have flirted across history:

> "Think not when Woman's transient Breath is fled.
> That all her vanities at once are dead;
> Succeeding vanities she still regards,
> And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards".

These lines offer us a glimpse into Pope's satire against women as shallow and fascinated only with vanity and flattery. There is therefore a deep misogynistic satire embedded within the poem, although the very witty presentation might at first glance obfuscate the sting with the weapon of humour. The sylphs also deflect some of the satire from Belinda. The 'filigree' work of creating this magical world however makes *The Pope of the Lock* comic, yet sublime in beauty.

The next major episode is Belinda's dressing before the mirror. This is compared with the putting on the amour of an epic hero. Pope describes the moment with almost magical elevation with the 'silver vases laid in mystical order' and the process

as 'the sacred Rites of Pride'. Belinda's accessories include India's gems, African combs, files of pins, Persian perfumes. Notice the delightful hyperbole describing the entire process:

> "Now awful beauty puts on all its Arms,
> The fair each moment rises in the Charms,
> Repairs her smiles, awakn'sev'ry grace,
> And calls forth all the wonder of her Face."

We shall later discuss the significance of the wealth of details that are described by Pope on Belinda's dressing table.
Canto II continues to describe the attraction of Belinda's beauty through the image of the diamond Cross:

> "On her while Breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
> Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore."

This culminates in yet another hyperbole:

> "If to her share some female errors fall
> Look on her Face, and you'll forget them all"

The Baron makes his entry at this point as Pope describes his admiration for the 'bright locks' of Belinda. He sets up an altar to make sacrifices. (once again an epic parallel). But the altar is made only with books of romances! The mock heroic dissolves the moment by describing the altar as made with 'twelve vast romances, neatly gilt'! His prayers are to be granted soon.

Belinda makes her way to Hampton Court (the palace) across the Thames in a barge to engage in gossip over tea. The sylphs watch over her with great care and Pope's imagination seems to go into overdrive as he creates their fantastic minute world with their brilliant names – 'Zephyretta, Momentilla, Crispissa and their leader Ariel'.

Canto III begins with the aristocratic world of Hampton Court with its pervasive concern with gossip and a life of leisure.

> "Snuff, or the Fan, supply each Pause or Chat
> With singing, laughing, ogling and all that."

This is followed by an elaborate game of cards (ombre) that mirrors the epic conflict with the cards resembling the epic heroes battling on the plains of Troy:

"And Particolor'd troops, a shining Train
Draw forth to Combat on the velvet Plain."

Look at the way in which Pope uses the mock heroic mode to transform the violence of the battle into a polite game of cards, bringing to the foreground the life of leisure of the contemporary aristocracy. As Belinda wins this elaborate game, the ceremony of tea follows:

"From silver spouts, the grateful liquors glide
While China's Earth receives the smoking Tyde."

Meanwhile, the Baron is helped by Belinda's maid Clarissa who hands him the 'two' edg'd weapon, the scissor. Pope plays out the suspense as twice Belinda looks back, but finally the Baron cuts off the lock in a moment of a mock heroic climax:

"The meeting Points the sacred Hair dissever
From the fair Head, for ever and for ever!"

The moment is followed by Belinda's epic scream that is dissolved by an anticlimax:

"Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,
When Husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last"

The third canto ends on this note of the Baron's triumph.

You might also want to read the conflict generated by this action in Cantos IV and V. Canto IV describes Belinda's hysteric melancholia and rage as Pope describes the

"Force of Female lungs,
Sighs, sobs and Passions, and the War of tongues".

What is interesting is the comic vision of social chaos that such a rage entails:

"Sooner let Earth, Air, Sea, to Chaos fall,
Men, Monkies, Lap-dog, Parrots perish all!"

Canto V becomes crucial in introducing the voice of female reason through the maid Clarissa who advocates good sense and submission to male desire in marriage rather than hostility. Look at this passage carefully.

"Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid.
What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use.
And keep good Humour still what'vr we lose?

And trust me Dear! Good Humour can prevail,
When Airs, and Flights, and Screams and scolding fail
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll
Charms strike the sight, but Men't wins the soul."

Belinda however discounts her advice and the social brawl begins, with Belinda defended by the pompous Sir Plume. As already mentioned, the poem ends with the epic denouement (the *deux-ex-machina*) through divine intervention by transforming the lock to a star.

2.1.5. The Text of *The Rape of The Lock*

(With Annotations)

(Boldfaced Black Words Are Explained in the Notes)

Text Source—Great English Poems, edited by C.B Young. OUP, 1923

((The section divitions are made for easy understanding of the text)

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos;
Sed juvat hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.

— MARTIAL

Canto I

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to **CARYL, Muse**! is due:
This, ev'n **Belinda** may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If She inspire, and He approve my lays.
Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,
Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord? 10
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?
Sol thro' white **curtains** shot a **tim'rous** ray,
And **oped** those eyes that **must eclipse the day**:

Now **lap-dogs** give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,
And the **press'd watch** return'd a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow prest,
Her guardian **Sylph** prolong'd the balmy rest. 20
'Twas He had summon'd to her silent bed
The morning-dream that hover'd o'er her head;
A Youth more glitt'ring than a **Birth-night** Beau,
(That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)
Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay,...
And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say.

Notes

Pope substitutes Polytime for Belinda in the initial epigram from Martial. The original read :

'I was loth, Polytimus, to mar those locks of thine, but glad am I to have granted that much to thy prayers?

What...sing: I am writing (I sing) about a terrible offence resulting from an amorous cause. Clearly a mock-epic mode, but then, the greatest battles have always been fought over women as trophies!

Caryl, Muse: A friend of Pope, John Caryl, whom Pope addresses as the muse. An acquaintance of Caryl, Lord Petre, cut off a lock of hair of a young lady, Arabella Fermor. A quarrel erupted between the families. Caryl suggested that Pope write a poem to point up the silliness of the quarrel. Pope addresses Caryl as if he were a muse. Thus while Milton for instance invokes the Heavenly Muse to aid him in writing Paradise Lost, Pope's muse is a friend who actually commissioned him to write the poem to heal a tiff. Mock epic at its best.

Belinda: Arabella Fermor. Belinda is a poetic name associated with gentleness.

Goddess: Another reference to Caryl as the muse.

Sol: the sun

curtains: the curtains on Belinda's bed

tim'rous: timorous, meaning *shy, timid*

oped: opened

must eclipse the day: Belinda's eyes are so bright that they rival the brightness of the sun. Epic inflation on the one hand, and a genuine appreciation of beauty on the other. Repeatedly in this poem, you will find the neo-classic and the romantic aspects coalescing.

lap-dogs: dogs small enough to be held in the lap

press'd watch: a kind of clock. Pressing a button on it caused a bell to sound the current hour or quarter hour.

Sylph: fairy, sprite. The 1714 version of TROTL was unique in Pope's addition of the supernatural machinery which is essentially a feature of epic poetry. He derived this from the Rosicrucian doctrine as formulated by Le Comte de Gabalis in Germany in the 17th century. While we shall come to this in more detail in course of the poem, here the reference is to Belinda's guardian sylph Ariel, who controls all her motions, including even what she dreams!

Birth-night: evening celebration of a royal person's birthday

> **Fairest of mortals, thou distinguish'd care**
> **Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!**
> If e'er one vision touch'd thy infant thought,
> Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught;
> Of airy Elves by moonlight shadows seen,
> The **silver token**, and the **circled green**,
> Or virgins visited by Angel-pow'rs,
> With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs;
> Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
> Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
> **Some secret truths, from learned pride conceal'd,**
> **To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:**
> **What tho' no credit doubting Wits may give?**
> The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.
> Know, then, unnumber'd Spirits round thee fly,
> The light Militia of the lower sky:
> These, tho' unseen, are ever on the wing,
> Hang o'er the **Box**, and hover round the **Ring**.

Notes

Fairest... Air: The youth in her dream (Line 23) addresses Belinda as the fairest mortal, saying she is watched over by a thousand sprites inhabiting the air.

Silver token: coin left by a fairy as a gift for a favored mortal

Some...give: Certain secrets are revealed only to maidens like Belinda and to children, but not to highly educated people, who with all the knowledge at their disposal, are not well inclined to beliefs not sanctified by science or reason. Sceptics may doubt the truth of these secrets but Belinda and innocent children believe them. You can see in this the influence of nannies and bedtime stories.

Box, Ring: The spirits of the air hover around Belinda while she is in her theatre box or traveling in her carriage on a circular road (ring) in Hyde Park, a large park in the Westminster borough of London. So you see that in Pope's imagined world, a beauty like Belinda is never really 'alone', whether in private or public life.

Think what an equipage thou hast in Air,
And view with scorn two Pages and a Chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous mould;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly Vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when Woman's transient breath is fled
That all her vanities at once are dead;
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in **gilded Chariots**, when alive,
And love of **Ombre**, after death survive.
For when the Fair in all their pride expire,
To their first Elements their Souls retire:
The **Sprites of fiery Termagants** in Flame
Mount up, and take a **Salamander's** name.
Soft yielding minds to Water glide away,
And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental Tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of mischief still on Earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of Air.

Notes

Think...Chair: You now have an army of sprites to look after you, not just two pages

As...air: The sprites were once women with beauteous forms. After death, they became spirits of the air. Notice how Pope uses the supernatural to formulate his cutting satire on feminine follies and vanities. Even the spirits have a hierarchy, just like Milton talks of angelology. The kind of nature one had when alive, and the kind of life one led on earth determines, according to Pope, the category of the supernatural into which a woman qualifies after death!

Think...dead: After a woman dies, she retains an interest in amusements. This is a supreme understatement of womanly vanity in terms that are almost Chaucerian, as in 'The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales'. Your counselor will point out the obvious similarities between the two poets.

gilded Chariots: splendid carriages to ride in

Ombre: a popular card game for three players in which only 40 of the 52 cards are dealt—the eights, nines, and tens are held back.

Sprites...Termagants: The spirits of quarrelsome, overbearing women.

Salamander: in myth, a lizard-like reptile that lived in fire; a spirit in the alchemy of Paracelsus (1493-1541), a Swiss physician

Soft yielding: Beginning here and continuing down to Line 66, the meaning is as follows: Other sprites live in water, keeping company with nymphs (minor goddess inhabiting the sea). Some sprites in the earth as gnomes (dwarflike creatures), and some of them live in the air.

"Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
For Spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
What guards the purity of melting Maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,

The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
Tho' Honour is the word with Men below.
Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
For life predestin'd to the Gnomes' embrace.
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdain'd, and love deny'd:
Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While Peers, and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And **Garters, Stars, and Coronets** appear,
And in soft sounds, **Your Grace** salutes their ear.
'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young **Coquettes** to roll,
Teach Infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a Beau.

Notes

What...Sylph: Sylphs (sprites) guard the purity of maidens from men who would take advantage of them.

daring spark: a bold gentleman; an aggressive beau

Some nymphs: From this phrase down to Line 90, the poem says that some sprites urge young ladies to be proud. In their vanity, these women refuse the offers of gentlemen.

Garters, Stars, and Coronets: the badges and other insignia of persons of high rank.

Your Grace : a member of the nobility. Although the phrase is in second-person point of view, it is to be read in third-person point of view as if it says, "His Grace."
Coquettes: flirtatious women

Teach ...blush: Teach young ladies to wear rouge. The artificiality of Belinda's society is amply brought out by the fact that a blush, rather than being a natural response, can be made out at one's bidding!

Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The Sylphs thro' mystic mazes guide their way,
Thro' all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall.
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When **Florio** speaks what virgin could withstand,
If gentle **Damon** did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from ev'ry part,
They shift the moving Toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortals Levity may call;
Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.
Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I **ranged** the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn'd by the Sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!"

Notes

Florio, Damon: Names commonly used in poetry in Pope's time the way we use Tom, Dick, and Harry—or John Doe—today. On the face of it, they do not refer to a specific person but to men in general. Of course Pope is talking about elegant fops who would spend their days at cards or coffee tables and in company of flirtatious women, carrying on each others' soft skills at persuasion without yielding!

Where...drive: The young gentlemen are vying for the attention of the young ladies.

sword-knots: A sword knot was a loop of fabric or leather attached to the handle

of a sword. A swordsman placed the loop around his wrist as a support for maintaining his grip. Some sword knots were intended only as ornaments. Notice the diminution from the scale of epic battles insofar as weapons are concerned.

Beaux: plural of beau

This...all: Humans are wrong to think that young women are responsible for their frivolous and flirtatious behavior (levity). The truth is that sprites cause this behavior. There is supreme understatement in this. Logical, rational human beings can hardly comprehend the world of feminine follies and charms….that is Pope's frivolous idea.

Of these: Beginning with this phrase and continuing down to Line 114, Belinda's guardian sprite introduces himself as Ariel, then discloses that a dreadful event is about to happen. He does not know what will occur, or how or where, but warns Belinda to beware.

rang'd: ranged

He said; when **Shock**, who thought she slept too long,
Leap'd up, and wak'd his mistress with his tongue.
'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first open'd on a **Billet-doux;**
Wounds, Charms, and Ardors were no sooner read,
But all the Vision vanish'd from thy head.
And now, unveil'd, the **Toilet** stands display'd,
Each silver Vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the Nymph intent adores,
With head uncover'd, the Cosmetic pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And **decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.**

This **casket** India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The **Tortoise** here and **Elephant** unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, Powders, Patches, **Bibles**, Billet-doux.
Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown:
And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

Notes

Shock: Belinda's dog.

Billet-doux: love letter. From the French *billet* (*note*, *letter*) and *doux* (*sweet*). The French pronunciation is be yay DOO; the English pronunciation is BIL ay DOO.

Toilet: dressing table or dressing room. It is a curious life indeed where a woman wakes up nearly at mid-day to cast her eyes on a 'love' letter!

Th' inferior Priestess: Servant, maid. Betty by name.

decks...spoil: adorns Belinda with jewels and other ornaments. It is worth remembering that by this time England was emerging as a colonial power with economic interests in Asia and Africa. A careful perusal of the items of Belinda's toilet will reveal that it contains in miniature the best of England's colonial dominions.

casket: box, case.

Tortoise: The shell of a tortoise was used in making combs.

Elephant: Reference to ivory.

Bibles: Small Bibles were fashionable accessories on ladies' dressing tables. The epic parallel to warfare is nowhere better evident than in this line. All the items in Belinda's dressing box would also be items that could be found in a soldier's kit bag, when on duty in the battle field. Of course, the uses vary for a woman like Belinda and a soldier. Interestingly, pages of the Bible also found good use as curlers for women's hair do!

Now...arms: Here begins an epic convention, a warrior putting on his armor. In this case, of course, it is a woman putting on her clothes in preparation for vying in the battle of the sexes.

Canto II

Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair Nymphs, and well-dress't Youths around her shone.
But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if Belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

Notes

Not...plain: Here begins an epic convention, the great voyage. In this case, Belinda is traveling in a boat on the Thames River with youths and guardian sprites. They all look so glorious that they rival the sunshine. Pope's enthusiasm in describing the gorgeous beauty of Belinda (there is no denying that she is beautiful, charms or no charms) can find a parallel only in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, where we have Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra on the barge. You need to see the number of times that the sun becomes a metaphor/competitor for Belinda's beauty; and not the moon which is conventionally the parameter of a woman's beauty. Clearly, Pope's idea is that Belinda's beauty has the power to outrival the sun, which is the source of all light and life.

Which... kiss: An offensive line that is out of place in an otherwise delightful poem. But then, the dig on religion should not also escape notice.

This Nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two Locks, which graceful hung behind.
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.
Th' advent'rous Baron the bright locks admir'd;
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd.
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a Lover's toil attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.

Notes

Love...detains: Young men fall in love with her glorious curls (labyrinths) of hair, becoming slaves to her beauty. Noticeably, love is trivialised here in being equated with what is really infatuation.

With...ensnare: Just as we catch game birds in snares and fish ("finny prey") in nets, Belinda catches men with her hair.

springes: traps, snares

finny: having fins

For this, ere **Phoebus** rose, **he** had implor'd.
Propitious heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r ador'd,
But chiefly Love—**to Love an Altar built,**
Of twelve vast French Romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
And all the trophies of his former loves;
With tender Billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r,
The rest, the winds dispers'd in empty air.

Notes

Phoebus: Apollo, the sun god. Phoebus means bright one. In Greek mythology, Phoebus Apollo became the sun, driving his golden chariot across the sky. Thus, Phoebus became a synonym for sun.

he: the baron (mentioned in Line 29).

to...built: From here down to Line 46, the poem says the baron places mementoes of young ladies of his acquaintance on an altar. Then he burns them in a "funeral" fire (pyre) fueled with love letters; he is offering a sacrifice that the gods may grant his wish to obtain locks of Belinda's hair.

But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And soften'd sounds along the waters die;
Smooth flow the waves, the Zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay.
All but the Sylph-with careful thoughts oppress,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
He summons strait his Denizens of air;
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
Soft o'er the shrouds aerial whispers breathe,
That seem'd but Zephyrs to the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light,
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes,
While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
Superior by the head, was Ariel plac'd;
His purple pinions op'ning to the sun,
He rais'd his azure wand, and thus begun.

Notes

Zephyrs : west winds or soft breezes.

Sylph : Ariel

He...repair : Ariel summons his helpers, and they gather around Belinda.

shrouds: ropes or wires attached to a mast and secured on the sides of a ship. They keep the mast steady.

light...flings: The light displays a variety of colors.

disports: plays; amuses itself

pinions: wings

Ye Sylphs and **Sylphids**, to your chief give ear!
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Daemons, hear!
Ye know the spheres and various tasks assign'd
By laws eternal to th' aerial kind.
Some in the fields of purest Aether play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets thro' the boundless sky.
Some less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the **glebe** distil the kindly rain.
Others on earth o'er human race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
Of these the chief the care of Nations own,
And guard with Arms divine the British Throne.

Notes

Sylphids: Female sylphs, female sprites

Ye know: From this phrase down to Line 90, Ariel describes the tasks assigned to the various kinds of sprites. The deliberate trivializing that Pope does with the use of the divine machinery reaches its height when we are told that these supernatural creatures are even entrusted with the protection of the British throne! This is indeed social satire at its best.

glebe: earth

Our humbler province is to tend the Fair,
Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd-essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs;
To steal from rainbows e'er they drop in show'rs
A brighter **wash**; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a **Flounce**, or add a **Furbelow.**
This day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair,
That e'er deserv'd a watchful spirit's care;
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight;
But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night.
Whether the nymph shall break **Diana's law**,
Or some frail China jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade;
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall.
Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
The flutt'ring fan be **Zephyretta**'s care;
The drops to thee, **Brillante**, we consign;
And, **Momentilla**, let the watch be thine;
Do thou, **Crispissa**, tend her fav'rite Lock;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of **Shock.**

Notes

Our humbler province: From this phrase down to Line 100, Ariel tells his sprites that one of their jobs is to tend to the needs of fair ladies—to keep their powders and perfumes in place, to curl their hair, to put color in their cheeks, etc.
wash: skin lotion

Flounce: frill or ruffle

Furbelow: also a ruffle or any other ornament

Diana's law: the law of Diana (Greek name, *Artemis*), Apollo's twin sister and the virgin goddess of chastity. This law required young women to maintain their chastity. The convoluted scale of values is evident here as nowhere before, through a series of condensed sentences that equate a woman's chastity at par with her make up or even the breaking of a bone china crockery – all of which are preserved by the divine machinery alone.

Zephyretta: Sprite in charge of regulating the wind generated by a fan.

drops: earrings.

Brillante: Sprite in charge of earrings

Momentilla: Sprite in charge of watching the time

Crispissa: Sprite in charge of guarding Belinda's favorite lock of hair.

Shock: Belinda's dog.

To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the Petticoat:
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.
Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;
Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye:
Gums and **Pomatums** shall his flight restrain,
While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain;
Or Alum **styptics** with contracting pow'r
Shrink his thin essence like a rivel'd flow'r:

Or, as **Ixion** fix'd, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling **Mill**,
In fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below!
He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;
Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;
Some **thrid** the **mazy** ringlets of her hair;
Some hang upon the pendants of her ear:
With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.

Notes

Pomatums: ointments

styptics: preparations that stop bleeding

rivel'ed: shriveled, shrunken

Ixion: In Greek mythology, King of Lapithae, who dared to fall in love with Hera, queen of the gods and wife of Zeus. To punish him, Zeus had him tied in Hades to a wheel that revolved nonstop.

Mill: chocolate mill. Could also topically mean rumour mill.

thrid: threaded

mazy: like a maze

Canto III

Close by those **meads**, for ever crown'd with flow'rs,
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising tow'rs,
There stands a **structure** of majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
Of foreign Tyrants and of Nymphs at home;
Here thou, great **Anna**! **whom three** realms obey,

Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes Tea.
Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste awhile the pleasures of a Court;
In various talk th' instructive hours they past,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.

Notes

meads: meadows

structure: the royal palace at Hampton Court

Anna...three: Anne (1665-1714), queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1702 to 1714.

At...dies: There was much gossip at the court, the infinite range of which can well be gauged from the parameters that Pope here talks of. TROTL is among other things, explicitly a society poem in the Augustan neo-classical vein, and the casual indifference of the foppish gallantry as also the women of 'refined' tastes can well be evidenced here.

Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the Toilet cease.
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,
Burns to encounter **two adventrous Knights**,
At Ombre singly to decide their doom;

And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.
Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
Each band the number of the sacred nine.
Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card:
First Ariel perch'd upon a **Matadore**,
Then each, according to the rank they bore;
For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.
Behold, four Kings in majesty rever'd,
With **hoary whiskers** and a forky beard;
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer pow'r;
Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and **halberts** in their hand;
And particolour'd troops, a shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

Notes

two...Ombre: Ombre requires three players. Here, Belinda will vie with two gentlemen. Interestingly, she is the challenger here. These lies could be a revealing commentary on gender relations in contemporary elite social circles.

Straight...join: Here begins an epic convention, the battle.

Each...nine: In Greek mythology, the nine muses of Mount Olympus. The cards, dealt in groups, correspond in number to the nine muses in Greek mythology.

Matadore (also Matador): card of the highest value in ombre

hoary whiskers: gray moustaches

halberts (also *halberds* or *halbards*): A halbert was a weapon with a shaft five to six feet long topped by a pike, or spearhead, and below the pike an axe blade. A warrior could thrust with a halbert, as with a spear, or hack, as with a battle-axe.

The skillful Nymph reviews her force with care:
Let Spades be trumps! she said, and trumps they were.
Now move to war her sable Matadores,
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillo first, unconquerable Lord!
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.
As many more **Manillo** forc'd to yield,
And march'd a victor from the verdant field.
Him **Basto** follow'd, but his fate more hard
Gain'd but one trump and one **Plebeian** card.
With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight reveal'd,
The rest, his many-colour'd robe conceal'd.
The rebel **Knave**, who dares his prince engage,
Proves the just victim of his royal rage.
Ev'n mighty Pam, that Kings and Queens o'erthrew
And mow'd down armies in the fights of **Lu**,
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the victor spade!
Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;
Now to the Baron fate inclines the field.
His warlike Amazon her host invades,
Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.
The Club's black Tyrant first her victim dy'd,
Spite of his haughty **mien**, and barb'rous pride:
What boots the regal circle on his head,
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
And, of all monarchs, only grasps the **globe**?

Notes

Spadillo: ace of spades

Manillo: two of spades, a card of high value

Basto: ace of clubs, card with third-highest value

Plebeian: card of little value

Knave: jack

Pam: jack of clubs

Lu: Loo, a card game in which the jack of clubs had the highest value

mien: manner

What boots the regal circle: what good is the regal circle

globe: golden ball which, along with a seeptre, was an emblem of royal power

The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;
Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his face,
And his refulgent Queen, with pow'rs combin'd
Of broken troops an easy conquest find.
Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous **strow** the level green.
Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,
With like confusion different nations fly,
Of various habit, and of various dye,
The pierc'd battalions dis-united fall,
In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.
The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,
And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.
At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look;
She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and **Codille**.

And now (as oft in some distemper'd State)
On one nice Trick depends the gen'ral fate.
An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen
Lurk'd in her hand, and mourn'd his captive Queen:
He springs to Vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.
The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
The walls, the woods, and **long canals** reply. 100

Notes

strow: archaic form of *strew* . This and the next line are strikingly redolent of Milton's description of the fallen angels in the lake of molten lava after their defeat in the battle against God in Paradise Lost, Bk 1. Also interesting are the images of colour that Pope uses to talk of the fallen cards – the insinuation is directly to England's colonial subjects. From this point of view TROTL could also be studied as a text that shows early traces of postcolonial thought in a metaphoric way. Your counselor will definitely tell you more on this.

Codille: A development in which the challenger failed to win the necessary cards. On the next play, Belinda wins the game. There are also traces of possible feminist historiographical study in the fluctuating fortunes of Belinda in the game of ombre. Here it is a male card that comes to the rescue of the female card, and thereby of Belinda too. The exultant shout she ensues forth however comes for a bit of spat from Pope, as his chastising remarks in the next stanza will show.

long canals: The canals on the grounds of Hampton Court

Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.
Sudden, these honours shall be snatch'd away,
And curs'd for ever this victorious day.
For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,
The **berries crackle**, and the mill turns round;
On shining **Altars of Japan** they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:

From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While **China's earth receives the smoking tide:**
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the Fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.
Coffee, (which makes the politician wise,
And see thro' all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain
New Stratagems, the radiant Lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere't is too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of **Scylla's Fate!**
Chang'd to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd hair!

Notes

berries crackle: The coffee beans crackle when roasted on the mill.

Altars of Japan: tables coated with varnish made from a substance of a Japanese tree of the cashew family.

China's...tide: The china coffee cups receive the steaming coffee.

Scylla's...hair: In Greek mythology, Scylla betrayed her father, Nisus, King of Megara, by cutting off a lock of his hair—a purple lock with magical powers that safeguarded him and his kingdom. Scylla did so because she was in love with her father's enemy, King Minos of Crete, who was attacking Megara. Nisus died and was changed into a sea eagle. Scylla later drowned and was changed into a sea bird that was chased by the eagle. Pope here evokes the classical parallel as a word of caution for the Baron who has been eyeing Belinda's lock of hair. In the process, Belinda is once again given added dimensions.

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edg'd **weapon** from her shining case:
So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the **fragrant steams** she bends her head.
Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitch'd the diamond in her ear;
Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the Virgin's thought;
As on the **nosegay** in her breast reclin'd,
He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her art,
An earthly Lover lurking at her heart.
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retir'd.

Notes

fragrant steams: steam from the hot coffee

weapon: scissors. Another instance of the use of hyperboles to achieve the effect of comic deflation. An ordinary pair of scissors becomes a weapon or a little engine, later a glittering forfex! The power of steel will be spoken of later. The obvious association is with the weapons of a deadly battle. Notice the reversal of roles. In the Toilet scene Belinda was arming for 'battle'; now she is about to be 'vanquished'. By locating an earthly lover lurking in her heart, Pope nonetheless gives human dimensions to Belinda – over and above all her artificiality.

nosegay: small bouquet of flowers

The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring **Forfex** wide,
T' inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.
Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,
A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd;
Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again)
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!
Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heav'n are cast,
When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich China vessels fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie!
Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine
(The victor cry'd) the glorious Prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British Fair,
As long as **Atalantis** shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a Lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!
What Time would spare, from **Steel receives** its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!
Steel could the labour of the Gods destroy,
And **strike to dust th' imperial tow'rs of Troy**;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew **triumphal arches** to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel,
The conqu'ring force of unresisted steel?

Notes

The Peer: the baron

Forfex: Latin for *scissors*

Atalantis: Reference to *The New Atlantis*, a popular gossip novel by Mary de la Riviere Manley (1663-1724). It alluded to real-life scandals.

Steel receives: From this phrase down to Line 178, the poem tells of the power of steel to endure, to destroy the work of gods and men, and, of course, to trim a lock of hair.

strike...Troy: In the Trojan War, the Greeks—using swords and spears of steel—slaughtered the Trojans and destroyed their city after gaining entry to the city inside a wooden horse.
triumphal arches: arches built to honor and memorialise great men and heroes.

2.1.6. Satire in *The Rape of The Lock*

While the poem is an exquisite work of beauty, Pope raises significant satirical points within it. You have already seen that satire occupied a significant space in eighteenth century poetry. So what are the components of this satire?

- **SATIRE ON WOMEN** The first major subject of satire is Belinda and through her the 'little unguarded follies' of women. While Belinda's beauty is praised, her narcissistic obsession with her own self is subtly criticised. The way she treats her toilette as a ritual and the way in which she uses her beauty to flirt and attract the attention of several beaus at the same time is strongly ridiculed. Consider the lines that seem to suggest that women have little intelligence:

  "Then gay ideas crowd the vacant Brain

  While Peers and Dukes, and all their sweeping Train

  And Granters, Stars and Coronets appear,

  And in soft sounds, Your Grace salutes their ear."

Belinda's dressing table is described as a moral muddle where Bibles and *billet doux* coexist. The flirtatious nature of Belinda is brilliantly expressed:

"Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,

Quick as her Eyes and a unfix'd as those

Favours to none, to all she smiles extends,

Off she rejects, but never once offends."

Her heart is then categorised as a 'moving toyshop'. Female sexuality and desire are seen as socially chaotic and therefore must be contained through Clarissa's speech. Also note that Belinda is not alone – through the sylphs Pope suggests that all women are obsessed by looks, beauty and coquettishness. Working deep within this poem is the idea of the *femme fatale* – the fatal woman who circulates desire and causes social destruction. Many critics have thus argued that Pope is subtly satirising the battle of the sexes – the Baron and Belinda represent men and women in society vying in a struggle for power.

- **SATIRE ON ARISTOCRATIC SOCIETY**: Another major target of satire of Pope is the aristocratic society of the contemporary England. Through Belinda and Hampton Court, Pope presents society as characterised by idleness, gossip and a life of leisure, card-games and tea. That a trivial incident might provoke a social brawl is also an indictment. Consider Pope's description of courtly society:

  "Either the heroes and the Nymphs resort,

  To taste awhile the Pleasures of the Court

  In various Talk th' instructive hours they past

  Who grace the Ball, or paid the visit last

  One speaks the glory of the British queen

  And one describes a charming Indian Screen

  A third interprets Motions, looks and Eyes

  At Ev'ry word a Reputation dies

  Surf or the Fan, supply each Pause of Chat

  With singing, laughing, ogling and all that"

Notice how this idle world is contrasted with the hard working world of the merchant

who 'from the Exchange returns in Peace' and the unfortunate wretches who "hang so that Jury men may dine."

The mock heroic becomes critical here – in elevating this idle world and activity to a heroic level, Pope seems to underscore its sterility. Given that Pope was the son of a linen draper, would he have viewed this idle world with scorn? Or do we locate a deep ambiguity here – he is critical of this world, but the brilliance of the language suggests he is half in love with it? Can you notice a similar approach in Pope's treatment of Belinda?

2.1.8. Key issues in *The Rape of The Lock*

- **Approaches to Colonialism**

While reading the poem you must have been fascinated with the sheer material quality of Pope's poem. Just consider the number of objects he describes - the 'watch with the Silver sound', the 'heavenly glass' and so on. These passages seem suggestive. Belinda's dressing table seems to be a veritable catalogue of the resources that colonial England seemed to have plundered from its various colonies:

"This Casket **India**'s glowing Gems unlocks

And all **Arabia** breathes from Yonder box

The **tortoise** here and the **Elephant** unite."

Note also the elaborate ceremony of tea drinking – the tables are made of the 'shining Altars of Japan' (lacquered tables), the tea is poured from 'China's Earth' (Porcelain) and both tea and coffee were products of rampant colonialism. Through both these ceremonies, the extent of London as a hub of colonial riches is underscored.

If you carefully notice, beneath the brilliant edifice of the poem lies a subtle menace of violence. Is this violence merely about the violation of the 'black lock of hair' or the female body? Or is it an allusion to the violence of the colonial powers against the colonies? Take a close look at the fair Belinda as she steps out:

"On her white Breast, a sparkling Cross she wore

Which Jews might kiss and Infidels Adore"

Does Belinda's white breast signify the Western white (European) power with its Christian overtones overwhelming the colonies of Infidels?

In that case what is Pope's attitude to colonialism? Pope seems to validate the process, celebrating the wealth and power that it brings to England. What is interesting is Pope's celebration of Belinda's world as one of iridescent light while darkness is associated with chaos and gloom. Contrast Pope's attitude with that of Jonathan Swift who ruthlessly criticises the process of colonialism and violence in *Gulliver's Travels*. Stewart Crehan points out:

> Perhaps, then, we should focus our attention on those elements in *The Rape of the Lock* that point forwards, rather than those that seem to shore up the social and aesthetic ideology of their historical moment. In showing us how, in the doubly-inverted order of mercantile-capitalist society, people are turned into objects and objects rule people; how metaphor is deconstructed into metonymy, and how female beauty, like any commodity or desirable piece of property, is invested with the reified and ultimately violent and destructive values of bourgeois society.

Laura Brown, while noting that Belinda's world is one "in which objects have taken over all the meaning," indicts Pope for not showing us the "real" Belinda: "Belinda's beauty can only be seen through the commodities that she wears; the question of whether there is a real beauty, or a real Belinda, behind those spoils remains unanswered."

There were dissenting voices like Jonathan Swift who in *Gullivers Travels* bitterly critiqued European colonialism as a savage display of the enormous greed. However, for the majority of the English writers, colonialism was a positive force that brought prosperity and virility to the nation. We have already seen that for Andrew Freeport in Addison's *The Spectator Papers* the sea is the "British common" and Defoe's novels offer a great justification of the colonial project morally reforming potential criminals. Thus Jack in *Colonel Jack* or Moll Flaunders, Defoe's eponymous heroines undergo complete transformations through the colonial project.

- **THE STATUS OF WOMEN**: At the heart of the poem lies Pope's presentation of the status of women in eighteenth century society. Female education was severely restricted and female sexuality was scrutinised with significant anxiety. Pope's text seems to reiterate these anxieties, using the incident of Arabella Fermor as a point of entry. If you look carefully, Pope presents several versions of female subjectivity. Firstly there is the version of Thalestris in Canto IV – the Amazonian woman who provokes violence and

aggression and causes social chaos.

"To Arms, to Arms! The Fierce Virago Cries

And swift as lightening to the Combate flies."

The second version is that of the hysterical feminine, marked by bouts of depression ("The nymphet in beauteous grief appears / Her eyes half languishing") or hysteria ("sighs, sobs and passions"). It is this version that Pope describes in the Cave of Spleen in Canto IV.

The third version that Belinda articulates is that of the coquettish feminine who is willing to circulate her desire and sexuality, but unwilling to surrender herself in marriage. The most serious satire of this poem seems to critique this position. It is merely because of a moral concern of the woman locked in a fantasy of narcissism or is it a larger manifestation of the male anxiety over female power? Ultimately the poem must thus reduce the female subject to control and governance of male authority through the institution of marriage.

It is this position of passive womanhood that the poem seems to argue for and Clarissa's speech seem to be the voice of Pope. Clarissa reduces beauty to a transitory phase and argues about the validity Good Sense and Good Nature, the binaries of Amazonian or the hysterical womanhood.

"And trust me Dear! Good Humour can prevail,

When Airs, and Flights, and Screams and scolding fail

Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll

Charms strike the sight, but Men't wins the soul."

It is thus Clarissa has been seen as a surrogate voice of the poet and her speech apparently delivers the moral of the poem. Any such simple hypothesis can however be problematic because Clarissa is a more complex character. After all, it is she who hands over the scissors to the Baron just before she cuts off Belinda's hair. Why do you think she does this? Is this the hostility between the prude and the coquette? Do we notice an undercurrent in Clarissa, a jealousy about Belinda's beauty or a hostility fed upon the difference in social class? These questions leave a rich ambiguity about the meaning of the poem.

This wider range of poetic possibilities can be glimpsed in Pope's "Epitaph. On Mrs. Corbet, Who Dyed of a Cancer in her Breast". This is a poem you can read when

you are reading the text of *The Rape of the Lock*. Note how Pope describes the 'good' woman:

Here rests a Woman, good without pretence,
Blest with plain Reason, and with sober Sense:
No Conquests she, but o'er herself desir'd,
No Arts essay'd, but not to be admir'd.
Passion and Pride were to her soul unknown,
Convinc'd, that virtue only is our own.
So unaffected, so compos'd a mind,
So firm yet soft, so strong yet so refin'd,

Elsewhere in the *Epistle to a Lady*, for example, we find two such epigrammatic paragraphs :

In Men, we various Ruling Passions find,
In Women, two almost divide the kind;
Those, only fix'd, they first or last obey,
The Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway.

(ll. 207-10)

Again and again the conservative and critical attitude of the poet toward women who are obsessed with sexualty is reflected:

Men, some to Bus'ness, some to Pleasure take;
But ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake:
Men, some to Quiet, some to public Strife;
But ev'ry Lady would be Queen for Life.

In *The Rape of the Lock* then, the question of ideology is the representation of the competing ideologies of female subjectivity. It may be suggested that there are three competing ideologies held up parallelly here. The first that we would like to draw your attention to is that of **aggressive womanhood** – articulated by Thalestris in Canto V. In this scene as Thalestris declares

To Arms, to arms: the fierce virago cries
And swift as lightning to the Combat flies

Pope creates a universe of chaos

'Heroes and Heroin's shouts confusedly rise

And base and treble voices strike the shies

leading to a vision of doomsday

"Earth shakes her nodding Tower's the Ground gives way

And the pale Ghosts start at the flash of day."

These passages are allied with the sense of the female hysteria that Pope has already evoked in the Cave of spleen

"Sooner let Earth, Air, Sea to Chaos fall

Men, Monkeys, Lap-dogs, Panots perish all."

The mock-heroic here releases the laughter but the darkening images, the sense of frenzy and the anxiety about social chaos betrays the patriarchal anxiety against what the eighteenth called the hysterical feminine. Aggressive womanhood thus creates a vision of apocalyptic collapse that requires divine intervention through the *deux ex machina*. One of the points that may be raised here is the presence of the martial rhetoric that dominates the game of ombre. This is different because it is part of the culture of the game and tinged within the structure of flirtation – the battle for control in the game of courtship. The fourth and fifth cantos actually draw upon the social brawl that threatens to destabilise society.

An antithesis to this, is of course the patriarchal fantasy of **passive womanhood**. This is articulated in the speech of Clarissa

"How vain are all these glories, all our Pains

Unless good sense preserve what Beauty gains:

That men may say when we the front box grace,

Behold the first in virtue, as in Face

… And trust me Dear, good Human can prevail

When Airs and Flights, and Screams and Scolding fail."

Notice how this speech directly refers book to the idea of 'good sense and good Humour' that Pope had articulated in the dedicatory epistle. Thus the lines move towards a vision of passive womanhood that accepts patriarchal mastery. It is this

vision that Samuel Richardson was also to reinvent in the eighteenth century novel *Pamela*.

The justification of this plea for passive womanhood is played out through a series of commentaries about the vacuity of Belinda's brain. The aesthetic merits of the poem are deceptively cruel here. They show attention to Belinda's great beauty but lead to a damming critique of her lack of intelligence and her mortal profligacy. Thus Pope can claim immortal beauty for Belinda in a line like

> "If to her share some female error fall
>
> Look on her face and you'll forget them all."

or compare her eyes with Sol. But it fixes Belinda as an object of the male gaze and Pope critiques her mental vacuity:

> "Then gay ideas crowd the vacant Brain"

This 'moving toyshop of her heart' is extended to all womankind through the sylphs who create a lineage of such moral muddled and empty headed giddy train of women engaging in flirtation. Thus this category of womanhood requires patriarchal supervision and control.

What we are suggesting here is that Pope is deeply implicating the poem into the woman question and offering versions of womanhood. In rejecting the subjectivity of aggressive womanhood as leading to social chaos, and by cleverly presenting female fickleness through the aesthetic he seeks to drive home a 'moral message' – a patriarchal fantasy of female subjection that was to haunt both the male and the female imagination in the mid eighteenth century until Mary Wollstonecraft raised questions about it. Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* notes how the eighteenth century public sphere successfully banished the woman from the public domain into the domestic sphere and Pope's poem was an integral agent in this process.

2.1.9. SUMMING UP

This Unit has definitely revealed to you in a nutshell why Alexander Pope remains the stalwart of 18th century literature. *The Rape of the Lock*, as you have seen, is truly a society poem that brings out almost all aspects of 18th century elite society. The garb of the mock epic, as repeatedly shown in this Unit, makes Pope satire less stinging in intent and more coated with humour. But to round off, you must keep in

mind that the liberal doses of satire alone would not have given the text its abiding fame; nor is Pope's critique of colonialism that anticipates post colonial thought the only strength of the long poem. It is the deft blend of these neo-classical traits with a streak of romanticism in the presentation of Belinda that gives the text a different flavour!

2.1.10. Comprehension Exercises

Broad Questions (20 marks):

1. How does Pope use the mock heroic elements in The Rape of the Lock? How do they add to the beauty of the poem?
2. "Pope's poem is a satire on eighteenth century aristocratic life". Do you agree? Justify your response.
3. *The Rape of the Lock* subtly deals with the phenomenon of colonialism". Discuss.

Medium Length Questions (12 marks)

1. "Pope's attitude towards women in *The Rape of the Lock* is deeply conservative". Do you agree? Justify your response.
2. Comment on the role of the sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*.
3. Bring out the veiled romantic aspects that you find scattered in *The Rape of the Lock*.

Short Questions (6 marks)

1. What are the various rhetorical figures used in *The Rape of the Lock* to highlight the mock heroic quality?
2. What is the significance of Belinda's dressing table in *The Rape of the Lock*?
3. Give an idea of the context in which *The Rape of the Lock* was composed.
4. What is the role of Clarissa in *The Rape of the Lock*?

2.1.11. Suggested Reading

Text

Students may read the entire annotated text using Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* ed. Harriet Raghunathan. New Delhi: Worldview, 2001.

