Centre for Distance & Online Education

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU

JAMMU

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

B.A. SEMESTER — IV

SUBJECT - ENGLISH LITERATURE **UNIT- I to V**

COURSE CODE : EL-401 **LESSON : 1 to 13**

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COURSE CO-ORDINATOR

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ENGLISH LITERATURE SEMESTER-IV

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WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to Semester IV. This Semester in English Literature you will read some important literary terms and classical writers. Do visit the CDOE library regularly to consult books and read texts. In case of any difficulty you can meet the Co-ordinator PG English / Teacher Incharge PG English.

Wish you good luck and success in academics.

Prof. Anupama Vohra
PG English Coordinator

Detailed Syllabus of English Literature under Non-CBCS Scheme for the examinations to be held in the Academic Session 2025-2026, 2026-2027, and 2027-2028

Semester –IV **Credits: 06**

Title: English Literature **Course Code: EL-401**

Duration of Exam: $2^{1}/_{2}$ hrs. **Maximum Marks:100**

Theory Examination: 80

Semester End Examination : 20

UNIT-I

LITERARYTERMS:

Comedy of manners, Malapropism , Maxim, Slapstick, Parody, Repartee, Grotesque, Allegory, Fiction, Novel, Novella, Setting , Character, Tale, Plot , Irony, Narrator & Narration.

UNIT -II

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE (1660-1700)

- Characteristics of Restoration Drama.
- Precursors and Pioneers of English Prose Fiction.
- Characteristics of Restoration Poetry.

UNIT -III

NOVEL

Aphra Behn : *Oroonoko*

UNIT-IV

POETRY

John Dryden : *Mac Flecknoe*

UNIT-V

DRAMA

George Etherege : *The Man of Mode*

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Mode of Examination

Internal Assessment Test: (20 Marks)

Two Written Assignments of 10 marks each shall be given.

External End Semester University Examination:

The Paper will be divided into Sections A, B & C

Section –A : Multiple Choice Questions

Section A will have 12 MCQs covering all the units. Students will write the corecr answers of any 8 questions in the answer sheet. **(8x1= 8 Marks)**

Section –B : Short Answer Type Questions

Section B will have short answer type questions from Unit 1 to Unit V. Four out of Five will have to be attempted by the students. **(4x4= 16 Marks)**

Section –C : Long Answer Type Questions

Section C will have four long answer type questions from Unit II to Unit V with internal choice from the same unit. Candidate will be required to attempt all the questions in about 250-300 words. **(14x4=56)**

SUGGESTED READING

i) Abrams M.H.& Harpham, Geoffrey. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* Eleventh Edition. Cengage Learning

i) Jayapalan.N, *History of English Literature.*Atlantic Publishers.

iii) Trivedi . R.D. *A Compendious History of English Literature*, Vikas Publication house.

iv) Sherburne . G and Bond.D.F. *A literary History of England: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century(1660-1789).* Albert Croll Baugh.

v) Latt. David J.&Monk. Samuel Holt, John Dryden: *A Survey and Bibliography of Critical Studies. 1895-1974.* Minnesota Archive Edition.

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -I**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 1**

LITERARY TERMS

1.24 Suggested Reading

1.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarise you with the various literary terms used by writers. The lesson would also facilitate you in gaining technical expertise in the subject of English literature. The appreciation of literary terms would enable you to have a good exposure to literary concepts. By knowing the origin and evolution of the literary movements that form the background of the novels, poems and other works of art, the learner you will become deeply familiar with the author and the meanings coded in the narrative. You will henceforth be better able to gauge and learn from the narratives and develop a fine critical and good analytical skill.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson the learners will be introduced to literary terms. Literary terms are an important part of one's engagement with literature. Literary terms involve the study of definitions of various significant terms, styles and forms in all genres of literature.

Literary terms comprise of the techniques and style used by writers in their works. These techniques comprise of words that are necessary for the understanding and critical analysis of literature. These literary terms also consist of literary movements, phrases and words. In essence, it resembles a dictionary and a glossary for literary works.