Secondary Reading

Brown, Laura. *Alexander Pope*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.

Erskine-Hill, Howard. *The Social Milieu of Alexander Pope*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

Fairer, David. (ed.) *Pope: New Contexts*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.

Guerinot, J.V. (ed.) *Pope: Twentieth Century Views*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972.

Jack, Ian. *Augustan Satire: Intention and Idiom in English Poetry 1660-1750*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

Hunt, J.D. (ed.) *The Rape of the Lock: A Casebook*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1968.

Pollak, Ellen. *The Poetics of Sexual Myth: Gender and Ideology in the Verses of Swift and Pope*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985.

Unit - 2 ❐ James Thomson*:* 'Spring' from *The Seasons*

Structure

2.2.0. Introduction

In nature the passage of time is indicated by the diurnal (day and night) cycle and the annual cycle of the Earth orbiting around the sun. You know that the relative position of the sun and the earth that also rotates on its own tilted axis, brings about the intensity of sunlight as it is experienced by us on earth. This affects the weather or climate and creates seasons. In the British Isles there are four seasons—Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. However, when it is summer in the northern hemisphere, it is winter in the southern hemisphere. You may find it interesting to learn that though you see pictures of Christmas with snow on the trees, icicles hanging from the pinewood, holly and the snowman, in Australia and in New Zealand, Christmas is celebrated during summer time. In India and in Bengal the year is divided into six seasons. Most European countries do not experience monsoon which is a feature in tropical climates.

So, when you are reading James Thomson's "The Seasons" you need to remember that he is a Scottish poet writing about the four seasons in Britain. Also keep in mind that the legendary Garden of Eden was conceptualised as a place of eternal spring and the

seasons did not exist. Seasons are related to the passage of time and are linked to the Fall of Man and the Original Sin in Christian conceptions of the world.

In classical European literature, the Greek and Latin poets referred to a mythical Golden Age when Nature's overflowing bounty was easily enjoyed, without work or labour by the shepherds and shepherdesses in the countryside. It was a time when humankind lived in harmony with the world of nature. Rustic life was conceptualised as an ideal and happy life and country folk were considered innocent and simple in comparison to urban people. This is an idea that you will encounter again in William Wordsworth's poetry. This celebration of nature, landscape, the countryside, the flora and fauna, country life and occupations was called pastoral poetry. The intention of this unit will be to introduce the learner to all these ideas related to pastoral poetry though Thomson's "Spring".

2.2.1. James Thomson and The Precursors of Romantic Poetry

When reading the history of English literature, each period is characterised by certain predominant traits. These often help to identify a work as ' belonging' to a particular period or context. However literary works cannot be homogenised and even within a specific time period, heterogeneous trends become visible. This can make the works of an age interesting and complex, this also makes literature an individual response to experience and the environment.

Though in the first module of this course you have learnt about Enlightenment and Augustan characteristics that marked the literature of the eighteenth century, two of the poets who feature in your course here, do not conform entirely to the neo-classical tenets of composition.

James Thomson (1700-1748) and Thomas Gray (1716-1771) along with other poets like William Cowper (1731-1800), William Collins (1721-1759), James Macpherson (1736-1796), Edward Young (1683-1765), Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) are also called ' Pre- Romantic' poets. If you look at their dates however, it is apparent that on the time-scale, they were very much within the eighteenth century.

These above-mentioned poets while working largely within eighteenth century principles of composition, often in terms of theme or sentiments expressed, moved away from several eighteenth century norms. Already, romantic reactions to neo-classical trends like artificial poetic diction, urban-centred writing, objectivity in depicting emotions which were to be specified in *The Preface to The Lyrical Ballads* (1802) by Wordsworth

and Coleridge, become visible in the poetry of the eighteenth century 'precursors'. James Sutherland identified certain features that marked eighteenth century poetry - Nature, Good Sense, Correctness and Elegance. He called these 'transitional' poets 'truants and rebels' who broke with these typical eighteenth century norms of composition. These poets approached themes that involved creative and imaginative ways of looking at nature, beauty, art, love and death, to name a few of the concerns. The theme was no longer restricted to the interactions of human beings with one another or the role of politics, religion or other institutions in creating a stable and ordered society. Thomson's celebration of the seasons assimilated contemporary trends of scientific, aesthetic and philosophical thought and he observed natural law and human life more imaginatively than empirically. While he writes within the Latin pastoral tradition and is enthusiastic about Isaac Newton's perceptions and observations on the complexity of light documented in his treatise on *Opticks,* Thomson reshapes Augustan poetry by foregrounding the landscape and displaying his sensitivity to the effects of light (metaphorically, the imagination) on the natural scene.

William Cowper's *The Task* (1784/85) for example is a discursive poem that uses the idea of retirement to the countryside from active, urban preoccupations that also formed the theme of Horace's poetry. Cowper relates each of the six books in the poem to his natural environment and to the cycle of the seasons. Some of the humanitarian issues that became associated with later romantic poetry or the poetry of William Blake occur here— concern for the poor, critique of colonial oppression, corruption of London and commercialised city locales, injustice in all spheres of life.

'Ode to Evening' (1747?) by William Collins is a sensitive nature poem that evokes the landscape through distinct scenes and images. There is a specially cultivated simplicity and quietness that is new. His *Persian Eclogues* (1742) may be an early poetic attempt, but it clearly indicates the romantic preoccupation with the exotic and oriental. James Macpherson's pretence of rediscovering the primitive Scottish Gaelic poetry of Ossian and translating it for his readers anticipated the use of the ballad form in Romantic poetry, Percy's *Reliques* and nostalgia for the past.

Meditations on transience and mortality generated typical Augustan moralising and Christian didactic formulations. However increasingly such orthodoxy was formulated in language and imagery that was reflective, sombre and melancholic. Edward Young's *The Complaint: or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality (1742-45)* ruminates on life on the edge of death. Death itself and on immortality including resurrection. The most famous and enduring of such poems belonging to the 'graveyard school' is Gray's *Elegy* that you will read in the course.

Interestingly, several of these poets have also broken out of the confines of the heroic couplet to use blank verse. In the use of the Ode, the preferred form became the Pindaric Ode that was irregular and less restrained than the Horatian form. The poetic diction is also simplified in many cases to resemble actual language of communication.

The 'precursors' were also called transitional poets who continued certain traditions of poetry and extended its range of theme and style to inaugurate new beginnings.

What is Pastoral Poetry?

The English poets 'imitated' the traditions of Greek and Latin pastoralism. The Greek poet Theocritus (third century BCE) wrote his *Idylls* and presented a picture of an idealised Golden Age. He celebrated nature and the rustic life.

The Latin poet Virgil (first century BCE), wrote Latin *Eclogues* (c.40 BCE) and *Georgics* (c. 35 BCE) which was pastoral poetry. He described a natural paradise in his *Eclogues* but also referred to contemporary Roman events. The *Georgics* refer to real agricultural issues and work towards restoring harmony between man and nature. So it is incorrect to think that pastoral poetry evokes a sense of loss and nostalgia.

The Greek farmer-poet Hesiod (eighth century BCE) in *Works and Days* describes the five ages of mankind, the oldest being the Golden Age. Hesiod gave practical advice to the farmer depending on the seasonal cycle and drawing up a veritable farmer's calendar.

These trends of blending the ideal and the real, the mythical past and the contemporary, the descriptive and the didactic were continued in British pastoral writing. The Renaissance in England encouraged various categories of the literary pastoral in poetry and in prose.

2.2.2. About *The Seasons*

James Thomson was writing the poem, that we are discussing, between the second and third decade of the eighteenth century. Though the poem published in 1730 has four-sections and a concluding hymn, it was composed in different parts and was revised several times. Thomson's writing career began as an Edinburgh University student in 1715 when he published poems in *The Edinburgh Miscellany* in 1720. When he came to London in 1725 as a private tutor living in his patron's house, he combined fragments that he had written earlier into the "Winter" section of *The Seasons* and published it in 1726. "Summer" appeared in 1727 and "Spring" in 1728.The final poem of the cycle, "Autumn" was included only in the first complete edition in 1730.

The Seasons is a long (5541 lines after final revision in 1746) blank verse poem and the "Spring" section is itself 1082 (in the 1730 edition) lines. Here we are including a few representative lines from the "Spring" section of the poem. Thomson is considered to be a Pre-romantic poet whose passion for Nature anticipates the emotions expressed by the Romantic poets. The Neo-classical age to which Thomson belonged described nature from observation, through the logical and scientific eye. Thomson's own poetry is meticulous in describing the natural world yet is sensitive to emotions of pleasure and reverence aroused by an intuition of a Supreme Being immanent in Nature. In a significant move away from Augustanism, Thomson defied Alexander Pope's dictum that 'The proper study of mankind is Man' and reconstituted the true poetic subject. He found Nature elevating, arousing philosophical reflection and moral sentiment. He asks, "Where can we meet with such variety, such beauty, such magnificence — all that enlarges and transports the soul?"

2.2.3. Text of 'Spring'

- **The Argument**

The subject proposed. Inscribed to the Countess of Hartford. The Season is described as it affects the various parts of nature, ascending from the lower to the higher; and mixed with digressions arising from the subject. Its influence on inanimate matter, on vegetables, on brute animals, and last on Man; concluding with a dissuasive from the wild and irregular passion of Love, opposed to that of a pure and happy kind.

- **Comment**

In the eighteenth century, the form or structure of poetry was important for determining the kind or genre. Accordingly the poet could choose the diction that maintained the decorum of the form. The 'Argument' explains the pattern of the poem. This is typically neo-classical as control and restraint were more important than lyrical digressions.

(Lines 1- 71)

COME, gentle Spring, ethereal mildness, come;
And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
While music wakes around, veiled in a shower
Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend.

O Hartford, fitted or to shine in courts
With unaffected grace, or walk the plain
With innocence and meditation joined
In soft assemblage, listen to my song,
Which thy own season paints—when nature all
Is blooming and benevolent, like thee.[1]

And see where surly Winter passes off
Far to the north, and calls his ruffian blasts:
His blasts obey, and quit the howling hill,
The shattered forest, and the ravaged vale;
While softer gales succeed, at whose kind touch,
Dissolving snows in livid torrents lost,
The mountains lift their green heads to the sky.

As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed,
And Winter oft at eve resumes the breeze,
Chills the pale morn, and bids his driving sleets
Deform the day delightless; so that scarce
The bittern knows his time with bill engulfed
To shake the sounding marsh; or from the shore
The plovers when to scatter o'er the heath,
And sing their wild notes to the listening waste.[2]

At last from Aries rolls the bounteous sun,
And the bright Bull receives him. Then no more
The expansive atmosphere is cramped with cold;
But, full of life and vivifying soul,
Lifts the light clouds sublime, and spreads them thin,
Fleecy, and white o'er all-surrounding heaven.[3]

Forth fly the tepid airs; and unconfined,
Unbinding earth, the moving softness strays.
Joyous the impatient husbandman perceives
Relenting Nature, and his lusty steers

Drives from their stalls to where the well-used plough
Lies in the furrow loosened from the frost.[4]
There, unrefusing, to the harnessed yoke
They lend their shoulder, and begin their toil,
Cheered by the simple song and soaring lark.
Meanwhile incumbent o'er the shining share[5]
The master leans, removes the obstructing clay,
Winds the whole work, and sidelong lays the glebe[6]
White through the neighbouring fields the sower stalks
With measured step, and liberal throws the grain
Into the faithful bosom of the ground:
The harrow follows harsh, and shuts the scene.[7]

Be gracious, Heaven, for now laborious man
Has done his part. Ye fostering breezes, blow;
In luxury and ease, in pomp and pride,
Think these lost themes unworthy of your ear:
Such themes as these the rural Maro sung
To wide-imperial Rome, in the full height
Of elegance and taste, by Greece refined.[8]
In ancient times the sacred plough employed
The kings and awful fathers of mankind;
And some, with whom compared your insect-tribes
Are but the beings of a summer's day,
Have held the scale of empire, ruled the storm
Of mighty war; then, with victorious hand,
Disdaining little delicacies, seized
The plough, and greatly independent scorned
All the vile stores corruption can bestow.[9]

Ye generous Britons, venerate the plough;
And o'er your hills and long withdrawing vales
Let Autumn spread his treasures to the sun,
Luxuriant and unbounded. As the sea
Far through his azure turbulent domain
Your empire owns, and from a thousand shores

Wafts all the pomp of life into your ports;
So with superior boon may your rich soil,
Exuberant, Nature's better blessings pour
O'er every land, the naked nations clothe,
And be the exhaustless granary of a world![10]

from The Seasons: Spring (lines 569–761)

As rising from the vegetable World
My Theme ascends, with equal Wing ascend,
My panting Muse; and hark, how loud the Woods
Invite you forth in all your gayest Trim.[11]
Lend me your Song, ye Nightingales! oh pour
The mazy-running Soul of Melody
Into my varied Verse! while I deduce,
From the first Note the hollow Cuckoo sings,
The Symphony of Spring, and touch a Theme
Unknown to Fame, *the Passion of the Groves*.[12]

When first the Soul of Love is sent abroad,
Warm thro the vital Air, and on the Heart
Harmonious seizes, the gay Troops begin,
In gallant Thought, to plume the painted Wing;
And try again the long-forgotten Strain,
At first faint-warbled. But no sooner grows
The soft Infusion prevalent, and wide,
Than, all alive, at once their Joy o'erflows
In Musick unconfin'd. Up-springs the Lark,
Shrill-voic'd, and loud, the Messenger of Morn;
Ere yet the Shadows fly, he mounted sings
Amid the dawning Clouds, and from their Haunts
Calls up the tuneful Nations. Every Copse
Deep-tangled, Tree irregular, and Bush
Bending with dewy Moisture, o'er the Heads
Of the coy Quiristers that lodge within,
Are prodigal of harmony. The Thrush

And Wood-lark, o'er the kind contending Throng
Superior heard, run thro' the sweetest Length
Of Notes; when listening *Philomela* deigns
To let them joy, and purposes, in Thought
Elate, to make her Night excel their Day.
The Black-bird whistles from the thorny Brake;
The mellow Bullfinch answers from the Grove:
Nor are the Linnets, o'er the flow'ring Furze
Pour'd out profusely, silent. Join'd to these
Innumerous Songsters, in the freshening Shade
Of new-sprung Leaves, their Modulations mix
Mellifluous. The Jay, the Rook, the Daw,
And each harsh Pipe discordant heard alone,
Aid the full Concert: while the Stock-dove breathes
A melancholy Murmur thro' the whole.[13]

'Tis Love creates their Melody, and all
This Waste of Music is the Voice of Love;[14]
That even to Birds, and Beasts, the tender Arts
Of pleasing teaches. Hence the glossy kind
Try every winning way inventive Love
Can dictate, and in Courtship to their Mates
Pour forth their little Souls. First, wide around,
With distant Awe, in airy Rings they rove,
Endeavouring by a thousand Tricks to catch
The cunning, conscious, half-averted Glance
Of their regardless Charmer. Should she seem
Softening the least Approvance to bestow,
Their Colours burnish, and by Hope inspir'd,
They brisk advance; then, on a sudden struck,
Retire disorder'd; then again approach;
In fond rotation spread the spotted Wing,
And shiver every Feather with Desire.

Connubial Leagues agreed, to the deep Woods
They haste away, all as their Fancy leads,

Pleasure, or Food, or secret Safety prompts;
That *Nature's great Command* may be obey'd,
Nor all the sweet Sensations they perceive
Indulg'd in vain. Some to the Holly-Hedge
Nestling repair, and to the Thicket some;
Some to the rude Protection of the Thorn
Commit their feeble Offspring. The cleft Tree
Offers its kind Concealment to a Few,
Their Food its Insects, and its Moss their Nests.
Others apart far in the grassy Dale,
Or roughening Waste, their humble Texture weave.
But most in woodland Solitudes delight,
In unfrequented Glooms, or shaggy Banks,
Steep, and divided by a babbling Brook,
Whose Murmurs sooth them all the live-long Day,
When by kind Duty fix'd. Among the Roots
Of Hazel, pendant o'er the plaintive Stream,
They frame the first Foundation of their Domes;
Dry Sprigs of Trees, in artful Fabrick laid,
And bound with Clay together. Now 'tis nought
But restless Hurry thro the busy Air,
Beat by unnumer'd Wings. The Swallow sweeps
The slimy Pool, to build his hanging House
Intent. And often, from the careless Back
Of Herds and Flocks, a thousand tugging Bills
Pluck Hair and Wool; and oft, when unobserv'd,
Steal from the Barn a Straw: till soft and warm,
Clean, and compleat, their Habitation grows.[15]

As thus the patient Dam assiduous sits,
Not to be tempted from her tender Task,
Or by sharp Hunger, or by smooth Delight,
Tho the whole loosen'd Spring around Her blows,
Her sympathizing Lover takes his Stand
High on th' opponent Bank, and ceaseless sings
The tedious Time away; or else supplies

Her place a moment, while she sudden flits
To pick the scanty Meal. Th' appointed Time
With pious Toil fulfill'd, the callow Young,
Warm'd and expanded into perfect Life,
Their brittle Bondage break, and come to Light,
A helpless Family, demanding Food
With constant Clamour. O what Passions then,
What melting Sentiments of kindly Care,
On the new Parents seize! Away they fly
Affectionate, and undesiring bear
The most delicious Morsel to their Young,
Which equally distributed, again
The Search begins. Even so a gentle Pair,
By Fortune sunk, but form'd of generous Mold,
And charm'd with Cares beyond the vulgar Breast,
In some lone Cott amid the distant Woods,
Sustain'd alone by providential *Heaven*,
Oft, as they weeping eye their infant Train,
Check their own Appetites and give them all.[16]

Nor Toil alone they scorn: exalting Love,
By the great *Father of the Spring* inspir'd,
Gives instant Courage to the *fearful* Race,
And to the *simple* Art. With stealthy Wing,[17]
Should some rude Foot their woody Haunts molest,
Amid a neighbouring Bush they silent drop,
And whirring thence, as if alarm'd, deceive
Th' unfeeling School-Boy. Hence, around the Head
Of wandering Swain, the white-wing'd Plover wheels
Her sounding Flight, and then directly on
In long Excursion skims the level Lawn,
To tempt him from her Nest. The Wild-Duck, hence,
O'er the rough Moss, and o'er the trackless Waste
The Heath-Hen flutters, (pious Fraud!) to lead
The hot pursuing Spaniel far astray.[18]

Be not the Muse asham'd, here to bemoan
Her Brothers of the Grove, by tyrant Man
Inhuman caught, and in the narrow Cage
From Liberty confin'd, and boundless Air.
Dull are the pretty Slaves, their Plumage dull,
Ragged, and all its brightening Lustre lost;
Nor is that sprightly Wildness in their Notes,
Which, clear and vigorous, warbles from the Beech.
Oh then, ye Friends of Love and Love-taught Song,
Spare the soft Tribes, this barbarous Art forbear!
If on your Bosom Innocence can win,
Music engage, or Piety persuade.[19]

But let not chief the Nightingale lament
Her ruin'd Care, too delicately fram'd
To brook the harsh Confinement of the Cage.
Oft when, returning with her loaded Bill,
Th' astonish'd Mother finds a vacant Nest,
By the hard Hand of unrelenting Clowns
Rob'd, to the Ground the vain Provision falls;
Her Pinions ruffle, and low-drooping scarce
Can bear the Mourner to the poplar Shade;
Where, all abandon'd to Despair, she sings
Her Sorrows thro the Night; and, on the Bough,
Sole-sitting, still at every dying Fall
Takes up again her lamentable Strain
Of winding Woe; till wide around the Woods
Sigh to her Song, and with her Wail resound.[20]

But now the feather'd Youth their former Bounds,
Ardent, disdain; and, weighing oft their Wings,
Demand the free Possession of the Sky.
This one glad Office more, and then dissolves
Parental Love at once, now needless grown.
Unlavish *Wisdom* never works in vain.
'Tis on some Evening, sunny, grateful, mild,

When nought but Balm is breathing thro the Woods,
With yellow lustre bright, that the new Tribes
Visit the spacious Heavens, and look abroad
On Nature's Common, far as they can see,
Or wing, their Range, and Pasture. O'er the Boughs
Dancing about, still at the giddy Verge
Their Resolution fails; their Pinions till,
In loose Libration stretch'd, to trust the Void
Trembling refuse: till down before them fly
The Parent-Guides, and chide, exhort, command,
Or push them off. The surging Air receives
The Plumy Burden; and their self-taught Wings
Winnow the waving Element. On Ground
Alighted, bolder up again they lead,
Farther and farther on, the lengthening Flight;
Till vanish'd every Fear, and every Power
Rouz'd into Life and Action, light in Air
Th' acquitted Parents see their soaring Race,
And once rejoicing never know them more.

[Source: *Poets of the English Language* (Viking Press, 1950)]

2.2.4. Notes and Glossary

1 In the opening lines Spring is invoked even as the poet addresses his patroness, the Countess of Hartford. Though literature was moving into the marketplace as a commodity, the culture of aristocratic patronage still continued. The poet draws an analogy between Spring, its beauty and gentleness with that of the Countess. It was a tradition to use the seasons as symbols for the stages in human life. Spring was equivalent to early youth, Summer to later youth, Autumn to maturity and Winter to old age.

2 Each season is personified and has a specific character and the illustrations that Thomson used for his poem corroborate this. Winter is 'surly' and the winds are like 'ruffians'. This harshness gives way to the gentler breeze of Spring. The uncertainty of the weather is proverbial. The bittern and plover are water birds which are misled as winter is still withdrawing and springtime is yet to assert itself.

3 The poet refers to the signs of the Zodiac – Aries the ram and Taurus the bull. These are two of the constellations in the elliptic path round the sun. The sun is said to enter the first point of Aries on 21st March which marks the transition from winter to spring. It enters Taurus on 20th April.

4 When spring arrives, the farmer starts to plough the land using his 'steer' or young, male bullocks. They appear to be willing to be yoked and labour in the fields. Thomson is influenced by Virgil's *Georgics.*

5 The 'share' or plough share is used in agriculture. It is the hardened metal that cuts into the earth and loosens the soil. It shines through use.

6 Glebe is an archaic word referring to 'clay' in the land and fields.

7 The sower may be carrying the seeds in a white cloth — so it stalks the fields like a ghost.

8 Man has put in enough effort to work the land for crops. The rest is left to the grace of heaven. The theme that Thomson has chosen has a long tradition going back to Virgilius Maro writing poems on rural occupations for the people of imperial Rome.

9 In early time kings have fought wars and gone back to peace-time occupations like farming. The dignity of labour is the theme in these lines

10 The poet appeals to the people of Britain to value working in the fields and in due course feed the world. Thomson is convinced of the mission of imperial Britain to improve life in the so called 'benighted' nations. The conviction here is of the commercial power of Britain and its imperial destiny. This reflects the socio-historical context of the Augustan/Enlightenment age.

11 The 'vegetable world' refers to nature that seems to have become active and energetic after winter. The poet's muse is sustained by the reawakening of nature and the activity of birds in spring.

12 The poet wants to borrow the voice of the nightingale and the call of the cuckoo to sing of love.

13 This entire passage describes various birds and their songs and calls that create an orchestrated and harmonious music. The habitats of the birds are the natural English countryside. Even the harsh calls of certain birds form part of the musical concert.

14 The inspiration for song is traced to the emotion of love. Even birds and beasts, like humans, respond to joy in nature, to calls of love and express pleasure through art and artifice.

15 This entire verse paragraph has described the nesting of various birds and their instinctive urge to protect their fledglings

16 This verse paragraph portrays the bond of love and responsibility that binds the male bird to the female and its young The concept of nurture and sustenance in the natural world percolates to the world of human beings.

17 Spring inspires love in the natural world.

18 Each variety of bird tries to defend its nest from attacks by truant school boys, shepherds or dogs.

19 The poet tries to dissuade the caging of birds by human beings. He believes that natural freedom enhances their beauty and song

20 The melancholic strain of the nightingale's song may be traced to the bird returning with food for the young and finding an empty, robbed nest.

2.2.5. NEO - CLASSICAL ASPECTS IN "SPRING"

What is Neo-Classicism?

Neo-Classicism means 'new' classicism or 'imitated' classicism. Classicism is a word associated with the works of ancient authors/art of Greece and Rome. Between 1660 and 1750 in reaction to the exuberance of Renaissance literature, a more restrained, symmetrical and structured form of writing was favoured. The poets and writers attempted to revive the classical spirit and learnt their literary lessons by imitating the forms and patterns of poetry belonging to an ancient age. They had great admiration for literature written in the age of Emperor Augustus of Rome.

When Thomson started writing in 1726, there were several nature or landscape poems that became quite popular. There were Alexander pope's "Windsor Forest", Gay's Rural Sports," and Lady Winchilsea's "Nocturnal Reverie"—all published as early as 1713. What is distinctive and interesting about Thomson's observation of the seasons is how he combines the poetic and the scientific. It is not merely empirical experience but his engagement with science and philosophy, human activities and the entire range of natural phenomena — animal and bird behaviour, insects and flora that is get reflected in his poem. In form and content *The Seasons* shows the cultural, philosophical and religious ethos of the eighteenth century.

In form, the poem expanded into an epic survey of Nature in the different seasons. The poet used both microscopic details and general reflection to move towards a comprehensive and universal picture of the human and natural worlds. This inclination to find in Nature lessons for life or to compare the seasons to the phases of human life by using various forms of analogy and personification suited neo-classical moralising and didacticism. The epic scope of the poem comprises the harmony traced between the divine sphere and the natural and human worlds. The magnitude of the epic is therefore incorporated into the poem.

Another epic characteristic of the poem is the way in which the poet broadens the subject-matter and scope of the poem by expressing a sense of patriotism. A secondary epic is often a carefully structured public address that evokes a sense of national pride by weaving together legend and history, the past and contemporary, myth and reality. This is the way in which the epic as a form reflects the culture of an entire civilization or nation. (Read the last verse paragraph of the first extract cited.)

Addressed to Lady Frances Seymour, Countess of Hartford who acts as patron, Muse and inspirer, the poem begins with what is called an invocation. In the epics this was a device that a poet used to imbibe divine inspiration from the nine Muses of poetry. Here the convention is adapted by Thomson to gracefully repay a social obligation that he owed to his patroness.

Though the four sections of the poem evolved separately, Thomson tried to give it an overarching structural form and consistent theme. For example "Spring," describes the influence of the season over the whole Chain of Being, starting with the lowest, inanimate matter, and ending with the highest of beings on earth, "Man." Though the poem uses a range of descriptive techniques, nature is not depicted for its own sake but functions in the context of edifying digressions.

In the first 71 lines extracted here, the poet begins with the change that Spring marks from a cold and dismal winter. He describes the breezes warming the soil that leads to agricultural activities. He praises such labour as useful and dignified as agricultural wealth gives the British Empire the power to feed poorer nations. The lofty perception that Britain had a duty towards 'uncivilised' peoples of the world was ironically an Enlightenment concept about the destiny of Europe.

In sections of "Spring" not included here, Thomson describes a rainbow after a spring shower that amazes an ignorant swain though Sir Isaac Newton had explained the refraction of light and the formation of the colour spectrum through his scientific theories.

He also digresses into discussions of humanity's loss of innocence, the virtues in herbs, the concept of reason governing passion and afflictions that followed the Flood.

It is the variety of Nature and the reflective modes of thought induced by the activities of vegetation, flora and fauna that is highlighted by Thomson. So the verse paragraphs on birds and their activities in Spring (the second extract) forms a large section of the poem.

The poet describes how birds are infused with love from the ultimate 'Mover' of the universe. They mate during this season, build nests to lay their eggs and brood over them. They nurture the fledglings, feed them and teach them to fly. This activity of the birds is analogous to the amorous passions aroused in human beings. While Thomson cautions readers about the playfulness of youthful lovers and the happiness that is a result of marriage, he shifts from what is a topographical or landscape poem to didactic verse. This intermingling of pure pictorial description and moralizing is typically neo-classical. It tries to establish that the experience of nature inspires feeling, which in turn inspires reflection which culminates in the praise of God.

WHAT ARE THE RULES OF POETRY?

In *An Essay on Criticism*, Alexander Pope wrote:

"Those RULES of old discovered, not devised,

Are Nature still, but Nature Methodised;

Nature, like Liberty, is but restrained

By the same Laws which first herself ordained."

The neo-classical poets respected rules and reason more than imagination and fancy. The poetry that they wrote was thus more objective than expressive or lyrical.

In terms of style, neo-classical tenets of following 'rules' and observing the 'decorum' that was suited to a specific 'kind' of poetry is meticulously followed. Though the poem is written in blank verse, the choice of diction is stylised. This meant that a particular kind of language was used for poetry and each kind of writing (epic, pastoral, ode, epistle) had its own register of 'appropriate' words and expressions.

Neo-classical poets were convinced that there was a difference between ordinary or everyday language and poetic language which was more aesthetic and elevated. Therefore they used several rhetorical devices to create the effect of distancing of poetry from the mundane and the crude. For example archaisms or old-fashioned and obsolete words and verbs were frequently used in pastoral poems to refer to the idea of a past golden age or in a topographical poem to a paradisal, innocent world of nature. Words like 'yon', 'oft', 'thy', 'thee', 'nought' are used alongside poeticisms like 'dam', 'Quiristers', 'morn', 'pinion', verbs like 'deign', 'brook' and others that you can pick out from the extracts.

Another convention of this kind of stylised diction is the use of epithets, an epic device which is usually a compound adjective. Thomson uses these in his poetry that gives his landscape a pictorial dimension. Some examples to which list you can pick out many others from the extracts are: 'mazy-running Soul of Melody', 'long-forgotten Strain', 'faint-warbled', 'Shrill-voic'd', 'half-averted Glance', 'white-wing'd Plover', 'Love-taught Song', 'Copse Deep-tangled', 'new-sprung Leaves'.

Aural and visual effects are reinforced by traditional figures of speech like onomatopoeia and alliteration. Consider in this context short expressions and consecutive blank verse lines like the following: 'brittle Bondage break', 'Confinement of the Cage', 'weighing oft their Wings', 'Of winding Woe; till wide around the Woods/Sigh to her Song, and with her Wail resound'.

Other literary mannerisms peculiar to neo-classicism are the allusions – in this extract to Virgilius Maro, to the classical Muses or to the story of Philomela from Ovid. 'Plumy Burden', 'Soft tribes', 'Messenger of Morn' are indirect ways of referring to an object or here the birds in the passage.

2.2.6. Romantic Transitions in "Spring"

The neo-classic ideals of reason and judgement largely restrained the expression of feeling and emotion. While Thomson's poetry was sufficiently motivated by Augustan poetics, it was not possible for him to remain entirely objective. This intervention of emotion is an anticipation of Romantic sentiment and this is one of the reasons that Thomson is classed as a pre-romantic poetic figure.

Thomson conceptualised nature and the seasons, the natural world and its activities as part of a meticulously planned system. While Newton had scientific explanations for

various phenomena, Thomson observed and experienced nature only to reinforce his faith in the beauty, goodness and truth of the divinely ordained pattern of the universe. His perceptive observations of nature were something more than merely mimetic. As a poet he was able to draw readers to participate in his own inner excitement, sympathy and urgency in relating to nature in its variety and moods. His initial depiction of nature is fresh and immediate (this is the trait of romanticism) and it is only on reflection that his moral sensibility intervened to transform particular experience into a shared and universal aphoristic comment.

In typical eighteenth century topographical poems like John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642) or Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713), the idea of nature was fitted together into a schematic pattern where there was order in variety – the theme of discordia concors. Thomson was trying to work out more complicated homo-centric points of view. These perspectives did not necessarily merge into one compatible vision. So he communicated a sense of human beings as part of the Chain of Being, hierarchically inhabiting what Pope called the 'isthmus of a middle-state'; this reiterated the superior moral ability of human beings as placed within the experiential scheme of nature; and human readers were able to exercise judgement in viewing creation and nature and human beings in nature. The overarching divine order encompassed human experience even while Thomson was able to identify individual experience as a defining moment of the human condition. So Thomson occupies his position between neoclassical thought and romantic sensibility.

What is the Great Chain of Being

The great chain of being in Latin *scala naturae*, literally "ladder/stair-way of nature", is a concept derived from classical philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. It refers to the hierarchical structure of all matter and life, believed to have been divinely ordained. It conceptualised an ordered scheme of things where classification and categorisation were important.

By foregoing the use of the heroic couplet, the characteristic form of neoclassical poetry in favour of blank verse, Thomson was experimenting with an idiom that was more flexible. The corpus of non-dramatic blank-verse poetry in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century included John Milton's Paradise Lost (1667) and Paradise Regained (1671). When Thomson used this form in *Winter,* the first poem written of the larger work, he modified the mimetic-didactic tone of neo-classical verse to incorporate the reflective tone of a soliloquy and the democratic voice of a dialogue with one's natural environment. This prefigured romanticism in Thomson's poetry.

2.2.7. Visual Representations

Samuel Johnson in his *Lives of the British Poets* writes : "The reader of *The Seasons* wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses."

Thomson's poem enjoyed great popularity on account of the picturesque landscapes and eco-diversity that it portrayed. The Queen was the most illustrious subscriber along with other distinguished individuals who signed up for the June 1730 quarto edition of *The Seasons*. The edition illustrated by engravings by William Kent, eminent landscape gardener, was also sold through trade. Booksellers competed with each other to bring out unique illustrated copies of texts.

The 'painterly' qualities of the text made it a favourite for illustrators. Dr. Johnson noted: "His descriptions of extended scenes and general effects bring before us the whole magnificence of Nature, whether pleasing or dreadful... The poet leads us through the appearances of things as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and imparts to us so much of his own enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand with his imagery, and kindle with his sentiments."

William Kent in the 1730 edition had one plate for each season. The visual given overleaf is the plate for "Spring". It is likely to have been inspired by Lady Hertford's (to whom Thomson dedicated this section of the poem) landscaped garden and grotto in Marlborough where the poet was invited to be in residence (in Summer 1727) when he wrote parts of the poem.

The verbal and visual texts supplement each other but the illustration clearly appears partly naturalistic and partly allegorical. The harmony of creatures in the Great Chain of Being, the angels, humans and animals; the unity of earth, sky, cloud and air is symbolically fore-grounded by the rainbow. The upper-section of the engraving shows supernatural creatures and the lower section naturalistic scenes. Inclined spatial planes are used to draw in the mountains and the countryside, spring-time occupations and leisure. In a composite manner, Kent attempted to interpret the argument of the poem.

Kent was not the only illustrator of the poem. Through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, several visual representations of the poem have been made. Each of these illustrations were actually a reading and interpretation of the verbal text from a particular historical perspective.

2.2.8. Summing Up

This intention of this unit was to introduce the learner to all these ideas related to pastoral poetry though Thomson's "Spring". It also highlighted the tenets of neoclassicism as well as Romanticism which James Thomson's *The Seasons* in general and 'Spring' in particular displayed. Thus what we learn from this unit is:

- In classical European literature, the Greek and Latin poets referred to a mythical Golden Age when Nature's overflowing bounty was easily enjoyed, without work or labour by the shepherds and shepherdesses in the countryside. This celebration of nature, landscape, the countryside, the flora and fauna, country life and occupations was called pastoral poetry.
- The 'Precursors' of the Romantic poets while working largely within eighteenth century principles of composition, often in terms of theme or sentiments expressed, moved away from several eighteenth century norms. Already, romantic reactions to neo-classical trends like artificial poetic diction, urban-centred writing, objectivity in depicting emotions which were to be specified in *The Preface to The Lyrical Ballads* (1802) by Wordsworth and Coleridge, become visible in the poetry of the eighteenth century 'precursors'. James Thomson was one of them.
- Thomson is considered to be a Pre-romantic poet whose passion for Nature anticipates the emotions expressed by the Romantic poets. The Neo-classical age to which Thomson belonged described nature from observation, through the logical and scientific eye. Thomson's own poetry is meticulous in describing the natural world yet is sensitive to emotions of pleasure and reverence aroused by an intuition of a Supreme Being immanent in Nature.
- What is distinctive and interesting about Thomson's observation of the seasons is how he combines the poetic and the scientific. It is not merely empirical experience but his engagement with science and philosophy, human activities and the entire range of natural phenomena — animal and bird behaviour, insects and flora that is reflected in his poem. In form and content *The Seasons* reflected the cultural, philosophical and religious ethos of the eighteenth century.
- Thomson's poem enjoyed great popularity on account of the picturesque landscapes and eco-diversity that it portrayed.

Thus, the unit successfully brings out the gradual transition which occurred in Eighteenth century verse from Neoclassical to Romantic trends.

2.2.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long Questions: 20 marks

1. What are the features of pastoral poetry that you find in the extracts that you have read?
2. Is Thomson's poem a neo-classical poem? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Why is Thomson called a pre-romantic poet?

Medium Type Questions: 12 marks

4. Comment on Thomson's concern for the environment.
5. How do the visual and verbal texts complement each other?
6. Comment on the pictorial qualities in the poem.

Short Questions: 6 marks

7. What is an invocation? Whom does the poet invoke here?
8. What epic characteristics, if any, do you notice in the poem?
9. Name the birds that the poet refers to in the poem.
10. Identify specific neo-classical stylistic features in the poem.

2.2.10. Suggested Reading:

Adams, Percy G. *Graces of Harmony: Alliteration, Assonance, and Consonance in Eighteenth-Century British Poetry*. Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1977.

Cohen, Ralph. *The Art of Discrimination: Thomson's "The Seasons" and the Language of Criticism*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964.

Hagstrum, Jean H. *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. pp. 243-267.

Sambrook, James, ed.The Seasons. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981. (

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson's "The Seasons"*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959.

Unit - 3 ❐ Thomas Gray: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

2.3.0. Introduction

In Module 1 Unit 2, we have hinted at a transition in poetic aesthetics from the neo-classical to the pre-Romantic; and in the previous Unit, your acquaintance with Thomson has already taken you one step ahead in reading the Precursors of Romantic poetry. In a stark contrast to both the urbanity of tone and setting of the Augustan poets, Thomas Gray's *Elegy* takes the reader to the pristine countryside where unknown and unsung ordinary men lie buried in the church graveyard. From a general meditation on death to a more particularised utterance, the poem has a movement that is sombre to say the least. This Unit will introduce you to another of the most famous transitional poets through an equally celebrated and much anthologised poem. You will need to look out for the interesting mix of genres, the use of a controlled poetic form to express a profound emotional landscape and of course, a hint of the democratised temperament in poetry that was soon to become one of the corner-stones of the Romantic Movement

2.3.1. Early Romanticism And The Genre of The Poem

In the previous Unit you have already read about the 'Precursors of Romantic Poetry' and so you know how poets like Thomson, Collins, Gray, Cowper and others began to

pave the way for the Romantic Revolution in English literature, right from around the second half of the 18th century. In moving from Unit 1 to Unit 2 of this Module, you must also have identified the strong winds of transition that characterise the two broad poetic modes.

With Gray's poem, we arrive at an even more vivid picture. Notice the poet's use of the term 'Elegy' at the beginning of the title.

What is an elegy?

In European classical literature, both Greek and Latin, the elegiac referred to a metre for writing poetry. It was widely practised by Catullus and Propertius. In later modern English literature the term was used in the context of a reflective poem that seriously meditated on death. Often it was verse that lamented a dead person. In that sense, Milton's Lycidas, Shelley's *Adonais* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* are all elegies that lament the death of people near to the poets.

Thomas Gray probably begasn *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* about 1746. It was originally a somewhat shorter poem than the version he finally published in 1751, and it is strongly felt that the poem was occasioned by the death of his friend Richard West in 1742. By designating his work as an elegy, Gray immediately places it in a long tradition of meditative poems that either focus on the general phenomena of human mortality, or reflect specifically on the death of a single person. By setting his meditation in a typical English churchyard with mounds, gravestones, and yew trees, Gray was also adhering to the trend of some of the most popular poems in the middle of the century that were set in graveyards and meditated on death.

Yet a glance through the text of the poem will reveal that Gray's *Elegy* is basically different from the tradition of the elegiac, whether in classical or in contemporary English literature. The 'grave-yard' school of poetry referred to a genre of 18th-century British poetry that deliberated on death. It is called a 'school' simply because several poets were writing on this theme around the middle decades of the century. Several of the poems were imitations of Robert Blair's popular poem *The Grave* (1743) and of Edward Young's blank-verse dramatic rhapsody *Night Thoughts* (1742-45). These poems turn on morbid themes -- the sorrow and pain of bereavement, the physical reality of death and the transitoriness of human life. These brooding, melancholic and meditative tendencies of graveyard poetry definitely found an expression in Thomas Gray's text (1751), but there is more to *Elegy* as you will soon see.

Though the poem may have been an elegy to mourn his friend Richard West, in typical eighteenth century manner it becomes a more universal reflection that celebrates the graves of humble and unknown villagers and suggests a moral that the lives of rich and

poor alike "lead but to the grave." The graveyard school significantly prefigured the Romantic Movement and Thomas Gray remains an important signpost in this evolution.

2.3.2. Thomas Gray - A Bio-brief

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) was born in Cornhill, London, the fifth child and only survivor of his parents' twelve children. His father was a professional money scrivener while his mother had a modest millinery shop. From 1725-1734 Gray attended Eton College where his literary interests were nurtured in the company of classmates like Horace Walpole, Thomas Wharton and Richard West, the last one a friend whose death at the age of 25 was a devastating blow. At Peterhouse, Cambridge, Gray had an opportunity to pursue his varied interests in architecture, classical literature, natural and medieval history, botany and etymology. Gray left Peterhouse without taking a degree, probably planning to move into studying law. However in 1739 he accompanied Horace Walpole on the Grand Tour of the continent that was in a way a continuation of his education in a non-formal manner. When he came back to London in 1741, he found that he had not actually prepared himself for any specific career.