1.2 COMEDY OF MANNERS

Comedy of manners was first developed by Roman dramatists Plautus and Terence in the second and third century BC. Comedy of manners comprised of plays that dealt with the intrigues, regularly amorous, of the witty and sophisticated section of the society, generally comprising the elite class. The plays relied on wit and laughter by satirising the manners and habits of the aristocratic class. It comprised of a witty conversational give-and-take, which constituted a kind of verbal battle of wits between people from the elite class with stock characters like young lovers, wealthy rivals, jealous husbands, fools, etc. Moving on from Roman dramatists,

Shakespeare was a wide advocate of the comedy of manners as is seen in his plays like *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

The comedy of manners saw a new turn in the Restoration period primarily in restoration comedy. The witty dialogues were more risqué in nature for they made ample use of sexual innuendoes and symbols. A good example is found in Aphra Behn's restoration comedy play *The Rover*. The overt and explicit sexual humour of restoration comedies was countered by sentimental comedies. The further development of the comedy of manners genre was made by Oliver Goldsmith in his famous play *She Stoops to Conquer* and Richard Sheridan's *A School for Scandal*. These playwrights retained the wit and humour of the genre while forgoing any sexual overtones. The comedy of manners thereafter lapsed in the nineteenth century, but was revisited and revived by dramatists like Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Noel Coward, Neil Simon, Alan Ayckbourn and Wendy Wassertein. Most of these comedies have also been adapted into movies.

1.3 MALAPROPISM

Malapropism is a literary term which means a blunder in speech or writing caused by the substitution of a word for another similar in sound but different in meaning. The term was derived from Richard Sheridan's play *The Rivals* (1775) which had a character called Mrs. Malaprop. Shakespeare also made use of malapropism through the character of Dogberry in the play, *Much Ado about Nothing*. Malapropism in English literature was generally employed by a few writers for a comic and ironic effect. A classic example is found in the speech uttered by Mrs. Malaprop where she is explaining to Sir Anthony Absolute, her ideas and take on the education of women. Her speech indeed perfectly qualifies the comic and ironic function of malapropism:

"Observe me , Sir Anthony, I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning...But Sir Anthony, I would send her at nine years old to a boarding school, in order to let her learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, Sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;- and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries; but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and

likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying."(Sheridan, *The Rivals*)

1.4 MAXIM

A maxim means a short statement emphasizing a general truth or doctrine. Maxims were abundantly used by writers with the purpose to inform, enlighten, educate and delight readers about the truths, about the nature of things and existence. A good example of a maxim is Alexander Pope's famous maxim from "An Essay on Man", he writes 'The proper study of mankind is man'. John Keats's haunting poetry is full of maxims, for instance, 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.' Robert Frost's famous poem "The Road not taken" also rings with wisdom which is an essential quality of a maxim. In this poem, the poet takes the road not travelled and experiences great adventures and experiences lasting several lifetimes. The reader gets the message of the maxim that people who travel on unharted terrains experience difficulties, but grow tremendously during the journey.

1.5 SLAPSTICK

Slapstick is a form of low comedy that dominated the theatre scene of England. It is characterized by physical action, such as the throwing of custard pies. Originally, a slap-stick was a cudgel made of two flat pieces of wood attached to a handle which the comedian used to literally hit the other characters with. This was done to elicit laughter among the audience. Charlie Chaplin is the most adorable mascot of the slapstick comedy genre. Chaplin movies signalled a new growth in the slapstick genre where this genre sought to satirise the ills of modern times ushered in by industrialisation and capitalization.

1.6 PARODY

Parodies are generally comedies that ridicule a serious literary work or its characteristic style by trivialising the subject matter. Parodies also intend to ridicule people and characters by exaggerated depictions and treating them flippantly. A parody may also imitate the serious manner and characteristic features of the work and the author to deflate the might of the original. Parody was also used to elevate a low subject with mock dignity. Parody is a subgenre of the burlesque art form(which employed satirical imitations.) The butt of the satiric ridicule is the subject being ridiculed. From the early nineteenth century to the present era, parody has been the

most favourite and popular form of burlesque.

Among popular parodies, Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*(1742)is significant. Fielding's novel parodied Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela*(1741) by creating a hearty male hero in place of Richardson's sexually beleaguered and prudent heroine Pamela. Other famous parodists include John Philips, Jane Austen, James Thurber, Philis McGinley, A.S Byatt and many others.

1.7 REPARTEE

A witty set of remarks constitutes a repartee. A person good at repartee usually is a person who is intelligent and enthrals the audience with his/her witty conversations. Repartee comes from the French word 'repartire' which is borrowed from the game of fencing. When indulging in repartee one doesn't stab the opponent with an actual sword but instead attacks with a sharp blow of words just like in the game of fencing. A great instance of repartee is the character of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* who engages in repartee with Darcy in the novel.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I (CYP-I)

Fill in the blanks:

1. Repartee comes from the French word_____.
2. Parody was used to _____a low subject with mock dignity.
3. Slapstick is a form of _____ comedy.
4. Maxim was used for the purpose to _____ the reader.
5. Malapropism is derived from the character called _____.