In 1742 Gray, inspired by the Buckinghamshire countryside where his mother and aunts had retired, wrote several poems. This was also the year that is attributed to the composition of the elegy that you are going to read. He probably wrote the poem over several years, revised it and finally published it in 1751. Gray spent his career as a don in Cambridge, shunned publicity but wrote prolifically.

2.3.3. Form And Content of The Poem

Gray's Elegy is a long poem of 32 heroic quatrains. Like any neo-classical poem, the form and meter are restrained and symmetrical. So the four iambic pentameter lines or quatrains into which each stanza is cast, have an alternate rhyme-scheme. You can easily see that the first line rhymes with the third, the second with the fourth. In a striking deviation from the heroic couplet, this *abab* pattern, at this time associated with elegiac poetry, gives the poem a staid pace, along which the

An **'epitaph'** refers to an inscription on a tombstone. It consists of the dates of birth and death and a few phrases by which the person may be remembered. Often it consists of lines from a poem. What is the function of the epitaph in this poem? Here the epitaph appears after the conclusion of the poem and it seems that Gray has written the inscription for his own grave-stone. It appears that the poet-narrator shares a destiny with the simple rural folk though he is learned and educated. He imagines that like him wandering through the country churchyard, some swain would come across his grave and pause to read the inscription.

thought is developed. The last three stanzas are printed in italic type and given the title "The Epitaph."

The regularity of rhythm, the formal diction, the personifications and metaphors all celebrate Gray's theme of honouring the unknown 'heroes' lying in their graves in a country churchyard.

As you must have felt by now, *Elegy* differs from the conventional poetry of this genre in the elaborateness of its natural setting and the tone of universality. The poem takes you visually around a country churchyard at sunset, deliberately evoking a mood of isolation and reflection. Metaphorically, the end of the day also generates philosophical meditations on human mortality. The classical idea of memento mori, a Latin phrase that reminds a person that 'one must die', reinforces other corollary lessons that death eases out the difference between the common man and the king or noble, that pride, riches, fame or worldly things cannot be carried across into the 'other' world.

Where is the Churchyard? Is it a real Churchyard?
The poem was completed when Gray was living near St Giles' parish church at Stoke Poges which is an affluent parish in South Buckinghamshire district of England. Gray himself was buried in this churchyard (1771) and there is a memorial that was erected later to commemorate the churchyard site that was made so famous by his poem. The place described in the poem is very typical of an English countryside and village scene that is dominated by the church and churchyard.

The poem is romantic because it evokes emotions and sentiments of melancholy and sadness. However the poet is able to control the subjectivity of his emotions by reflecting on larger issues that concern the world and humanity in general. This combination of the romantic and the neo-classical indicates that it is a pre-romantic poem.

2.3.4. *Elegy* and The Pastoral Tradition

An understanding of the poem in the light of the tradition of the pastoral is seminal, because it is in this that the bridge between the neo-classic and the romantic strains is most fittingly struck. Gray's poem does not conform to the classical tradition of the pastoral elegy. The Greek pastoral elegiac tradition was created by the bucolic poets Theocritus (3rd century BCE), Moschus (2nd century BCE) and Bion (1st century BCE). However, no single individual is mourned in Gray's poem as the sense of despair is more universal and comprises the human condition in general. In this sense it may be closer to Matthew Arnold's Victorian elegy "The Scholar Gypsy" that grieves the passing away of a way of life in the Oxford countryside that was represented by the scholar, Glanville. Milton's "Lycidas" or Shelley's "Adonais", elegies that we have referred to

earlier, however mourn the loss of particular friends and follow conventions that incorporate an invocation, shepherds who grieve for a friend and an idyllic landscape. If the fact of a personal loss having occasioned Gray's poem (as suggested earlier) be accepted, then we can observe a passage from the individual to the communal in Elegy.

In Gray's Elegy, he evokes the English countryside, not any stylised setting but a familiar landscape that was linked to his own experience. Techniques of the picturesque and the gothic are used for representing the village churchyard. The poem is an elegy because it is an emotional response to the death of his friend Richard West which makes him conscious of his own mortality. The theme of death is more objectively treated by posing rhetorical questions that enable the poet to think dispassionately about mortality.

The narrator in the poem contemplates issues of obscurity and remembrance that focus on opportunities lost and those that are gained. Thus simple country life is contrasted to ostentatious city life and the waste of talent is set against fame and recognition. The modest tombstones in the churchyard are testimony to the honour and memory of some human soul, unknown and uncelebrated. The narrator/poet moves on to anticipate his own destiny and is partly resigned to it.

2.3.5. Text of *Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard*

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,[1]
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,[2]
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,[3]
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.[4]

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign. 12

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet[5] sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,[6]
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed[7],
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed[8].

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share[9].

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe[10] has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke[11]! 28

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.[12]

The boast of heraldry[13], the pomp of pow'r,[14]
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.[15]

Nor you, ye proud[16], impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,[17]
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.[18]

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?[19] 44

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire[20];
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.[21]

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.[22]

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.[23]

Some village-Hampden[24], that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton[25] here may rest,
Some Cromwell[26] guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade[27]: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.[28]

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.[29]

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.[30]

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.[31]

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?[32]

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.[33]

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;[34]
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,[35]

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,[36]
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.[37]

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.[38]

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.[39]

"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;[40]

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.[41]
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."[42]

THE EPITAPH[43]

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God. 128

2.3.6. Notes And Glossary

1. The striking opening of the poem introduces the mood of brooding. 'Curfew' marks a specific time-period when the rule of authority persists. Here the words 'tolls', 'knell' and 'parting day' are linked metaphorically, equating evening and death.
2. A typical pastoral scene when the shepherd returns home at dusk across the 'lea' or meadow.
3. Alliteratively the poet recreates the weariness of the farmer with 'weary way' being a classic example of a transferred epithet.
4. The 'me', the subject or speaker enters into the poem, signifying a change from Augustan poetics.
5. A tiny town or small village
6. Notice the use of the epithet that is so common in much of Augustan poetry.
7. Epithet that is part of the poetic diction and is also pictorial.
8. Those lying in their 'lowly beds' a euphemism for graves will no longer experience the thrills of the morning breeze or the sounds of the countryside.
9. An idyllic picture of the simple pleasures of domestic life, the hearth and home.
10. The clay-archaism.
11. This stanza refers to the activities of the farmer, the tools of the trade - the sickle, the oxen, the furrows made by the ploughing are mentioned.
12. Ambition and Grandeur are personified. The poet addresses people in the metropolis or those in the midst of riches and plenty to warn them that they should not mock the simple joys and achievements of country folk. The discourse of wealth and class, materialism and commerce, power and position is contrasted to the humble 'annals of the poor'.

13. Coat of arms used by an aristocratic family.

14. Ceremony associated with power. Notice the alliteration.

15. The inevitable truth of all human existence is emphasised.

16. The poet seems to be addressing people who are proud to have compassion for these simple country folk.

17. Trophies or memorials are raised by the rich over the graves of the dead to commemorate their achievements. The people here are too poor to afford such luxuries.

18. It is the remembrance in the village church attended by the community that marks a memorial for them.

19. This is one of the passages that uses figurative language almost in every expression. Note the use of personification and metaphor. The answer to the two rhetorical questions is that commemorating the dead in an elaborate manner cannot make them come live. So memorials for the dead are only expressions of human vanity.

20. The poet is reflecting here on the kind of people who could be buried there. It could be a person who was divinely inspired.

21. It could also be a person fit to rule or create music on the lyre.

22. Yet these people led unassuming lives as their poverty did not give them access to knowledge or opportunities to use their talent. Beautiful and marvellous gems that remain undiscovered and flowers that bloom unnoticed in a lonely desert.

23. The poet cites two examples from the natural world of neglect.

24. The poet conjectures that the unacknowledged dead could be village heroes - historically unknown but fearless or inspired. John Hampden was a Puritan politician who fearlessly opposed the policies of Charles I.

25. John Milton was a celebrated poet and literary figure and a village counterpart could have been silenced by the lack of scope to read and write.

26. The anti-royalist politician Oliver Cromwell came to power for a short time. He was responsible for the Civil wars and the execution of Charles I. Therefore he was guilty of much bloodshed. The poet says that there may have been someone in the village who was as passionate about liberty but his fervour would remain unknown.

27. The destiny of the humble villagers was not to command authority and political power.

28. The poet twines negative qualities that inevitably accompany success and says that in some way the unambitious rustic population had therefore been saved from luxury, pride, shame, untruth.

29. The basic honesty of this sequestered life is praised here. Interestingly the phrase 'Far from the madding crowd' became the title of one of Thomas Hardy's novels.

30. Though the village churchyard does not have ornate tombstones or rich memorials, the simple grave-stones do attract the notice of passers-by like the speaker here.

31. The simple inscriptions are factual rather than poetic. Ironically these seem to have been created by the 'unletter'd muse'. At least these graves with quotations from the Bible communicate the inevitability of death.

32. These are people are likely to be forgotten and therefore are eager to review their lives.

33. The uncelebrated villager needs some loved one to shed tears and mourn for the dead. Even the rustic grave recalls the memory of a living being.

34. Here the poet is speaking of himself (thee) and referring to the remembrance of the 'unhonoured dead' in the elegy he was writing.

35. He wonders what would happen if someone inquired into his own fate after his death.

36. From here what the 'swain', a rural shepherd would say (imagined) is recounted.

37. He hopes that the swain would fondly remember him walking across the meadows at dawn to see the sunrise.

38. It is also likely that the swain would remember the poet stretching out at noon under the beech tree, contemplating the brook/river that flowed by.

39. The poet still imagines what the old villager would say about him. The varied moods of the dead man would be remembered.

40. One day the man would be missed in his favourite haunts.

41. Next the missed person is seen carried in a hearse along the church path to the graveyard.

42. The villager exhorts the passerby/reader to move up to the grave and read the epitaph.

43. The imagined epitaph is that of the speaker/poet. Here Thomas Gray is seen to have been inscribing his own tomb stone. The youth here is unknown to pride, fame and wealth because of his humble origins. Yet he is a scholar-poet blessed by knowledge and science. He is melancholy and lonely and wishes only for an understanding and compassionate friend. He finds peace and repose in death.

2.3.7. Key Issues

- **The Lyrical in the Poem:**

The elegy as you know, is a form of the lyric. Therefore the emphasis is on emotions and feelings generated by a subject or theme. The poem does not narrate, nor does it dramatise scenes or events. Rather, it evokes responses of sadness, loss and sorrow that are inevitably associated with death.

Gray's *Elegy* rediscovers the pessimistic roots of the pastoral tradition by emphasizing upon sentiment. Yet the gloom and melancholy that intrudes on the human mind as dusk followed by evening descends in the cemetery is more Gothic and eerie than classical. The poet is able to create a mood of brooding that is represented by the landscape and the philosophical insights that he communicates.

- **Didacticism in the Poem:**

Much of classical literature is marked by the manner in which universal truths, broad generalisations and philosophical insights are communicated through poetry that is not essentially subjective. From the tradition of Horace, Gray picks up the theme of retiring from public life to a simple rural retreat. In Latin this idea of beatus ille or 'happy the Man', concentrates on how ambition, desire, fame, ego and wealth create anxieties and tensions in city and public life from which one can escape into the countryside. In some ways the poor and simple country folk are fortunate. The tone adopted by the poet is moralistic and often the verses are aphoristic in style.

Gray appeals to proud and ambitious people not to make fun of the simple life or to detest the poor. Every man has to die one day and glory, wealth and luxuries have to be abandoned on earth. Earthly life is transitory and the boasts of power, wealth and glory are vain and empty.

In this poem the poet prefers the obscure life of a villager and the conclusion of the poem is an epitaph inscribed on the death of such a person who has retired "from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" (73). If you read a poem like Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes", the poet shows how happiness lies in surrendering one's desires and ambitions and accepting what is destined for a person.

It seems that Gray is uncertain about the ambitions of his literary contemporaries and equally concerned about the erosion in middle class values like modesty and generosity. He views the mercantile morality of the urban middle class with suspicion. Broadly speaking, Gray's Elegy mourns for human mortality and the decay of civilizations. While Augustan culture celebrated the progression of society towards perfection, that confidence is undermined by an anxiety that creates a sense of isolation in the poet. From a participative community ethos where the poet speaks to an inclusive audience, we find Augustan pastoralism moving towards isolating the poet from his audience by becoming introspective. This is the change towards the subjective or individual feelings from shared sentiments that formed the crux of romanticism.

- **Figures of Speech:**

In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads,* William Wordsworth talks about the language of poetry resembling the language actually spoken by common people. He criticises the "gaudy and inane phraseology" of poets of the earlier generation. He rejects the poetic diction and "unnatural language" and uses Thomas Gray as an example of what poets should avoid in their writing. In Augustan fashion, Gray depends on rhetoric, several figures of speech to vividly express his musings on death. The imagery is rich and words are used for maximum poetic effect. The poem is extensively used as an example from which one could identify and study the effect of figurative language.

Some of the figures of speech used are:

Personification, Metaphor, Metonymy, Inversion, Syncope, Alliteration, Anaphora

Activity for the Learner

With help from your counsellor, identify some examples of each of these figures of speech. As a project work, write definitions of each of these and explain the significance of the particular rhetorical use in the context of the poem.

You can also scan some significant sections of the poem to understand the prosodic structure.

2.3.8. Comprehension Exercises

Long Questions (20 marks):

1. Would you call Thomas Gray's poem an elegy? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What features of Neo-classicism do you notice in the poem?
3. Does Gray's Elegy anticipate Romanticism? Identify these features

Medium Length Questions (12 marks):

1. Comment on the narrative voices in the poem.
2. What features of rhetoric give the poem a distinctive character?
3. What lessons does the poet gather from wandering through the country churchyard?

Short Questions (6 marks):

1. Why does the poet mention (i) Hampden (ii) Milton (iii) Cromwell?
2. What is an epitaph? Whose epitaph is read out here?
3. Pick at least three examples of Personification in the poem. Why does the poet use this figure of speech?
4. What is Gray's observation about country life?

2.3.9. Suggested Reading

Fairer, David and Christine Gerrard ed. *Eighteenth-Century Poetry. An Annotated Anthology.* Blackwell annotated anthologies. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

Heath-Stubbs, John ed. *Thomas Gray: Selected Poems.* Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd., 1981.

Kaul, Suvir. *Thomas Gray and Literary Authority: A Study in Ideology and Poetics.* California: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Lonsdale, Roger ed. *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith.* London and Harlow: Longmans, 1969.

Module - 3 : Reading Prose

Unit-1 ❐ Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels* Books I & II

Structure

3.1.0. Introduction

Can you recall the age at which you first read *Gulliver's Travels* either in the original or translation? Or maybe saw it on your television screens for the first time! Indeed *Gulliver's Travels* remains popular as a classic of **Children's literature**, but then, that is only one perspective to this novel. Reading Jonathan Swift's work is still enjoyable and relevant as it deals with contemporary themes like individual versus society or rationality versus emotion, power or strength in the context of corruption and righteousness. It also shows how societies and cultures need to be understood in relative terms and this takes on a very physical dimension when we see Gulliver in the land of Lilliputs and then his stay in the country of the Brobdingnags. In dealing with this time

tested text, this Unit will show you that there is in life, no absolute truth or reality; and that perspective or ways of seeing become much more important. The aim will also be to show how in some ways, *Gulliver's Travels* was a critique of reason and even empirical truths that defined the Enlightenment period in Europe and Britain. As we read the nuances of the text, you will discover how other ways of comprehending the world could to a large extent curb Euro-centric pride and ambition especially in the age of colonisation and commerce. You must also remember that Swift, being Irish, was an outsider to England and himself belonged to a colonised country. This makes it an interesting text for us in India as we are able to appreciate the humour and ridicule that underlies this narrative satire that appears like a popular travelogue, but is really much more than that. While your syllabus contains only the first two books, we expect that you will definitely find time to read up the entire work out of interest at leisure !

3.1.1. Jonathan Swift – A Literary Biography

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) may be regarded as one of the most colourful, controversial, and in a sense, tragic personalities of the 18th century literary scene. He was born to English parents in Dublin. He was a posthumous child, largely dependent on the goodwill of his uncle for his upbringing. He studied at Kilkenny and at Trinity College Dublin where he became a Doctor of Divinity. The circumstances of his birth engendered in him, a fierce sense of pride and a sensitivity which remained with him till the end of his life. He visited London frequently. At first he worked as secretary to the statesman and author, Sir William Temple. Here he also tutored eight-year old Esther Johnson, the Stella of his posthumously published (1766) *Journal to Stella*. Later he became the unpaid propagandist for the Harley-St.John Government then in power. After the fall of this Government following the death of Queen Anne he returned to Ireland where he was ordained as the Dean of St.Patrick's Cathedral in 1713. Though Swift had problems in denying his English parentage, his Irish tracts particularly *The Drapier's Letters* and *A Modest Proposal* justify the love and respect he had earned for himself as an Irish Patriot. Swift died in Dublin in 1745. He gave a third of his income to the Irish poor who were usually Catholic. Swift, a staunch Anglican priest did not differentiate when helping the needy. The following are his most important works:

1. *The Battle of the Books; A Tale of a Tub* (1704)
2. *The Bickerstaff Papers* (1708)
3. *The Examiner* (ed.); Meditations on a Broomstick (1710)

4. *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity*; *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711)
5. *A Proposal for Correcting the English Language* (1711)
6. *Drapier's Letters* (1724)
7. *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)
8. *A Short View of the State of Ireland* (1728)
9. *A Modest Proposal* (1729)
10. *Conversation* (1738)
11. *Verses on the Death of Dr.Swift* (1739)

➢ *Gulliver's Travels* in Perspective

Gulliver's Travels was published under a pseudonym in London in 1726 by the publisher Benjamin Motte. The publisher had, as Swift complained to his friends, without the writer's permission, censored certain parts of the books because he found them too satirical. In 1735 Faulkner published the *Travels* with necessary corrections and additions according to Swift's dictates. Most of the later editions follow Faulkner.

The title page bears the following inscription-

TRAVELS INTO SEVERAL REMOTE NATIONS OF THE WORLD BY LEMUEL GULLIVER, FIRST SURGE0N AND THEN A CAPTAIN OF SEVERAL SHIPS.

The readers naturally expected another travel book with the promise of unknown wonders about remote places. Writing travelogues was very much in vogue in the 18th century. This could perhaps be linked with the expansion of overseas trade and colonisation. This form of popular literature was marked for exaggerated accounts of sea-faring traders and sailors who returned home after their adventures. Swift himself was fond of travel literature and had written in 1720 about reading many "diverting books of history and travel". (Corr, II, 430).

In the same years he annotated *A Relation of Some Years of Travaile into AFRICA and Greater Asia* (1634) by Thomas Herbert. Swift had then complained "If this book was stript of its Impertinence and Conceitedness and Tefious digressions, it would be almost worth reading, and would be two thirds smaller than it is" (Prose Works, V, 243). The following year he wrote to Ford that he was then writing a "History of my Travells, which will be a large volume and gives Accounts of Countreyes hitherto unknown" (Corr, II, 381).

These references suggest that *Gulliver's Travels* could have started as a parody of the genre of eighteenth century travel books. The most famous of the contemporary travel books is Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* published in 1716. In the stylistic feature of accumulating precise details to create a sense of authenticity or verisimilitude and also in the choice of the protagonist as an average middle class narrator, Swift is close to Defoe. But Swift's irony as opposed to Defoe's earnestness sets the two books apart.

Among the other inspirers of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* . It is work of collaboration among members of the Scriblerus Club which satirises false learning and scholarly pedantry. Martin too visits the 'ancient Pygmaean Empire' before the 'Land of Giants', the most humane people in the world, then the 'Kingdom of Philosophers', who govern by Mathematics', he concludes with an account of how the traveller 'discovered a vein of Melancholy proceeding almost to a disgust of his Species', *The Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus* was published in 1741. However, the ideas incorporated in the work germinated during the Scriblerus Club meetings in 1714. Among the members of the club were John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), John Gay (1685-1732), Robert Harley (1661-1724), Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and Swift. The short lived club enjoyed another short span of life in the mid 1720s. The renowned novelist Sir Walter Scott published a multivolume edition of Swift's works in 1814, with notes and life of the author. In its introduction appearing in Volume-II, he mentions certain sources 'of inspiration for Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Among them is Lucian's *True History*- a fictitious journey through the imaginary countries prefaced by an introduction, in an exquisite vein of irony on the art of writing history. From the *True History* of Lucian, Cyrallo Bergerac took his idea of a *Journey to the Moon* and Rabelais derived his yet more famous *Voyage of Pantagruel*. Swift consulted the books but he is more indebted to Rabelais who satirises severely the various orders of the law and clergy of his period. Rabelais was one of Swift's favourite authors. A translation of his works by Peter Motteux was published in London in 1694. In 1697 William Dampier published his *A New Voyage Round the World*. Though Gulliver was by no means a pirate, he has much in common with the hardy seamen with his insatiable curiosity and prejudices of a thoroughbred English man. Here Dampier, Crusoe and Gulliver form a true English triumvirate.

After completing his *Gulliver's Travels* Swift wrote to Charles Ford on 14th August, 1725-: "I have finished my Travells, and now I am transcribing them, they are admirable things, and will wonderfully mend the world rather than diverting it."

It is the great fortune of posterity that whatever the creator's ostensible intention may

have been, *Gulliver's Travels* has not only vexed but diverted and entertained the world. John Gay in a letter to Swift on 17th November 1726 said, " From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the cabinet council to the Nursery. The politician to a man agree that it is free from particular reflections, but the satire on general societies of men is too severe."

In any study of *Gulliver's Travels* we must bring into account both the fantastically entertaining effect along with the strong satirical element. Before we study the various aspects of the first two books of *Gulliver's Travels* it would be convenient to survey the four books briefly.

3.1.2: The Plan of *Gulliver's Travels*

The first two books of The Travels are by far, the most interesting, though the last book has invited several scholarly controversies and debates. The third book which was incidentally written after the four, in spite of its hilarious patches and serious reflections, is generally agreed to be the least appealing. Though you have only the first two books for your study, it is essential to know, at least in brief something about each of the four voyages that Gulliver embarks upon.

➢ Book 1

True to the style of a travelogue the book opens with an account of Gulliver who like Robinson Crusoe belongs to the 'middle-station' of life. He was the third of five sons of a small estate owner of Nottinghamshire. He studied in Emmanuel College and later worked as an intern for an eminent London surgeon, Dr. Bates. These facts along with references, to his struggle with scanty allowances from his father, establish him as a prototype of an average middle class Englishman. Precisely because of these easily identifiable qualities, his fantastic adventures related in a matter-of-fact dead pan tone, and the psychological changes that he undergoes ground the narrative in a familiar reality.

Not happy in his job as an intern, Gulliver sets out on a voyage and suffers a shipwreck but is able to save himself by swimming ashore to the island of the Lilliputs who are tiny six inch tall people. They imprison Gulliver but provide him with food and shelter. In return Gulliver rescues them from foreign invasion. Later on, learning about their plan to starve him to death, Gulliver escapes, and is rescued by a passing ship.

➢ Book 2

Ten months after his escape from the Lilliput island, Gulliver, once more on an adventurous voyage is left on an island of giants known as Brobdingnags. Here Gulliver shows the magnanimity of the giants but he also goes to some length to make us aware that a magnifying glass enlarges both positive and negative qualities. The massive sized Brobdingnagians also exuded a rank physicality which would not have been evident in smaller creatures.

He is taken home by a farmer and is well cared for by the farmer's daughter Glumdalclitch. Later the Queen buys him from the farmer and is presented in the King's court as an entertaining toy. The farmer's daughter is allowed to stay in the palace to look after Gulliver who learns the native language and gives accounts of his country to the king, and in the process exhibits the flaws of European society. On outings Gulliver is usually carried in a box. An eagle picks up the box and drops it in the sea and an English ship rescues Gulliver from the box.

➢ Book 3

This book recounts several voyages. Gulliver first reaches the island of Laputa. It is a flying island and can at will, hover over the neighbouring islands or towns when they revolt. The Laputans are strange people with fixed gazes and heads frozen to a permanent tilt. They can converse only after being roused by flappers. Swifts's journey to Balnibarbi and the visit to the Academy of Lagado is fascinating with the account of the strange experiments that were conducted there. On his visit to Luggnagg, he is shocked to see the immortal Struldbruggs who drag along their decrepit bodies with no hope of relief. After leaving Luggnagg, Gulliver goes home via Japan.

➢ Book 4

Gulliver's last voyage is to Houyhnhnm land which is inhabited by horses that are totally rational beings. Bereft of all passion and emotions, they run a kingdom, with the bestial irrational humans known as Yahoos who occupy the margins of the country. Gulliver idolizes the Houyhnhnms and tries his best to hide his resemblance with the Yahoos. He is soon found out and banished. He is taken home by Captain Pedro de Mendez of a Portuguese ship. Gulliver is unable to get over his loathing for the Yahoos and after his return spends most of his time in the stable. We thus see what havoc takes place if passion and rationality are polarised. We are reminded of Swift's remark to

Pope that the foundation of his attitude towards humankind seen in the narrative is based on the view that human beings were not rational beings, but creatures capable of rationality, - not animal rationale, but *rationis capax*. He was aware that the world could easily become disordered and resemble chaos. His satire is concerned with concrete aspects of human nature and the human predicament and his effort is to maintain a balance between reason and passion, order and disorder

Since you have the first two voyages for detailed study, you need to take a closer look at the first two books.

3.1.3: Detailed Summaries – Books I and II

❖ **Book 1**

So let us come back to the Lilliputs. The fantasy of the tiny people concretised through mathematically precise description has enthralled readers of all ages all over the world. Nowhere in this book do we find descriptions with generalising adjectives or adverbs. At the very outset, we are struck by the image of Gulliver, later to be named Man Mountain helplessly fettered to the ground with 6-inch high human figures crawling all over him. In the helplessness of Gulliver and the littleness of the Lilliputs who can easily be quashed to death in hordes at a time, we can trace the ultimate fragility of the human predicament. Neither size nor numbers, matter. Only understanding and cooperation do. Though Gulliver is irritated by the creatures crawling all over him and stinging him with poisonous arrows, he does not hurt any of them. The Lilliputs reciprocate by providing him with food and drink and shelter. They ignore the fact that this causes a strain to their stock of food. In deference to Swifts world view we should here, remind ourselves that generosity did not inspire the Lilliput decision, but sheer practicality. The tiny people were afraid that they would not be able to dispose off Gulliver's huge corpse if he died.

The book is replete with precise descriptions of articles and activities. These bring home the fact that the perspective of observing something very small may indicate freshness, novelty and delicacy along with triviality and pettiness. Swift cleverly gives the inventory of Gulliver's possessions from the Lilliput point of view, so that even readers take a fresh new look at such articles as a watch, a knife, and coins. In *Robinson Crusoe* too there are detailed descriptions of articles that he is able to rescue from the wrecked ship. Verisimilitude that authenticates the everyday was used to make the fictional narrative appear to be true.

From the satirical point of view the description of the Lilliputian emperor's entertainment, is important. The images are amusing in themselves. They also have topical satirical significance. But what is most interesting is the fact that they have a general and universal implication. Look at the following lines from the text for example:

(All textual quotations are from the Norton Critical Edition of Gulliver's Travels)

> The emperor had a mind one day to entertain me with several of the country shows, wherein they all exceed Nations I have known, both for Dexterity and Magnificence. I was diverted with none so much as that of the Rope-Dancer, performed upon a slender white Thread, extended about two Foot, and twelve Inches from the ground. Upon which I shall desire liberty, with the Readers patience, to enlarge a little.
>
> This Diversion is only practiced by those persons who are candidates for great Employments, and high Favour , at court. They are trained in this art from their youth, and are not always of noble Birth, or liberal Education. When a great office is vacant either by Death or Disgrace (which often happens) five or six of those candidates petition the Emperor to entertain his Majesty and the court with a Dance on the Rope, and whoever jump the highest without falling, succeeds in the office. Very often the Chief Minister themselves are commanded to shew their skill, and to convince the Emperor that they have not lost their Faculty. Flimnap, the Treasurer, is allowed to cut a caper on the strait Rope, at least an Inch higher than any other Lord in the whole Empire. I have seen him do the summerset several times together upon a Teacher fixed on the Rope, which is no thicker than a common packthread in England. My friend Reldresal, principal secretary for private Affairs, is in my opinion, if I am not partial , the second after the Treasurer; the rest of the great officers are much upon a par.
>
> These Diversions are often attended with fatal Accidents, whereof greats numbers are on Record. I my self have seen tow or three candidates break a limb. But the Danger is much greater when the Minister themselves are commanded to shew their Dexterity ; for by contending to excel themselves and their Follow, they strain so far, that there is hardly one of them who hath not received a Fall ,and some of them two three. I was assured that a year or two before my arrival, Flimnap would have infallibly broke his NECK, if one of the kings cushions, that accidentally lay on the ground, had not weakened the Force of his Fall.

The absurdity of visualising people in power jumping on ropes, is amusing enough. Contemporary readers must have regarded the exercise of identifying of oblique topical references as invigorating. For instance, Flimnap is the Whig prime minister Sir Robert Walpole. His political dexterity in retaining power was well known. The reference to Flimnap being saved from being injured by a fall by the king's cushion, refers to Walpole's indirect approach of pleasing the king through his mistress, the Duchess of Kendal. There are several other thinly veiled topical references to important members of the British parliament. We cannot however, ignore the fact that at this point, Gulliver is identified with Bolingbroke while Reldresal the Lilliputian treasurer, resembles Swift's friend Carteret. The Emperor of Lilliput is King George himself, thinly veiled.

If you remember John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* in Paper 3, you will recall that it was a satire on contemporary politics. Here you see even Swift doing the same in *Gulliver's Travels*. So you see this was a contemporary trend of reflecting the hectic political activity of the period and its implications on social psyche. As students of literature, we need to grasp these significations as also see how these texts, their topical allusions notwithstanding, have continued to retain abiding significance within the canon.

Modern readers would not however be interested in the identifying game, had it not been for the general truth that Swift expresses. For example, political success is largely dependent on extraneous factors and skillful game-manship fraught with danger. The Lilliputian two party system may be compared with the Whig and Tory party system in England. The comic reference to the furore over the end from which an egg should be broken, or over the size of the heels of the shoes to be worn by party members indicates the pettiness to which parliamentary disputes could descend. The extremely grotesque image of the compromise of wearing shoes having heels of two different sizes resulting in a hobble, depicts the result of uneasy political adjustments.

There are numerous examples of such comic satire having both topical and universal applicability. Though Gulliver is not consistently Swift's mouthpiece, his refusal to help the Liliputs to subjugate the Blefuscian kingdom, expresses Swift's anti war and anti imperialistic stance. It was more directly and eloquently reflected in *The Drapier's Letters*. Let us look at Gulliver's response to the King of Lilliput :

> His Majesty desired I would take some other Opportunity of bringing all the rest of his Enemy's Ships into his Ports. And so unmeasurable is the Ambition of Princes, that he seemed to think of nothing less than reducing the whole Empire

> of Blefuscu into a Province, and governing it by a Vice-Roy ; of destroying the Bing-Endian Exiles, and compelling that People to break the smaller end of their Eggs, by which he would remain the sole Monarch of the whole World. But I endeavoured to divert him from this Design, by many Arguments drawn from the Topicks of Policy as well as Justice : And I plainly protested, that I would never be an Instrument of bringing a Free and Brave People into Slavery. And when the Matter was debated in Council, the wisest part of the Ministry were of my Opinion.

Swift was forced to leave England after the fall of the Tory Government because he refused to see eye to eye with the ruling power. Similarly, Gulliver is forced to escape Lilliput Island via Blefuscu, to save himself from being tortured, starved and poisoned to death. Swift expresses his attitude towards ambitious politicians by showing the ingratitude of the Lilliputians towards Gulliver despite his immense help in dousing the palace fire with his urine and saving them from foreign invasion. Gulliver's account of Lilliput society highlights in many entertaining ways the shortcomings of English Society in general and the defects of his political enemies in particular.

❖ Book 2

Gulliver's second voyage takes him to a land of Giants. They are called The Brobdingnagians. From a Man mountain looking down at tiny creatures swarming around him he is reduced to a midget looking high up at the giants. Swift shows how a change of perspective can change the same mountain into a mole-hill. Let us hear Gulliver speaking:

> In this terrible Agitation of Mind I could not forbear thinking of Lilliput, whose Inhabitants looked upon me as the greatest Prodigy that ever appeared in the World: where I was able to draw an Imperial Fleet in my Hand, and perform those other Actions which will be recorded forever in the Chronicles of that Empire, while Posterity shall hardly believe them, although attested by Millions. I reflected what a Mortification it must prove to me to appear as inconsiderable in this Nation as one single Lilliputian would be among us. But, this I conceived was to be the least of my Misfortunes: For, as human Creatures are observed to be more savage and cruel in Proportion to their Bulk, what could I expect but to be a Morsel in the Mouth of the first among these enormous Barbarians that should happen to seize me? Undoubtedly Philosophers are in the right when they tell us, that nothing is great or little otherwise than by Comparison.

We can well understand Gulliver's plight. As we proceed with his adventure we also learn that it is a constant process of exposing and satirising human pride. It is therefore quite obvious that the tone and mood in this book is more serious. In the first book, despite the satire, there is an air of toy-land fantasy. The mode of narration however is the same. Specific dates, weights and sizes are given to create a convincing picture of realism.

The book starts with Gulliver's sense of terror at the prospect of being crushed to death by the over sixty feet high giants. He is bruised and hurt unintentionally by a farmer when he is picked up by him. The farmer's wife reacted to him at first by screaming and 'ran back as Women in England do, at the sight of a toad or spider'. Later on closer observation he is accepted. A sense of lurking danger surrounds Gulliver all the time. He trembles in fright when the farmer's ten-year old son takes him by his leg and dangles him in the air. He trips over a boulder-sized crust of bread and falls on his face. He is attacked by mastiff-sized rats and partridge sized hornets. He narrowly escapes from drowning in a bowl of cream. He is cradled by a monkey and carried in a precarious state from one roof top to another and was nearly choked to death when the creature stuffed him with chewed products from its mouth. A hideous gigantic frog jumps over him to and fro and covers him with filthy slime. The book is replete with such incidents, which are amusing for an observer and terrifying for the sufferer.

Yet ironically enough the Brobdingnagians are friendly protective and generous people. The farmer's daughter takes loving care of Gulliver, they make meticulous arrangements for his comfort and protection. True, he is exhibited as a showpiece but they show genuine concern for his comfort. When the Brobdingnagian Empress buys off Gulliver, they retain the farmer's daughter Glumdalclitch to look after him. Gulliver develops a strong affection for his little nurse who was just forty feet tall. It is almost an inversion of the Swift-Stella relationship because while looking after him she also teaches him. She had lovingly stitched seven shirts of the finest material for Gulliver which, by average human standards, would be as fine as sack cloth. Similarly when the Queen gets Gulliver clothes made of finest silk, they feel quite rough on the skin. Here Swift the realist even in his flights of fancy points to the fact that magnification does not merely enlarge what is worth glorifying, one has to accept the negative aspects too. Thus Gulliver finds the stench from the skin of the royal maids-in-waiting overpowering; the large pores of their skin and their massive breasts nauseating. Swift describes the men too but the details about women are a part of his demystification of feminine beauty. The description of the royal dinner furthers this point. Each mouthful of food that the queen munches

on, is equivalent to the amount which could feed 'a dozen English farmers'. She crunches on lark-wing which is nine times as large as that of a full grown turkey. Gulliver describes this as a 'nauseous sight'. Royalty has been totally deglamourised, and the parameter of size proves instrumental in this.

The most shockingly repulsive description is that of a public execution. A criminal's head is decapitated at a stroke and blood sprouted like a jet fountain over seventy feet high and the head rolled with a resounding thud. These details do not detract from the total impression of the Brobdingnagians as magnanimous, intelligent and practical people. Their language was clear, uncluttered and masculine though unable to hold any abstract concepts. Their knowledge was devoted to what could be applied for practical well being. They had a very clear cut notion of Right and Wrong. The impression is most strongly reflected in Gulliver's interaction with the Emperor. We will deal with this later.

By contrast, the Lilliputs are often enough quite vicious and mean minded. They shower Gulliver with poisonous arrows. This is understandable. It reflects the insecurity of little creatures confronting another creature who is hundreds of times larger than themselves. However the reason why he is allowed to live, does not speak highly about them. Gulliver is kept alive only because they had no idea about what they could do with his carcass, after killing him. Later they plan to starve him to death and dispose of his body in parts. This shows total lack of gratitude for Gulliver's act of saving them from foreign invasion. Swift clearly shows that even an apparently dainty world can harbour the meanest mindset. Yet he maintains a playful tone, an indication of Gulliver's confidence in his superior strength. Here we are tempted to believe that Gulliver is Swift's mouthpiece, though we will later discover how far it is from the truth.

The tables are turned in the Second Voyage. Initially Gulliver makes a fool of himself. An element of boisterous fun in the description of his vulnerability prevents his proud strutting from becoming despicable. Gulliver himself recalls that 'All the mirth for some days was at my expensez'. Later, in his interaction with the king, Gulliver becomes the representative of all the evils that plagued Western Civilization. The Brobgingnagian king rather than Gulliver, becomes Swift's mouthpiece. The vehemence of the king's attack against human pride, or his shock on hearing about power-hungry politicians indulging in destructive warfare, clearly echoes Swift's savage indignation.

Let us have a closer look at this section of the text: We see that the Brobdinagian king's attitude to Gulliver, as he learns more and more about English politics in particular and Western civilization in general, changes from indulgent condescension to open contempt

and then to hatred. Gulliver had several long sessions with the king. After hearing Gulliver's proud account about his country, the king reacts:

> Manners, Religion, Laws, Government and Learning of Europe...the king taking me up on his right Hand, and stroaking me gently with the other, after an hearty Fit of laughing, asked me whether I was Whig or Tory. Then turning to his first Minister, who waited behind him with a white Staff near as tall as the Main-mast of the Royal Sovereign he observed how contemptible a thing was human Grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I.

Swift ensures that the Brobdingnagian King's opinion about European civilization is not an impulsive outburst but a considered observation. He makes Gulliver recount the fact that the king has five long sessions with him. He took notes about what Gulliver had said regarding contemporary history, about the political and judicial systems and the advancement of modern warfare. On the sixth session the king asked pertinent questions which reflected his doubts:

> He asked, what Time was usually spent in determining between Right and Wrong ands what degree of expence. Whether Advocates and Orators had Liberty to plead in Causes, manifestly known to be unjust, vexatious or oppressive. Whether Party in Religion or Politics where observed to be of any Weight in the scale of justice…

Swift was particularly averse to the idea of maintaining a standing army. He continuously opposed the view that the Duke of Marlborough was bringing glory to the country by waging expensive wars on neighbouring countries. He makes the Brobdingnagian king echo his sentiments:

> He wondered to hear me talk of such chargeable and extensive Wars; that, certainly we must be a quarrelsome people or live among very bad Neighbours, and that our Generals must needs be richer than our kings…above all he was amazed to hear me talk of a mercenary standing Army in the midst of Peace, and among a Free People.

The Brobdingnagian king reacted violently when Gulliver spoke about the modern advancement of war whereby thousands of men were killed, and cities razed to the ground. The king felt that some 'evil Genius, enemy of mankind, must have been the first Contriver.' The king showed great interest about the new areas of knowledge and learning that Gulliver described but he reacted with the now famous remark which could well be Swift's own :

> He gave for his Opinion, that whoever could make two Ears of corn or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a spot of Ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his Country than the whole Race of politicians put together.

Swift was an ardent advocate of knowledge used for practical benefit. This however does not mean that he thought that the Brobdingnagian state was ideal. He therefore makes Gulliver observe-'

> The Learning of the People is very defective, consisting only in Morality, History, Poetry and Mathematicks wherein they must be allowed to excel. But the last of these is wholly applied to what maybe useful in Life, to the Improvement of Agriculture and mechanical Arts; so that among us it would be little esteemed and as to Ideas, Entities, Abstractions and Transcendentals I could never drive these conceptions into their heads.

Gulliver's sense of pride in the belief that he belonged to a more sophisticated society, as we have already seen, is repeatedly debunked by the Brobdingnagian king. According to him, contemporary European civilization meant nothing but :

> ….an heap of Conspiracies,Rebellions, Murders, Massacres, Revolutions, Banishments, the very worst Effects that Avarice, Faction, Hypocrisy, Perfidiousness, Cruelty, Rage, Madness, Hatred, Envy, Lust, Malice ,or Ambition could produce.

The Brobdingnagian king deals a final stroke in demolishing the Eurocentric pride of a superior civilization with his outburst at the end of chapter six of the book:

> I have gathered from your Relation, and the Answers I have with much Pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth.

Such outbursts are against human pride and not against Gulliver. The king continues to interact with him and treat him well. Here through the voice of the king we see Swift, the priest, exemplifying the dictum 'Hate the sin and not the sinner'. This is also reminiscent of Swift's remark that he hated different classes of human beings but loved individuals. Similarly, we have already seen the Brobdingnagian king echo Swift, the advocate of peace and the practical philosopher, who thought knowledge was important only if it added to the well-being of the people in general.

It is quite apt that Gulliver's second voyage, fraught with accidents, should end with an accident. An eagle picks up the box in which Gulliver travelled, and dropped it into the sea. An English ship rescued him. Gulliver was left to adjust to a change of perspective because the normal human world appeared miniaturised for him for quite some time.

Having given you this brief though analytical account of the two books, let us now discuss the *Travels* from a few specific angles. It will help you in gaining a deeper insight about the book. You must however supplement this with your reading of the original text.

3.1.4: *Gulliver's Travels* as a Novel

Gulliver's Travels was written about one and a half decades before what literary historians describe as the beginning of the great English novelistic tradition. The great tradition of the English novel started with the publication of Samuel Richardson's epistolary novels, *Pamela* (1741) and *Clarissa* (1742); Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742); Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748) and Lawrence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, *Gentleman* (1760 – 1767).

The varied nature of the novels which we have just mentioned, suggests that even in its early developmental stage, it was a widely inclusive genre refusing to be contained within narrow definitions which are coined mainly for convenience. From the ideas given in Module 1 Unit 3, you may roughly define a novel as a lengthy prose narrative, where ordinary characters reveal themselves through sustained interactions with other characters within or outside their social milieu. The resulting conflicts may have happy or tragic consequences. In the context of the growth of the novel, a primary characteristic was the element of realism that marked its difference from the romance or fantasy literature.

The novel as a genre, started flourishing in response to the growing demands of a newly emerging reading public, tired of romances, and clamouring for stories, with which they could identify. A great number of women – wives and daughters of the newly emerging class of well to do traders, formed a part of this class. Also it was middle-class morality and values that became the proper subject matter of the novel and the themes hinged on everyday concerns. Initially, the demands for light reading material, were met by the essays, periodicals and travelogues. Keeping in mind a demand for realism, all fictional works were prefixed with 'a true history of…or a true story of...'

This was to catch the initial attention of readers. It was then left to the writers' skills to sustain it.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), as you have gathered earlier, is regarded by many literary historians as the first English novel. Here, we have an average God fearing man as a hero. His adventures are made plausible by a stylistic device of accumulating minute descriptive details as circumstantial evidence of truth. Crusoe stands out as a non- heroic hero, who, through diligent hard work, tames his hostile environment, for survival. However, if Defoe's travelogue is to be considered as a novel, it is one, at its very rudimentary stage. There is no interaction of characters, and a barren island can hardly be called a social milieu. There are no women characters. Crusoe's experiences have no impact upon his personality.

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* has many characteristics of a novel. Like Crusoe, Gulliver is introduced as an average middle class Englishman. Gulliver too, is made to use minute circumstantial details to establish the truth of his adventures. In the process of his descriptions, Gulliver exposes his character. In the land of the Lilliputs, he is a gentle Man Mountain who could, if he wanted, overrule the insect like Lilliputians. But his sense of honour prevents him from doing so. In the land of the Brobdingnagians, he perceives himself as an insect like creature, always under the threat of physical harm. In the third voyage, he is a stunned observer, watching the meaningless activities of star gazing Laputians. In the fourth voyage, he is a cowering creature, terrified at the prospect of being identified with the beastly Yahoos. In each of the island adventures, the fantastic creatures are described in details. Some of them, such as the Lilliputian king and his Secretary of state, are given individual characteristics. Similarly, the Brobdingnagian king, Glumdalclitch the little nurse, the Houyhnhm master and the Sorrel Nag have been particularised. Gulliver's rescuers have also been individualised in outline after each adventure. We can also picture his poor neglected wife, whom Gulliver finds repulsive at the end of his fourth voyage. This makes Gulliver different from the lonely Crusoe, the undisputed coloniser in an uninhabited island. Yet, critics do not regard *Gulliver's Travels* as a novel.

The chief reason for not categorising *Gulliver's Travels* as a novel, is not the fantastic nature of the protagonist's adventures. The illusion of reality created, could have well made it a fantastic novel of adventure. What prevents its acceptance as a novel, is the fact that the adventures are **episodic** in nature, each adventure standing alone without leading on to the next. Swift's conception of Gulliver as a character, is very **fluid**. At times, Gulliver is a sober, upright person, with a keen power of observation. At other

times, he is made to strut pompously like a clown, praising his country for the wrong reasons. Gulliver is alternately made a mouthpiece for Swift's satire, and his butt of ridicule. We the readers, at such moments, become aware that instead of an individual, we are confronting a mere vehicle, which Swift uses to expose the maladies of European civilisation. Swift introduced Gulliver as a real person following the convention of writing 'True histories'. An introductory letter and a frontispiece portrait was used to reinforce the claim. After securing the attention of the readers, Gulliver is used at will, by his creator, in his devastating satirical journey. *Gulliver's Travels* remains a great satirical narrative, with scope for multiple layers of interpretations. It has many novelistic characteristics, but it is not a novel.

The problematic nature of Swift's first person or 'I' narrative technique, is another obstacle that comes in the way of regarding *Gulliver's Travels* as a novel. Gulliver is supposed to be writing about his adventures, after completing his four voyages. At the end of the last voyage, he is depicted as a mentally disoriented person. How then does he recount his earlier experiences in the voice of a normal innocent voyager? This does not detract from Swift's satirical intent, but it destabilises the psychological consistency that a novel demands.

3.1.5: Swift's Allegorical Vision

You have first come across the term 'allegory' in your study of Middle English literature; and subsequently in John Bunyan. So you know that an allegory is a literary device almost like an extended metaphor. It is a rhetorical tool that uses symbolism, imagery, actions to convey complex ideas and concepts in a very practical way. One of the best known allegories in English literature is of course John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) which Swift admired a lot. The objects of satire in Swift's narrative cover various aspects of human life and society like the physical, political, intellectual and moral issues. The book as a whole may therefore be seen as an allegory of the decline in human values that distinctly subverted the Enlightenment project of progress.

In each book Swift satirises a particular set of institutions, values and systems. In Book I where Gulliver reaches the land of Lilliputs, Swift's allegory covers several aspects of contemporary English politics and the Party system as it was practiced in England in the post-Restoration period. The size of the people here is symbolic and the dwarfishness of Lilliputians stands for triviality and shallowness of the English society of Swift's time. Swift refers to the high-heels and low-heels — the Tories and Whigs of his age.

Similarly Big Endian represents Catholics and little Endian stands for Protestants. So topical religious and political issues and concerns are allegorically referred to through a delightful fantasy tale.

In the second voyage, Gulliver visits the island of Brobdingnag that is inhabited by giant-like people. Swift used the perspective of size to highlight the imperfections and deficiencies of human beings. Through the conversation between Gulliver and the King, English customs and notions of power are critiqued. Gulliver gains a new way of looking at familiar things.

Through his investigation into ideas and beliefs prevalent in the remote nations that he travels to, Gulliver re-examines war and conflict in the context of European civilization. Swift through his allegorical method draws parallels between Lilliput's desire to enslave an already defeated Blefescu hinting at the strained relationship between England and France. He also indirectly criticised European imperialist arrogance that used the civilizing mission for brutal oppression which masked their chief motive which was greed. Patterns of war and destruction are woven into the allegorical motif here to explain the political systems that Swift is satirising. Allegory and satire are therefore difficult to separate in the book, and the story operates throughout on two levels of comprehension.

It would be interesting to place Gulliver in the position of Christian, the protagonist of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* whom you have seen in Paper 3. The chief difficulty here lies in the fact that Gulliver, unlike Christian, is a comic figure. Christian, during his adventurous journey, overcomes all his enemies who figure as various temptations and reaches the Crystal Palace. Gulliver is repeatedly saved and rescued by others. Gulliver becomes more and more confused with his subsequent journeys till he suffers from total mental dislocation. Here the allegorical interpretation will hold, if we regard Gulliver as the reverse allegorical figure who leads us from confusion to confusion to expose human vice as well as vulnerability – a vulnerability where unlike Christian, Gulliver does not have the option of choice. This is not limited to the island adventures alone. The circumstances that land him on the islands are also important. In the Lilliputian adventure, Gulliver is ship-wrecked. This merely reflects human susceptibility to the vagaries of fortune. Gulliver then gains insight about the meanness, ingratitude, jealousy, cruelty and power-hungry aspects of humans, in a miniaturized version. Gulliver, as a confident man mountain, escapes from the apparently pretty land of petty ambitions, cruelty and meanness.

In the second voyage, Gulliver's confidence is shattered by the cowardly desertion of his ship-mates. The process of realizing his weakness continues with numerous accidents

in Brobdingnagian land, where his assertion of cultural superiority is snubbed by the Brobdingnagian king's contemptuous remarks that the people belonging to Europe were odious vermin. Significantly enough, it is an accident which releases him from the island. He regains confidence among his own people despite the contemptuous remarks of the Brobdingnagian king. Gulliver is wiser, less confident, but still sane. The circumstances leading to the third voyage, are more cruel. He is set adrift on the sea in a canoe. His adventures show the so-called speculative creatures who have to be reminded about everyday realities with floppers. Gulliver, despite further knowledge about human weaknesses, remains sane. In the fourth voyage, Gulliver is deserted on a lonely island by his own crew. After experiencing the cruelty, treachery and cowardice of his own kind, Gulliver is ready to accept the fact that animals can be superior to human beings. It is therefore not surprising that he is enamoured by the rational Houyhnhnms. The filth and bestiality of the Yahoos, is a further step in Gulliver's knowledge of human kind. Why then does Gulliver who adjusted at home after the earlier adventures, become unable to do so, after the fourth voyage? Gulliver could not accept the fact that he was a Yahoo. The Houyhnhnms unceremoniously banished him from their kingdom. Shorn of the last vestige of pride, a mad Gulliver finds comfort in stables. Gulliver's madness is not caused by the knowledge he acquired through his adventures. It is a result of his inability to accept his human identity in totality. *Gulliver's Travels* can then be regarded as an allegory, not through the clarity of vision acquired by the protagonist, but through the insight the readers, gain as vicarious sharers of his adventures.

The idea of human limitations was a constant preoccupation of Enlightenment England. John Locke (1632-1704) had expressed this very strongly in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

"Our knowledge being so narrow as I have showed, it will give some light into our present state of mind, if we look a little into the dark side, and take a view of our ignorance, which being infinitely larger than our knowledge may serve much to the quieting of disputes." (Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. 280) Locke therefore suggests that we should confine our thoughts within the contemplations of those things that we are within the reach of our understanding.

Enlightened Europe's concern was not only about the limitations of the human mind, but also about his position in the universe. Swift's friend Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Man* positions man between extreme rationality and bestiality -

Placed in this Isthmus of a Middle State…
He hangs between in doubt to act or Rest…
In doubt to deem him God or beast…
In doubt his Mind or BodyTo Prefer …

(Alexander Pope. *Essay on Man* ii, 3-8 in John Butt ed.'The Poems of Alexander Pope', London & New York, reprinted 1989, page 516)

Swift, the Anglican priest, was acutely conscious of the depravity inherent in post-lapsarian man. It was however for the enlightenment satirist to proffer Reason that acts as a spiritual anchor and antidote to prevent descent into total bestiality. But Swift in his own unique way, also shows us that the Reason, the very factor of redemption, can through misuse, make a civilized Yahoo worse than the filthy Houyhnmhnmland Yahoos. The Houyhnhnm master banished him from his country saying "when a creature pretending to reason behaved as humans do he dreaded lest the corruption of that Faculty must be worst than Brutality itself."

The allegory does not take us to any final destination. It simply urges human beings to know about their inherent bestiality and use their capacity of reason to rise to the level of decent living epitomized in the behaviour of the captains of the ships who rescued him, particularly the Portuguese captain of the last voyage, Pedro de Mendez. The allegoric journey also provides other exemplary characters, such as the Brobdingnagian king and Glumdalclich the little giantess who looked after Swift in his second island adventure. Ironically enough, no divine intervention for salvation has been offered by Swift, the Dean and Doctor of Divinity.

3.1.6: *Gulliver's Travels* – Parodying the Travelogue

Travelogues or several volume anthologies of travel writing were popular with readers in the eighteenth century. Most readers found a vicarious sense of adventure in reading these accounts. Indeed, the narrative is about the travels of Gulliver to new and remote places where he encounters people he had not even heard about. So the course of the prose narrative/novel is about discovering new countries, exploring new cultures and connecting with alternative worlds. The European Enlightenment was also about acquiring empirical forms of knowledge, and travel and travel experience provided opportunities for accumulating data about other lands and other people.

In the sixteenth century, it was customary for sons of upper-class and aristocratic English families to send their sons on the 'Grand Tour', a journey to sites of culture and civilization in Europe, to complete their education as 'gentlemen'. In the eighteenth century, which saw the rise of the middle-classes, merchant-adventurers made voyages to far-away lands to trade, acquire wealth and fortune so that they could come back to their country and lead a comfortable life.

In the context of European colonisation and the entry of England into the race for new colonies, material resources and even control and power; travel established the idea of cultural encounter. Gulliver meets other people and races and learns about how they live – their social conditions, political institutions, customs, ideas and problems. In turn he interacts with the 'other' (which refers to cultures, races, peoples that are not familiar) and tries to tell them about England and the systems prevalent in his own country. Just as he forms his views about the places that he visits and the peoples that he interacts with, the other people also form their own opinions about Gulliver and the English nation. Refer to how the King of the Brobdingnags reacts to the European enterprise and their idea of superiority.

In fact, Swift is raising several questions through the use of the form of a travel book. Travel writing was always a representation of a culture from a particular perspective which was perhaps not an absolute truth. The fact-fiction dichotomy persisted and travelers vouched for the authenticity of what they wrote by establishing that these were eye-witness accounts and mere reportage of what they saw.

Swift diligently maintained all the paraphernalia of travel books including the style of writing and the use of maps. Gulliver, the narrator, is given a specific local habitation, with details of his family background. He was born in Nottinghamshire as the third of five sons. He studied in Emanuel College and in Cambridge. He was apprenticed to Mr. James Bates, an eminent surgeon in London. He did not like his work and he left his job to learn navigation and other parts of Mathematics. He married Mary Burton, second daughter of Mr. Edmund Burton Hosier, in Newgate Street, from whom he had received a portion of four hundred pounds. Thus, Gulliver is established as a real person. The Frontispiece has an engraving of the portrait of Gulliver. The resemblance of this portrait with Swift himself, has tricked many readers into believing that Gulliver is Swift's mouth-piece and not just a persona. On the other hand, we often overlook a trail of cues to enable us to view his travel book from multiple perspectives rather than Gulliver's view-point alone. The Front page of the Faulkner edition of the book has the inscription "Splendide Mendax" or splendid lies. This suggests that we are invited to

enjoy this book not merely as a parody but also to ponder over the fantastic episodes as pointers to some truth. Here we are perhaps invited to discuss allegorical truths beyond the comic fantasies and brutal satirical thrusts.

Through his many travels, Gulliver is reductively treated as a comic figure rather than a heroic explorer. He 'discovers' lands by accident and the unknown inhabitants observe him, his behaviour and customs and often ridicule him for his physical dimensions – his largeness or smallness. He becomes a curiosity to be exhibited to others. This is a complete reversal of the way in which the Europeans very aggressively viewed otherness and difference in other nations of the world. European pride and superiority is thus critiqued through Gulliver, and on hindsight, Swift's narrative proposes dimensions of a counter-colonial discourse from within the colonial nation.

At the end of his voyages, Gulliver gains what is more in the form of self-discovery. European travelers contributed empirical and material knowledge for the progress of their nations. Gulliver becomes totally confused in the end – he has gained neither wisdom nor rationality through his travels. Thus the travel-education link is called in question.

In the first two books, Gulliver perceives the world through sense-perception. This form of experience is described by John Locke as forming the foundations of knowledge. The Queen of Brobdingnag holds up Gulliver to see his reflection in the mirror – he can also see the Queen. The mirror is used as a metaphorical tool by Swift to project the idea of **self-refexivity** and reflection. This may refer to the relative nature of things which gives a perspective to knowledge.

3.1.7: Misanthropy in *Gulliver's Travels*

Misanthropy is the general hatred, distrust or disdain of the human species or human nature. A misanthrope, or misanthropist is someone who holds such views or feelings. The word's origin is from Greek words misos, ("hatred") and anthrôpos, ("man, human"). Swift has been accused of misanthropy by many critics. For instance, his contemporary, Jean Earl of Orrery, in his *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (1732) states 'In his last part of his imaginary Travels, Swift has indulged a misanthropy that is intolerable. The representation that he has given of human nature, must terrify, and even debase the mind of the reader who views it…'

Sir Walter Scott, in the introduction to his multi volume edition of *Swift's works* (1814)

remarks that the fourth book of the *Travels,* 'holds mankind in a light too degrading for contemplation.' Forgetting the fact that Swift lived for twenty years after the publication of *Gulliver's Travels*, Scott suggests that the narrative reveals 'signs of incipient mental illness which took hold of him in the last days of his life.' Scott grudgingly admits that we are compelled to admire the explosive power of Swift's misanthropic outbursts, though the impact on humanity was bound to be negative.

The Victorian novelist, William Thackeray held similar views. In the 20th century, renowned critics such as F R Leavis state, 'We have then in his writings the most remarkable expressions of negative feelings and attitude that literature can offer' (Leavis, *Determinations.* 105).

Swift himself helped in the nurturing of such negative views. In a letter to Pope, written on 29th September, 1725, he remarked ' I have ever hated all Nations Professions and Communities and all my love is towards individuals…I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth…' Though the word 'hate' appears repeatedly, this passage refutes the charge of misanthropy, for the love for individual relationships overshadows any vague concern for abstractions. This accounts for the positive representation of the Brobdingnagian king, Glumdalclitch, the child nurse who looked after Gulliver, in the Brobdingnagian land, Captain Pedro de Mendez, Gulliver's rescuer in his last voyage. It also explains Swift's warm relationship with his numerous friends, which his massive volumes of correspondence, supports.

In general, readers have been disturbed by the intensity with which Swift exposes the vices inherent in the human animal. What provokes the savage indignation which lacerates his heart, is not the inherent bestiality in humans, but the misuse of the higher faculty of reason, which is also an integral part of human beings. Swift is infuriated by the criminal activities of the human race, which beasts are incapable of committing.

A world which has witnessed the destruction and massacre in two World Wars, a world which trembles in fear at the recurrent butchery of terrorists, should admire Swift's foresight, instead of criticizing his misanthropy.

A satirist can never be a misanthrope. His aim is the betterment of society. He uses his misanthropy as a trope to warn Man against the danger of falling into Yahoo like depravity if the higher faculties are not cultivated and put to good use. The warning note comes most succinctly through the Houyhnhnm land master, who banishes Gulliver because he was afraid that a human brute with even a rudiment of reason, could put it to use, in a most destructive manner. This is a reiteration of what the Brobdingnagian king had

said after Gulliver had proudly described the destructive power of the newly invented war weapons.

Swift's mode of description may be disturbing, but it exposes an angry reformer rather than a sullen misanthrope, - a reformer who uses his fury as a satirical weapon to goad human beings to use the better part of his nature, to suppress the worst.

3.1.8. Gulliver's Travels as a Menippean Satire

All scholars, much to their delight and difficulty, know that the satirical contents of *Gulliver's Travels*, invites a multiple level of interpretations. C. H. Firth, in his lecture published in *The Proceedings of the British Academy* – Vol IX (1919 -20) has focused on the topical political allusions in the first and second books of *Gulliver's Travels*. He has tried to codify the actual historical figures and events which Swift had in mind, while writing. We have referred to them in our general critical survey of the books.

Modern scholars feel that while being important, overt attention to topical factors, detract focus from the more important universal relevance of the work. A modern reader would find it more interesting to look at the book as a Menippean Satire. The term refers to long fictionalised usually prose narratives, with multiple satirical voices aimed at general human lapses. Menippean Satire derives its name from the Greek cynic Menippus. None of his works survives, but his spirit is reflected in the works of Lucian of Samosata (125-180 CE) and Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BCE). Menippean Satire is therefore also known as Varronian Satire. The chief characteristic of such satire is that it targets out types, and not individuals.

Contemporary scholars such as Northrop Frye have classified Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver's Travels*, Thomas Carlyle's (1795 – 1881) *Sartor Resartus*, Lewis Carroll's (1832 – 1898) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and its sequel *Through the Looking Glass* and Robert Burton's (1577 – 1640) *The Anatomy of Melancholy* as good examples of such Satire.

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift places 'Everyman', Gulliver in diverse situations. He then makes him describe his society in a positive light. This allows the reader to gain a triple perspective. First, Gulliver's own perception of what he is describing; second, the reader's viewpoint ; and third, the perspective of the listener to whom Gulliver is speaking, which is usually the authorial view. For instance, we may regard the Brobdingnagian king's voice as Swift's own. If Gulliver is Everyman, the reader is vexed into recognizing

himself in his pompous trotting and praising of western civilization for atrociously wrong reasons. One of the standard devices of Menippean Satire is defamiliarization. Swift achieves this by placing his protagonist in diverse situations, to allow his readers to look at the familiar world through different perspectives. In the first two books, the changes are in magnitude. In the third, it is about individual perception, while in the fourth, there is a total metamorphosis with beasts behaving rationally, and the human kind depicted as bestial. The single protagonist Gulliver, is made to speak in multiple voices, because his function keeps changing; sometimes, he is the authorial voice, and at other times, he is the butt of his satire. Multiplicity is also achieved by Gulliver's changes in perspectives about himself. The superior Man Mountain of the first voyage, becomes a groveling insect like creature, quivering at the prospect of physical harm, in the second. In the third voyage, Gulliver looks on with horror, at the goings on of speculative scientists. The most horrific picture in this voyage, is that of the Struldbergs people gifted with immortality, without the gift of eternal youth. The spectre of these ancient creatures dragging their decrepit bodies with no hope of relief, crashes the general romantic myth associated with immortality. In the last voyage, Gulliver desperately tries to hide his human or Yahoo identity, with all its bestiality, as he prostrates himself before rational animals, the Houynhnhms. Another method of defamiliarisation in Menippean Satire, is to initiate a dialogue with ghosts. Swift does so, in this third book, in which, among others, Brutus is brought into the scene, to emphasize the corruption in the present state of affairs.

Metamorphosis is another trope used in Menippean Satire. It is not used literally in *Gulliver's Travels*. However, its figurative application is strongly evident. Gulliver does not change literally, but he undergoes dramatic psychological changes about his perception of self. Metamorphosis is also an epic device, but it is employed differently here. Thus while having the traces of a Menippean Satire in the true sense of the term, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* expands beyond the scope of satire. In Gulliver's disorientation, Swift diagnoses the attitudinal disbalance of civilized human beings regarding their perceptions about themselves and about the society they live in. What Swift depicted as a European phenomenon, is today, in the backdrop of two world wars, and mindless commercialisation, a global truth**.**

3.1.9: Summing Up

The purpose of this Unit, as stated at the outset, has been to provide you with multiple

dimensions to read a text that has truly universal appeal over ages and generations. In course of this Unit, we have thrown light on how the contemporary milieu has in a big way been responsible for the making of Jonathan Swift the novelist. Attention has been paid to reading relevant issues as may be found in the first two books of Gulliver's travels to the land of Lilliput and Brobdingnag. New terms that you have come across in this Unit include 'Misanthropy' and 'Menippean Satire'. You have also seen how several ideas of the Enlightenment have influenced the writing of *Gulliver's Travels*. You can now engage in discussions with your counselor on the various aspects raised in miniature in this Unit.

3.1.10. Comprehension Exercises

Broad Questions (20 marks):

1. How does Swift establish his protagonist Gulliver as a real individual?
2. How do the shifts in perspective in *Gulliver's Travels* help Swift in his satirical intent?
3. Would you consider *Gulliver's Travels* as a novel? Give a reasoned analysis on the basis of your reading of Books 1 and 2.

Medium Length Questions (12 marks):

1. How was Swift affected by the prevailing popularity of Travel Literature? Show with instances from the text.
2. In what sense can we regard *Gulliver's Travels* as an allegory?
3. Would you from your reading of *Gulliver's Travels* consider Swift to be a misanthrope?
4. Discuss *Gulliver's Travels* as Menippean Satire.

Short Answer Type Questions (6 marks):

1. Discuss the importance of the scatological elements in *Gulliver's Travels*.
2. Give a brief account of Gulliver's interaction with the royal authorities of Lilliput.
3. Show how Gulliver manages to 'come' out of the land of Brobdingnags. What is the deeper significance of this?

3.1.11. Suggested Reading

Text

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Unit - 2 ❐ Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*

Structure

3.2.0. Introduction

Robinson Crusoe, published in 1719, was Daniel Defoe's first novel, and it immediately attracted a large middle class readership. This was both because it was an exciting adventure story and also because it had lessons to impart that would be very contemporary in the given scenario. We shall come to that in course of this Unit. In the eighteenth century a text like this could gain wide currency because it encapsulated the ambitions and aspirations of an emerging middle-class in England and was shaped by the spirit of the times. In the present time when the art of fiction is a well established form, Defoe's text can be read by students of literature as an example of an early novel that tries to confuse the reader by trying to pass off fiction as fact. The truth-fiction dichotomy and the use of techniques that can sustain the plausibility and probability of time and action became important features of the form. You will read the work basically because it gives some idea of how the novel as a genre evolved; and for what it represents of the mercantile interests that shaped the destiny of Britain in that century. Renewed interest in the novel hinges on a postcolonial reading of an Enlightenment text that gives us some idea of how 'other' nations and peoples were considered in those times.

With these perspectives in mind, we shall now proceed with the Unit.

3.2.1. Defoe's Literary Career

Daniel Defoe today is synonymous with arguably his most celebrated creation Robinson Crusoe, the eponymous hero of his first novel. Even as kids you must have heard of this character and of the novel in some form or the other! You will however be surprised to know that Defoe came to fiction-writing quite late in his literary career. In fact, by the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century, he was already a prolific writer of a miscellaneous body of work, including political and religious pamphlets, biographies, travel accounts, histories and a vast range of journalistic writing – all of which played an important part in shaping his later fiction. His years of experience as a journalist imparted an air of objectivity to his accounts that become evident in his eye for detail. In particular, his journalistic pieces are significant in the manner in which they pave the way for his fictional experiments. Focus on the human interest aspect and eye-witness accounts mark his journalistic style; these being strategies later put to good use in his fiction. His familiarity with a variety of popular genres enables him to adapt these in his fictional narratives. After the success of *Robinson Crusoe*, he wrote several other fictional biographies, including a sequel to the text which catapulted him to fame. However, *Crusoe's Farther Adventures* could not recreate the magic of the first work. His other "novels", *Moll Flanders, Roxanna*, *The Adventures of Captain Singleton*, *Colonel Jack* and two works of historical fiction: *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *Memoirs of a Cavalier* exhibit the characteristic flair of Defoe's style: a dexterous blend of realism, romance and adventure makes the tales come alive. Of these, apart from *Robinson Crusoe* which you will be studying in detail here, *Moll Flanders* deserves special mention. Published in 1722, *Moll Flanders* is the story of a tough, streetwise heroine whose fortunes rise and fall dramatically. Both works straddle the border between journalism and fiction.

Robinson Crusoe was based on the true story of a shipwrecked seaman named Alexander Selkirk and was passed off as history, while *Moll Flanders* included dark prison scenes drawn from Defoe's own experiences in Newgate and interviews with prisoners. That the protagonist is a struggling woman who is driven by the urge to attain respectability in a society that values worth by money, makes the novel a very crucial one in literary history. His focus on the actual conditions of everyday life and avoidance of the courtly and the heroic made Defoe a revolutionary in English literature and helped define the new genre of the novel.

Having briefly summed up the literary brief of Defoe's career, it seems important as also interesting to say a few words on the makings of the man; which in a large way influenced his literary world. Born in the very year of the Restoration, Daniel Foe (that was his original name, which he got changed at 35 to sound more aristocratic!) was the third child of parents who were Presbyterian dissenters. This meant that despite being a bright student in school, he was barred from attending Oxford or Cambridge, and had to pursue higher studies in a Dissenters' institution called Morton's Academy. Though Defoe abandoned his early plans of being a Presbyterian minister, yet his Protestant values endured throughout his life despite discrimination and persecution, and these values are expressed in *Robinson Crusoe.* In 1683, Defoe became a traveling hosiery salesman. Visiting Holland, France, and Spain on business, Defoe developed a taste for travel that lasted throughout his life. His fiction reflects this interest; his characters Moll Flanders and Robinson Crusoe both change their lives by voyaging far from their native England. A fervent critic of King James II, Defoe became affiliated with the supporters of the duke of Monmouth, who led a rebellion against the king in 1685. When the rebellion failed, Defoe was essentially forced out of England, and he spent three years in Europe writing tracts against James II. When the king was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and replaced by William of Orange, Defoe was able to return to England and to his business. Unfortunately, Defoe did not have the same financial success as previously, and by 1692 he was bankrupt, having accumulated huge debts. Though he eventually paid off most of it, he was never again entirely free from debt, and the theme of financial vicissitudes—the wild ups and downs in one's pocketbook—became a prominent theme in his later novels. *Robinson Crusoe* contains many reflections about the value of money.

3.2.2. The Fact - Fiction 'Dilemma' in Defoe's Novels

Defoe's novels are mostly in the form of fictional biographies narrated in the first person, pretending to be 'fact'. Apart from minute observation and realistic detail, Defoe's use of narrative frames gives his texts a documentary status. The rhetorical strategy deployed in each of his fictional works operates on the same principle of erasing the presence of the authorial voice, and equating the first person narrative voice as "real", providing a true account of the speaker's experiences. The introductory 'editorial' voice further insists upon the factuality of the narrative, and highlights the dual purpose of presenting such a personal history to the reading public: such tales serve to instruct as well as entertain. Edification and instruction are thus prioritised over entertainment in this

scheme, both by the 'editorial' voice and the first person narrative voice. The latter usually distances himself/herself from his/her previous follies and misdemeanours by adopting a penitent stand. Emphasis on reform and return to virtue thus form the thematic core of Defoe's adventure tales, reflecting his deep-seated faith in the Puritan ethic of work and journey towards social and moral progress. Parallel to the outer journey towards progress and struggle for survival therefore, runs an inner spiritual quest for self-improvement. In most of his narratives, ordinary or even less than ordinary individuals find themselves positioned in extraordinary situations. As a recurrent theme, this will be found to effectively synchronise the modern convention of realism with the earlier tradition of romance and adventure.

❖ **Why and how then does Defoe apply this technique in Robinson Crusoe?**

Often called the first novel, *Robinson Crusoe* is a text that repeatedly and insistently denies its fictionality. It is this 'reality effect' that is today very often identified with the new genre. Despite his own avowed aversion to fiction, the entrepreneur in Defoe was quick to detect the commercial potential of books in an age when readership was fast multiplying. He made the move from journalism to fiction without acknowledging that such a transition had taken place, and without seeming to be aware of the novelty of his enterprise. Prose fiction did indeed exist before *Robinson Crusoe*, but it is this canonical text with its shift away from mythical heroes of the earlier narratives, its focus on the Enlightenment virtues of self-sufficiency and rationality, and its matter-of-fact documentary style of capturing reality that set the tone for the new fiction of the period. This was a fiction which directed itself to the needs of the fast-growing new readership, the emergent middle-class, which could identify with the individualism of Defoe's heroes (and heroines) and admire the Robinson Crusoe variety of heroism. Thus while *Robinson Crusoe* is found wanting in one of the primary traits of the novel - the presentation of man in society - the unreality of Crusoe's situation and his heroic achievements in the face of overwhelming odds is masterfully covered up by the sheer wealth of mundane, everyday details, and through a process of universalisation, presenting the protagonist as a representative of humanity in general, and of the newly emergent class, the rational economic man in particular.

3.2.3. Robinson Crusoe - The Storyline

The novel is purportedly a record of the true adventures of the eponymous hero of the title, prefaced by an editorial note introducing the protagonist to the readers. The first

person account that follows can be roughly divided into three parts, the first describing the hero's life before he is marooned on the island, the second detailing his struggles and experience as a solitary survivor on the island and the third part charting out his return to civilisation.

Crusoe's story begins with details of his family background: he is the young son of a wealthy York merchant. He always had a desire to go to the sea, and runs away from home despite his father's wishes. While aboard a ship, a storm develops and Crusoe fears for his life. He prays to God and promises to repent if he is saved. Once the ordeal is over, Crusoe's friend's father also repeats the warning that had been earlier sounded by his own father - against the uncertainties besetting a sailor's life. Paying no heed to their advice and in spite of his harrowing experience, Crusoe gives in to temptation and goes on another voyage, because he is "young and foolish." From the beginning, the story is cast in the form of a moral fable, with the prefatory emphasis on the didactic value of the account. The theme of the prodigal son further enforces this Protestant allegory of God's grace being bestowed on the suffering and penitent individual. The novel thus records in minute and vivid detail the ups and downs in the life of its protagonist, and attempts to unfold the pattern of "Providence." There is in Crusoe an undying will to never give in to his fate, and make the most of his circumstances. The strong Protestant values of individualism, labour and self-retrospection are keys to understanding the evolution of Crusoe's character. So when his ship is captured by Moorish pirates and he is enslaved, he is resourceful enough to find the right opportunity not only to escape, but also to take a slave with him. Crusoe is rescued by a kind Portuguese captain who takes him to Brazil where he becomes a Brazilian planter. He decides to set off on another voyage to collect slaves for his plantation.

The middle and crucial section of the novel begins when, setting off upon "an evil hour", he is shipwrecked and finds himself marooned on a desolate island. He spends his first night on the island on a tree, and thanks God for saving him. Crusoe next returns to the ship to collect useful things including clothes, food items, weapons and tools. He meditates on the uselessness of money in his situation. He makes a raft and returns to the ship several times. Crusoe next devotes his energies to the making of what he calls his "fortress", a safe dwelling which will protect him from wild animals and savages, and at the same time provide a good vantage point. He also constructs a makeshift calendar, to record the passage of days. Most importantly, he begins a journal in which he records the good and evil aspects of his experience.

A singular feature of Crusoe's narrative is the matter-of-fact documentary manner of

recording the incidents, with a keen eye for verisimilitude. This novel method of storytelling is not only in keeping with the contemporary values of rationality and individualism, it also set the trend for the emerging fiction of the period. The stress on verisimilitude and documentation serves to disguise the "strange and surprising" nature of Crusoe's adventures and Crusoe continues to record in his journal the mundane, everyday aspects of his life in his "island of despair" alongside the miraculous accounts of discovery and survival.

He learns through accidents, mistakes and experience. He is fortunate enough to survive the onslaught of the forces of nature, including an earthquake and a hurricane. Not only does he survive tremendous odds, he also benefits from most of these harrowing situations. After the hurricane, more remains from the wrecked ship are washed ashore. The next blow comes in the form of a prolonged period of illness, during which the weakened and hallucinating protagonist sees a terrible vision, in which he is admonished for his waywardness and warned for not repenting in spite of his many sufferings. After his recovery, Crusoe is a reformed man, and turns to religion for solace. While he had in the past, when faced with danger, turned to religion, his faith in god on those earlier occasions had always been short-lived, disappearing with the passing of the period of crisis. He now comes to regard the island as a site of salvation and his desolate state as necessary for his penitence. However, there remains an ambiguity about his religious experience: it is not clear whether it is a "true" divine vision or a hallucination generated by his fevered mind. Such ambivalence is characteristic of Defoe's narrative, an account which seamlessly blends fact and fiction, passing one off for another. The disruption in Crusoe's calendar can therefore be read not only as a symbolical representation of his loss of authority and submission to God's will, but also a cancellation of fixed timelines, one of the indispensable tools used to ration and order reality. At the same time, his deliverance from repeated predicaments fills him with optimism and he begins to view the island as a land of opportunity. With renewed faith and optimism, he sets out on another exploration, going to the other, more beautiful end of the island. However, he prefers the security of his first home with his "family" of goats, cats and a parrot which he teaches to talk. At the same time, his mood does not remain positive throughout, and he suffers from bouts of highs and lows, often despairing of his situation and then turning to the Bible for comfort.

Crusoe's journal comes to an end at this point, thus marking the closure of an important rhetorical strategy within the larger narrative, a device which contributes to a sense of the real and more importantly, helps to construct identity, offering insights into Crusoe's

character. Yet, the subtext provides vital giveaways which reveal the fabricated and fictional nature of the journal: he deliberately gives a wrong date for his first entry in the journal, matching it with the day of his arrival on the island. Anachronisms mark Crusoe's account, pointing to the subjective and unreliable nature of any narrative. By the time his journal ends, Crusoe is well settled in the island with two homes, self-sufficient and lord of all he surveys. He continues his life on the island by keeping himself busy in different activities and in acquiring new skills.

The next disruption in Crusoe's orderly existence comes when he finds a footprint on the shore, a discovery which terrorises him and makes him run to the shelter of his "castle". At first he thinks it is the doing of the devil, then reasons it must be the mark of a cannibal. His fears are further confirmed when he discovers human skulls and bones, and after this he seldom ventures far from the security of his enclosure. While at first his attitude is non-judgmental and resigned to the will of God, he later turns aggressive and is ready to attack the savages, who visit his island again. Though his faith in God was shaken by the discovery of the footprint, another event makes him realise how fortunate he has been, in spite of his many travails. One night he hears a gunshot and in the morning finds a shipwreck and realises how Providence has been on his side. He compares his disobedience of his father's wishes to "original sin" and when he dreams of rescuing a victim from the cannibals, he considers this his only path to redemption. Crusoe's opportunity comes a year and half later, when he sees a man being pursued by cannibals. He rescues the victim and names him Friday, after the day on which the latter was saved.

It is in his relationship with Friday that we find the most detailed working out of Crusoe's ambivalent attitude towards the other: the contrary pulls of attraction and revulsion or fear have, from the beginning, shaped the contours of his desires and his travels. His desire to go to the sea cannot simply be interpreted as wanderlust nor does he fall into the category of the romantic adventure hero of the past. From the beginning, he is cast as *homo economicus*, keen to advance his fortunes and maximise utility through the use of his rational faculties. He is therefore a successful planter, trader and colonial master who establishes his sovereignty over the island on which he arrives as a castaway. At various points in the novel, he acquires slaves and with Friday, he at once, unquestioningly, accepts the latter's subservient position. In this master/servant or father/son relationship, Crusoe is clearly the superior, tutoring the savage cannibal in the ways of civilisation. Although he is genuinely fond of Friday's company, he does not completely trust him. There is, however, one area in which the civilised master's firm

faith in his pre-eminence is shaken: after Friday's conversion to Christianity, Crusoe is amazed by his religiosity and admiringly upholds him as a true Christian, superior to many in Europe. Crusoe's own troubled relationship with his God makes him recognise Friday as a better Christian. Yet, he continues to be apprehensive about Friday, not quite sure whether he has been able to completely reform him. At the same time, Friday's company boosts his self-image and he feels that much of his earlier fear of the cannibals was a result of his imagination.

With the arrival of Friday, a new chapter may be said to have started in Crusoe's life: he is no longer the lone inhabitant of the island, and soon after, Crusoe's solitary island is populated by other presences. As Crusoe and Friday plan to voyage out to Friday's island, another group of cannibals arrive with victims and this time Crusoe has Friday to help him rescue the ill-fated men. One of them is a European and the other turns out to be Friday's father. Crusoe is amazed to see the bond between the savage father and son duo, yet wastes no time in establishing his imperial sway over his "new subjects". Assured by the rescued Spaniard that the other Europeans in his group would accept Crusoe's leadership, Crusoe sends him and Friday's father to the other island to bring them. As they wait for their return, they are surprised to see the arrival of an English boat, with prisoners. When the prisoners are left on the shore by their captors who set about to explore the island, Crusoe approaches them and finds out they have been held captive by a mutinous crew who plan to abandon the captain and his two faithful men on this desolate island. Crusoe agrees to help the Captain on the assurance of free passage back home, and on condition that the Captain and his men swear allegiance to him. Although they are not many in number, they succeed in overwhelming the mutineers through clever strategy and Crusoe makes them believe he is a governor of a royal colony. The Captain and Crusoe decide to take along twelve men they consider trustworthy and leave the rest behind on the island. Crusoe informs them of the Spaniards who are going to arrive and instructs them about the ways of survival on the island.

After they leave the island, they reach Lisbon where Crusoe finds his old friend the Portuguese Captain, and although he is tempted, he decides against going to Brazil and a life of luxury. He decides to take the land route to England because he is now, at the end of his adventures, apprehensive of sea voyages. However, ill fortune continues to beset him and he nearly loses his life in an attack by wolves. Finally, back in Hull, he settles down to a sedentary life, married, with children. Yet, Crusoe remains an isolated man: he does not seem to have formed any genuine attachments and although he has friends, he remains aloof once back in civilized society. Though married, there is little

mention of his wife, and we do not even get to know her name. Crusoe seemed happier in his island home, in the company of Friday and his pets. Given Crusoe's character, it comes as no surprise that after his wife's death, he is bitten by wanderlust again, and sets out on yet another voyage. He visits his island, which is now a thriving colony, with the cannibals warded off. The novel is therefore circular in structure, with Crusoe's return to a life of adventure. The idea that a character like Crusoe is not born to lead a sedentary life is conveyed in the hint of a sequel, which promises to chart out his "further adventures".

3.2.4. Important Themes in *Robinson Crusoe*

- **Spiritual journey and regeneration**: The novel can be read as a spiritual autobiography or a Christian allegory in which Crusoe, like the Biblical prodigal son, disobeys his father and as a result can return home only after he undergoes much suffering and is truly penitent. Repeatedly, he is warned for his waywardness, but his repentance is always short-lived, forgotten as soon as he is out of his crisis. He is finally converted halfway through the novel, although doubts continue to plague him as he questions the cruelty of his fate. The design of Providence is an important theme in the novel, the course of the action exemplifying not only Crusoe's extraordinary survival skills, but equally how fortunate he is: he emerges mostly unscathed from his many predicaments. A benign Providence seems to be protecting him, and Crusoe himself recognizes this occasionally, especially at the time of his religious reawakening that follows his illness. So his "island of despair" metamorphoses into Eden, and he is Adam in the primordial garden, a land filled with wondrous opportunities where he is lord of all he surveys. At other times, he is cast in the mould of Job, whose trials finally end when he is rewarded by god for his patience. Defoe's narrative exudes the Protestant ethic of salvation through work and surrender to the will of God. Crusoe's spiritual journey is presented in the shape of his relationship with God, and his regeneration comes when he finds comfort in the word of God, the Bible.
- **Conflict between Puritan morality and capitalist economic interest**: In *Robinson Crusoe,* the Puritan ethic of work coexists with the capitalist motto of economic individualism, combining spirituality and pragmatism. Crusoe, from the beginning is keen to advance his position through trade, and does not pay

heed to his father's wishes. Parental authority is thus defied in favour of personal gain or interest. In terms of the Christian allegory, while Crusoe seems to be duly punished for his insubordination, his experiences differ from that of the parable of the prodigal son in one important respect: unlike the latter, he does not inherit his wealth from his father, nor does he return bankrupt; he earns his immense fortune through sheer hard work and perseverance. Once back home, his spiritual awakening does make him give away his wealth and he is able to curb his acquisitive instincts. However, it is important to keep in mind that Crusoe's variety of Protestant faith is not, in the final analysis, in conflict with the profit principle that guides his actions. The two ideologies in fact work together, with the evangelical drive providing the justification for colonising the heathen "other".