1.8 GROTESQUE

Grotesque was an art form that was first used in ancient Rome and continued to be revived till the twenty first century. Grotesque earlier referred to paintings that combined incongruous elements. Originally it was a combination of a style of mosaic and fresco wall paintings in ancient Rome. The gothic art form manifested in other art forms like architecture sculptures, music and literature. A good instance of grotesque art form was depicted in the extravagant, comical and sometimes vulgar designs/embellishments surrounding devotional texts and manuscripts.

In the context of literature, grotesque was used to emphasize characters who

seemed incongruous, bizarre, absurd and unseemly. Shakespeare gave a good range of grotesque characters like Iago, Caliban and Shylock. The character of Bertha Mason in Charlotte Bronte's much acclaimed novel, *Jane Eyre* also embodies grotesque shades. Bertha is mirrored as an 'exotic other' who becomes mad, 'demonic' after being confined by Rochester in the attic. The grotesque art form has also been used to describe grisly and morbid episodes in the films of Alfred Hitchcock. The modern reader can find good elements of the grotesque in Franz Kafka's epic novella *Metamorphosis*(1915). Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*(1965), gives a very different presentation of the grotesque where it is viewed as the expression of an energetic and irreverent popular culture organized around pagan festivals.

1.9 ALLEGORY

An allegory is an extended narrative structure found in literary works that carries a second meaning along with the surface story. There are broadly two kinds of allegories, Historical and political allegories and sustained allegory of ideas. In the latter kind of allegory, there is a personification(giving human qualities to inanimate objects) of abstract entities such as values, virtues, vices, characters etc. John Bunyan's *Pigrim's Progress* is a classic example which allegorizes the Christian doctrine of salvation through its character called Christian. *Pilgrim's Progress* constitutes a religious and moral allegory. In such moral allegories, the narrative area provides entertainment while the allegorical area serves to give instruction. John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681),is a good instance of a historical and political allegory where the biblical King David represents Charles II of England. In the modern times, Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a great political allegory that allegorizes the Bolshevik Revolution and subsequent Stalinist excesses embedded inside the fable. Over the years, use of allegory has come to represent critical analysis as well, where critics at times interpret works in an allegorical fashion. This is done when they perceive cogent analogies between characters and abstract ideas. For instance, Freudian psychology has been used by literary critics to interpret allegorically Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Here the characters of Hester, Rev.Dimmesdale and Chillingworth are seen to embody the Freudian Ego, Superego and Id respectively.

1.10 FICTION

Fiction simply is a narrative usually in the form of a novel that is about imaginative events. Fiction involves the use of fantasy and imagination to a great extent. A fictional story comprises of things that cannot be verified in the external world. However, fiction rests on certain universal facts that make up the truth in fiction. In other words, the plot structure, characters correspond to their meanings in the real world/life. Inspite of fiction being mostly centered on fantasy, still it does retain an essential logic of reality to hold the interest of the reader.

Fiction is different from nonfiction which comprises of historical, verifiable and biographical accounts. In conclusion, fiction broadly refers to any literary narrative, in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events which actually happened. Fiction continues to dominate the literary scene.

1.11 NOVEL

Novel is a fictional narrative written in prose comprising a considerable length. A novel is also referred as an extended work of fiction. It differs from the short story and novella on account of length. A novel allows for a greater magnitude of characters, plot and broad development of the milieu etc. It also at the same time differs from long writings/narratives written in the verse form. The English form of the novel comes from the Italian word novella(meaning a little story). The novel genre originally emerged from the collection of tales and fables. The novel saw a lot of prior development through the emergence of the long narrative romantic prose written by Greek writers in second and third centuries. An important predecessor of the novel was the picaresque narrative form popular in the sixteenth century. Picaresque fiction comprised of episodes, a series of adventures that were led by a picaro(a Spanish term meaning rogue), who lived by his wits. The main aim of this tradition was satiric in nature. The novel art form as we now know was first used by writers like Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson. Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*(1719), *Moll Flanders*(1722), created the settings in a detailed and convincing manner, while making the central figures well rounded and credible. Richardson's *Pamela*(1740) also laid the foundation for the novel for its rich psychological and sentimental structure. Another popular growth of the novel was in the form of Bildungsroman (German term meaning novels of education) novels. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* are good examples of bildungsroman novels. As the novel advanced in the nineteenth century, exoticism and adventure was abound