- **Economic individualism and colonization**: *Robinson Crusoe* is perhaps the most celebrated proto-colonial text and its hero an early colonist who very significantly, establishes, not a republic but a kingdom. He is the proud owner of his possessions, including the slaves he acquires. Although both Xury and Friday are devoted to him, he treats them as dispensable commodities. While Coleridge regards Crusoe as "the universal representative" of mankind in general, James Joyce assesses his persistence, efficiency and practicality as qualities in keeping with Crusoe's spirit of economic individualism and the principle of private enterprise. Crusoe's universal status may be brought to question if we see the way Defoe depicts in detail his hero's adventures in an alien land while devoting little time to Friday's experiences in England. The difference is also one of quality: while Crusoe is presented as a commanding figure, exercising mastery over his surrounding and the other characters he meets, Friday is loyal servant who if he at all initiates action, he does so to either protect or entertain the white Europeans. The bear-baiting episode in England shows Friday in such a role; moreover, it is all the more significant since it is the only time Friday lies when he boasts of having killing bears in his own land. This may be read as a corruption of Friday's natural honesty as a result of his contact with civilization.
- **Man and nature**: Robinson Crusoe symbolises the triumph of rational will over untamed nature. The familiar binaries of nature versus nurture, wild untamed nature on the one hand versus civilization and art on the other are further strengthened in the representation of the protagonist as the successful male colonial adventurer who establishes his dominion over feminine nature and the

effeminate, submissive inhabitants of the island. This combination of reckless spirit of adventure and a capacity for limitless enterprise makes Crusoe the quintessential *homo economicus* or the economic man, one who is guided by his reason and driven by self interest to impose order and design on the primitive state of nature.

- **Attraction/Repulsion towards the "other":** While Crusoe exhibits the characteristic revulsion of the white man towards the "cannibals" and savages he encounters, he is, at the same time, inexplicably drawn to the other. He is more at home in his island, leading a solitary existence, than when he is back in civilization, amidst family and friends. The only genuine bond he forms is with Friday, and although he cannot completely trust him nor treat him as his equal, he admires the latter for his qualities. This attraction for the other can be explained in terms of colonial discourse which regards the colonised races as at once attractive and threatening. At another level, Crusoe's repeated journeys to distant lands across the seas may be read as the expression of his indomitable spirit of adventure, rebelling against middle class values. Crusoe's identity as an imperialist is largely shaped by his Protestant evangelism, his deep-seated hatred of non-Christians. This explains the exceptional status that Friday enjoys – Friday converts to Christianity and his behaviour is more exemplary than many European Christians.

- **Race, Class and Family**: For a text which has at its centre a man isolated from society, leading a solitary life of a castaway in an island, *Robinson Crusoe* is a text surprisingly obsessed with hierarchies. The account begins with the violation of paternal authority, with Robinson running away from home in spite of his father's wishes, and in the course of the novel we find him duly punished. This act of rebellion against familial hierarchy is mirrored in the theme of turning away from God the father and returning to the fold after his spiritual awakening. Although he escapes from society for a life at sea, Robinson himself is acutely aware of class distinctions, aware also of his own position. After settling down on the island, Crusoe feels he is the proud owner of the realm, and this sense of ownership is most forcefully and graphically portrayed in his relationship with Friday. The polarities as well as the ambiguities in the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised are played out in the Crusoe-Friday relationship, a strange kinship in which one cannot do without the other. This mutual dependence lasts till Crusoe is delivered safely to his land, among his community. After this

point, Friday is no longer needed and neither the author nor the narrator show any interest in what becomes of him. Apart from establishing his domination over Friday, Crusoe is equally quick to assert his superiority over the Europeans who arrive on his island and actually pretends to be a royal governor. One final point needs to be made about Crusoe's sense of hierarchy: the issue of gender. *Robinson Crusoe* is a text embedded in patriarchy and the absence of women in the narrative is telling. Once back home in civilized society, Crusoe, in keeping with its norms, does acquire a wife; however, she figures so marginally in his emotional landscape that he does not even name her. An interesting parallel is his "naming" of Friday: in a way both Friday and Crusoe's wife remain nameless, we do not get to know their (real) names.

3.2.5. Important Characters in *Robinson Crusoe*

- **Robinson Crusoe:** Perhaps the most striking aspect in Defoe's portrayal of his protagonist is the way he presents him in near complete isolation, and not as a social being, as was the general norm in eighteenth century literature. It is Crusoe's physical and spiritual solitude that defines and shapes him. Yet the hero of Defoe's castaway narrative is curiously unmindful of his loneliness; in fact, he seems very much at home in his island paradise, and actually feels threatened when he sees signs of other humans. If his solitude is extreme, it is archetypal, representing the universal isolation of each individual, trapped in his own subjectivity. Crusoe is too busy building up and extending his property to be weighed down by lack of society: his possessions, including the domesticated animals and later Friday take the place of human company. Perseverance and resourcefulness therefore are the hallmarks of Defoe's hero, a man who evolves from a naive young sailor to a toughened and experienced survivor. His evolution is traced through stages – the first is the capitalist stage in which the restless young man repeatedly runs away to sea in the pursuit of profit. As a castaway, reason takes over as the guiding principle, presenting Crusoe's daily battle for survival in terms of an eighteenth century manual of self-help. At the same time, he continues to follow the profit principle, building up his empire meticulously and single-handedly. The final stage follows Crusoe's spiritual conversion, after which he recognises the role of providence in his life and the value of faith. The spiritual evolution of the protagonist enables us to read the narrative as a Puritan guide for youth, a religious allegory in which

Crusoe is cast in the role of the prodigal son or exile who returns as the ideal eighteenth century Englishman, guided by reason and morality. He is also Adam in the primeval garden, learning to recognize his frailties in the course of his adventures. Unlike Adam, he has no female counterpart; yet lack of female agency does not rule out the significance of the issues of gender and sexuality in this narrative. In a sense it may be suggested that this apparent absence point to an important subtext, one in which the masculine protagonist owns and tames the feminine wilderness of the island.

- **Friday:** The introduction of Friday is a brilliant narrative strategy in a text that tells the experiences of the protagonist alone on an unpopulated island – a new character is introduced just when the story tends to get tedious. Friday's appearance is part of the sudden and dramatic series of events which upset Crusoe's settled way of life on an island he had claimed as his own. The character of Friday has drawn critical attention in the light of contemporary post-colonial theory, which take into account his role in terms of race, gender and sexuality. The obvious interpretation is to read Friday as Crusoe's alter-ego, the colonised other, the archetypal slave/servant to Crusoe's imperialist master. Crusoe's role is that of the instructor, tutoring the savage in the ways of civilization and true religion. Yet Friday stands out from the other savages Robinson Crusoe encounters and describes, and in more ways than one, he makes Crusoe question his assumptions regarding the so-called savage races. His deep religious faith, his honesty and gratitude, his close attachment to his family – all the make Crusoe wonder about his innate racial inferiority. Indeed, these qualities serve to present him as a foil to the hero himself, making the latter appear in a negative light. Crusoe's faith was never his strong point and although he undergoes a spiritual awakening, we do not really see him change in a fundamental way. From the beginning, he is seen as someone eager to break free of the ties of family, leaving for the sea against his father's wishes. At the end of the novel, when he returns to England and acquires a family, he does seem much interested in them, and readily gets over his wife's death. The simplistic master/pupil or superior/inferior binary is therefore brought to question through the presentation of Friday as "noble savage", someone who willingly decides to serve his master rather than return to his people. In many ways, Friday is closer to the Europeans than to other savages, in terms of his appearance and his behaviour. The chief and only point of difference seems to be his religion, yet in this area too, he is finally a better Christian than Crusoe, one whose version of the religion endorses

and supports imperialism. Friday is treated as an object and Crusoe never once enquires about his name nor shows interest in his language, and once they return to England, Crusoe has little use of him. Yet the Friday-Crusoe bond is stronger than any other relationship portrayed in the book. It is all the more significant because of the complete absence of any female figure on the island and Crusoe's total disinterest in women and marriage.

3.2.6. Plot and Structure

Robinson Crusoe is remarkable for its elaborate and contrived structure, although it gives the impression of real life experiences recounted in a straightforward manner. Defoe carefully creates the reality effect framework by means of an editorial introduction, and then allowing the protagonist take over in first person narrative. The editorial Preface, the journalistic style and attention to minute detail account for the verisimilitude yet it must be recognised that these are carefully planned narrative strategies. The Editor is not a real life character, but part of the fiction perpetrated by Defoe. At the same time, the Preface denies the fictionality of the account and this prepares the ground for our entry into an extraordinary tale. In fact, the text we now celebrate as the first novel, insistently claims that it is "history", worth narrating for its very incredibility. The editorial preface then simultaneously acknowledges the implausibility of the events narrated and avows their truth. A further dimension is added by the journal, which provides another temporal order, a sense of immediacy and greater authenticity, recording the events as they take place. While it also serves as yet another story within a story frame, thus it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two narrators - the solitary Crusoe on the island documenting his experiences for himself, and the Crusoe who recounts his adventures for readers once he has returned to human society. The distinction between, the journal and the later reminiscence, between private and public is deliberately blurred, in order to create an effect of seamless continuity. With its masterly suspense-building, the deliberate deployment of the introduction, crisis, resolution pattern and clever use of recurrent themes, this complex text belies its apparent loose, episodic form. The work can be neatly divided into parts: the first introductory or preparatory phase in which a young Crusoe runs away from home and lands repeatedly in trouble because he does not heed the advice of his well-wishers. The second part of his adventures starts when he finds himself marooned on the uninhabited island. This crucial phase is further divided by Crusoe's vision and spiritual reawakening from which point the text takes a new turn. The final part of his experiences takes us back to Europe, and his

journey over land to England. The "strange" adventures of the archetypal rebel and exile engaged in perpetual voyage or quest is framed by a return to convention and conformity at the end of the book. Robinson Crusoe is remembered most iconically as the island-hero but the novel ends with him returning to human society, back home in England, where he marries and settles down as a family man. Such reassuring circularity is at the same time rendered exciting with the promise of "further adventures". He is the kind of protagonist who always yearns for more and this is true not only of his capitalist acquisitive instinct, but also seems to apply to the author's desire to capitalise on the possibilities of such a method of storytelling.

Although throughout the text there is only one protagonist, the interest never flags, and Defoe introduces new and dramatic events or characters at points where the storytelling is at the risk of becoming monotonous. There is a circularity in terms of events and characters as well, making for thematic unity. Crusoe the rebel son finds a foster father in first his friend's father, and next in the Portuguese Captain. In terms of a Christian allegorical reading, the father-figure stands for God the father, the guiding spirit and Crusoe represents everyman, journeying towards salvation. Crusoe himself in turn acts as a father figure to two young boys he takes under his wing in the course of his travels, though his role as a father figure leaves much to be desired. Both Xury and Friday he treats as objects, although they are emotionally attached to him. His treatment of Xury prefigures his relationship with Friday and perhaps one of the reasons why he develops a stronger bond with the latter is because of Friday's faith. The Xury-Friday parallel is evident not only in terms of their nature and relationship with Crusoe, but in terms of the events that unfold involving them. For instance, the bear-baiting episode featuring Friday is prefigured by an earlier incident in which Xury similarly killed a wounded lion. The presence of Xury and Friday in Crusoe's story serves to highlight one of the major themes of the text - slavery in its many forms. Crusoe himself is a slave at one point of time, and yet while he strongly desires and cherishes his independence, he does not question the institution of slavery. Instead, we see him selling into slavery immediately after their escape from the Moors. This is because slavery and trade/profit are closely interlinked in Crusoe's world.

Religion here plays the key role of justifying one type of slavery over another, and in validating western colonial enterprise. The island over which Crusoe establishes his sway is also at another level the ideal space where the solitary individual struggles to discover himself and his faith. The structure of the novel is thus shaped and bound together by the twin impulses of Protestant faith and economic gain. Structurally as

well as thematically, the text is a case-study of accumulation-principle at work, with details piling up to represent Crusoe's steady rise from the state of nature to a civilized man in possession of an empire of his own.

3.2.7. Summing Up

While *Robinson Crusoe* is a landmark text breaking away from earlier traditions, it reinvents the older myths, giving them a new direction. Thus at one level the text works as a brilliant tale of adventure in the mould of the earlier romances, although the mythical hero of the past is replaced by the new age Protestant middle class individual. Yet in spite of his apparent ordinariness, Robinson Crusoe impresses us with his amazing ability in not only surviving extreme odds, but also emerging successful from his adversities. At the same time, Defoe's hero would have reminded his readers of the extraordinary experiences of a real-life castaway, Alexander Selkirk, whose adventures gained much popularity. While capitalising on this kind of travel writing, Defoe made use of yet another popular genre of the period - conduct literature primarily aimed at youth, texts which took on the role of providing spiritual guidance. Crusoe's life therefore can be read as a spiritual autobiography or allegory representing the journey of the human soul towards salvation. This seventeenth century tradition is given a contemporary twist in the eighteenth century context of proto-capitalist enterprise so that the protagonist is now a bourgeois Puritan, who, as James Joyce points out, is indeed "the true symbol of the British conquest."

3.2.8. Comprehension Exercises

(Broad Answer Type 20 marks)

1. Can *Robinson Crusoe* be described as the first novel in English given the author's insistent critique of fiction as a genre? What are the characteristics of the novel that can be found in this seminal text?
2. How does Crusoe embody the idea of the "economic man"? Explain with reference to Crusoe's experiences before and after he is marooned.
3. Critically examine Crusoe as an ideal representative of the Christian faith.
4. How does Friday act as a foil to the character of Crusoe? Assess the relationship between the two and bring out the multiple tensions inherent in such a bond.

5. Analyse Crusoe's fear of cannibalism. What does cannibalism symbolise in the text? In terms of Crusoe's acts of appropriation and violence, who do you think is the real cannibal in the story?
6. Comment on the plot and structure of Robinson Crusoe. How far is it true to describe it as an episodic tale of adventure?

(Medium Length Answers 12 marks)

1. What purpose does the editorial preface serve in *Robinson Crusoe*?
2. Comment on the theme of the prodigal son in the novel. How does Defoe work out Defoe's troubled relationship with his father and father-figures in his life?
3. What is the significance of the Xury episode? Does it prefigure Crusoe's later bond with Friday?
4. Bring out the significance of the bear-baiting episode and the role played by Friday in this incident.
5. Why does the novel end with the promise of further adventures? Does this hint of a sequel strenghten or undermine the sense of circularity in the plot of the novel?

(Short Answer Types 6 marks)

1. Why does Crusoe embark on yet another voyage in spite of promising to repent during his ordeal at sea?
2. What are the two significant items maintained by Crusoe which serve to document his experience on the island and provide a sense of temporal order?
3. Give two examples of Crusoe's enterprise and ability to transform adverse conditions into profitable ones.
4. Why does Crusoe react with fear when he sees footprints on his island? Why is he persuaded that it is the work of either the devil or of a cannibal?
5. Which real-life castaway is said to have inspired the tale of Defoe's fictional hero?

3.2.9. Suggested Reading

Ellis, Frank, H. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Robinson Crusoe.*

Seidel, Michael. *"Robinson Crusoe:* Varieties of Fictional Experience". *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe.* Ed. John Richetti.

Shinagel Michael ed. *Robinson Crusoe*, Norton Critical Edition.

Watt, Ian. "Robinson Crusoe, Individualism and the Novel". *The Rise of the Novel*.

Unit - 3 ❐ Joseph Addison: 'Sir Roger at Church' Richard Steele: 'On Recollections of Childhood'

3.3.0. Introduction

In Module 3 of Papers 2 and 3, you have already had a fair idea of the development of what is broadly called 'non-fictional prose' in the 16th and 17th centuries in England. In continuation of that trend, this Unit will draw your attention to the developments in prose in the 18th century. It intends to give you a clear idea on how the development of English Prose was not a random or erratic event but a gradual and harmonious process of development. Your counselor might as well recall for you the beginnings in the didactic prose of Bacon, the mathematical plainness of the Restoration pamphleteers and diarists, and move on to the Neo-Classical emphasis on decorum and moral purpose of Eighteenth century prose of the Periodical Essayists and the nascent novel – until it attained its modern form and fullness. At the micro level, this unit will introduce the learner to the

features of Augustan or Eighteenth Century English prose and the two stalwarts – Joseph Addison and Richard Steele – who were the pioneers in popularising the very topical genre called the 'Periodical Essay', published in the popular Journals/newspapers of the time. You will also see for yourselves how these paved the way for the rise of the novel in that century.

3.3.1. The Background Of The 18th Century Periodical Essay

Why do you think the term 'Periodical' came to be affixed to the essay form in the 18th century?

As you go into this sub-section, try and find the answer to this very basic question that should definitely strike your minds at the outset.

The periodical essay, conceptualised towards the end of the seventeenth century, reached its peak of success early in the eighteenth century in the work of **Joseph Addison** (1672-1719) and **Richard Steele** (1672-1729). The flourishing prose tradition of the seventeenth century polished by the elegance of Sir William Temple, the ideas of plainness propounded by John Locke and John Tillotson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, led to the discarding of the cumbrous sentence-structure of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages and ushered in, what came to be called, the "middle style" of prose which enabled a greater degree of informality and was exploited by the periodicals/ newspapers of the time.

The periodical essay was also the direct product of the art of pamphleteering much in vogue in the Restoration age and continued in the works of Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift in the eighteenth century. Journalism too had its pioneer in Defoe's periodicals, *The Review*, *Applebee's Journal.* The growing interest of the eighteenth century in contemporary affairs is readily traced in the developments in journalism. In addition to the newspapers, the early eighteenth century had 'journals of books', which summarised and extracted the more scholarly continental as well as English books. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, by Edward Cave, had offered the cultured reader a monthly selection of poems, songs, stories, news and the like. *The Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society* continued as the chief scientific periodical. The compactness of the city of London, the club-like effect of the Coffee Houses, further aided the expansion of the Periodical Prose form. The periodical essay catered to a topical need like comedy of

manners and it substituted the entire tradition of theatre going which was a part of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. In an age of socio-political turmoil, there was no longer time for idle pleasure. It was a time trying to adapt to new and changed conditions, where the church no longer dominated and the need for a stable society became the preoccupation of the intellectuals. Thus journalism appeared as the most realistic and original medium for the rising middle classes to solve problems and to shape their opinions. The periodical essay with its fictional characters and anecdotes, entertained a large readership that included the merchants, intelligentsia, courtiers and acted as a fit interregnum between the decline of theatre-going and the emergence of the novel. The periodical essayists echoed, to some extent, the complacency of the times, the sense of security and calm, but also tried to correct the faults that were products of this complacency. Of their readers , they demanded sane , level-headed actions , backed by the dictates of reason and common sense. Eighteenth-century writers, and particularly the periodical essayists, showed the same concern for order, reason , and good sense in their writing. Reacting against the passion and complexity of the seventeenth-century metaphysical school, they strove for clearness, for correctness and for a balanced style that would underline their rational persuasions and come to be described by Samuel Johnson as "the middle style" (On Addison) of English Prose which had its direct successors in Lamb. Their principal aim was to be understood, and the lucidity and symmetry which their prose attained as a result. One important contribution that the periodical writers made to English literature is the colloquial manner they adopted in order to appeal to a wider public; they required that a piece of prose or poetry be interesting , agreeable , and above all comprehensible.

For an author, the periodical form could be especially appealing as a means of presenting his ideas tentatively rather than completely. This informality, already present in the Renaissance essays, is extended when the writer has the additional advantage of publishing periodically. Periodicals in the eighteenth century included social and moral commentary, and literary and dramatic criticism, as well as short literary works. They also saw the advent of serialised stories, which Charles Dickens, among others, would later perfect. One of the most important outgrowths of the eighteenth-century periodical, however, was the topical, or periodical, essay which was the lead article in an issue. Practically all eighteenth century authors were occasional contributors. The shaping influences of this form of prose/essay were journalistic rather than that of the 'essai'

following the traditions of Montaigne, Bacon or Cowley. The periodical essay usually had a dual aim: to **amuse** and to **improve**. It was through deft management of the latter purpose, while not neglecting the former, that Addison and Steele achieved their greatest successes. There were many periodicals - Ned Ward's *London Spy* (1698-1700), Willis's *Occasional Paper*, *The Weekly Comedy* and *The Humours of a Coffee House* (1707-1708). – before Addison and Steele's periodical careers began. One must then conclude that the superiority of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, the essay periodicals of Steel and Addison, is in part due to the happy combination of the 'dule' and 'utile'. Appealing to an educated and largely middle class audience, the periodical essay as developed by Addison and Steele was not scholarly, but casual in tone, concise, and adaptable to a number of subjects, including daily life, ethics, religion, science, economics, and social and political issues. Another innovation brought about by the periodical was the publication of letters to the editor, which permitted an unprecedented degree of interaction between author and audience.

In literary reputation Addison far surpasses Steele, but in his prose he is never at his best except when working beside Steele. *The Tatler* was begun by Steele in April 1709, and appeared on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays – on days that the post left London for the country. In the dedication to the first collected volume Steele wrote: "The general purpose of this paper, is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affectation and to recommend a simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behavior". The 'dulce et utile' (amusement and instruction) combination resulted in some of the best known and best loved prose-writings of the eighteenth century. Mr. Issac Bickerstaff, the pseudonym under which all the Tatlers were written was gradually characterised as an elderly, tolerant observer and commentator, an astrologer by profession.

The Spectator is by far the best of all periodical Papers. It also was a folio half sheet, but unlike *The Tatler*, appeared daily – a strain on the versatility and industry of its authors. It ran from March 1711 to December 1712, and although a collaborative project, in it Addison did his best writing. The persona of 'Mr. Spectator' was invented and characterised in the first issue. He was an observer, not a censor of morals, and therein lay his usefulness and his charm. The club of which he is a member is introduced to us by Steele in the second number of the paper.

Check your progress

After reading this sub-section, you should be able to gather a fair idea of the why the Periodical Essay is so called and what its subject matter is. The trends of continuity and disruption from the Restoration era, the impact of the emerging popular culture and public life of the times, the continuation of the classical idea of the dual purpose of literature…and the rise of a mature prose style … all these should be noted.

Your counselor is expected to guide you in analysing these aspects with additional inputs.

3.3.2. Joseph Addison (1672-1719) – A Brief Biography

Joseph Addison (1672 -1719) an English essayist, poet, and dramatist, who, with Richard Steele, was a leading contributor to and guiding spirit of the periodicals ***The Tatler*** and ***The Spectato***r. His writing skill led to his holding important posts in government while the Whigs were in power. Addison was the eldest son of the Reverend Lancelot Addison, later Archdeacon of Coventry and Dean of Lichfield. After schooling in Amesbury and Salisbury and at Lichfield Grammar School, he was enrolled at the age of 14 in the Charterhouse in London. Here began his lifelong friendship with Richard Steele, who later became his literary collaborator. Both went on to the University of Oxford, where Addison matriculated at Queen's College in May 1687. Addison went on to have a lucrative career in the government. The Whig success in the election of May 1705, which saw the return of Somers and Halifax to the Privy Council, brought Addison increased financial security in an appointment as undersecretary to the secretary of state, a busy and lucrative post. Addison's retention in a new, more powerful Whig administration in the autumn of 1706 reflected his further rise in government service. At this time he began to see much of Steele, helping him write the play *The Tender Husband* (1705). In practical ways Addison also assisted Steele with substantial loans and the appointment as editor of the official London Gazette. In 1708 Addison was elected to Parliament for Lost within Cornwall, and later in the same year he was made secretary to the Earl of Wharton, the new lord lieutenant of Ireland. Addison's post was in effect that of secretary of state for Irish affairs. It was during Addison's term in Ireland that his friend Steele began publishing *The Tatler*, which appeared three times a week under the pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff. Though at first issued as a newspaper presenting accounts of London's political, social, and cultural news, this periodical soon began investigating English manners and society, establishing

principles of ideal behaviour and genteel conduct, and proposing standards of good taste for the general public.

By the end of 1710 Steele had enough material for a collected edition of *The Tatler*. Thereupon, he and Addison decided to make a fresh start with a new periodical *The Spectator*, which appeared six days a week, from March 1, 1711, to December 6, 1712, offered a wide range of material to its readers, from discussion of the latest fashions to serious disquisitions on criticism and morality, including Addison's weekly papers on John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the series on the "pleasures of the imagination." From the start, Addison was the leading spirit in *The Spectator*'s publication, contributing 274 numbers in all. In bringing learning "out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables, and in coffee-houses," *The Spectator* was eminently successful. One feature of *The Spectator* that deserves particular mention is its **critical essays**, in which Addison sought to elevate public taste. He devoted a considerable portion of his essays to literary criticism, which was to prove influential in the subsequent development of the English novel. His own gift for drawing realistic human characters found brilliant literary expression in the members of the Spectator Club, in which such figures as Roger de Coverley, the subject of one of the prose pieces that forms part of this unit, prominently feature.

3.3.3 Text – Sir Roger at Church

Published in *The Spectator*, No, 112, Monday, July 9, 1711

> Ἀθανάτους μὲν πρῶτα θεοὺς, νόμῳ ὡς διάκειται, Τίμα. [1]
>
> — Pythagoras
>
> I am always very well pleased with a country Sunday, and think, if keeping holy the seventh day were only a human institution, it would be the best method that could have been thought of for the polishing and civilizing of mankind. It is certain the country people would soon degenerate into a kind of savages and barbarians were there not such frequent returns of a stated time, in which the whole village meet together with their best faces, and in their cleanliest habits, to converse with one another upon indifferent subjects, hear their duties explained to them, and join together in adoration of the Supreme Being. Sunday clears away the rust of the whole week, not only as it refreshes in their minds the notions of religion, but as it puts both the sexes upon appearing in their most agreeable forms, and exerting

all such qualities as are apt to give them a figure in the eye of the village. A country fellow distinguishes himself as much in the churchyard as a citizen does upon the 'Change[2], the whole parish politics being generally discussed in that place either after sermon or before the bell rings. My friend Sir Roger, being a good churchman, has beautified the inside of his church with several texts of his own choosing; he has likewise given a handsome pulpit[3] cloth, and railed in the communion[4] table at his own expense. He has often told me that, at his coming to his estate, he found his parishioners very irregular; and that, in order to make them kneel and join in the responses, he gave every one of them a hassock[5] and a Common Prayer[6] book, and at the same time employed an itinerant singing master, who goes about the country for that purpose, to instruct them rightly in the tunes of the Psalms; upon which they now very much value themselves, and indeed outdo most of the country churches that I have ever heard. As Sir Roger is landlord to the whole congregation, he keeps them in very good order, and will suffer nobody to sleep in it besides himself; for if by chance he has been surprised into a short nap at sermon, upon recovering out of it he stands up and looks about him, and if he sees anybody else nodding, either wakes them himself, or sends his servant to them. Several other of the old knight's particularities break out upon these occasions; sometimes he will be lengthening out a verse in the Singing-Psalms[7] half a minute after the rest of the congregation have done with it; sometimes, when he is pleased with the matter of his devotion, he pronounces "Amen" three or four times to the same prayer; and sometimes stands up when everybody else is upon their knees, to count the congregation, or see if any of his tenants are missing. I was yesterday very much surprised to hear my old friend, in the midst of the service, calling out to one John Matthews to mind what he was about, and not disturb the congregation. This John Matthews, it seems, is remarkable for being an idle fellow, and at that time was kicking his heels for his diversion. This authority of the knight, though exerted in that odd manner which accompanies him in all circumstances of life, has a very good effect upon the parish, who are not polite enough to see anything ridiculous in his behavior; besides that the general good sense and worthiness of his character make his friends observe these little singularities as foils that rather set off than blemish his good qualities. As soon as the sermon is finished, nobody presumes to stir till Sir Roger is gone out of the church. The knight walks down from his seat in the chancel[8] between a double row of his tenants, that stand bowing to him on each side, and every now and then inquires how such an one's wife, or mother, or son, or father do, whom he does not

see at church—which is understood as a secret reprimand to the person that is absent. The chaplain[9] has often told me that upon a catechising[10] day, when Sir Roger has been pleased with a boy that answers well, he has ordered a Bible to be given him next day for his encouragement, and sometimes accompanies it with a flitch of bacon to his mother. Sir Roger has likewise added five pounds a year to the clerk's place; and, that he may encourage the young fellows to make themselves perfect in the church service, has promised, upon the death of the present incumbent, who is very old, to bestow it according to merit. The fair understanding between Sir Roger and his chaplain, and their mutual concurrence in doing good, is the more remarkable because the very next village is famous for the differences and contentions that rise between the parson and the squire, who live in a perpetual state of war. The parson is always preaching at the squire, and the squire, to be revenged on the parson, never comes to church. The squire has made all his tenants atheists and tithe-stealers[11]; while the parson instructs them every Sunday in the dignity of his order, and insinuates to them almost in every sermon that he is a better man than his patron. In short, matters are come to such an extremity that the squire has not said his prayers either in public or private this half year; and that the parson threatens him, if he does not mend his manners, to pray for him in the face of the whole congregation. Feuds of this nature, though too frequent in the country, are very fatal to the ordinary people, who are so used to be dazzled with riches that they pay as much deference to the understanding of a man of an estate as of a man of learning; and are very hardly brought to regard any truth, how important so ever it may be, that is preached to them, when they know there are several men of five hundred a year[12] who do not believe it.

3.3.4. Notes and Glossary

1. Epigraph: "First worship the immortal gods as custom decrees." The first of the so-called Golden Verses of Pythagoras.
2. A citizen of the City of London, hence commonly a merchant. The " 'Change" is the Exchange in London, where merchants met to transact business.
3. Pulpit: The podium from where the priest in a church conducts the service.
4. Communion: The term "**communion**" is applied to sharing in the Eucharist by partaking of the consecrated bread and wine, an action seen as entering into a

particularly close relationship with Christ. Sometimes the term is applied not only to this partaking but to the whole of the rite or to the consecrated elements.

5. Common Prayer Book: The Book of Common Prayer is the short title of a number of related prayer books used in the Anglican Communion, as well as by the Continuing Anglican, "Anglican realignment" and other Anglican churches.
6. Hassock: a cushion for kneeling on in church, while at prayer.
7. Psalms: The **Book of Psalms** (Hebrew "Praises"), commonly referred to simply as **Psalms** or "the Psalms", is the first book of the *Ketuvim* ("Writings"), the third section of the Hebrew Bible. The title is derived from the Greek translation, *psalmoi*, meaning "instrumental music" and, by extension, "the words accompanying the music." The book is an anthology of individual psalms, with 150 in the Jewish and Western Christian tradition and more in the Eastern Christian. They are meant to be sung accompanied by music.
8. Chancel: In church architecture, the **chancel** (or presbytery) is the space around the altar in the sanctuary at the liturgical east end of a traditional Christian church building, possibly including the choir.
9. Chaplain: Traditionally, a **chaplain** is a minister, such as a priest, pastor, rabbi, imam or lay representative of a religious tradition.
10. Catechising: To teach the principles of Christian dogma, discipline, and ethics by means of questions and answers.
11. Tithe-stealers: Farmers who cheat the parson to whom they are bound to pay annual tithes (i.e., a tenth of the produce of their farms)
12. Five hundred a year: a man with an income of 500 pounds a year.

3.3.5. Sir Roger at Church - Commentary and Analysis

The Spectator Papers, though catering to a topical need and taste, outlive their contemporaneity though the sheer force of characterisation which Addison so deftly used and managed. One of the most memorable characters created by him is Sir Roger de Coverley, an elderly country squire. At first he was designed to be the survival of a Restoration Rake (fashionable man), but he soon became the Tory country squire, aged and lovable, benevolent tyrant of his parish, occasionally absurd as magistrate and politician. Sir Roger appeared in so many essays that some thought that *The Spectator*

was evolving to the form of the novel of manners. Whether we watch Sir Roger on his own estate, note his relations with the parson of his parish, or his paternal interest in the attendance and behavior of his tenants at church, we share a friendly affection in all of it. He never becomes so absurd as to lose our respect.

➢ **Character of Sir Roger**

The picture that emerged of Sir Roger's character from the initial passages of the essay is:

- Sir Roger is one an **eccentric** but **lovable** Country squire.
- Sir Roger de Coverley is a man **of naturally strong intelligence** and **physical vigour**.
- He has, indeed, resigned himself to **an inglorious existence** among his bucolic and admiring tenants.
- He, however, has not fallen a victim to a sense of self-importance like the pompous and empty-headed Sir Harry Quickset.
- He overflows with **loving kindness**, the concept of *noblesse oblige* that stillmarked out the older feudal homes.
- His long career of feudal autocracy has only added a **touch of independence** and eccentricity to his **benevolence**.
- His relationship with his tenants is a **paternalistic one**.

➢ **Humour in Addison**

Humour in Addison's essays is chiefly ironical and satirical. Humour and irony are related very closely in his essays. Moreover, his laughter is intended to mend, correct and rectify follies and absurdities and hence the purpose of *The Spectator* papers, well announced in number 10, was "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality". Good-natured humour abounds in "Sir Roger at Church". The follies, oddities of Sir Roger are the chief elements and source of humour. His authoritative power sometimes leads him to appear a funny and idiosyncratic man. Addison shows that Sir Roger is eccentric and in this essay his eccentricities and oddities are seen in the capacity in which he exercises his authority as landlord. He wants that his tenants should behave well in the church. He allows nobody to sleep in the church during sermon but himself often cannot resist dozing off. He creates humour through incongruity between what he says and what he does. Sometimes when everybody is upon their knees, he would stand

up and start counting the number of the tenants present. Here Addison says, "As Sir Roger is landlord to the whole congregation, he keeps them in good order and will suffer nobody to sleep in it besides himself". Moreover, he "sometime stands up when everybody else is upon their knees, to count the congregation, or see if any of his tenants are missing". It creates humour and we laugh at his peculiarities. He is not conscious that he is breaking social form and it becomes an oddity of manner. Then again Addison says about Sir Roger that when he is pleased with a matter, he pronounces the word "amen" several times. Addison says. "...half a minute after the rest of the congregation have done with it; sometimes when he is pleased with a matter of his devotion, he pronounces amen three or four times to the same prayer". A religious fervour that is misplaced—Sir Roger does not realize that this is eccentric behavior. Sometime Sir Roger falls asleep during the congregation and yet, if by chance he sees anybody dozing, he wakes him up or sends his servants to him. Sometime he shouts to somebody and tells the person not to disturb the congregation. A fine example of situational irony – that he is doing exactly the opposite of what he is preaching. These eccentricities make us laugh. The authoritarian Sir Roger leaves the church first after finishing the congregation and no one dares leave the room before him as a mark of respect. He goes out dividing the people into two rows and he follows the lane between these two rows. These oddities of Sir Roger are not criticized but satirized with the mild strokes of humour. Apparently Addison tries to amuse the reader through the above humorous anecdotes and description of situations but actually he also satirizes the shortcommings of Sir Roger, as sleeping in the church during sermons is an offence to the Church. Sir Roger's vices however are so mild as to call for nothing more than good-natured satire, instead of bitter criticism. Surely, Addison is critiquing a way of life through the affable Sir Roger, the tenants for their philistinism – they are too rustic to understand the sermon or its nuances.

➢ Satire in Addison

While the healthy living and paternalistic communal relations with the tenants, demonstrated by Sir Roger are portrayed with subtle admiration, his dealings with the local church are highly satirized. The most obvious mockery of Sir Roger occurred when Addison detailed Sir Roger's relationship and commitment to high-church authority. The authority Sir Roger wielded in the country church near his estate is meant to depict Tory feudalism as a farce. One of these feudal principles was the privilege which gave large landowners control over their local parish church and the ability to name the clergyman and clerks. While a choice based on merit is an admirable enough

notion, Mr. Spectator could not suppress a hint of bemusement over Sir Roger's complete authority in the church writing that, 'As Sir Roger is Landlord to the whole Congregation, he keeps them in very good Order, and will suffer no body to sleep in it besides himself…'. The squire routinely caused disruptions such as lengthening the verses of psalms, standing while others were kneeling so as to note any absences and interrupting the sermon to tell people not to disturb the congregation with fidgeting or making noise. Mr. Spectator opined that the worthiness of his character made these behavioural oddities seem like foils rather than blemishes on his good qualities. He also noted that none of the other parishioners were polite or educated enough to recognise the ridiculousness of Sir Roger's behaviour inside the church and his sense of authority over the church. These observations of Sir Roger's love of the high-Anglican church in the countryside are essential to the authors' original purpose for creating the character, to mock the seemingly backward rural Tory. You must remember here that Addison was a Whig supporter in an age when literature and politics were intimately linked, so he was appealing to Whig sympathisers.

3.3.6 Richard Steele – Biography

Sir Richard Steele**,** pseudonym Isaac Bickerstaff (1672 – 1729). He was a noted English essayist, dramatist, journalist, and politician, best known as principal author (with Joseph Addison) of the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Steele's father, an ailing and somewhat ineffectual attorney, died when the son was about five, and the boy was taken under the protection of his uncle Henry Gascoigne, confidential secretary to the Duke of Ormonde, to whose bounty, as Steele later wrote, he owed "a liberal education." He was sent to study in England at Charterhouse in 1684 and to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1689. At Charterhouse he met Joseph Addison, and thus began one of the most famous and fruitful of all literary friendships.

He was commissioned in 1697 and promoted to captain in 1699, but, lacking the money and connections necessary for substantial advancement, he left the army in 1705. Steele's most important appointment in the early part of Queen Anne's reign was that of gazetteer—writer of *The London Gazette,* the official government journal. Although this reinforced his connection with the Whig leaders, it gave little scope for his artistic talents, and, on April 12, 1709, he secured his place in literary history by launching the thrice-weekly essay periodical *The Tatler*. Writing under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, Steele created the mixture of entertainment and instruction in manners and morals that was to be perfected in *The Spectator*. "The general purpose of the whole," wrote Steele,

"has been to recommend truth, innocence, honour, and virtue, as the chief ornaments of life"; and here, as in the later periodical paper, can be seen his strong ethical bent, his attachment to the simple virtues of friendship, frankness, and benevolence, his seriousness of approach tempered by the colloquial ease and lightness of his style.

Steele's original plan for *The Tatler* was of a journal with several divisions. Diversity was the great need and he divided the paper into contrasting sections that derived from various sources, chiefly Coffee Houses, in which he pretended he had agents. Thus, 'accounts of gallantry were to come from White's Chocolate House, from Will's Coffee House would come the poetry, already made famous by Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve and others. Foreign and domestic news came from James's Coffee House and all other subjects he concludes 'shall be dated form my own apartment'. 'whatever we do or say or think or feel', as the Latin motto of the first *Tatlers* was translated, suggested that interest in human beings and their affairs is an endearing and amiable characteristic of *The Tatler.*

3.3.7 On Recollections of Childhood – Text

From the *Tatler*, Number 181, June 6, 1710

> There are those among mankind, who can enjoy no relish of their being, except the world is made acquainted with all that relates to them, and think everything lost that passes unobserved: but others find a solid delight in stealing by the crowd[1], and modelling their life after such a manner, as is as much above the approbation[2], as the practice of the vulgar. Life being too short to give instances great enough of true friendship or goodwill, some sages have thought it pious to preserve a certain reverence for the names of their deceased friends; and have withdrawn themselves from the rest of the world at certain seasons to commemorate in their own thoughts such of their acquaintance who have gone before them out of this life. And indeed, when we are advanced in years, there is not a more pleasing entertainment, than to recollect in a gloomy moment the many we have parted with, that have been dear and agreeable to us, and to cast a melancholy thought or two after those with whom, perhaps, we have indulged ourselves in whole nights of mirth and jollity. With such inclinations in my heart, I went to my closet yesterday in the evening, and resolved to be sorrowful; upon which occasion I could not but look with disdain upon myself, that though all the reasons which I had to lament the loss of

many of my friends, are now as forcible as at the moment of their departure, yet did not my heart swell with the same sorrow, which I felt at that time; but I could, without tears, reflect upon many pleasing adventures I had had with some, who have long been blended with common earth. Though it is by the benefit of nature, that length of time thus blots out the violence of afflictions; yet, with tempers too much given to pleasure, it is almost necessary to revive the old places of grief in our memory; and ponder step by step on past life, to lead the mind into that sobriety[3] of thought which poises the heart, and makes it beat with due time, without being quickened with desire, or retarded with despair, from its proper and equal motion. When we wind up a clock, that is out of order, to make it go well for the future, we do not immediately set the hand to the present instant, but we make it strike the round of all its hours, before it can recover the regularity of its time. Such, thought I, shall be my method this evening; and since it is that day of the year which I dedicate to the memory of such in another life as I much delighted in when living, an hour or two shall be sacred to sorrow and their memory, while I run over all the melancholy circumstances of this kind which have occurred to me in my whole life.

The first sense of sorrow I ever knew was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age; but was rather amazed at what all the house meant, than possessed with a real understanding why nobsody was willing to play with me. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a beating the coffin, and calling “Papa”; for, I knew not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother caught me in her arms, and transported beyond all patience of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embraces; and told me in a flood of tears, Papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he could never come to us again. She was a very beautiful woman, of a noble spirit, and there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport[4]; which, methought, struck me with an instinct of sorrow, that, before I was sensible of what it was to grieve, seized my very soul, and has made pity the weakness of my heart ever since. The mind in infancy is, methinks, like the body in embryo; and receives impressions so forcible, that they are as hard to be removed by reason, as any mark with which a child is born is to be taken away by any future application. Hence it is, that good-nature in me is no merit; but having been so frequently

overwhelmed with her tears before I knew the cause of any affliction, or could draw defences from my own judgment, I imbibed commiseration, remorse, and an unmanly gentleness of mind, which has since insnared[5] me into ten thousand calamities; and from whence I can reap no advantage, except it be, that, in such a humour as I am now in, I can the better indulge myself in the softnesses of humanity, and enjoy that sweet anxiety which arises from the memory of past afflictions.
We, that are very old, are better able to remember things which befell us in our distant youth, than the passages of later days. For this reason it is, that the companions of my strong and vigorous years present themselves more immediately to me in this office of sorrow. Untimely or unhappy deaths are what we are most apt to lament; so little are we able to make it indifferent when a thing happens, though we know it must happen. Thus we groan under life, and bewail those who are relieved from it. Every object that returns to our imagination raises different passions, according to the circumstance of their departure. Who can have lived in an army, and in a serious hour reflect upon the many gay and agreeable men[6] that might long have flourished in the arts of peace, and not join with the imprecations[7] of the fatherless and widow on the tyrant to whose ambition they fell sacrifices? But gallant men, who are cut off by the sword, move rather our veneration than our pity; and we gather relief enough from their own contempt of death, to make it no evil, which was approached with so much cheerfulness, and attended with so much honour. But when we turn our thoughts from the great parts of life on such occasions, and instead of lamenting those who stood ready to give death to those from whom they had the fortune to receive it; I say, when we let our thoughts wander from such noble objects, and consider the havoc which is made among the tender and the innocent, pity enters with an unmixed softness, and possesses all our souls at once.

Here (were there words to express such sentiments with proper tenderness) I should record the beauty, innocence, and untimely death, of the first object my eyes ever beheld with love. The beauteous virgin[8]! How ignorantly did she charm, how carelessly excel. O death! Thou hast right to the bold, to the ambitious, to the high, and to the haughty; but why this cruelty to the humble, to the meek, to the undiscerning[9], to the thoughtless? Nor age, nor business, nor distress, can erase the dear image from my imagination. In the same week, I saw her dressed for a ball, and in a shroud. How ill did the habit of death become the pretty trifler[10]! I still behold the smiling earth—A large train of disasters were coming on to my

memory, when my servant knocked at the closet door, and interrupted me with a letter, attended with a hamper of wine, of the same sort with that which is to be put to sale on Thursday next, at Garraway's coffee-house[11]. Upon the receipt of it, I sent for three of my friends. We are so intimate, that we can be company in whatever state of mind we meet, and can entertain each other without expecting always to rejoice. The wine we found to be generous and warming, but with such a heat as moved us rather to be cheerful than frolicksome. It revived the spirits, without firing the blood. We commended it until two of the clock this morning; and having to-day met a little before dinner, we found, that though we drank two bottles a man, we had much more reason to recollect than forget what had passed the night before.

3.3.8 Notes and Glossary

1. stealing by the crowd: maintaining a low profile or being private.
2. approbation: approval or praise
3. sobriety: the state of being sober, and not drunk or intoxicated.
4. transport: overwhelm someone with strong emotions.
5. insnared: trapped
6. agreeable men: men who are
7. imprecations: curses
8. beauteous virgin: the lovely, single and chaste lady who was the object of Steel's very first affections.
9. undiscerning: lacking judgment, insight, or taste.
10. pretty trifler: a lovely plaything.
11. Garraway's Coffee House: one of the popular Coffee Houses near the Change in London, the hub of intellectual activity.

3.3.9 On Recollections of Childhood – Commentary and Analysis

Though less popular than Addison as an essayist**,** Steele has been described as "more human and at his best a greater writer." In the prescribed essay in the module, he reflects

on the pleasure of remembering the lives of friends and family members who have died. Especially vividly portrayed is the death of Steele's father when he was a mere child of five. Death was a new and unknown event for him and he could not fathom the irrevocable nature of it. Struck by the sense of loss and exposed to the constant pain of his mother, Steele realizes and writes in retrospect that such indelible impact of disaster and tragedy in childhood has made him a man with a gentleness and sensitive bent of mind which is easily tuned towards recollections of bereavement. The simplicity and apology with which he describes this 'unmanly' softness of nature actually highlights the humane nature of the writer rather than demeaning his personality. This is a style which Steele follows regularly, one of negation, which actually goes to create a positive view of the essayist in the reader's mind.

Steele continues his discourse on the nature of deaths and the memories it evokes in the minds of survivors. According to him, the deaths and departures of childhood hit humans with greater impact than those which are encountered in later years. It is interesting to note that Steele says that the circumstances of death are the parameters which differentiate the nature of the sorrow it evokes in the mind of the living. For instance the nature of sorrow for mourning the gallant soldiers who gave their lives for the whims of some tyrant – would only result naturally in cursing the tyrant but would be different from the pain of the insider – the widow or the father on losing a loved one. Finally, Steele shares with us the object of his first affection a young lady who was called away by untimely death. Her death once again raises many questions in the writer's mind regarding the lack of reason and logic in death's onslaughts – who takes away not always the proud or the evil but also the tender and the meek. The essay ends on a note of humour as a casket of wine intrudes upon Steele's sombre trail of recollections and the arrival of friends and a long night of revelry leaves the writer's spirits uplifted.

What is noteworthy in the essay, as in the essays of Addison too, is the familiarity of approach which instantly endears and draws the reader close to the essayist to share in his sorrows and participate in his humour with ease. Steele's selected essay blends pathos, philosophical reflections and personal sorrow with humour and light-heartedness, thus fulfilling the role as enumerated in early issues of *The Tatler* of combining 'dulce' with 'utile' or the appetite for the amusement with morality and to create the best-known and best-loved prose writing of the eighteenth century. Augustan age has often been charged with 'a too noticeable lack of emotion', but Richard Steele, with his warm human sympathy and genuine pity for the condition of weak men, seems to deny this accusation. His emotional nature led him to what may have been an excess of

sentimentality in his plays, but in the periodical essays, the rapport that he establishes with his audience by expressing his feelings makes his satire more acceptable and thus more effective.

3.3.10 On Style: Addison and Steele Compared

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Richard Steele (1672-1729) are the founders of the modern English essay as well as modern English prose. Both Steele and Addison aimed at easy and free flowing expression and that was the style the 18th century needed with the expansion of England's trade and industry. In each preceding age, the masterpieces were poetry but before the middle of the 18th century we find prose far surpassing poetry. As regards the improvement of English prose Steele and Addison occupy an important position. They were the first to combine good style with attractive matter. And thus to convey a prose ideal to a much wider circle than had any one done before and further they diffused a taste for knowledge as none previously had one done before that was communicated in a novel way.

Look at this wonderful passage from one of the essays in *The Spectator* which will bring out the philosophy of Addison and Steele:

It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools, to dwell in the clubs, at tea-coffee houses.

In *The Spectator*, the method of Addison and Steele is that of the preacher who does no violence to human nature. At bottom, the idea that they seek to inculcate is of the art of living together, the duties of family life, the status and role of women, in society—general subjects, such are the subjects touched upon by a secular, impartial and practical this universal adviser. In the words of Cazamian: "The variety of subject, a supple adaption to the preferences of the public at the same time sufficiently skillful reaction against certain habits, certain defects, a harmony with obscure instinct of middle class minds- such are the major reasons for the success of spectator." Addison is remarkable among satirists because he intended his humor to be 'Remedial', to induce human feelings to forsake the wrong, and to become more kindly. His humor is of a kind that makes one smile rather than laugh aloud. His essays helps to impart a moral tone to British society, he castigated the manners and foibles of society. In fact, he was the most genial teacher

of wisdom to the people of his age. The contribution of Steele as an essayist may be considered more than significant to that of Addison in that it was Steele who initiated and conceptualised the joint venture *The Tatler* and *The Spectator.*

Steele stated the purpose of the *Tatler* in these words: "The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false art of life, to puff off the disguise of cunning, vanity, and affection and to recommend a general simplicity in our discourse and behaviour." Most of Steele's essays are didactic in nature. He intended to bring about a reformation of contemporary society manners and life. Steele was able to produce originality in his essays. *The Tatler* was the result of his idea. His creative imagination resulted in the establishment of the Spectator Club. Addison contributed to the development of the characters of Spectator Club. Both essayists were conscious moralists who intended to improve the minds and manners of their readers:

- ✓ their essays are less formal and didactic than those of Francis Bacon, but less personal than those of Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt in the next century.
- ✓ They strove for a balance between the new mostly Puritan philistine middle-class and the often libertine aristocracy.
- ✓ They fostered a new social ideal which stressed moderation, reasonableness, self-control, urbanity, and good taste.

Steele and Addison provide a natural contrast to one another, both in their personalities and in their work. Both men were interested in reforming the manners and morals of the eighteenth century, but Steele wrote more from experience of the faults, foibles and weaknesses he was satirising in human beings while Addison more from inner experience and on his habit of thought and introspection. His tone is calmer than Steele's, though he is less warm and sympathetic. His prose is more balanced and symmetrical, easier to follow, though perhaps less 'natural'. His essays attempt a conscious perfection of style that Steele may not have had time for. Addison mastered a literary manner finer than Steele's though he may have been lacking in the kindliness and sympathetic humanity of his contemporary. But though Steele did show a powerful sympathy and more 'feeling' than Addison in his writing, and though the original conception of a reformatory series of essays was his, the credit for evolving the most widely-read periodical and the one of the highest quality must go to Addison. It may be said, in conclusion, that Steele was the more original and Addison the more effective. Addison raised Steele's conception

of an essay to a degree never yet surpassed. Steele is unequalled in his depiction of and advice to members of the domestic circle; he is most at home with matters having to do with the "personal" aspect of lives of eighteenth century men and women. When the periodicals turned their attention to correcting manners and morals, Addison's cool sense and rational persuasions were perhaps regarded more seriously than Steele's cheerful, though sympathetic pictures.

Dr Samuel Johnson on Addison's 'Middle Style' of prose writing

"His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace lie seeks no ambitious ornaments and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour. ... His sentences have neither studied amplitude nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." (Dr Johnson on Addison from *Essays by Johnson*, ed. J H Fowler)

3.3.11 Summing Up

This Unit has attempted to make the learner aware of the following significant issues:

- That there is a continuity between the prose of the earlier ages of English literary history and the eighteenth century and the eventual evolution of modern English prose owes a lot to the development of prose writing in any particular age..
- The English Prose tradition seriously began with Bacon's crisp didactic prose, moved towards simplicity and plainness with Restoration pamphleteers and diarists, merging with the Neo-classical emphasis on elegance and decorum and finally heralding the birth of modern prose.
- The development of prose was a predominant reason for the emergence of the periodical essay and eventual the rise of the novel. Printing had contributed largely to the creation of a market place for journals, newspapers and fiction

- Joseph Addison and Richard Steele were pioneers who established in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* a form of the literary essay that went out of fashion after the eighteenth century periodical papers ceased to exist.
- The representative essays by Addison and Steele from *The Tatler* and *The spectator* are helpful in revealing the style of the writers and pointing out how they were both precursors of the English novel as well as of modern prose to be discussed in subsequent modules.

The preceding sections of this unit have tried to fulfill most of these objectives, leading the learner to appreciate the nuances of the prose style and the purpose of the essayists in the chosen pieces. As a learner you are expected to develop a curiosity to read more essays by Addison and Steele in order to get a greater knowledge and taste of their style.

3.3.12 Comprehension exercises

Long Answer Type Questions— 20 marks

1. Give an account of English Prose in the Eighteenth century with special reference to Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. How did they make morality fashionable?
2. Critically assess the prose styles of Addison and Steele as found in the essays 'Sir Roger in Church' and 'On Recollections of Childhood'.
3. Examine how the Periodical essay helped to capture the contemporary social ethos of the eighteenth century.

Medium Answer Type Questions—12 marks

1 Delineate the character of Sir Roger de Coverley after Addison in 'Sir Roger in Church'.

2. Show how 'On Recollections of Childhood' reflects on the pleasures of remembering lives of people from the past.
3. Show how Addison blends wit and humour with criticism in his essay 'Sir Roger in Church'?

Short Answer Type Questions – 6 marks

1. Describe Steel's feelings at his father's death.
2. Describe some of the peculiarities of Sir Roger's in church.
3. Give two examples each of the use of humour from both Addison's and Steele's essays.

3.3.13 Suggested Reading

1. Walker, Hugh. *The English Essay and Essayists*. London & Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1915.
2. Graham, Walter. *The Beginnings of English Literary Periodicals: A Study of Periodical Literature 1665-1715*. 1926. Reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1972.
3. Squibbs, Richard. *Urban Enlightenment and the Eighteenth Century Periodical Essay*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
4. Meyers, Carol, "Advisors of the age of reason: The periodical essays of Steele, Addison, Johnson, and Goldsmith" (1962). Honors Projects. Paper 24. http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/eng_honproj/24

Module - 4

An Introduction to 'Reading Drama and Dramaturgy'

In Paper III, you have read in detail about the Puritan stage, drama after the Restoration of monarchy, glimpsed some representative snippets of Restoration dramaturgy and also been acquainted with a bit of critical thoughts on contemporary drama.

In all this, you have surely felt that the history of English comedy from the Restoration (1660) to the very end of the eighteenth century seems to be marked by a curious pattern of action and reaction. The closing of the theatres at the beginning of the Civil War in 1642 was a momentous event in the history of English drama. After a hiatus of eighteen years, when the playhouses reopened in 1660, the character of English drama had undergone an irreversible change. With their polished prose dialogues, urban settings, intrigue-plots, stock and amoral characters, the Restoration Comedy of Manners, practiced by such court wits as William Wycherley, George Etherege, William Congreve, George Farquhar and John Vanbrugh were fundamentally different from the comedies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Written by, for, and about a leisurely aristocratic class, the Restoration Comedies not only excluded other classes from its dramatic world but also made fun of anything that was non-urban and hence, 'non-fashionable' as the age was wont to believe.

If the Puritan ethos of the Protectorate was directly responsible for the excesses of the Restoration Comedies, the very excesses also led onto a reaction in the minds of the spectators. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, popular reaction against the amoral/immoral absurdities of the form was voiced from every possible quarter. It was probably Jeremy Collier's 1698 pamphlet "A Short View of the Immorality and the Profaneness of the English Stage" that sealed its fate forever. It is no wonder then that generally considered to be the finest example of the Restoration Comedy of Manners, William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) is also one of its last. Hereafter, we will only see the conventional mode of the Comedies of Manners disintegrating and breaking apart. The vacuum thus created was filled by what has come to be called "**the Sentimental Comedy**". In contemporary novels, as in the theatre, the immoral intrigues of characters gradually gave way to an excess of sentimentality. Sentiments were defined and extolled as one of the highest of human virtues, it had an uncanny ability to enter

into and participate in the distresses of others and feel their plights as one's own. The heroes and heroines of such plays were infallibly virtuous, uncomplaining in their sufferings and always sympathetic to others. Oliver Goldsmith, a contemporary of Sheridan, would refer to this kind of play—practiced by the likes of Colley Cibber, Richard Steele, and Hugh Kelley— as "weeping sentimental comedies"!

The anti-sentimental comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan, coming after the vogue of the Restoration Comedy of Manners and the Sentimental Comedies, seem to present a compromise, a golden mean as it were between the two types. Both Goldsmith and Sheridan retained the wit, the sophisticated dialogues, the stock-characters and common motifs like mistaken identity from the Restoration comedies while purging them of their overtly sexual connotations. In Goldsmith's play, largely set in the English countryside, we see how he goes back to Elizabethan indigenous comic traditions to 'cure' English theatre of sentimentalism that had devastated the presence of true comic humour. The comedy is entertaining as it is based on physical entertainment and action than on witty dialogue.In *The Rivals* we see Sheridan affecting an amalgamation of features from both types of comedies—the comedy of Manners and sentimental plays to effect a change. While for instance, the Captain Absolute/Ensign Beverley and Lydia plot retains most of the trappings of the Comedies of Manners, the Julia-Faulkland subplot, with its emotionally charged rhetoric and high sentiments is a direct descendant from the Sentimental Comedies. By subordinating the Julia-Faulkland plot to the Absolute-Lydia one, Sheridan however, attests his preference for the 'laughing' over 'weeping' comedies, and by portraying Faulkland as an unnecessary jealous and sentimental lover, the dramatist also points to the absurdities that an excess of sentimentality could create.

This Introduction to the Module is intended to bridge the evolutionary forms of Comedy that you have already come across in Paper III and will now read through in Paper IV.

Module - 4

Unit - 1 ❐ Oliver Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*

Structure

4.1.0. Introduction

This unit intends to introduce the learner to eighteenth century drama. The excesses of Restoration Comedies, made way for what came to be called "**the Sentimental Comedy**", with excess of sentimentality, and a fit reaction against it in the form of what came to be called "**the anti-sentimental comedy**". It is our objective to lead the learner to this gradual transition from Restoration to Sentimental drama and finally discuss in

detail the features of Anti-sentimental drama. For this purpose the play which will be used as an illustrative text is Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer.* It remains to this day a popularly performed anti-sentimental play. When the play was written and performed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it marked a shift from the sentimental dramas of Hugh Kelly, Colley Cibber, Richard Cumberland, Richard Steele, to the anti-sentimental plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan. Even outside this theatrical context (that will be explained below) the play has the features of a delightful and entertaining comedy. While reading the play try to identify features of English country and city life, the position of women and what was expected from them, the function of men in society, the difference in class and position – issues that in some way or another are still relevant in other times and other locations.

4.1.1. Drama in the Eighteenth Century

- **Reactions to Restoration:** The rise of Eighteenth Century Drama was directly related to the disintegration of Restoration Comedy of Manners and if the Puritan ethos of the Protectorate was directly responsible for the excesses of the Restoration Comedies, the very excesses also led onto a reaction in the minds of the spectators. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, popular reaction against the amoral/immoral absurdities of the form was voiced from every possible quarter. It was probably Jeremy Collier's 1698 pamphlet "A Short View of the Immorality and the Profaneness of the English Stage" that sealed its fate forever. Also, the middle class audiences, who had previously been the butt of the humour in the comedies with aristocratic rakes as heroes, were on the rise in terms of socio-political position as well as economic prosperity. They no longer enjoyed the plays which had no reflection of their lifestyle or values. This was also a major reason for the wane of restoration drama.
- **Rise of Sentimental Comedy**: It is no wonder then that generally considered to be the finest example of the Restoration Comedy of Manners, William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) is also one of its last. Hereafter, we will only see the conventional mode of the Comedies of Manners disintegrating and breaking apart. The vacuum thus created was filled by what has come to be called "**the Sentimental Comedy**". Sentiments were defined and extolled as one of the highest of human virtues, it had an uncanny ability to enter into and participate in the distresses of others and feel their plights as one's own. The heroes and

heroines of such plays were infallibly virtuous, uncomplaining in their sufferings and always sympathetic to others. Oliver Goldsmith, a contemporary of Sheridan, would refer to this kind of play—practiced by the likes of Colley Cibber, Richard Steele, and Hugh Kelley— as "weeping sentimental comedies"!

- **Rise of Anti-Sentimental**: The reaction to the excessive lachrymose comedies resulted in creating a new brand of witty comedy purged of the sentimental excesses and the obscenities of the Restoration. The anti-sentimental comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan, coming after the vogue of the Restoration Comedy of Manners and the Sentimental Comedies, seem to present a compromise, a golden mean as it were between the two types.
- **Important dramatists—Sheridan and Goldsmith:** Both Goldsmith and Sheridan retained the wit, the sophisticated dialogues, the stock-characters and common motifs like mistaken identity from the Restoration comedies while purging them of their overtly sexual connotations. In Goldsmith's play, largely set in the English countryside, we see how he goes back to Elizabethan indigenous comic traditions to 'cure' English theatre of sentimentalism that had devastated the presence of true comic humour. The comedy is entertaining as it is based on physical entertainment and action than on witty dialogue. In *The Rivals* we see Sheridan affecting an amalgamation of features from both types of comedies—the comedy of Manners and sentimental plays to effect a change.

4.1.2. Oliver Goldsmith: A Literary Biography (1730-1774)

Oliver Goldsmith (10 November 1730 – 4 April 1774) was an Irish writer, poet, and physician known chiefly for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his pastoral poem 'The Deserted Village' (1770) (written in memory of his brother), and his plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773). He also wrote "An History of the Earth and Animated Nature", and he is also thought to have written the classic children's tale, *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, giving the world that familiar phrase. Goldsmith's birth date and year are not known with certainty. According to the Library of Congress authority file, he told a biographer that he was born on 29 November, 1731, or perhaps in 1730. Now the most commonly accepted birth date is 10 November, 1730.

Amongst his literary output in this period are contributions to Tobias Smollett's *Critical Review*, and *An Inquiry to the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759). His

writing also appeared in *The Busy Body*, *The British Magazine*, and *The Lady's Magazine*. A year later, his "Chinese letters" were published in the *Public Ledger*; these were fictionalised letters in the style of Voltaire that presumed to be written by a Chinese mandarin visiting England. It was during this time period that Dr. Samuel Johnson, one of England's most famous men of letters, became a great admirer of Goldsmith's work. He invited Goldsmith to join his exclusive Turk's Head Club, and through Johnson's patronage, Goldsmith began to publish his first master works, including the novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*. This novel, along with his masterful comic play *She Stoops to Conquer*, found great success, and remain his best-loved works, which is also the text that this unit will study in full detail. *Vicar* was particularly important since his advance earnings kept him out of a debtor's prison. During this period, Goldsmith also published his letters and *The Life of Richard Nash*. He continued to write throughout the 1760's, overseeing several editions of *The Vicar of Wakefield* during that time. His premature death in 1774 may have been partly due to his own misdiagnosis of his kidney infection. Goldsmith was buried in Temple Church. The inscription reads; "Here lies/Oliver Goldsmith".

4.1.3 She Stoops to Conquer – About the Play

***She Stoops to Conquer*, by Oliver Goldsmith**, is often dubbed a "Restoration comedy", by publicists and reviewers, but in fact it opened in 1773—over a hundred years after Restoration of the monarchy in England, which occurred in 1660. The inspiration of the play came from a real incident in Goldsmith's life. At age 17, Goldsmith was travelling in the Irish countryside, and when night descended he asked a passerby to recommend an inn. The passerby, who happened to be the town's joker, directed Goldsmith to the home of a squire. The squire played along with the prank, and only when Goldsmith left special instructions for his breakfast did his host reveal that the house was not an inn, but a private home.

The similarity between *She Stoops to Conquer* and the Restoration comedies is no accident. With *She Stoops to Conquer* (and his essay on sentimental and laughing comedies), Goldsmith was, in fact, attempting to bring back the "laughing comedies" of the Restoration era, which had fallen out of favour as "sentimental comedies" had taken over the stage. Along with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the author of two later comedies, *The School for Scandal* (1776) and *The Rivals* (1775), Goldsmith led a reaction against sentimentalism on the stage. The sentimental plays had arisen partly in response to the seeming immorality of Restoration comedies, which typically depicted a rakish

hero whose vices go unpunished. In contrast, sentimental comedies generally portrayed virtue's final triumph and its world abounds in pity, pathos and moral sentiments. In reacting against the trend of didactic and moralistic sentimental comedies, Goldsmith drew inspiration from his past. Goldsmith and Sheridan drew upon their antecedents (particularly the Restoration comedies), writing comedies which mocked the social mores and behaviour of the upper class. Their comedies emphasized wit, often took a somewhat critical view of romantic love, and generally prized nimble social skills and adept self-promotion over virtue and honest dealing. Goldsmith's own words articulate in a fairly comprehensible manner the salient features of Sentimental Comedy:

> […] a new species of dramatic composition has been introduced, under the name of 'sentimental' comedy, in which the virtues of private life are exhibited, rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses rather than the faults of mankind make our interest in the piece. These comedies have had of late great success, perhaps from their novelty, and also from their flattering every man in his favourite foible [*Essay on the Theatre*].

The above quoted words also reveal the author's anxiety about the future of comedy which, he thinks, has been badly adulterated by the blending of the tragic and the comic, a predicament he mourns in the Prologue to *She Stoops to Conquer:* 'the Comic muse, long sick, is now a-dying.' Therefore in *She Stoops to Conquer* Goldsmith consciously waged a war against the sentimental trend on the comic stage. As exponents of Anti-sentimental Comedy, Goldsmith and Sheridan were basically reviving the spirit of pure comedy and amoral laughter on the stage.

However, with *She Stoops to Conquer*, it is clear that Goldsmith cannot entirely leave sentimental comedy behind. Nevertheless, his play marks a significant departure from the form. Historically, the play, which became very popular when it premiered in 1773, serves as a link between the Restoration's sardonic celebrations of desire and the sentimental comedy that gained popularity in Goldsmith's days. Goldsmith's good friend, the critic Samuel Johnson, opined that he knew of "no comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated an audience, that has answered so much the great end of comedy—making an audience merry."

While the play proves funny and entertaining, it also marks an important step in the development of comic theory. In 1772, Oliver Goldsmith published an essay entitled "An Essay on the Theatre; Or, a Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental

Comedy." The essay came after the poor reception of his play *A Good-Natured Man* and in anticipation of the much-loved *She Stoops to Conquer*. It is easy to understand this essay as an explicit statement of purpose for the latter comedy, which was in the process of being completed for production at the time of the essay's publication, and as such should be studied in conjunction with it. The Prologue to the play gives us Goldsmith's purpose in writing the play: He projects himself as the doctor and the play as the required medicine to prevent the sick comic muse from dying from the onslaught of sentimental comedy.

To sum up, Goldsmith's 'laughing comedy' celebrated laughter over sentiment and the simple virtues of the country over the snobbery of the town. Goldsmith derided sentimental comedy as false and boring. He felt that though comedy focuses on social life and attempts to reform social manners and morals, this reform is rarely a moral judgment of the wicked, but usually a social judgment of the absurd instead. In the end, the existing (broken, problematic) society is reformed, typically through reconciling the disjunctive elements.

4.1.4. The Characters in the Play (Dramatis Personae):

- **Tony Lumpkin:** Tony Lumpkin is the son of Mrs Hardcastle and stepson to Mr Hardcastle. It is as a result of his practical joking that the comic aspects of the play are set up.
- **Mr. Hardcastle:** Middle-aged gentleman who lives in an old mansion in the countryside about sixty miles from London**.**
- **Mrs Hardcastle:** Wife to Mr. Hardcastle and mother to Tony, Mrs. Hardcastle is a corrupt and eccentric character. She is an over-protective mother to Tony
- **Miss Kate Hardcastle:** Daughter to Mr. Hardcastle, and the play's stooping-to-conquer heroine. Kate respects her father and dresses plainly in his presence to please him.
- **George Hastings:** Friend of Marlow who loves Constance Neville.
- **Constance Neville:** Comely young lady who loves Hastings but is bedeviled by Mrs. Hardcastle's schemes to match her with Tony.
- **Sir Charles Marlow:** Father of young Charles**.**

4.1.5. Act-wise Analysis of the play with Comments

Act I. The play opens in its primary setting, a chamber in the "old-fashioned" country house of Mr. Hardcastle. This is an expository scene which introduces all the major characters and prepares us for the complications in the plot.

Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle enter in the midst of a pleasant argument. Mrs. Hardcastle is perturbed at her husband's refusal to take trips into London, while he insists he is not interested in the "vanity and affectation" of the city. Mrs. Hardcastle mocks him for his love of old-fashioned trends, so much that he keeps his house in such a way that it "looks for all the world like an inn." She wishes to emulate the fashions of London and downplays her age. As she speaks of her son Tony Lumpkin, Mr. Hardcastle finds his roguish ways grating, and laments how the boy is too given to practical jokes. On the other hand, Mrs. Hardcastle (Tony's natural mother) defends him, and she begs her husband to be easier on Tony.

Two other characters are introduced: Miss Hardcastle (Kate) and her cousin Miss Neville (Constance). Constance is an orphan with a small fortune. Mrs. Hardcastle has an eye on her fortune and wants her to marry the wayward Tony Lumpkin to keep her jewellery within the family. Mr. Hardcastle disapproves of Kate's lavish gown to which she reminds him of their agreement: in the morning she dresses as she likes in order to welcome friends, while in the evening she dresses plainly in order to please his tastes. Mr. Hardcastle then gives her the news that he has invited Mr. Marlow, son of Hardcastle's old friend Charles Marlow, to their house that evening in order to court Kate. Mr. Hardcastle considers Marlow's reticence and reserve a virtue but Kate is convinced that their meeting will be formal and dull. Kate informs Constance of her imminent danger and learns that Marlow is a friend of Hastings, the man whom Constance loves. She learns that Marlow has the strange reputation of being ill-at-ease with aristocratic women but behaves freely with women from lower social rank.

The next scene opens at 'Three Pigeons' where Tony is found to enjoy the company of several drunk men. Tony sings a song to praise liquor as the source of great wisdom and also laughs at the manners of the civilized world. Tony takes us to an anarchic world which debunks civilized norms. The landlord brings news that two gentleman have arrived, and are lost on their way to Mr. Hardcastle's house. Tony intuits quickly they must be Marlow and Hastings, and since Tony is still angry about Hardcastle's insults, he decides to play a joke on his step-father. He will convince them that Hardcastle's house is in fact an inn and so they would present themselves there not as gracious

guests, but as entitled patrons. After receiving instructions from Tony, Marlow and Hastings leave for Hardcastle's home, and so the stage is set for the comedy to take place.

Critical Comments:

- *She Stoops to Conquer* is a "well-made play," in that it is well structured to deliver a complicated plot with recognizable characters. Goldsmith writes a first act that establishes with great economy the plot to come.
- This play will operate very much through the use of dramatic irony, the effect produced when the audience knows something that the characters do not. The irony here is dependent on situations.
- Goldsmith also ably establishes the plot lines we are to follow. The main plot is clearly whether Kate will marry Marlow, while the primary subplot is whether Constance will marry Hastings.
- Tony seems to stand at the centre of the play, considering that it is he who takes initiatives to put the plot in motion, making him what would traditionally be called the protagonist.
- Tony's love of life and disavowal of customary, respectable expectations will prove crucial to Goldsmith's purpose of praising low comedy over sentimental comedy.
- Further, there is an additional subplot of whether the Hardcastles will resolve their differences about old and new ways of life. While this never directly affects the action of the play, it is thematically important.
- Through all these plots, Goldsmith lays the groundwork for his exploration of morality and respectability. The play's ironic subversion of traditional expectation is established in both scenes of Act I.
- Lastly, the parent-child relationships in the play are significant. While the two friends, Mr Hardcastle and Charles Marlow try as guardians to control the lives of their respective offspring, Mrs Hardcastle schemes to keep her niece's wealth within the family. Constance's jewelry is in her custody and her plan to marry her ward off to her son Tony is specifically to control that fortune.

Act II. Hardcastle and several "awkward servants" enter, the former instructing them on how to appear sophisticated for the expected guests. Another servant enters, leading

in Marlow and Hastings. The men admire how much the inn seems as though it might have once been a mansion. While discussing inns, Hastings introduces Marlow's particular oddity of character: in front of modest, reputable women, he is "an idiot, such a trembler," while he is eloquent and lively around barmaids and common women.

Hardcastle enters excitedly, asking for Marlow and offering them "hearty reception." Because of Tony's lie, they believe him to be the innkeeper. They ignore Hardcastle and he finds Marlow not only rude, but distinctly out of character from the modesty he had been led to expect. They are amused by Hardcastle's loquaciousness and the way he speaks about politics as though he were a man of repute. They cut off another of his stories to ask for dinner.

Despite their confusion over this seemingly pushy landlord, the men allow Hardcastle to accompany them to their rooms. However, Hastings stays behind, remarking to himself on the strangeness of the situation, and Constance enters to find him. They are happily reunited, and Constance quickly surmises the trick Tony played, and corrects the mistake for Hastings. Hastings insists Constance join him in eloping, but she believes her fortune will prove crucial in their lives, and begs time to try and persuade her aunt (Mrs. Hardcastle) to give her the jewelry. Hastings suggests they need not correct Marlow's false assumptions since Marlow's timidity would make him to leave quickly in embarrassment, and this will foil their plan of elopement.

Marlow re-enters, confused over why Hardcastle would want to dine with them. Hastings spins a new lie, telling Marlow that Constance and Kate Hardcastle are themselves staying at the inn that night. Marlow is terrified by the news, and begs that Hastings postpone his meeting until the next day, when he can meet her at the Hardcastle home. Constance will not hear of it, since Kate would see such a refusal to meet as insulting.

Kate enters, and is introduced to Marlow. Things take a turn into one of the play's funniest scenes once Hastings and Constance abruptly leave. Marlow keeps his head down during the entire interview, and stammers pleasantries, while Kate controls the conversation, amusing herself with the man's timidity. He finally finds a way to politely exit, and Kate, now alone, laughs to herself at his ridiculous shyness. She does, however, note both his "good sense" and good looks.

As Kate exits, four others enter: Tony, Constance, Hastings, and Mrs. Hardcastle. Tony, assuming that she is pursuing the marriage desired by Mrs. Hardcastle, continues to ignore her. The focus shifts to the other two, where Mrs. Hardcastle enjoys talking of London with Hastings. She laments being saddled with an "antique" like Hardcastle,

but is enlivened to hear that the fashion in London now considers the age of fifty as fashionable. She talks to Hastings of how much Constance loves Tony. Hastings asks the privilege to speak to Tony man-to-man, and so the ladies leave. Alone, Hastings strikes a deal: if Tony can help them to escape, Hastings will "take her off his hands." Moreover, Tony also promises to get Constance's jewels so that the lovers can have them.

Critical Comments:

- Where Act I was primarily concerned with the set-up or exposition, Act II is primarily concerned with establishing the contradictions and complications of the play's characters. On the surface, all of these people are comic types: Tony is the trickster; Marlow and Hastings are the romantic leads; Constance and Kate are the pure maidens to be won; and the Hardcastles are the bastions of an old world who will work as antagonists to the young, creating the complications of the comic plot.
- The importance of appearance over substance is very much apparent as a theme in this act, and will continue to be so throughout the play.
- Much of this thematic content is apparent in the act's signature scene, the meeting of Kate and Marlow. Many things are happening here. Most importantly, it is a wonderful parody of a sentimental dialogue.
- However, the substance of the conversation does touch on the play's theme: the importance of living, rather than observing life.
- Lastly, a word needs be said about the comic humour in the act. Much of it comes from "low" humour, like the servants, who are slow to learn and bicker ridiculously. Yet the best humour here is again dependent on dramatic irony, as the web of confusion allows us to laugh at people.

Act III. In this act both Mr. Hardcastle and Kate appear confused with Marlow: the former over his impudence, the latter over his modesty. Hardcastle does see they both know enough to reject Marlow, a decision Kate approves unless she finds him to be more pleasing to each of them. Hardcastle grants her licence to attempt to correct his first impression, assuming that Kate has been drawn to the young man because of his good looks.

They leave, and Tony rushes on, holding the casket containing Constance's jewels.

Tony reveals to Hastings that he has stolen the jewels. They hear Constance and Mrs Hardcastle approaching and Hastings exits quickly with the casket. Tony pulls his mother aside, and suggests she lies to Constance, claiming the jewels have been stolen so as to put an end to the matter. Mrs. Hardcastle gladly accepts the plan and makes a mock confession of the loss. While she is gone, Tony confesses his plan to Constance. However, Mrs. Hardcastle returns quickly, having discovered the jewels have actually been stolen.

All exit, and Kate enters with a maid, laughing about the joke. Kate sees in Marlow's confusion an opportunity to deceive him, and decides to continue playing the barmaid. Marlow enters, remarking to himself how terrible is his situation. Kate, acting the barmaid, approaches him and asks if she can help. He notices her beauty and grows immediately flirty and open, remarking on the "nectar" of her lips. Overcome with passion, he pulls her close right as Mr. Hardcastle enters. Marlow quickly exits, and Hardcastle confronts Kate, accusing her of lying about Marlow's modesty. Kate asks for more time to reveal his true character.

Critical Comments:

- Act III is primarily concerned with complication of the plot, though the confrontation between Kate and Marlow that ends the Act is central to its primary themes.
- Goldsmith's greatest achievement is the naturalness with which he presents such a contrived and complicated plot.
- This success lies in his superb command of character that, as already noted, uses comic stock characters but complicates them so that their motivations make the contrivances of the plot believable.
- Most of the complications in the act concern the subplot and are great fun because of the dramatic irony.
- The other section of the act is far more substantial, as it explores the questions of appearance and human foibles.
- This theme is most clear in Kate's plan to reveal Marlow's true side. By "stooping" both in terms of class and wealth, she is able to pull out his true nature: a sexually aggressive, rather impetuous young fellow.
- In a way, Kate's plan is also a sly comment on the theatre itself. By acting in a "low" manner, Kate is able to engender truth, a truth that reveals the silliness of human nature. This is very much Goldsmith's purpose in writing a "laughing comedy" that celebrates lowness as a mirror to truth.

Act IV. Hastings and Constance enter, bringing news that Charles Marlow (father of Marlow) is expected to visit the house that evening. To avoid detection Hastings decides to act promptly and send Constance's casket to Marlow. Marlow is confused with the caskets and sends it to Mrs. Hardcastle for safekeeping. Hastings is mortified to learn that the casket has gone back to Mrs. Hardcastle. However, he cannot reveal his anger to Marlow at this moment, and decides that he and Constance will have to go without the jewellery.

Hardcastle enters to find Marlow. Hardcastle asks Marlow to control his servants, who are indisciplined and rowdy. When Marlow refuses to discipline them, Hardcastle demands that Marlow and his servants leave immediately. Marlow is disgusted with the idea of being put out in the middle of the night, but Hardcastle insists until Marlow asks for his bill. In the confusion over why Marlow is requesting a bill, Marlow suddenly realizes that something is grossly wrong.

Kate enters and realizing that she needs to play the situation right, tells Marlow of his mistake. But she does not yet reveal her true identity. She poses now to be a "poor relation" who relies on the Hardcastles for shelter. Marlow is shocked to have potentially treated her as a lower class woman, and apologizes for having mistaken her behaviour for that of a barmaid. He admits to her that he cannot pursue her since "the difference of our birth…makes an honourable connexion impossible" and so he must not endeavour to ruin her. Kate is impressed with the virtue he shows here. When he leaves, she decides to herself that she will maintain the deceit long enough to show her father his true character.

Tony tells Constance that he cannot steal the casket again from his mother but will have horses prepared for their escape. As Mrs. Hardcastle enters, they pretend to be caught fondling each other, and Mrs. Hardcastle promises she will have them married the next day.

In the meanwhile Hastings' letter reaches Tony. Constance recognizes the handwriting and realizes that it could ruin them. Before Mrs. Hardcastle can get hold of it, Constance grabs the letter and pretends to read it, making up a nonsense letter on the spot. Tony spoils her attempt by giving it to his mother. She learns that Hastings is waiting for Constance in anticipation of the elopement. Mrs. Hardcastle decides to use the horses prepared by Tony to take Constance away from Hastings.

Constance, now depressed, is joined by Hastings, who accuses Tony of betraying them. Before he can suitably defend himself, Marlow enters, angry at having been duped.

Everyone seems to turn on Tony. Tony suddenly develops a plan, and tells everyone to meet him in two hours at the "bottom of the garden" where he'll prove to all his actual good nature.

Critical Comments:

- This act marks the worsening of the crisis: Marlow turns his back on Kate; Constance and Hastings feel betrayed by Tony; resentment is paramount in all the characters; and everyone turn against Tony Lumpkin.
- The act also presents Goldsmith's most keen observation on the hypocrisy inherent in the aristocratic worldview.
- When Marlow learns that Kate is not a barmaid but a poor relation of the Hardcastles, he faces an ethical test and refuses to marry below his status. But when Kate posed as the maid he had no moral qualms in treating her as a commodity. He even says that he will pay for robbing her honour.
- Goldsmith does not condemn the reprobate in Marlow, but the social system which sanctions such class hierarchies as legitimate. Marlow's extreme dualities are produced by the system in which he is trapped. In the hero's dilemma there is a spark of the tragedy that lies beyond the scope of comedy. It lies in the forces that confound Marlow's happiness.
- Marlow's double standard exposes the hypocrisies of upper-class social life.
- Lastly, this act shows Tony transcending the stock character of a trickster that he plays. His stupidity is now matched with a genuine desire to help others.
- In a sense, perhaps, Tony himself has a sentimental streak, so long as that sentiment does not praise aristocratic values as its end.

Act V. Hastings is informed by a servant that Mrs. Hardcastle has left with Constance. Hardcastle and Charles Marlow enter, laughing about young Marlow mistaking Hardcastle for an innkeeper. Although Hardcastle thinks that Marlow and Kate like each other, Charles wishes to find that out himself.

Marlow enters to apologise for his impudence. They discuss his daughter, whom Marlow praises but says he did not share any intimacy with her. Hardcastle, who saw Marlow take her hand in Act III, accuses him of lying, while Marlow continues to insist that their meeting was "without emotion."

Kate enters almost right away, and the two elders interrogate her. Kate informs that

Marlow has talked to her before more than once and was quite passionate in his manner. Charles, who has confidence in his son's modesty, feels that Kate is lying. The two elderly men decide to watch Kate and Marlow from behind a screen.

The scene shifts now to the back of the garden. Tony tells Hastings that he has played a trick on his mother: he drove the horses around in circles, through difficult areas, until he finally crashed the carriage into a horse-pond nearby. Thinking herself 40 miles from home, Mrs. Hardcastle is in a panic. She fears that she may be robbed on the highway and Tony further terrifies her by pointing to Mr. Hardcastle who was out to take his evening walk. Mrs. Hardcastle now believes that she is about to meet a highwayman.