in the works of Sir Walter Scott. Many varieties of the novel emerged in the form of epistolary novel(novel of letters), realistic novel, sociological novel, regional novel(pioneered by Thomas Hardy), gothic novel, detective novel etc. In the twentieth and twenty-first century novel writing continues to grow featuring a deep understanding of the self from writers like Virginia Woolf and Proust, and new literary devices like magic realism, metafiction from novelists like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie.

1.12 NOVELLA

It is an Italian term meaning short tale or story. It is a narrative which is short and succinct. In Italy, collections of novelle(fables), such as Bocaccio's *Decameron* were hugely popular in the fourteenth century. A novella is also fictional in nature but differs from a short story and a novel. Writers like Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers drew upon the novella for most of their plots. In general usage novella is used as a synononym for short novel. Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) is a classic example of a novella.

1.13 SETTING

Setting in a narrative refers to the time and place in which the action of a story, play or poem occurs. In case of a novel, short story the setting refers to the physical location, historical time, and social circumstances of the play. The atmosphere for example, of a play like *Macbeth* is medieval Scotland. Similarly, the setting of a play like *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett connotes an atmosphere of barrenness and bareness given the mood of the play. The stage settings of Beckett's plays with its sparse settings also symbolises the barrenness of modern living.

It generally refers to the atmosphere of the play. In a play or a drama, setting may refer to the physical setting, for instance stage scenery, stage equipment and production. The physical setting may include the furniture and stage properties.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II (CYP-II)

Fill in the blanks:

1. Novel comes from the Italian word _____.
2. Setting in a narrative refers to the time and _____.
3. Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is a classic example of a _____.
4. Novel of education is called _____.
5. _____ is a classic example of an allegory about the Christian doctrine of salvation.

1.14 CHARACTER

Characters are particular types of persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work of art. They are identified with distinct qualities and facets. These qualities may range from intellectual, moral to emotional. Dialogues and action of the play represent the motivations for the desires and ideologies of the characters. A character may be stable or unchanging from the beginning of the plot till the end, like the character of Prospero in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. On the other hand, a character may also be unstable and undergo great change in his ways, for instance the protagonist of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*. This may occur due to the maturity and development of the character in the course of the novel. In essence, a character represents a person in a work of art who embodies distinct qualities.

E. M Forster in his polemical work, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) traced the evolution of the term character. He employed the terms of flat and round characters. According to Forster, a flat character is someone who doesn't experience any growth in the novel. They display typical attributes or traits that become their major character trait. They usually have minor roles, simplistic to perform in the novel or play. Flat characters also serve as a foil to the protagonist in some cases and are also used by writers to aid in the plot and action of the narrative. A fine example of a flat character is that of Mr Collins in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.*

A round character on the other hand is someone who experiences a growth and displays well developed and often complex attributes. This character type is difficult to describe and most often functions as leading characters in a work of art. They are also multifaceted in their outlook and resemble the complexities of human

nature. An example of this character type is the leading female protagonist of Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre*.

1.15 TALE

A tale is simply a narrative. The term 'tale' dates back to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* which was a collection of realistic stories that Chaucer drew from fourteenth century English society. Edgar Allen Poe also was a fantastic chronicler of tales. A tale usually has a loose plot structure which is often narrated by a narrator. A tale usually is more concerned with the series of events in the story and has little to do with the development of the characters. A tale generally revolves around a series of adventures, mysteries and exotic settings. A tale can be both in the form of a novel or short story. Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* is a famous instance of the genre of tales.

1.16 PLOT

A plot simply put, is a series of incidents that occur in a narrative. . M Forster in his *Aspects of the Novel*(1927) defines a plot as " a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality." A plot according to Forster shapes a story in an artistic dimension. Another definition of a plot is given by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Aristotle stresses on the unification of the incidents forming the plot. According to Aristotle, in a unified plot there is a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning section constitutes of events that pave the way for further events. The middle comprises the past events and also forms the basis for future events. The final section is the culmination of what has happened so far and forms a unified end. Aristotle was also of the view that in case the writer omitted any of the events then the plot did not constitute a unified whole. On the other hand many writers had embraced another plot structure known as the episodic form. This form was concerned to be of inferior nature by Aristotle, but writers used this plot which involved a series of disconnected incidents for it offered them great freedom and scope.