Hardcastle enters and is surprised to find Tony back so soon. Tony tries to dissuade Hardcastle from further investigation. Hardcastle persists in pushing through, which makes Mrs. Hardcastle throw herself at the mercy of the "bandit" to save her son. A few more passages are spent to sort all confusions. Though everyone is again angry with Tony, Hardcastle sees "morality" in the way he abuses his mother in pursuit of justice. Constance now decides to apply to Mr. Hardcastle for permission to marry the man of her choice.

The scene shifts back to the house. Sir Charles remains confused by Marlow's duplicity. When Marlow meets Kate, he laments his helplessness. Kate accuses him for his greed for money, but Marlow confesses that he has been drawn to her by her 'refined simplicity. Through his speech to himself, he resolves to stay with her despite his father's lack of approval. She refuses him, claiming such a union will surely result in resentment, but he claims otherwise, and gets down on his knee to woo her.

At such a move, Sir Charles and Hardcastle charge from behind the screen and each accuse Marlow of falsehood, though for different reasons. In the attacks they launch on him, the truth of Kate's identity is revealed.

Mrs. Hardcastle enters announcing that her niece has eloped with Hastings and that she will not ever release the girl's fortune. Hardcastle accuses her of being "mercenary", but she tells him that if Tony refuses to marry Constance of his own volition once he is of age, then her fortune goes automatically to her. Besides, even before the action, Tony is already committed to Bet Bouncer and remains loyal to her throughout. As Hastings and Constance arrive to beg forgiveness, Hardcastle reveals that Tony is actually of age. Tony refuses to marry Constance and her fortune goes back to her.

The mistakes of one night make all characters, except Mrs. Hardcastle, learn something from their mistakes.

Critical Comments:

- Interestingly enough, Goldsmith's ending could easily be criticized as falling into the sentimentality he claims to keep at bay.
- Both pairs of lovers find happiness, virtue is rewarded and remains the supreme sentiment amongst everyone.
- The play does not transcend the conservatism of contemporary polite, genteel English society by ensuring a happy match of men and women of good breeding and character.
- While Goldsmith is unable to avoid his conservatism, he has the artistic sensibility to critique his flaw. This comes from the dissatisfied Mrs. Hardcastle who describes the end as a "whining end of a modern novel."
- The fact is, the emotional, happy ending is only engendered by the comic tools of flaunting vice. Marlow is the best example. His baser nature is not reformed, but subsumed by the happy resolution.
- Kate only acquires Marlow as an acceptable husband through classical comic acts of trickery. She must force him to confront his own vice and folly, his own assumptions about behaviour and class, so that he is prepared mentally for a happy marriage.
- But again, the marriage between Marlow and Kate is possible only because Marlow realizes that Kate is the daughter of Mr. Hardcastle.
- The theme of appearance and its fallacious nature remains very strong up to the end of the play.
- Kate then marks herself as the heroine through her moderation. As the character who understands both the simplicity of the country and the sophistication of the town, she understands that life is about contradiction and excitement, and that happiness comes from embracing a bit of both sides.
- Tony appears to be a character,who exercises maximum agency and brings about a happy ending. Tony can be regarded as Goldsmith's mouthpiece. The heroism of this low, tertiary character, and his necessity to the plot, helps to further Goldsmith's defence of "laughing comedy."

- Tony, who indulges in low humour, knows how to combat the baseness that is often hidden behind aristocratic veneer. He thus emerges as the strongest critic of upper-class social hypocrisies.
- Finally, the sentimental ending is not absolute because of the financial pragmatism involved.
- While the ending is sentimental in a way, it does not feel artificial from the plot, but rather an honest expression of the play's themes: human baseness, deluding appearance, hierarchies of class, the importance of humour, the value of moderation, etc.

Critical Comments on the Epilogues:

There are two epilogues commonly published with the play. The second, intended to be spoken by Tony Lumpkin, was not written in time of the original production. Here Tony tells the audience that he will now appear in the great world of London and teach the world what good taste is. This epilogue does nothing to further the play's themes. Contrarily, the first epilogue spoken by Miss Kate Hardcastle, sums up the goal Goldsmith sets for himself in his 'Essay on the Theatre'.

> WELL, having stooped to conquer with success,
> And gained a husband without aid from dress,
> Still as a Barmaid, I could wish it too,
> As I have conquered him to conquer you:
> And let me say, for all your resolution,
> That pretty Barmaids have done execution.
> Our life is all a play, composed to please,
> "We have our exits and our entrances."
> The first act shows the simple country maid,
> Harmless and young, of everything afraid;
> Blushes when hired, and with unmeaning action,
> *I hopes as how to give you satisfaction.*
> Her second act displays a livelier scene,—
> Th' unblushing Barmaid of a country inn.
> Who whisks about the house, at market caters,
> Talks loud, coquets the guests, and scolds the waiters.

Next the scene shifts to town, and there she soars,
The chop-house toast of ogling connoisseurs.

On 'Squires and Cits she there displays her arts,
And on the gridiron broils her lovers' hearts —
And as she smiles, her triumphs to complete,
Even Common Councilmen forget to eat.
The fourth act shows her wedded to the 'Squire,
And madam now begins to hold it higher;
Pretends to taste, at Operas cries *caro*,
And quits her *Nancy Dawson* for *Che Faro*.
Doats upon dancing, and in all her pride,
Swims round the room, the *Heinel* of Cheapside :
Ogles and leers with artificial skill,
Till having lost in age the power to kill,
She sits all night at cards, and ogles at spadille.
Such, through our lives, the eventful history—
The fifth and last act still remains for me.
The Barmaid now for your protection prays,
Turns female Barrister, and pleads for Bayes.

Kate tells us how she has stooped to conquer and how this plot device has enabled the dramatist to conquer his audience. She proposes that "our life is all a play" and then traces the five act life of a pretty country barmaid. The five acts of the barmaid's life describe the predicament of English comic theatre: the comic muse learns to confront her audience and cater to their taste; then having been brought to high society she loses her essential nature and lapses into sentimentality; she then sits docile waiting for a doctor like Goldsmith to revive her liveliness and conquer her spectators again

4.1.6. The Titles of the Play

Choosing a title for his play was a tricky problem for Goldsmith. Some suggestions were *The Belle's Stratagem* and *The Old House a New Inn.* However the present title was supposed to have been prompted by John Dryden's line in *The Hind and the Panther:*

"But kneels to conquer and but stoops to rise."

In fact, Goldsmith's play has two titles: the main title is *She Stoops to Conquer* and the secondary title rather than subtitle is *The Mistakes of a Night.* Both point to elements that constitute the plot. The clues for the two titles of the play are provided within the play's text. The main title is derived from Kate Hardcastle's words 'I stoop'd to conquer,' while Mr Hardcastle provides the second title, 'the Mistakes of the Night shall be crown'd with a merry morning ….' The first title points to Kate Hardcastle's strategy of stooping to the level of a barmaid to win Marlow. Kate, who learns that Marlow is awkward with women of high status, decides to disguise herself as the barmaid of the Hardcastle mansion and test her prospective husband.

The subtitle primarily points to the mistakes Marlow commits which trigger comic action. The first mistake is to think that Mr. Hardcastle's house is a country inn. Much of the comic effect emanates from Marlow's insolent behaviour towards Mr. Hardcastle, whom he regards as the interfering inn-keeper. Marlow's second mistake is to think that Kate is the barmaid of the house. The other characters also commit several mistakes which propel the main plot and the subplot towards the denouement.

4.1.7. Comic Elements: Irony, Humour, Farce, Wit

Aristotle probably wrote a treatise on comedy that was lost. Yet in his *Poetics* where the discussion is mainly on Greek tragedy, he makes certain comments about a genre that has been juxtaposed to the tragic form. Comedy he writes is a dramatic picture of the ridiculous and an imitation of men worse than the average. He goes on to define the ridiculous as a mistake or deformity that does not produce pain or harm to others.

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* focuses on the seemingly inconsequential and often innocent mistakes of distinct human characters. The comic laughter in the play ensues from the humorous representations of the characters who show the follies, foibles, eccentricities and oddities of human beings. The laughter thus generated usually translates into reform, change or insight into human fallibility.

Situations abounding in low comedy can be farcical situations which give rise to physical laughter. Goldsmith introduces entertaining scenes that are exaggerated, extravagant or improbable but carefully integrates the elements of farce into the comic action. Thus the ale-house scene or the back garden scene where Mrs Hardcastle mistakes her own garden for a dangerous location far away from home generate comic humour because of the sheer absurdity of events.

Goldsmith makes use of several elements from the earlier comic techniques to shape his play—manners, artificial aristocratic veneers, humour, farce, wit and irony to revive comic drama. Irony primarily arises from the interplay between appearance and reality which leads to comic incongruity. The play can be described as a comedy of errors as mistakes committed by the characters or kept secret from characters control the action or plot. Goldsmith has portrayed Tony Lumpkin mainly through farce and satire. Tony is commonly characterised as a spoilt, dim-witted verve, who deliberately plays pranks on others. He orchestrates one plot after another, partly to take comic revenge on those who try to ignore him.

Goldsmith's use of comedy manners revolves mostly around Young Marlow, who is the object of this type of humour. An example of this type of humour is where Marlow will not ask for directions on the way for fear of 'an unmannerly answer'. It is also Marlow's 'manners' taken to ludicrous extreme that makes for his total awkwardness and inability to relate to women of social standing. Goldsmith deploys witty language, especially, in the mouth of Kate who teases Marlow, 'Did you call, sir? Did your honour call?".

Verbal wit is often introduced into the repartees of Kate with her father or in exchanges with Marlow who initially mistakes her for the barmaid.

Literary tools for creating an entire range of comic effects are used by Goldsmith in the play.

4.1.8. The Social World of *She Stoops to Conquer*

The plot of Goldsmith's play might appear totally preposterous to a modern reader. However, a brief discussion of contemporary social life will clear some of the confusions. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British "country home" was at the height of its popularity and importance. Families of the aristocracy possessed both a house in town and a house in the country, and would retire to the latter during weekends in order to relax and hunt. Some of the minor gentry (such as the Hardcastles in *She Stoops to Conquer*) lived permanently in their country houses and did not frequent London. With the improvement of roads in the second half of the eighteenth century, the horse and buggy, became the primary mode of travel. Gentlemen of the Georgian era were required to have a strong interest in horses, which were a constant topic of conversation. The coach eventually came to manifest social standing, and coaches became increasingly showy as the age drew on. As roads, coach quality, and travel conditions improved, so

did inns, so that by 1827 some even resembled the homes of noblemen and served exquisite food.

4.1.9. The Politics of Marriage in *She Stoops to Conquer*

The plot of *She Stoops to Conquer* hinges on two marriages: first, between Marlow and Kate; and the other between Hastings and Constance. In the early eighteenth century, most members of the aristocracy and nobility had weddings that closely resemble formal weddings of today. Prior to 1753, all that was necessary for a marriage to be considered legal was the mutual consent of both parties, assuming they were both "of age" (fourteen for boys, twelve for girls). Moreover, a man could promise to marry a woman at a future date, and then if they "consummated" their relationship, the couple could be considered legally bound. This loose definition of marriage led to many scandalous irregular marriages. These led to several societal and legal problems.

To counteract this trend, the Marriage Act of 1753 was passed as an attempt to codify the rules of marriage and create one universal standard. The Act required that witnesses be present, that the ceremony be performed by a legitimate and recognised clergy, and that, if the couple was not twenty-one years of age, they have parental consent. The Act was intended to protect women (and sometimes men) from being deceived by potential suitors into compromising their reputation. Another intention behind the Act was to standardizse the marriage records and thus minimise future legal disputes.

However, the Act could also be viewed as an attempt by the nobility to maintain the status quo and preserve their place in society. The new restrictions on marriage meant that an underage noble could not disobey his or her parent's marriage wishes without legally sacrificing his or her inheritance and/or title. *She Stoops to Conquer* was written twenty years after the passage of The Marriage Act, and one can see the impact of the new law in the behaviour of the characters in the play. Tony Lumpkin has to wait until he is twenty-one before he can refuse Constance Neville. The only hope for Constance and George Hastings to get married (without parental consent) is to leave England for France. Marlow and Kate Hardcastle are expected to go through an elaborate formal courtship, and Marlow's private comments and vows have no legal standing.

4.1.10. Goldsmith's Characters and the treatment of Social Class

The play features treatment of social class as one of the main themes. Goldsmith's treatment of social class in *She Stoops to Conquer* is not the typical exploration of social snobbery or an explicit discrimination or mistreatment of the lower class by the upper class. Goldsmith merely plays on the double standards when it comes to treating people of lower status. However, Goldsmith does show that it is the perfect norm for people of the upper class to treat the lower class in a certain way and it is also accepted by the lower class themselves. This is shown from the way Marlow and Hastings talk about the barmaids that Marlow flirts with in his hometown.

Mrs. Hardcastle and Mr. Charles Marlow can be seen as the two main characters, who are most class-conscious. Mrs. Hardcstle proposes a match between Tony and Constance so that she can keep Constance's jewels in the family. Her desire to use marriage as a tool for social elevation is clearly seen because jewels represent wealth and it will further heighten her status as a lady to the people around her and to her neighbours. Furthermore, not only do the jewels play a part in exposing her class-consciousness but the fact that she dislikes Tony going to the bar shows her dislike of mingling with the lower class people. She would rather marry off Tony to Constance, who is definitely richer and more refined than the barmaid who Tony is taken with.

However, Tony is one of the characters whom Goldsmith portrays as one who shuns the dictatorship of social class. He prefers to lead a happy life by drinking at the pub with his lowlife friends and prefers Bet Bouncer, the barmaid, to Constance Neville. Also, another character who is shown not to be class-conscious is Mr. Hastings. Even after knowing that the jewels are lost, he decides to elope with Constance. He impresses us as a true lover.

In keeping with his professed goal of lampooning sentimental comedy in favour of laughing comedy Goldsmith exhibits foolishness in even the most outwardly heroic characters, and heroism in the "lower" characters. First, let us consider the heroes, Hastings and Marlow. While they would be seen as virtuous young men to their audience – especially because of their aristocratic standing and signs of good breeding – we can also see that they are capable of extreme "lowness" and even of meanness. The most explicit example is Marlow's love of common women. Something that would be considered a vice in moral comedy is here matched in Marlow by a sincere desire to be close to a "modest" woman. Again, both men, when operating under the fallacious assumption that Hardcastle's home is an inn, are quite dismissive of and cruel to

Hardcastle.

Meanwhile, the women are far more interesting than one might expect. Constance is perhaps a little passive, but that fits within the confines of the sub-plot, which is close to a traditional sentimental storyline. What does make Constance different from most romantic, sentimental heroines is her pragmatic realisation that money matters quite a lot. While Hastings asserts that he needs only the woman, not the money, Goldsmith creates a woman to remind us that such a philosophy is only grand and wonderful for rich men. Constance loves Hastings as much as he does her, but she also knows they need cash.

Kate, on the other hand, falls into a literary tradition of strong heroines, a tradition much loved by Shakespeare. Her contradiction is exemplified by the way she dresses plainly for her father and well for her friends, the way she can straddle the line between town and country, sophistication and simplicity. This ability suits her well in confronting Marlow. She is also able to laugh at herself and her situation. She deserves the happiness she will find, because she has the strength to identify it and go after it.

4.1.11. Goldsmith's use of Verbal wit and Repartee

The characters in the play are brought alive by the dialogue and the variation in the language registers used so skillfully by the dramatist. The dialogue is easy and natural and therefore sometimes it uses 'low' language or what could also be called 'slang'. The wit and repartee (witty exchange of words) are not as pointed and sharp as those in the plays of William Congreve, but the exchange of words between Kate Hardcastle and her father or the young Marlow are a natural outcome of the action and characterisation.

Since Goldsmith had been well-versed in country life, the culture of country houses and small-town inns, he is able to portray characters in such environments with a remarkable degree of accuracy. The individuality of the characters percolate through the dialogue. "It is comparatively simple to indicate a person by giving him some trick of speech or gesture; that is external. It is not so simple to let that speech or gesture be dictated by the inner traits of character, but that is what Goldsmith does." (Robert Herring, 1962)

If there are some stock characters, they are depicted as life-like figures rather than puppets. For example, Mrs Hardcastle resembles a generation of superannuated matriarchs who seek to control the lives of their wards, who scheme to retain money

and influence in society, who try to reinvent themselves as youthful and desirable women. In this case, Mrs Hardcastle likes the affectations of city life as well as its excitements. She detests the boredom of country life and her husband's retiring life-style. She is obsessed with her son by a previous marriage that finds herself in situations that are ridiculous. The dialogue attributed to her in the play catches the cadence of her resentment and disappointment, her anxiety and fondness relating to Tony Lumpkin.

The Alehouse scene is rowdy and noisy with snatches of a popular country song and the drunken boisterousness of "several shabby fellows". A scene like this and the language spoken here would have been unthinkable in aristocratic Resoration society as represented in the comedy of manners. The sentimental dramatists also would have refined the language and manners of anything that was considered 'low'. Goldsmith goes back to the earthy language and broad humour that was part of the comic tradition in Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

Yet the two young friends, Marlow and Hastings are toned down versions of the Restoration rake – fashionable in dress and affected in manners, educated and genteel in speech, forming a contrast to Tony, "an awkward booby, reared up and spoiled at his mother's apron-string." The juxtaposition of these characters and their speech maintains the difference in language registers.

This difference that also pertains to class and education is the source of humour in the scene where Mr Hardcastle sets about training his four awkward servants in "the table exercise" so that it would seem that his farm and barn hands "have been used to good company, without ever stirring from home." The language of the servants is spontaneous and natural and sprinkled with country colloquialisms.

While Constance uses the measured and balanced language of a well-bred sentimental heroine, Kate Hardcastle shifts registers depending on the role that she plays. This is the reason that she can convincingly play the coquettish barmaid and the modest and chaste heroine whom hr father holds in high esteem for her quick wit.

English prose comedy had moved out of aristocratic and upper-class monotony associated with stylized use of language to the more natural rhythms of speech in the country and the metropolis.

4.1.12. Summing Up

This unit has sought to draw the attention of the learner to the development of eighteenth

century drama as an organic growth from restoration drama discussed in paper 3. These important issues have been dealt with in this unit:

- The middle class audiences, who had previously been the butt of the humour in the Restoration comedies, with aristocratic rakes as heroes, were on the rise in terms of socio-political position as well as economic prosperity. They no longer enjoyed the plays which had no reflection of their lifestyle or values. This was also a major reason for the wane of restoration drama and the emphasis on the form which blended virtuosity with wit.
- The excesses of Restoration Comedies, made way for what came to be called "**the Sentimental Comedy**", with excess of sentimentality, and a fit reaction against it in the form of what came to be called "**the anti-sentimental comedy**".
- The middle class audiences, who had previously been the butt of the humour in the comedies with aristocratic rakes as heroes, were on the rise in terms of socio-political position as well as economic prosperity. They no longer enjoyed the plays which had no reflection of their lifestyle or values. This was also a major reason for the wane of restoration drama.
- With *She Stoops to Conquer* (and his essay on sentimental and laughing comedies), Goldsmith was, in fact, attempting to bring back the "laughing comedies" of the Restoration era, which had fallen out of favour as "sentimental comedies" had taken over the stage. Along with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the author of two later comedies, *The School for Scandal* (1776) and *The Rivals* (1775), Goldsmith led a reaction against sentimentalism on the stage.
- She Stoops to Conquer hinges on the themes of social class—chiefly the social double standards—and marriage. Goldsmith plays on the double standards when it comes to treating people of lower status. However, Goldsmith does show that it is the perfect norm for people of the upper class to treat the lower class in a certain way and it is also accepted by the lower class themselves. Marriage becomes the trick to raise social standards or hoard wealth.
- Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* focuses on the seemingly inconsequential and often innocent mistakes of distinct human characters. The comic laughter in the play ensues from the humorous representations of the characters who show the follies, foibles, eccentricities and oddities of human beings. The laughter thus generated usually translates into reform, change or

insight into human fallibility. The laughter is often produces through witty use of repartees in the fashion of Restoration drama.

This unit thus teaches the learner how English drama is gradually moving towards social consciousness and social inclusiveness, apart from refining the nature of its satire, drawn from human foibles and eccentricities rather than directing its barb at any particular class. It also seeks to become more eclectic in its approach and inclusive in the nature of its audiences, which had been reduced drastically in the times of Restoration drama.

4.1.12. Comprehension Exercises

Long Questions: 20 marks

1. Explain the meaning and significance of the title *She Stoops to Conquer*. How is the title directly related to the action?
2. Comment on the interplay of appearance and reality in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer.*
3. How far does Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* succeed as an anti-sentimental comedy? Substantiate with close textual references.

Medium Questions: 12 marks

1. Write a brief note on the depiction of low life in *She Stoops to Conquer.*
2. Comment on the comic ruse planned by Tony in Act V to confuse his mother.
3. Write a note on the epilogue spoken by Kate Hardcastle.

Short Questions: 6 marks

1. What is the setting of *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith?
2. Why was Mr. Hardcastle angry with Tony Lumpkin?
3. What caused differences between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle?

4.1.14. Suggested Reading

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Unit - 2 ❐ Richard Brinsley Sheridan: *The Rivals*

4.2.0. Introduction

As has been indicated in the introductory note to this Module, Richard B. Sheridan's *The Rivals* is one of the most representative works of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This is because the play combines features of both the Comedies of Manners and Sentimental Comedies, and establishes a balance wherewith to understand and justify what is called the Anti-Sentimental Comedy. In its deft combination of stock as well as individualised characters; witty, polished dialogues; intrigue plot and hilarious situations, this play also happens to be a very good classroom text. The purpose of this Unit is to properly contextualise a reading of the play that would help the learner understand many of the important social issues of the late eighteenth century.

4.2.1. Introducing R.B Sheridan

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) inherited his dramatic genius from both his parents. The third child, and second son, of Thomas (actor, orthopoeist and playwright) and Frances Sheridan (novelist and playwright), Richard was born in Dublin, Ireland.

After receiving elementary education in Dublin, Sheridan entered Harrow, the famous public school, in 1762 and remained there for the next six years. During this time he was also privately taught fencing and horsemanship by Domenick Angelo. After the death of Frances Sheridan in 1769, the household moved to the fashionable spa town of Bath in 1770, a move that keenly affected the observant eye of Richard. In Bath Thomas Sheridan taught elocution and gave half-theatrical and half-musical entertainments known as Attic entertainments. It was in Bath that Sheridan met the young, beautiful and extremely talented singer Elizabeth Linley for whose sake he fought two duels, much as Captain Absolute was about to do in *The Rivals*! Sheridan eventually married Linley though it resulted in an estrangement between the father and the son.

Early in the decade Sheridan had written a farce called *Ixion*, later rechristened as *Jupiter,* in collaboration with Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, a friend at Harrow. But Sheridan's first major dramatic success came with the performance of *The Rivals* in 1775. In its first performance the play was hissed off the stage for its inept acting and inordinate length. The young dramatist took care to edit the play to its present shape and it was performed once more after a gap of ten days to popular acclaim. The success of *The Rivals* was repeated with *The School for Scandal* (1777) and *The Critic* (1779). His other dramatic works include *St. Patrick's Day* (1775)*, The Duenna* (1775)*, A Trip to Scarborough* (1777)*, The Camp* (1778) and *Pizzaro* (1779). In 1776 Sheridan had also undertaken the management of the Drury Lane Theatre, his dramatic career however, did not extend beyond 1779. Though we remember Sheridan more for his dramatic achievements, to his contemporaries he was also a great orator and politician. Elected as an MP from Strafford in 1780, Sheridan held ministerial posts thrice and eventually became the Privy Councillor to the Crown. The dramatic and linguistic exuberance of his plays was recreated in his long and carefully prepared Parliamentary speeches. His utter mismanagement of his financial affairs became as proverbial as his rhetorical skills. In spite of commanding large sums of money at different periods of his life, Richard Sheridan died in penury in 1816, leaving behind a repertoire of unforgettable plays, two among which never went out of vogue in more than two centuries that have elapsed after his death.

4.2.2. Sneak Preview: Characters In *The Rivals*

- ❖ Sir Anthony Absolute, a wealthy baronet
- ❖ Captain Jack Absolute, his son, disguised as Ensign Beverly
- ❖ Faulkland, friend of Jack Absolute

- ❖ Bob Acres, friend of Jack Absolute
- ❖ Sir Lucius O'Trigger, an Irish baronet
- ❖ Fag, Captain Absolute's servant
- ❖ David, Bob Acres' servant
- ❖ Thomas, Sir Anthony's servant
- ❖ Lydia Languish, a wealthy teenaged heiress, in love with 'Ensign Beverley'!
- ❖ Mrs. Malaprop, Lydia's middle-aged guardian
- ❖ Julia Melville, a young relation of the Absolutes, in love with Faulkland
- ❖ Lucy, Lydia's scheming maid

4.2.3. Act-wise Summary of *The Rivals* with Critical Commentary

➢ ACT I SCENE I

The play opens with Fag, Captain Jack Absolute's servant, spotting Sir Anthony Absolute's coachman. They greet each other and the coachman informs Fag that anticipating a bout of gout, Sir Anthony has arrived in Bath accompanied by his ward Julia and the servants. Sir Anthony, however, does not know that his son is also in Bath. Fag mysteriously remarks that he does not serve Captain Absolute anymore, but is currently employed by an Ensign called Beverley. He eventually explains that Captain Absolute has fallen in love with a whimsical rich heiress called Lydia Languish who prefers her beloved to be a poor Ensign rather than a rich Captain. It is to humour her caprice that Jack has assumed a false identity. Her aunt and guardian, Mrs. Malaprop is considered as an obstacle in the path of love.

➢ ACT I SCENE II:

The second scene opens at Lydia's aunt Mrs. Malaprop's lodgings where we see Lydia in conversation with her maid Lucy. The latter had been instructed to borrow some books from the circulating libraries and Lucy gives an account of the books she had been able to procure for Lydia. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Lydia's cousin, Julia. After a pleasant greeting Lydia affirms that she has a lot to confide to Julia. Lydia's affair' with Ensign Beverley has been discovered by her aunt and as a punishment Lydia is forbidden from leaving her room. At the same time, Mrs. Malaprop

herself has fallen in love with an Irish Baronet and is writing letters to him under a false name. Not only this, before their correspondence was discovered, Lydia had quarreled with Beverley and has not got an opportunity of reconciliation. She also states that she is determined to marry the poor Ensign, and by marrying without her aunt's consent she will lose most of her huge property. On Julia's comment that she is behaving capriciously, Lydia reminds Julia of her own betrothed Faulkland's capricious nature. Julia defends her lover by saying that Faukland is too noble hearted to be jealous and his whimsical behaviour is a result of his ardent attachment to her. Lucy comes in to inform them of the arrival of Mrs.Malaprop and Sir Anthony Absolute, Julia leaves the company and the novels from the library are hidden under instructive religious books.

Mrs.Malaprop scolds Lydia for her inordinate attachment to a poor soldier and instructs her to forget him. Sir Anthony blames her obstinacy on her habit of novel reading. After a heated exchange of words, Mrs.Malaprop asks Lydia to go back to her room. Mrs.Malaprop and Sir Anthony discuss the pernicious effects of the wrong kind of books on girls. From this conversation we also come to know that Sir Anthony has proposed marriage between his son and Lydia to which Mrs.Malaprop has consented. On his departure she calls Lucy and gives her another letter for Sir Lucius. Lucy laughs at her behind her back and counts over the money she has made by acting as a go-between among various parties.

✓ **Critical comments on Act I**

- The first scene serves as an expository one where two minor characters talk about the major ones and introduce them to the audience. We get a glimpse into the nature and singularities of all of them from a relatively disinterested perspective. It also shows the resourcefulness of characters like Fag, and later, Lucy, who are able to see through the pretensions of their masters and to make good use of them
- Apart from Jack and Faulkand who are mentioned, all the major characters are presented in front of the audience. The excessive imagination of Lydia, the balanced rationality of Julia, the linguistic pretensions of Mrs. Malaprop and the absolutist nature of Sir Absolute become clear from their interaction with each other. There is a clear hint of the effect of Comedy of Manners in the naming of characters – Mrs Malaprop and Sir Absolute in particular.

➢ ACT II SCENE I :

The second act opens at the lodgings of Captain Absolute where Fag tells him that he has met Sir Anthony and has informed him about the presence of his son at Bath but has not disclosed the true purpose behind his stay in the town. His friend Faulkland, however, knows nothing about the arrival of Julia to Bath, thus Captain Absolute decides to tease him a bit. Faulkland is anxious and apprehensive on account of the health of Julia as every kind of weather may bring some kind of ailment. To relieve him of his apprehensions, Captain Absolute informs him of her presence in Bath. His hasty departure is arrested by the arrival of Mr.Acres who is an acquaintance of Julia and Anthony Absolute. On being introduced to Faulkland, Acres talks about how happy and cheerful Julia had been at Devonshire. Faulkland becomes uneasy and jealous hearing that Julia had been happy in his absence. On his departure Acres tells Jack that Lydia is not favourably disposed towards him and expresses a desire to kill that Ensign whom she is in love with. Acres takes his leave and Sir Anthony comes in to meet his son. He expresses a wish to make Jack economically independent by marrying him to an heiress with a large fortune. Jack however declines to marry the lady of his father's choice stating that his heart is engaged to another person. Sir Anthony tries to persuade his son to marry according to his wishes without, however, informing Jack of the identity of the prospective bride. Sir Anthony threatens to disown his son and disinherit him from his property and leaves in a fit of anger.

➢ ACT II SCENE II:

Lydia's maid Lucy is seen in conference with Sir Lucius O' Trigger with whom Mrs.Malaprop is in love. Lucy gives Sir O' Trigger the letter entrusted to her by Mrs.Malaprop which she has signed as 'Delia'. From the conversation it becomes clear that Sir Lucius thinks that the letters are being written by the niece Lydia and not the aunt, Mrs.Malaprop. Lucy lets him live in that delusion. Fag however happens to see the two conversing and threatens to tell Ensign Beverley; Lucy tells Fag the details about the correspondence between Mrs.Malaprop and Sir Lucius and also informs him that Beverley now has another rival in Captain Absolute whom Sir Anthony has proposed as a groom for Lydia.

✓ Critical comments on Act II

- The first scene of this act almost repeats the structure of the last scene of the previous act. Instead of Lydia and Julia, we see Jack and Faulkland

in conference and their conversation reveal their character. Here it is Jack who is level headed and quick witted whereas Faulkland is given to whimsies. Acres, like Mrs. Malaprop, provides the overwhelmingly comic element to the scene and Sir Absolute with his imposing nature would remind the readers of Mrs Malaprop's treatment of Lydia in the previous scene.

- The second scene makes it clear that the servants are going to play a pivotal role in the plot of the play by complicating the issue of mistaken identities. Sir Lucius comes across as a rather vainglorious man, who is over zealous of his honour.

➢ ACT III SCENE I:

Jack Absolute comes to know from Fag that Lydia is the bride that his father has actually chosen for him. He decides to agree to the proposed match. He tries to convince an enraged Sir Anthony already persuaded of his son's ingratitude that he actually wants to marry according to his father's choice. Sir Anthony is satisfied and tells his son that Lydia Languish is the chosen bride. Jack however pretends indifference. Sir Anthony is happy with the turn of the events; he decides to take Jack alone to Mrs.Malaprop's lodgings to meet Lydia.

➢ ACT III SCENE II:

The scene opens with the soliloquy of Faulkland who analyses his own actions and is ashamed of his capricious behaviour towards Julia. The reason of his behaviour however, as he clearly understands, is his all-engrossing love for Julia. On her arrival, they initially express mutual contentment. Faulkland soon expresses his displeasure with Julia's behaviour in the country during his absence. He also suggests that Julia loves him out of gratitude as he had once saved her life. Julia protests her true love for Faulkland but failing to persuade him, leaves the room in tears. Faulkland waits for her in vain and again accuses himself for being unjust to her.

➢ ACT III SCENE III:

Captain Jack Absolute comes to Mrs.Malaprop's lodgings with a letter of introduction from his father and flatters her to gain her goodwill. She informs him of the affair between Lydia and Beverley and shows Jack a note by the supposed Beverley which she had intercepted. In the letter Jack, impersonating as Beverley, has abused

Mrs.Malaprop. Jack reads the letter aloud to her and Mrs.Malaprop wants Lydia to meet her prospective groom. Lydia comes into the room expecting Captain Absolute and finds her beloved Beverley instead, who apparently has duped her aunt to get admission into the house. Lydia proposes an elopement to which Beverley/Jack pretends to agree. Mrs.Malaprop decides to eavesdrop and misunderstands what she hears. She comes into the room apologises to Jack for what she imagines to be Lydia's rudeness and drags her by force out of the room.

✓ **Critical comments on Act III**

- The first is a scene of comic confusion which shows the essential good nature of Sir Absolute in spite of his quick temper. He is ready to forgive his son as he agrees to marry the girl of his choice, Jack on the other hand is capable of superb play-acting in front of his parent to humour him.
- Faulkland's self-tormenting nature and Julia's extreme devotion to him is revealed in this scene. The emotionally charged dialogues strike a new note in the play. It puts these two characters squarely in the tradition of contemporary sentimental comedies.
- Jack's ability to make the best of a situation is again revealed here, he fools both aunt and niece and manages to remain in good terms with both, we see the pinnacle of his manipulative power in the scene.

➢ **ACT IV SCENE I:**

Acres is dressed in new clothes and is admired by his servant David. Sir Lucius O' Trigger comes in and enquires after his affairs. Acres informs him that he had come to Bath following Lydia, but there is a rival in the affair as Lydia is in love with one Ensign Beverley. Sir Lucius asks Acres to challenge Beverley to a duel as it is a matter of his honour. The reluctant and cowardly Acres is instigated by Sir Lucius to write a letter of challenge to Beverley which Sir Lucius offers to deliver himself.

➢ **ACT IV SCENE II:**

Mrs. Malaprop tries to convince Lydia to marry Captain Absolute, praising his appearance and behaviour. Lydia feels amused as she thinks that Mrs.Malaprop is unknowingly praising Beverley. In the meantime Sir Anthony brings a reluctant Captain Absolute to meet his prospective bride. Lydia sits on a chair looking away from their direction,

wondering why Mrs.Malaprop is not amazed at seeing the real Captain Absolute. Jack tries to disguise his voice while speaking but Lydia turns around only to see Beverley and cries out aloud in surprise. Jack is forced to reveal his true identity which makes Lydia unhappy as there would be no runaway marriage after all. Sir Anthony however understands the humour of the situation and asks Mrs.Malaprop to forgive him for writing that abusive letter in the person of Beverley. They leave the young people together to sort their differences out. Lydia is sorely disappointed at the prospect of a regular marriage with the consent of the elders. She also thinks that Jack has made a fool of her. In a moment of anger she flings away Jack's miniature that she had been wearing. Mrs.Malaprop and Sir Anthony find them quarrelling and Sir Anthony takes Jack away asking Mrs.Malaprop to intercede on his behalf.

➢ ACT IV SCENE III:

Sir Lucius O' Trigger meets Jack immediately after the encounter with Lydia. Sir Lucius laboriously picks up a quarrel with him and challenges him to a duel on account of an imaginary affront. Jack agrees to meet him in King's Mead-fields at six o' clock for the duel. Coming in at that point, Faulkland is informed of all the ensuing events by Jack. The former has had a quarrel with Julia and feels that he had finally hurt her beyond repair. He however receives a letter from her forgiving him and asking to meet him. Faulkland however, is still not satisfied as he thinks that Julia has been too hasty in her forgiveness. He decides to put her love to another test.

✓ Critical comments on Act IV

- The supposed rivalry between Acres and Beverly is fanned by Sir Lucius, the cowardice of Acres and the goading of Sir Lucius provides the comic element to the scene
- Jack is forced to reveal his identity to Lydia and his nightmares come true as Lydia characteristically refuses to marry a richer man. Jack's control over the situation is at an end
- Exasperated by Lydia's behavior, jack accepts the challenge. The scene is set for a final encounter between all the major characters at King's Mead Field

➢ ACT V SCENE I:

Faulkland informs Julia that he had hurt someone in a quarrel and must leave the country

immediately. Sincerely alarmed at this, Julia offers to go with him and to solemnize their marriage later in safety. After testing her loyalty to his heart's content, Faulkland reveals that whatever he had said were untrue. Julia feels humiliated at his continued suspicions of her motives and decides not to marry him as all her love have been ineffectual in correcting his temper. Faulkland blames himself for tormenting Julia in this way. Lydia comes to meet Julia and tells her of her distresses. Julia confesses that she knew from Faulkland's account Beverley's real identity. Lydia thinks that everyone has cheated her out of an opportunity of an elopement and a life in poverty. Mrs.Malaprop comes in accompanied by Fag and David in search of Sir Absolute as she had come to know that Jack and Acres have gone to the King's Mead-field to fight a duel. Alarmed at this news, the ladies decide to go to the field to prevent mischief.

➢ ACT V SCENE II:

While waiting for Faulkland to accompany him, Jack unfortunately meets his father in the South Parade. He explains away the sword that Sir Anthony finds him carrying by saying that he wanted to make Lydia consent to marry him by threatening her to kill himself if she refuses to. Immediately after his exit, David comes in to inform Sir Anthony of the impending duel. Enraged at his son's falsehoods, he also decides to go to King's Mead-field.

➢ ACT V SCENE III:

Sir Lucius tries to make an increasingly frightened Acres understand the technicalities of a duel. When Jack enters, accompanied by Faulkland and reveals that he himself is Acres' supposed rival Beverley, Acres is overjoyed and declares that he will never fight with a friend. Sir Lucius though, reminds Jack of his challenge and asks him to fight. They are prevented however from harming each other by the entrance of Sir Anthony, David and the ladies. In the ensuing confusion Sir Lucius calls Lydia her 'Delia', whereas Jack comes to know that she had agreed to accept him as her husband. Mrs.Malaprop is also forced to reveal that it was not Lydia but she who had been writing love letters to him under the feigned name of Delia. Neither Sir Lucius nor Sir Anthony nor ever Bob Acres want to marry Mrs.Malaprop who is only too eager to be married. As Lydia agrees to marry Jack so Julia feels it would be unkind on her part not to forgive Faulkland for his past follies. As all the young couples are properly paired and happy, Julia delivers the concluding/final speech of the play summarising the moral. She hopes for a happy future without the too glittering gloss of high romance. As loving hearts are united

virtue would crown and deck them in moderate and rational pleasure.

✓ **Critical comments on Act V**

- Things come to a head between Julia and Faukland as well owing to the latter's suspicious temper. The ever forgiving Julia is forced to break the engagement as his character seems to be incorrigible
- Sir Anthony as well as all the other characters come to know of the proposed duel and rush to the Field to prevent any accident
- The final scene provides the comic denouement where all the confusions are cleared and everyone, including Mrs. Malaprop is forced to reveal their respective assumed identities. As is conventional for comedies, the couples are neatly paired off while the pretensions of Malaprop are deflated. The essential good nature of Acres and Sir Lucius is also revealed. Julia's words advocating moderation as a principle in life ends the play.

4.2.4. Analysis of Characters in *The Rivals*

Now that you have a basic acquaintance with the characters and are also introduced to the story-line of *The Rivals*, you should be in a position to analyse the characters and formulate a basic idea of Sheridan's art of characterisation.

The major characters of *The Rivals* can certainly derive from the type characters of the **Comedies of Manners**. That they are essentially stock characters is evident from their names. **Sir Anthony Absolute** is a type of the tyrannical father, absolutely adamant in all his opinions and insistent on the prerogatives of his parenthood. We have referred to this earlier as the absolutist streak in his character.

Lydia Languish is the romantic languishing girl of seventeen whose head is full of fantastic ideas derived from the novels she reads; **Mrs. Malaprop** is the quintessential abuser of high-sounding words, all her words are mis-or-mal appropriated to their context; **Acres** smells of rusticity and **Sir Lucius O' Trigger** is the trigger-happy gentleman (though without much valour!) who is ever ready to pick a quarrel at a moment's notice. All the major characters, including some minor ones like Fag and Lucy, are also enlivened by a peculiar charm particular to the person. **Captain Jack Absolute and Julia**, being the most sensible of the set are also the most individualised. Jack, in contrast to his

friend **Faulkland** is a rational lover. Unlike Faulkland, he is not of a jealous or whimsical temper. He loves Lydia without being blind to her romantic follies and is clever enough to assume and retain a false identity to humour her caprices. There is shrewdness in Jack which makes him able to manipulate the absurdities of both his father and his lover. He effectively creates and unravels the complexities of the plot and acts almost as a surrogate of the play manager within the scope of the play. His love, unlike Lydia's, is rationalised with a strong practical sense. He will definitely marry her, but not without her entire fortune, and prudently so. Jack definitely possesses what the contemporary spectators would have called 'an easy temper', tolerant of the foibles of others and with an ability to laugh at himself, he is the master-manipulator in the play whose skills could be surpassed only by the dramatist himself.

Julia on the other hand is a **foil to Lydia**. She is sensible, as is Jack, of the whimsical nature of her lover and tries her best to keep it in check. She also attempts to hide Faulkland's foibles from the censures of the world. In vain does she try to persuade her cousin to see reason and when Faulkland's unjust accusations cross the limits of her endurance, she decides to break the engagement. Her exchanges with Faulkland show her even temper and loving heart. It is also significant that Sheridan gives to Julia the closing speech of the play, thus underlining its moral and also the moral values of the speaker. Her character has often been found, by critics and spectators alike, as lacking the vitality of Lydia. This has to be understood in the context of the tradition of **Sentimental comedy** from where she claims her descent unlike Lydia who is very clearly a '**Humours**' character.

Between themselves, Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop broach the important **theme of guardianship** in the play. While in charge of their young wards, both of them adopt a high-handed attitude. When she herself is corresponding with a lover under a feigned name, Mrs. Malaprop, confines Lydia to her room for her love for a half-pay Ensign. Her ideas on female education are as narrow as Sir Anthony's. Sir Anthony, on the other hand, moves from the tenderest regard for his son to the bitterest of reproach in a matter of moments on his son's refusal to marry the girl of his choice. Knowingly or/and unknowingly they present obstacles in the path of the young lovers and fulfill the function of the **comic antagonists**. Neither of them could serve as proper models to emulate for their respective wards. Sir Anthony's infallible good humour, however, saves him from the final disgrace that befalls Mrs. Malaprop at the climax. In the opposition between Sir Anthony/Captain Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop/Lydia, Sheridan also foregrounds the age-old theme of the conflict between generations.

Faulkland is contrasted with both his friend Captain Absolute and his beloved Julia. Lacking the pragmatism and rationality of both, be becomes a source of ridicule for the former and that of pain for the latter. His language is the most emotionally charged of all the characters in the play and like Sir Anthony, he easily moves from one extreme of emotion to another. A direct descendant of the "man of feeling" type of sentimental characters, Faulkland represents the darker aspects of passion that are completely absent from Jack's nature.

At the centre of the multifarious complexities and rivalries of the play, we have the "blooming love-breathing seventeen" years old **Lydia Languish** who, according to Sir Anthony, has turned her head with too much reading. Her romantic ideas about marriage require an elopement and an opposition from her guardian. If she marries without the consent of Mrs. Malaprop, she is liable to lose two-thirds of her vast fortune and this is the very spur that has drawn her to a half-pay Ensign! When she comes to know that Beverley and Captain Absolute is the same person, her chagrin knows no bound. Her stubborn resistance to all Mrs. Malaprop's efforts to coerce her into an engagement that she does not want is both comic and admirable. Her follies are those of an exaggerated imagination and a propensity to take literature for life, a trait that would later characterize other comic heroines like Jane Austen's Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey.* Lydia's refusal to marry a rich suitor also broaches the important theme of the **relationship between money and marriage** in the play. She cannot imagine herself being made into a Smithfield 'bargain' by marrying someone with her full fortune. Jack, in spite of his true devotion to Lydia, will not consent to a runaway marriage as it would entail a truncated fortune.

Both Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O' Trigger are conventional butts of ridicule, one as a would-be fashionable wit fresh from the country and the other an irascible quarrelsome man from Ireland. Though both are fortune hunters in a certain sense, they have, like all the other major characters in the play, the goodness of heart which redeems them from being mere fools or fops in comparison to the protagonist.

The servants as a group serve the choric function in the play. They provide useful information to the audience, as in the opening scene, and are instrumental in advancing the plot as well. Fag and Lucy especially are modeled on the clever servants of Roman Comedy who further the cause of their masters at the same time fill their own pockets.

Activity for the Learner

With help from your counsellor and after a thorough reading of the text, try to group the characters into categories. There could be groups like characters belonging to the nobility, working class characters, and characters drawn from Sentimental Comedies or from the Humour and Manners Comedies and so on. Many of these groupings might even overlap on certain characters. You will find the emergence of interesting social patterns that can be related to the socio-cultural contexts of Restoration and 18th century England that you've been reading about in Papers III and IV. It would be further interesting to note how distinctly characterisation in 18th century drama differs from its Elizabethan counterparts.

4.2.5. Genre

You have already read Goldsmith's play in Unit 1 of this Module. What points of similarity do you find between these two plays, written as they were in the same decade of the 18th century? We shall try and address the issues of sentimentality, anti-sentimental comedy, farcical elements and such other aspects of the play in this sub-section.

Though there seems to be a general critical consensus regarding the notion that *The Rivals,* like Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* is an 'anti-sentimental comedy', there is some disagreement regarding the degree to which Sheridan uses farcical elements within the general framework of a comedy. But let us turn first to the issue of **anti-sentimentalism**. It has been argued that an excess of sentimental plays on the eighteenth century stage, a type which Goldsmith derisively termed "Weeping comedy", led to a reaction and a partial revival of some of the conventions of the Restoration Comedies of Manners. It is also clear from our play's two sets of lovers that the Faulkland-Julia subplot is drawn from the repertoire of contemporary sentimental plays. The excessive sensibility of Faulkland, his untenable and unjustifiable jealousies regarding Julia, his incessant stream of self-reproaches and doubts might seem tedious to modern spectators/ readers. A stage history of the play shows that a directorial editing of the play would invariably sacrifice much, if not the whole, of this subplot. But what seems tedious and tasteless to us was not probably so to its contemporary audience. Early reviews of the play show much commendation of Julia's role, if not of Faulkland's. Faulkland's excesses are certainly regarded as such both by the audience and by the other characters in the play, including Faulkland himself. Just as Lydia's romantic fancies are to be curbed by

Jack's loving pragmatism, so Faulkland's fault of temper would be corrected by the gentle upbraidings of Julia. Sheridan, like a master craftsman achieves a delicate balance between the sentimental and the anti-sentimental strands of the play. The contemporary audience, who had been fed long on a diet of sentimentality, would not feel that they were watching something entirely new on stage. Though the play seems to deride the temperamental whimsies of Faulkland, like contemporary sentimental plays, it champions the values of a good heart. That is precisely why both Sir Lucius O' Trigger and Bob Acres graciously forego their claims on Lydia at the end of the play and though irascible and vain respectively, neither Sir Anthony Absolute nor Mrs.Malaprop really emerge as villains fundamentally opposed to the protagonists. They are merely temporary blocking agents, who stand for a time between the young people and their objectives.

As regard to the second question, it is undeniable that *The Rivals* has **farcical elements**. Two important features of farce are its preference for exaggeration and improbable situations. The play abounds in both. Almost all the major characters, barring Jack and Julia, have exaggerated character traits. Sir Anthony Absolute is irascible to an extreme whereas Mrs.Malaprop's excessive vanity is the reason behind her "nice derangement of epitaphs". Acres is a cowardly countryman who wants to pass off as a fashionable dandy while Sir Lucius is a bit too sensitive about his honour. Bob's cowardliness provides much occasion for physically exaggerated action as well, especially at the crucial duel scene where he tries his best to escape from the unsavoury situation to the vexation of Sir Lucius. Improbabilities are to be found in the scenes where Jack comes to meet Lydia in the presence of his father and Mrs.Malaprop and later when he tries to trick his father into believing that he is not his son. Mrs. Malaprop's erroneous language does not really fulfill any functional role in the play except for heightening the farcical humour. The tortuously long narration of Fag to the ladies of the dire danger their male friends are in or the rapid transitions in Sir Anthony's moods are all comically exaggerated elements which give the play a farcical overtone. Inspite of these, we should desist from calling it a farce. The rapid succession of incidents and the total subservience of character to plot which are also hallmarks of a farce are missing their own right, not because they are vehicles of the action. Jack and Julia's solid good sense, the sly opportunism of Fag and Lucy and Faulkland's morose humour are incompatible with the spirit of true farce. The play, moreover, depends too much on the unraveling of character, as opposed to incidents to be categorised as a farce.

4.2.6. Plot

The five act comedy comprising fourteen scenes moves rapidly, though not as rapidly as to bewilder the spectators/readers. The plot more or less conforms to the neoclassical (not strictly Aristotelian) unities of time, place and action. Though not strictly specified, the action of the play does not comprise more than a few hours, with all that has happened before being narrated by the characters. The setting of the play throughout is Bath with the proper balance between outdoor and indoor scenes and the denouement being enacted in King's Mead-field, one of the prime locations in the town. Thought there is a double plot in the play, they are linked both in terms of theme and characters. Faulkland and Julia are known related to Jack and Lydia respectively and their love story is a foil to Jack and Lydia's, in both cases, the crises in love stem from the irrational whims of one partner. Both strands are finally brought together in the climax and the lovers are neatly paired off with mutual consent of the elders.

The short expository scene at the beginning sums up the situation as the play opens. The dialogues also provide a thumbnail sketch of all the major characters regarding their nature and situation. The characters themselves are introduced one after another in the subsequent scenes.

One interesting aspect of the plot which often goes unnoticed is its **lack of any real external conflict**. Though the apparent rivalry between Jack Beverley, Sir Lucius and Bob Acres provide the title of the play, the rivalry is never a real one. Jack and Beverley are identical, Bob's addresses are never accepted by Lydia and he is only too eager to relinquish his claims on her. Sir Lucius has never been encouraged by Lydia, it was Mrs. Malaprop who he had been unwittingly courting. The two guardians, for a time appear as antagonistic to the young lovers' choice. It is again only a temporary and apparent one, as both of them want to 'force' their wards to marry the very people that they are in love with. The difficulties in the path of the lovers are created mostly by themselves, what they, especially Lydia and Faulkland, have to overcome is the element of capriciousness and prejudice in their otherwise favourably disposed minds. This also foregrounds the point that *The Rivals* is more a play about characters, rather than of plot or incidents.

The first scene is meant to raise the expectation of the spectators/readers before actually meeting the characters. In Scene II, Lydia, Lucy, Mrs.Malaprop, Sir Anthony are presented whereas Act II Scene I familiarises us with Jack, Faulkland and Acres. The dialogues and situations in both the scenes are designed to illustrate the particular oddities

of the characters. Through Act II Scene ii and Act III Scene I, the plot is rapidly developed. A difference of opinion between Sir Anthony and Jack regarding the latter's marriage resolves itself in reconciliation that the quarrel between Faulkland and Julia will also be resolved in the same manner. A minor crisis is reached and successfully averted by Jack in Scene III in Mrs.Malaprop's lodgings. He manages ingeniously to dump both the aunt and the niece and postpone a revelation of identity. The final crisis of the play is also hinted at in Scene IV as Sir Lucius instigates Acres to challenge Beverley to a duel and decides to do the same for himself regarding Captain Absolute. Up to this point in the play, however, Jack seems to be in complete control of the situation. This control starts wavering and eventually collapses in Act IV. The crisis between him and Lydia reaches its climax in Act IV, Scene II when Jack's identity is revealed and as he had foreseen, the truth enrages and estranges Lydia in spite of the forgiveness of the two guardians. In the first scene of the next act Faulkland also earns Julia's chastisement and a final refusal to marry him. The short second scene serves as an interlude before the final comic denouement in the last scene of the play. All the characters, major and minor alike, gather at King's Mead-Field, either to take part in or to prevent the proposed double duel. All the remaining misunderstandings are cleared up as Jack is forgiven by Lydia and Mrs. Malaprop confesses that it was she and not Lydia who had been writing to Sir Lucius, under a pseudonym. As is customary in comedies, the play concludes with the lovers properly paired off (since Julia forgives Faulkland as well) and the moral is uttered by Julia.

4.2.7. Language

A glossy linguistic surface had always been a marked feature of the Restoration Comedies of Manners. Polished dialogues and witty repartees were one of its greatest stylistic signatures; sentimental plays, on the other hand, used language as a weapon to arouse emotions. Sheridan's first play goes further than the road charted by either. In a play which thrives on stock situations and whimsical characters, it is language which becomes the playwright's tool to create and demarcate between his various characters. That Sheridan has been careful in assigning a particular linguistic register to each character is evident from the first scene itself where the coachman consistently draws analogies from his world of coachmanship and Fag, with his recently acquired Bath manners, tries to be condescending with his niceties of speech. Jack's language comes closest to that of the Restoration rakes minus their sly innuendoes. His witty rejoinders to Faulkland's petulant and peevish comments prove him to be a master of wit. Faulkland,

on the other hand, with his torturously constructed sentences, pauses between words and the frequent use of exclamatory sentences (see Act II Scene II for example) presents a highly temperamental and volatile mind in front of the readers/spectators. The irascible nature of Sir Anthony is clear from his frequent swearing and quick oscillation between terms of disparagement and endearment. Lydia probably apes the fashionable language of the day by peppering her speech with meaningless tags like 'Heigh ho'. Acres however, can claim ingenuity with his borrowed doctrine of the 'oath referential'. His novel use of oath-taking, as noticed by Jack stems from the theory that an oath has to be properly suited to its context, therefore feeling his rising courage and bracing himself for the imminent duel, Acres swears 'Odds bullets and blades' (Act III Scene IV) or his inability to master the steps of the fashionable French dances makes him say, 'Odds jigs and tabors!'

But the linguistic oddities of the other characters pale into insignificance in front of that of Mrs. Malaprop whose name indicates this mismanagement of language –*mal apropos*. Her 'derangement of epitaphs' have made her name literally immortal in the dictionary in the form of 'malapropism'. She is however, not a unique character in this respect. Her linguistic incompetence has been traced back to such literary predecessors as Henry Fielding's Mrs. Slipslop (*Joseph Andrews*), Tobias Smollett's Mrs. Tabitha Bramble (*The Adventures of Humphrey Clinker*, one of the books that Lydia had been reading and which also has a young heroine in love with a strolling actor named Lydia) and Frances Sheridan's Mrs. Tryfort (*A Journey to Bath*). Whoever her predecessors might be Mrs. Malaprop is unique in her misapplication of long and difficult words completely out of context. Though there is no clearly discernible pattern in her misuse of words, several strands can be identified. She typically confuses between similar sounding words, especially words with the similar beginnings- as 'allegory' for 'alligator', 'epitaphs' for 'epithets', 'hydrostatics' for 'hysterics' and 'pineapple' for 'pinnacle'. Sometimes the situation is made all the more hilarious by her use of near-antonyms of the word she actually intends to utter, 'derangement' for 'arrangement' or 'malevolence' for 'benevolence'. The most ludicrous element of the malapropism is her evident pride in her language, a 'ridiculous' vanity that would probably outline her final humiliation at the climax of the play. Her character has been accused of improbability as it seems almost impossible that she should use all these difficult words without knowing their meaning. Whatever the case might be, it is true that of all the characters in the play, probably the most remarkable and memorable is that of Mrs. Malaprop, courtesy her special language. Sheridan, in assigning one particular idiom to one character seems to have a scale of values in his mind. The more whimsical a character is, the more wayward

would be his/her language, the only probable exception to the rule being Lydia, who, apart from her fashionable speech tags, does not really show any other remarkable oddity in her language. Though a bit verbose, Julia also seems to fit into the pattern, as it is she and Jack who are the most sensible of the lot.

Though read or experienced on stage essentially as a light hearted comedy, *The Rivals* broaches several important themes. The money-marriage nexus that was such a ubiquitous topic in the Restoration Comedy appears in an attenuated form in Jack's refusing to marry Lydia without her entire fortune and in Lydia's fears that she would be made into a ' Smithfield bargain'. The conflict between generations and the theme of parental tyranny is manifested in the relationship between Sir Anthony and Jack on the one hand and Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia on the other. There are indications throughout the play that Lydia's excessively romantic temperament is a result of her reading of contemporary romances and novels. Both Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony hold rather harsh and narrow views on female education. Interestingly, apart from Mrs. Malaprop, and possibly Lucy, no other female character in the play has full control over their property or lives. Julia is a ward to Sir Anthony, Lydia's fortune depends on her marrying with her aunt's consent, even Mrs. Malaprop herself is only too eager to get married which would inevitably result in a reversion of her fortune in favour of the husband. More significantly, and perhaps taking all the other themes into its fold, the play deals with the question of a proper balance in relationships, that is exactly what Julia also points out at the end of the play. The happiness of the young couples as well as that of the elderly figures depend on a sense of moderation, a golden mean between absolute positions, the lack of which had created the various conflicts in the play in the first place.

4.2.8. Summing Up

- ✓ First performed in 1775 *The Rivals* happens to be one of the most successful and representative comedies of the late eighteenth century
    - ✓ The play combines elements from both Restoration Comedies of Manners and eighteenth century Sentimental Comedies and achieves a fine balance without the obvious defects of both
- ✓ The major characters of the play are type characters, some drawn from the tradition of "humours' characters, but are sufficiently individualised to be memorable literary personages

- ✓ The play has a main plot and a sub plot, both concerned with problems created by the exaggerated emotions of one of the partners in an amorous relationship
- ✓ The language of the play is exuberant and much of the humour derives from the mal-appropriation of words by the aptly named Mrs. Malaprop
- ✓ The play also broaches the theme of guardianship and parental tyranny over their children
- ✓ The play's conclusion seeks to impress upon the spectators/readers that moderation in thoughts, actions and words are qualities without which human relationship can succeed

4.2.9. Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Types (20 marks)

1. How does *The Rivals* combine elements from Restoration Comedy of Manners and sentimental Comedies?
2. Would you agree with the comment that the major characters in the play contrast and complement each other? Elucidate.

Medium Length Answers (12 marks)

1. Critically comment on the character of Mrs. Malaprop.
2. Comment on the significance of the theme of rivalry in the play.
3. Would you consider *The Rivals* as a comedy or as a farce? Give reasons for your answer.

Short Questions (6 marks)

1. Comment on the role of the servants in the play.
2. Comment on the theme of guardianship and authority in the play.
3. Briefly discuss the significance of the character of Julia in the play.
4. Briefly comment on the views expressed on female education in the play.

4.2.10. Suggested Reading List

Auburn, Mark S. *Sheridan's Comedies: Their Contexts and Achievements*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P,1977.

Bowman, David. "Sheridan's Comedy of Rhetoric". *Interpretations* 6.1(1974):#1-38. JSTOR.

Davison, Peter. *Sheridan:Comedies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998

Williams, Stanley T. "The English Sentimental Drama from Steele to Cumberland". *The Sewanee Review* 33.4(1925):405-26.JSTOR.

Recommended edition of the text—-

Sheridan R.B. *The Rivals*. Ed-C.L Price.Oxford: OUP, 2011.

Unit - 3 ❐ Dr Samuel Johnson : *Preface to Shakespeare* (Extracts)

Structure

4.3.0. Introduction

The immensely rich tradition of Shakespearean criticism in the eighteenth century testifies not only to the critical temperament of the age but also to the great interest that the culture took in the works of the greatest dramatist that England had produced. Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* succinctly addresses all the major critical concerns regarding the dramatist's works that were deemed important in the eighteenth century. This invaluable piece of literary criticism also acquaints the contemporary readers with the modes, practices and principles of eighteenth century neoclassical criticism. In this Unit, a couple of small extracts have been chosen to give you a feel of the reception of Shakespeare in 18th century England. In the process, you will also know about Samuel Johnson, more popularly known as Dr Johnson, an important 18th century voice who is remembered as a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer. After reading the Unit, you should, with help from your counsellor, be able to identify the line of evolution in Shakespeare studies from the 16th to the 18th centuries, and perhaps extend it to the present times.

4.3.1. About the Author – Dr Samuel Johnson

Doctor Samuel Johnson, as he came to be known to posterity, was born in the small midlands town of Lichfield, Staffordshire, on 18 September 1709. His father Michael Johnson was a Lichfield bookseller who, at the time of his son's birth, had risen to the eminent position of the Sheriff of the town. According to Johnson's biographer James Boswell, Samuel's mother, Sarah Ford "descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire." Early in his life Johnson contracted scrofula from the wet nurse he was put to, a disease which resulted in deafness in one ear and partial blindness in an eye. The physical difficulties and ailments he had to suffer from throughout his life left an indelible imprint on his personality. He entered Lichfield Grammar school in 1717 and soon showed remarkable progress, his prodigious memory and voracious reading turned him into a figure who was respected by both his peers and instructors. A small legacy left to his mother enabled him to go up to Oxford in 1728. He entered Pembroke College, but the hopes of a conventional university education were shattered soon when in 1729, barely thirteen months after he entered it, Johnson had to leave Oxford on account of poverty.

Facing major financial difficulties Johnson decided to come to London in the company of David Garrick, his former pupil and the most celebrated actor of the period. Johnson tried to make a living by what has been called 'inspired hackwork', —writing for various journals and periodicals. He worked for a time for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. In 1746 he signed a contract with a group of London publishers, then called booksellers, for a comprehensive dictionary of the English language, which was eventually published in 1755. In 1749 his greatest and best known poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was published; the year also saw the performance of his tragedy *Irene*, the incomplete manuscript of which he had brought with him while coming from Lichfield. Two series of periodical essays *The Rambler* (began in 1750) and *The Idler* (1758) and *The Dictionary of the English Language* made Johnson's reputation as the foremost lexicographer and literary critic of the age. In 1759 was published his philosophical novel *Rasselas, or the Prince of Abyssinia*. A meeting with James Boswell in 1763 resulted in a friendship which lasted till Johnson's death and the fruit of which was the justly celebrated *Life of Johnson* (1791), probably the best known biography in the history of English literature.

1765 saw the publication of Johnson's edition of Shakespeare's plays, a thoroughly researched scholarly work, the 'Preface' to which is one of the most valuable pieces of

literary criticism on Shakespeare's genius in the eighteenth century. His last major literary works were the ten volumes of *Lives of the Poets* (the first four volumes were published in 1779 and the rest in 1781). The balance achieved in this work between biography and literary criticism proved to be a model for literary biographies of the later ages.

Johnson suffered a stroke in 1783, his slow recovery was cut short by a combination of dropsy and other ailments which claimed his life on 13 December 1784. The following week he was buried in the Westminster Abbey.

Undoubtedly the most remarkable and authoritarian literary figure of the eighteenth century, Dr Samuel Johnson had mastered the fields of literary criticism, literary biography, lexicography, periodical essays and poetry. He was also a brilliant conversationalist. Justly credited with giving the English language its first methodical and comprehensive dictionary, he was a pioneer in more than one sense of the term. Like Alexander Pope, Johnson also struggled with life-long ailments, and like Pope again, he managed, after initial years of hardship, to earn a respectable living from writing. Dr Johnson had been an institution in himself and it is no wonder that he has been recognised as one of the very first professional 'man of letters' in the history of English literature and culture.

4.3.2. The Eighteenth Century and The Background to *Preface*

➢ The Neo-Classical and Augustan critical milieu

Perhaps no other period of the history of English literature has been graced with so many appellations as the eighteenth century. It is the 'age of prose and reason', the Enlightenment, the 'long' eighteenth century, the Augustan age, and also the extended neoclassical period. Each term subtly emphasises one of the multiple aspects of the century, sometimes with a degree of inevitable overlapping in connotation. That the eighteenth was century perceived as the Augustan age, and also as the neoclassical definitely period point to certain shared assumptions. You have earlier learnt of the pan-European cultural and literary movement beginning in fourteenth century Italy has been universally called the 'Renaissance' – the revival of Classical learning. As suggested in Module 1 Unit 1, the literature and culture of eighteenth century England can be thought of as a direct progeny of the culture of the Renaissance. If the Classical, i.e Greek and Roman, art forms, philosophy and learning had already been revived during the Renaissance, then these were further codified, systematised and consciously used, and prescribed as models to be emulated during the eighteenth century. While the term

'neoclassical' highlights the prevalence of classical norms and forms, 'Augustan' on the other hand designates the attempt on the part of many eighteenth century writers and thinkers to draw conscious parallels between their own literary and cultural milieu and that of the Classical Augustan age (the reign of Augustus Caesar, 27 BC-AD 14)

These are some assumptions, obviously stated earlier in this study material, but repeated here because you need to keep them in mind as you study Dr Johnson's *Preface*.

Neoclassical literary criticism, like the literature of the period, often sought to formulate and articulate certain standards of good writing. These standards were derived from the critic's reading and interpretation of the Classical poets like Horace, Virgil and Ovid on the one hand and Classical treatises on the literary arts like Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica* on the other. The works of the Classical critics, though usually read in the original, were often supplemented with commentaries by Renaissance and seventeenth century critics. Thus the much debated rule of the 'Three unities' of time, place and action did not derive directly from Aristotle but through the mediation of his Renaissance commentators like Julius Caesar Scaliger and Lodovico Castelvetro. It would, however, be wrong to think of neoclassical criticism as a monolithic and rigid structure of rules and formulations. There were divergent currents and moderate opinions within the broad rubric of this body of criticism. This is not to say that it is impossible to arrive at some general observations regarding neoclassical criticism. Certain characteristics were definitely noticeable—an insistence on the dual purpose of literature- it is meant to teach and delight, an idea derived directly from Horace; a notion of literary propriety and decorum in terms of the subject as well as the language of literature; a general consensus that art should imitate 'nature'—nature understood not in its external, physical sense but as a sum total of all the rules which govern the animate and inanimate worlds; a firm conviction that that the best literary models are already provided by the Classical authors and an aspiring writer should learn the art of writing by studying their works, an argument summed up admirably by Pope in his *Essay on Criticism*—

Be Homer's works your study and delight,

Read them by day, and meditate by night;

Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,

And trace the Muses upward to their spring;

...

Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;

To copy nature is to copy them.

Vis-a-vis these rules we find the neoclassical critics taking their respective positions. There are those who insist on adhering closely to the models set by Classical and contemporary French writers, and there were others who took a more moderate position, allowing for exceptions and granting the somewhat greater claim of 'nature' over 'art' or rules codified by men. We should place John Dryden, who has been acknowledged as the single most important influence on Johnson's criticism, and Johnson himself in the latter category.

➢ Dr Johnson as a critic

Dr Johnson's reputation as the greatest authority on the English language and literature was more or less firmly established by the time his edition of Shakespeare was published in 1765. He had already published plays, poems, periodical essays, *A Dictionary of the English Language* and his novel *Rasselas*. We may quote here the pertinent comment made by Johnson's biographer James Boswell on the *Preface*—

> In the October of this year he at length gave to the world his edition of Shakespeare, which, if it had no other merit but that of producing his Preface, in which the excellencies and defects of that immortal bard are displayed with a masterly hand, the nation would have had no reason to complain. A blind indiscriminate admiration of Shakespeare had exposed the British nation to the ridicule of foreigners. Johnson, by candidly admitting the faults of his poet, had the more credit in bestowing on him deserved and indisputable praise; and doubtless none of all his panegyrists have done him half so much honour.

Johnson's *Preface* is not an exhaustive or comprehensive introduction to the works of the dramatist, neither is it an encomium on his genius. Rather, it can be viewed, as Boswell's remark suggests, an attempt on Johnson's part to impartially assess the general nature and value of Shakespeare's works and to defend his reputation from the censure of those who attach too much importance to Shakespeare's deviation from 'Rules'. Many of the critical themes that Johnson broaches in the 'Preface' had been dealt with in his earlier works. That he was against too strict an adherence to the prescriptions and strictures of the critics is clear from *Rambler, 156.*—

> Among the laws...[s]ome are to be considered as fundamental and indispensible, others only as useful and convenient ; some as dictated by reason and necessity, others as enacted by despotic antiquity; some as invincibly supported by their conformity to the order of nature and operations of the intellect; others are formed by accident, or instituted by example, and therefore always liable to dispute and alteration.

It is against pronouncements like these that we have to posit Johnson's views on Shakespeare's 'unruly' genius.

The notion that the objective of literature is to portray what is 'general' and universal as opposed to the particular and historical has also appeared before in Johnson's writings, most particularly in *Rasselas*——

> The business of the poet... is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portrait of nature such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations...

The 'just' representation of general nature is precisely what Johnson considers to be the reason behind the continuing appeal and popularity of Shakespeare. This ability of Shakespeare's to " ...[hold] up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life" becomes the central criterion by which the dramatist's merits and faults are to be assessed. It is interesting to note the deliberate echo of *Hamle*t in this sentence from the 'Preface'. Hamlet, by his own admission had been one of the first plays of Shakespeare to have moved the young Johnson profoundly. The principle that literature should reflect the world also helps Johnson to put forward a defence of Shakespeare's mingling of the tragic and comic modes in his plays of which there is no classical precedent and which was castigated as 'mongrel tragi-comedy' by Sir Philip Sidney in his *The Defence of Dramatic Poetry*.

The faults for which Johnson censures Shakespeare are those deriving from an excessively luxurious imagination and a certain carelessness in composition. Thus Johnson criticises the dramatist's often loosely constructed plots; weak declamatory speeches; weaker second halves and a predilection for quibbles or puns.

4.3.3. The Text of *Preface* (Extracts)

Extract One

> "Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design." ("Shakespeare's World")

Extract Two

> A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it (" Shakespeare's Wordplay").

4.3.4. General Overview/Analysis of the *Preface*

Dr Samuel Johnson's long *Preface to Shakespeare*, as already has been pointed out, seeks to provide a balanced neoclassical approach towards the dramatist's works. Tightly structured and closely argued, the *Preface* begins with a declaration of Shakespeare's literary greatness as attested by time; presents a defence of some of the dramatic practices of Shakespeare; leads onto an enumeration of what Johnson regards as genuine faults in the art of the dramatist; contains a discussion of the very basis of certain neoclassical 'rules' which questions their validity and ends with certain general observations on

Shakespeare's sources; and Dr Johnson's own editorial procedures while preparing the edition.

The *Preface* opens with the surmise that the greatness of Shakespeare's dramatic works has been tested and positively proven by time. The primary reason behind the continuing appeal of the plays to audiences far removed from the playwright's historical and cultural context is Shakespeare's "... just representation of general nature". This precept would immediately remind the informed readers of the Classical, especially Aristotelian, notion of the literary arts as 'mimetic'. 'Mimesis' is the Greek word for imitation and it is a tendency inherent in human nature—literature pleases the mind because it imitates the world and plays are to be taken as imitations of particular actions.

You have already gathered some idea about Dryden's critical tract in Paper 3. Johnson might have remembered the definition of a play provided by Lisideius in Dryden's *An Essay Of Dramatic Poesy* (1665). According to Lisideius, a play is— "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind." The readers would also recognise an echo of Hamlet's comment to the actor "... the purpose of playing, whose end, both at first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature;" [Act iii, Scene ii, 20-22]. Since nature itself is immutable, Shakespeare's characters, unlike those of other dramatists, are not to be tied down to a particular age or nation, but are species or types in themselves. However, the appeal of universality is not the sole one on which Shakespeare's greatness rests. His skilful management of his plots and the rich texture of his dialogues are also to share this credit to a certain extent. His fertile imagination is able to make the remote familiar, and though his characters represent universal types, they are also highly individualised.

After taking into account the general excellences of Shakespeare's art, Johnson enters into an elaborate defence of the playwright's works against particular points of criticism. That Shakespeare's characters are often accused of being ahistorical or not sufficiently contextualised is explained away with the argument of their universality. The differences of manners and morals particular to a time or a nation must be subservient to the essential humanity that the dramatist portrays. The particularities, according to Johnson are accidental and should not, therefore, be predominant over what is general.

The more serious allegation levelled against Shakespeare is that often his plays are neither strictly tragedies, nor comedies. The dramatist has 'mingled' the two mutually exclusive modes of tragedy and comedy and thereby has violated the notion of literary decorum and undermined the unity of impression. Johnson defends Shakespeare for

writing such mingled drama by pointing out that the dramatist has always attempted to portray "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination...". Literary conventions and rules prescribed by authorities have distinguished between the two types of drama, but Shakespeare's capacious mind has been able to combine the force of the two into one composition. Dr Johnson deftly counters the objections raised by one neoclassical dictum— that of maintaining generic purity and exclusivity—by another—the Horatian notion of delight and utility being the end of literature. In an oft-quoted sentence Johnson asserts—"... there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature" Shakespeare's mingled drama approximates the actual pattern of human life in its alternations of happiness and sorrow. Neither is it true that this alternation of the comic and tragic scenes in Shakespeare's plays makes it difficult to sustain a dramatic mood or tenor. It is variety that spectators and readers look for, and variety is provided by the mingling of the modes. Johnson also makes a crucial editorial point here by remarking that the plays have not been classified into these subtypes according to any clear critical criteria but by the ending of the plays. Through all the three kinds of tragedy, comedy and history Shakespeare's method of composition remains the same. Without any precedence to follow and without the widespread knowledge of classical rules, Shakespeare could give free reign to his imagination. Sir Philip Sidney, Shakespeare's contemporary had castigated the absurdity of the English plays in harsh terms –

> all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carries it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion; so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained...

Dr Johnson evidently does not agree with the judgement passed by Sidney more than a century and half ago. By the middle of the eighteenth century there was a definite shift in European drama and dramaturgy away from the notion of strict generic purity. Like other leading critics of the time Dr Johnson also recognises the fact that the presence of comic and tragic elements within a single dramatic structure, as within life, heightens the effect of each other instead of destroying it. If the literary arts are to be true to their function of imitating nature, it is inevitable that it would give birth to a hybrid form of drama.

The discussion at this point naturally veers towards the question of the dramatist's

comparative mastery over the forms of tragedy and comedy and Dr Johnson expresses his opinion rather strongly in favour of the former. The comic dialogues of his plays are written in an idiom most proper for its purpose—therefore, maintaining the kind of literary decorum that was required of high comedies— whereas in the tragedies Shakespeare seems to toil hard to achieve the desired effect. While elaborating upon the notion that Shakespeare characteristically follows 'nature' over rules; Dr Johnson compares the occasional shortcomings of his comic dialogues with the unevenness of the natural surface of the earth itself. Though the readers are constantly reminded of the 'naturalness' of his genius, Dr Johnson is not oblivious to his 'faults'. The rather freewheeling defence of his dramatic art is followed by a schematic, point by point enumeration of the obvious faults to be found in his works. There is a scale of seriousness according to which the faults are listed. Johnson narrates these faults, 'in the proportion in which they appear to me', and the first fault he talks at length about is the seeming lack of moral purpose and poetic justice in his works. In a famous comment Dr Johnson asserts that "he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose." This fault he is not prepared to excuse by an appeal to the 'barbarity' of the Elizabethan age. The right object of a writer's imitation is nature, but there is also a necessity to be discrete while selecting what to imitate and represent in literature. A failure to do this would result in a disproportion where one of the goals of the literary arts, to instruct, would be undermined by the other, to delight. Johnson had earlier voiced the same opinion in *Rambler, 4* while taking about the new fangled genre of the novel—

> It is justly considered the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation; greater care is still required in presenting life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind as upon a mirror which always shows all that presents itself without discrimination.

This comment, taken together with the one in the *Preface* gives the reader a glimpse into Johnson's deep regard for the moral value of literature. Since it works with the force of an example in front of the readers, it is the moral duty of the writer to be discriminating and careful while selecting the details to be represented.

This discussion of what Johnson regards as the most serious fault in the works of Shakespeare is followed by the accusation that often the plots of his plays are loosely

constructed and evince a tendency towards anachronisms and violation of the norms of possibility. A general criticism of some of the linguistic aspects of the plays is then taken up. According to Dr Johnson, Shakespeare's comic repartees lack sophistication and refinement; the declamatory or set speeches found in his plays lack vividness; sometimes an 'unwieldy' sentiment finds laboured expression in convoluted syntax, or, alternatively, there might be an element of incongruity between the thought and the language in which it is expressed; neither is the dramatist able to resist the temptation of using a pun or quibble at the slightest possible opportunity, a fault which Johnson famously describes as Shakespeare's 'fatal Cleopatra'. In keeping with his general technique in the 'Preface', Johnson uses natural imagery and metaphors in order to express his dissatisfaction with this tendency of Shakespeare. Thus a quibble is compared to 'luminous vapours' or 'a golden apple. Like the enchanting and seductive image of the ancient Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, vapours and golden apples are also instruments of temptation. They are meant to lead people away from their destined path, to lead them astray. It has a fixed hold over the mind of the playwright, so much so that he would step aside from his actual course to pursue it. Though it might be a minor fault in the works of the playwright as compared to his lack of moral strictness, it seems to irk the lexicographer in Johnson who could not approve of the excessive and unnecessary wordplay which disturbs the flow of action.

This discussion naturally turns upon one of the greatest perceived 'defects' of Shakespeare's art, a defect that appeared as enormous by the standards of strict neoclassical criticism—the ' neglect of the unities'. Johnson's defence of Shakespeare on this account forms one of the most important and central arguments of the 'Preface'. He begins with the historical plays, which being neither tragedies nor comedies are naturally exempted from the laws of the unities. In his other works, Johnson contends, Shakespeare has more or less adhered to the unity of action and most of his plays conform to the Aristotelian principle of an ideal plot structure with a beginning, a middle and an end. It is in regard to the other two unities—that of time and place — that Shakespeare has deviated from the norm. Dr Johnson's defence begins with a query into the very basis of the norms themselves. Johnson argues that these two unities have derived their validity from the alleged requirements of credibility; it is generally assumed that to be credible to the audience, the playing time should approximate the time covered in the plot as it is impossible to conceive that action taking place over months or years could be represented in three hours or so. The principle of the unity of place logically follows from this supposition, as one cannot travel great distances within the short time

that is supposed to be presented on stage. Johnson perceptively argues that both these principles are rationally untenable because dramatic representation is not to be mistaken for reality and "... the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage and the players are only players." By taking this fact into consideration, the two principles might be seen as hindrances to the development of the plot rather than a necessary tool for its development. A play is to be made credible to the spectators not by adhering to any mechanical rule of approximate representation, but on the probability of the plot. The only unity that is imperative for a dramatist to preserve is that of action and here Shakespeare has not failed his audience. The violation of the other two, therefore, does not amount to any lessening of the merit of Shakespeare's plays. Johnson expertly shifts the balance of dramatic credibility from the observation of the rules laid down by the critics to the just representation of nature.

Samuel Johnson, who had been the most accomplished critic-biographer of the eighteenth century firmly contextualises Shakespeare in the 'infancy' of the English nation. The presence of the marvellous in his plots, or the simple fact that most of his plots are borrowed from other sources are obliquely vindicated by making allowances for the kind of audience Shakespeare had to cater to. Johnson compares Shakespeare's works with a forest which boasts of lofty trees as well as low weeds, whereas the works of 'more regular' dramatists are neatly laid out gardens. Shakespeare 'opens up a mine' where precious metal and stones lay mixed with clay. The complex defence that Johnson had been preparing through the 'Preface', insisting on the natural, albeit somewhat untamed, genius of Shakespeare, takes the final shape of the forest/garden metaphor. In the dichotomy between art and nature, Johnson places Shakespeare on the side of nature. It is the dramatist's natural curiosity and observant mind, rather than any formal, Classical training, which accounts for the richness, complexity and variety of his works.

The *Preface*, we must remember, was not meant to be read as an independent critical treatise or defence of Shakespeare's art. It is an introduction to the edition of his plays that Johnson had prepared, thus the remainder of the 'Preface' deals with the general editorial problems of textual corruption, collation and interpretation that any editor of the plays would have to face. This section might be of specialised interest, but the discussion that preceded it with its nuanced and sensitive understanding of Shakespeare's mind and art still remains one of the best examples of Shakespearean criticism of the eighteenth century.

Activity for the Learner

On the basis of the analysis you just read, try to place Samuel Johnson's understanding of Shakespeare's plays in the tradition of the development of literary criticism that you have read from Paper 2 onwards. The focus should be on the evolution of critical thought from the Renaissance through the Neo-Classical phase into the era of Enlightenment. Your counsellor will help you in this.

4.3.5. Summing Up

The purpose of this unit was to introduce the learner to the nuances of Eighteenth century literary criticism. And there is no doubt that none other than Dr Samuel Johnson and his famous *Preface to Shakespeare* could be the most effective illustration of this! Try to recall your understanding from a reading of the extracts chosen and see for yourselves if the following points come across your mind:

- ✓ Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* succinctly addresses all the major critical concerns regarding the dramatist's works that were deemed important in the eighteenth century. This invaluable piece of literary criticism also acquaints the contemporary readers with the modes, practices and principles of eighteenth century neoclassical criticism.
- ✓ Neoclassical literary criticism, like the literature of the period, often sought to formulate and articulate certain standards of good writing. These standards were derived from the critic's reading and interpretation of the Classical poets like Horace, Virgil and Ovid on the one hand and Classical treatises on the literary arts like Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica* on the other.
- ✓ Johnson's *Preface* is not an exhaustive or comprehensive introduction to the works of the dramatist, neither is it an encomium on his genius. Rather, it can be viewed, as Boswell his biographer remarks, an attempt on Johnson's part to impartially assess the general nature and value of Shakespeare's works and to defend his reputation from the censure of those who attach too much importance to Shakespeare's deviation from 'Rules'.
- ✓ The complex defence that Johnson had been preparing through the text, insisting on the natural, albeit somewhat untamed, genius of Shakespeare,

takes the final shape of the forest/garden metaphor. In the dichotomy between art and nature, Johnson places Shakespeare on the side of nature. It is the dramatist's natural curiosity and observant mind, rather than any formal, Classical training, which accounts for the richness, complexity and variety of his works.

- ✓ The *Preface*, we must remember, was not meant to be read as an independent critical treatise or defence of Shakespeare's art. It is an introduction to the edition of his plays that Johnson had prepared.

Thus, the learner is made to recognize that "Preface" is actually a piece of work, which was not meant to be a treatise or criticism on Shakespeare, but was simply an introduction to an edition of his plays, but it still remains the finest exposition of the dramatist's mind and art, a defence of his natural oeuvre as well as the best illustration of neoclassical prose.

4.3.6. Comprehension Exercises

Long questions: 20 marks

1. Would you agree with the statement that Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* presents a balanced neoclassical account of the playwright's works?
2. How does Samuel Johnson defend Shakespeare on the charge of violating the 'three unties'?
3. "Preface to Shakespeare" was not meant to be read as an independent critical treatise, but it still remains the finest exposition of Shakespeare's mind and art. Do you agree? Justify.

Medium questions: 12 marks

1. How does Dr Johnson establish Shakespeare as a natural genius?
2. "Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies..."—in what context does Dr Johnson say this ? How does he justify his critical opinion?
3. What are the general 'defects' that Dr Johnson finds with Shakespeare's works ?

Short questions: 6 marks

1. What is meant by the term 'fatal Cleopatra'?
2. Briefly explain the forest/garden metaphor that Dr Johnson uses in the *Preface*.
3. Give three instances of the linguistic excesses Dr Johnson finds in Shakespeare's plays.

4.3.7. Suggested Reading

Johnson, Samuel. *Selected Writings: A Tercentenary Celebration.* Ed. Peter Martin. Cambridge MA.: Harvard UP, 2009. Print.

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