Writers like Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, others however, made use of another plot structure known as the subplot which meant a double plot, an underlying second story that was linked to the main plot. Another aspect highlighted by Aristotle was the importance of plot in a work of art which he called "the soul of tragedy", he held the importance of plot above the development of characters as well. This view was contested by many writers, among them Henry James interpretation in his

work, *The Art of Fiction* deliberated at length about the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of narration, characters, incidents etc. He opined further that all elements including the plot and characters were equally important in a work of art and dependent on each other, none could exist without the other. Modern day narratives have varied plot structures and embody a more flexible structure than the rigid Aristotelian plot structure.

1.17 IRONY

Irony is a literary device that implies another meaning other than the stated one. Irony is a device that has been widely used by writers to emphasize something that cannot be achieved through simple speech. The use of irony dates back to Greek comedies where a character known as 'eiron' would indulge in irony. Eiron would make use of understatements and pretend to be less intelligent in order to emphasize an alternate meaning. This method of purposely hiding or masking something is done to subvert the dominant meaning and also to generate an artistic effect. There are different kinds of irony from verbal irony to Socratic irony, dramatic irony etc. Verbal irony is one where the meaning of what a speaker implies differs a lot from the meaning of what is explicitly expressed. For instance consider the introductory lines of Jane Austen's famous novel *Pride and Prejudice*. "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." This is a good instance of verbal irony, where the author intends a different meaning than what is literally implied.

Socratic irony on the other hand deals with the ironic method employed by Socrates, who was a fourth century BC scholar and philosopher. The philosopher Socrates would begin his exchange by assuming a pose of ignorance, a modest stance towards the speaker only to subvert the speaker's opinions by constant questioning which would expose the ignorance of the speaker himself on the subject. Dramatic irony on the other hand occurred mostly in Greek tragedies where the writers based the plots in such a manner in which the outcome was already known to the audience but characters would nevertheless play out their roles to achieve tragic or dramatic irony. Sophocles's play *Oedipus the King* is a fine instance of dramatic irony.

1.18 NARRATOR & NARRATIVE

A narrator is someone who tells and guides the reader about the plot and characters in a narrative or work of art. A narrative is simply the story itself. A narrative can be either a novel, novella, short story or a poem. The narrative includes all the components of the story. The narrator is the voice that tells the reader about the narrative or the story. A narrator or a narrative can be in first person or could be an omniscient narrator. First person narrator means that the narrative begins with a 'I' throughout the course of the story. This could mean a first-hand account of the protagonist dealing with the events in the story. An omniscient narrator on the other hand has a more privileged position in the sense that the narrator knows about the incidents that the characters will face.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-III (CYP-III)

State whether the following is true or false:

1. A narrator is the second author of the narrative. (True/False)
2. Socratic irony is similar to dramatic irony. (True/False)
3. According to Aristotle there should always be unity in the plot structure. (True/False)
4. A round character remains stagnant in a novel. (True/False)
5. As per Aristotle, plot is the soul of tragedy. (True/False)

1.19 GLOSSARY

1. **Amorous**: showing sexual desire, in the current usage it is implied that the comedy of manners was dominant in sexual content.
2. **Exoticism**: Derived from the word 'exotic' meaning foreign and non-native.
3. **Flippantly**: casually, not serious
4. **Foil**: serving as an opponent
5. **Magic Realism**: A literary genre where realism/ realist narrative is mixed with elements of dream and fantasy.
6. **Metafiction**: Metafiction is that fiction where the author/writer self-consciously refers to the artificiality of a text by departing from traditional

narrative techniques and conventions.

7. **Omniscient**: Something which is all present, all knowledgeable and present everywhere, for instance, the concept of God.
8. **Pagan**: People who worshipped elements of nature in ancient Rome.
9. **Risqué**: being sexually suggestive, contrary to societal norms.
10. **Supercilious**: being arrogant, thinking yourself to be superior to others.

1.20 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1 Define plot.

Ans. The plot is the concise and overall arrangement of incidents in a work of art.

2 Who is a narrator in a work of art?

Ans. A narrator is someone who tells and guides the readers about the happenings, characters in a narrative.

3 Discuss the evolution of the term grotesque.

Ans: Grotesque in Roman Literature was a collection of paintings that made great use of incongruous and mosaic elements. From being a prominent feature in paintings, grotesque in literature was perceived differently. Unusual, unseemly, eccentric and strange characters were termed as grotesque. The character of Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello* is one good example of grotesque in literature.

4 What is the difference between an irony and a satire?

5 Distinguish between a novel and a novella.

1.21 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss briefly the development of the novel genre.
2. Define slapstick comedy.
3. Discuss briefly any two kinds of irony.
4. What is malapropism? Give instances.
5. What is the difference between fiction and non-fiction.?
6. What are flat and round characters?
7. What constitutes a tale?

8. Discuss the development of the comedy of manners in England.
9. What do you understand by the term repartee?
10. Discuss the significance of the plot in a work of art.
11. What is the difference between parody and slapstick comedy?
12. Define the terms fiction and novel.
13. Describe the term grotesque.
14. What is the purpose of setting in a work of art?
15. Discuss the main features of characters in a narrative.
16. What is a maxim?
17. What is an allegory? Give appropriate examples from literary texts

1.22 ANSWER KEY

CYP –I

1. repartire
2. elevate
3. low
4. educate
5. Mrs. Malaprop

CYP-II

1. novella
2. place
3. novella
4. Bildungsroman
5. *Pigrim's Progress*

CYP-III

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

1.23 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we learnt about the various literary terms wherein a brief summary of a couple of literary terms was undertaken. The learners will be able to identify the origin and usage of terms that are usually seen in a literary text. The

lesson comprises of literary terms that are commonly present in every literary work for instance characters, novel, plot, irony and so forth. With the knowledge of the literary terms you will gain access to a decent knowledge of literature in general. You will develop analytical skills required in the study of literature. It will also make the study of literature a source of pleasure and delight.

1.24 SUGGESTED READING

- *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Chris Baldick
- *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory: Fifth Edition* by J.A. Cuddon
- *The Book of Literary Terms: The Genres of Fiction, Drama, Nonfiction, Literary Criticism, and Scholarship* by Lewis Turco
- *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by M.H, Abrams and Harpham Galt Geoffrey

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -II**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 2**

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION DRAMA

2.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to discuss the history and characteristics of Restoration Drama. The lesson also aims to acquaint you with the different types of drama that flourished during the Restoration era. At the end of this lesson you will be able to explain the characteristics of the Restoration Drama. You will also be able to define the Heroic Tragedy and Comedy of Manners, the two types of dramatic production that dominated the theatrical scene during Restoration era. Further you will able to answer the multiple-choice questions as well as prepare for semester end examination.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

With prosperity and economic condition booming under the Elizabethan monarchy, there was increase in fondness for theatrical spectacle among the London

population. The result of this liking resulted in the development of dramatic literature of remarkable variety, quality and extent and canonical dramatists like William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson later became the masters of English drama. However the better days for the playwright and drama did not last long and the London theaters were closed down due to rising Puritan influence in the English parliament and its hostility towards theaters in September 1642. The dramatic art was declared as immoral and representative of "lascivious Mirth and Levity", the actors were considered rouge and fines were levied on spectators if found viewing. The ban existed for eighteen years and finally the theaters were reopened with the restoration of Charles II in 1660. With the Restoration of a new king under the Stuart Dynasty who being brought up in France was all the time being influenced by the French culture and art was obvious to have a liberal view. Thus it was natural, upon the return of the court, that French influence should be felt, particularly in the theater and the King lifted the eighteen years ban imposed on theatre. In the month of August, 1660, Charles issued patents for two companies of players, and performances immediately began. Certain writers, in the field before the civil war, survived the period of theatrical eclipse, and now had their chance. Among these were Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant, who were quickly provided with fine playhouses.

2.2 THE OVERVIEW OF RESTORATION DRAMA

The Restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 brought about a revolution in English literature. With the collapse of the Puritan Government there sprang up activities that had been so long suppressed that they flew to violent excesses. The Commonwealth had insisted on gravity and decorum in all things; the Restoration encouraged a levity that often became immoral and indecent. The public theatres reopened in 1660, after eighteen years of official displeasure, a tradition needed to be re-established, which was both responsive to the recent past and a reflection of new tastes and fashions but there were no professional actors, and the new plays were different. Shakespeare now became the stage's standby: his plots, language and morals were trimmed to suit fashions influenced by the plays of Pierre Corneille (1616-84) and Jean Racine (1639-99) seen at Paris. A neo-classical criticism was imported, with 'rules' requiring the three 'unities' of action, place and time: that the action should happen in one place in no more than three hours. Shakespeare had ignored these rules, but they are worth understanding. The critics turned Aristotle's point that most good tragedies have a single plot into a

rule; and added the unities of place and time, and Dryden economically put these doctrines in his prologue to his play *Secret Love* (1665). Drama now tried to be purely comic or purely tragic, and critics also embraced Aristotle's commendation of artistic unity, singleness of effect, and philosophic truth. To his doctrine that art should imitate the permanent traits in human nature, they added the principle that it should show virtue rewarded. These aims are irreconcilable in tragedy.

Two different types of plays namely, 'Comedy of Manner' and 'Heroic Tragedy' or 'Heroic Drama' came to be written and staged throughout the restoration period. However it was the Comedy of Manner, which gained more popularity due to its entertainment form and satirised the manners and affectations of social class or of multiple classes. A manner is a method in which everyday duties are performed. It was the most characteristic product of Restoration Literature and reflects the spirit of the age more comprehensively than its prose and poetry. Dryden was the first to write Comedy of Manners with his *Wild Gallant*, although it was a failure, he wrote several others later in his career, which were more successful.

Two public companies licensed by the King acted in purpose-built theatres rather like modern theatres. Davenant's at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Dorset Garden, and Killigrew's at Drury Lane were covered; they had proscenium arches, curtains, scenery, lighting and music. They offered lightly classicised entertainments of a semi-operatic kind to the Court and its friends. Noble arms and noble love strut and fret their heroic conquests, and debated the problems of honour in symmetrical couplets but these English tragedies lacked the focus of French tragedy. Two well-connected impresarios, both with roots in the courtly and theatrical past, effectively nursed the London stage into robust health. Sir William Davenant (1606-68), who was rumored to be the godson and, even more preposterously, the bastard of Shakespeare, had established his credentials as a playwright and a librettist of court masques in the reign of Charles I. In 1656 he had managed to evade the government ban on theatrical performances by staging an opera, or 'Entertainment after the manner of the ancients', *The Siege of Rhodes.* This English opera, with music (now lost) by Henry Lawes, boasted 'a Representation by the Art of Prospective in Scenes and the Story sung in Recitative Musick' and included a timely musical debate between Diogenes and Aristophanes on the virtues and demerits of public amusements.

Thomas Killigrew (1612-83), with Davenant a holder of one of the two royal patents granting a monopoly over London acting, had written, and had possibly

seen performed, the bawdy, anti-romantic comedy *The Parson's Wedding* before the theatres were closed in 1642. It was, however, the innovations fostered by the more extravagant Davenant, which appear to have led the way. The introduction of overtures, 'curtain tunes', instrumental interludes, and 'ayres' with unsung dialogue led in the early 1690s to some of Purcell's most interesting public commissions, but the very use of such music during scene-changes serves as an indicator of the vital changes in production introduced in the Restoration period. Davenant's theatres at Lincoln's Inn Fields and Dorset Garden and Killigrew's at Drury Lane were expensively designed, purpose-built, and covered. A proscenium arch with flat wings, painted shutters, and backcloth behind it allowed for complex illusions of space and distinct changes of scene. Above all, the actors who performed on a well-lit apron stage now included women, a result both of the break in the training of boys to play female roles and of the influence of continental practice.

The active patronage of King Charles II and his brother James, Duke of York, assured that the court attended performances mounted beyond its confines and open, at a somewhat steep cost of one to four shillings, to any one who could afford admission. When Killigrew's company opened their first theatre (a converted tennis-court) in November 1660 with a performance of the first part of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, they were looking back to an established 'classic' with a sound royalist theme. The plays of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher continued to hold their own, if sometimes after a process of cosmetic 'improvement'. Although the *Henry IV* plays, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Julius Caesar* survived without major alteration, and attracted actors of the caliber of Thomas Betterton (1635-1710) (who was personally tutored in the part of Hamlet by Davenant who claimed to have known the actor first instructed by Shakespeare himself), Davenant proved to be an efficient cobbler together of texts revised according to new canons of taste. His *The Law Against Lovers* (1661-2) ingeniously fused *Measure for Measure* with *Much Ado About Nothing* and his versions of *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* (the latter in collaboration with Dryden) allowed for musical and choreographic spectacle and for a quite excessive symmetry of plotting. Balletic witches and siblings for Miranda and Caliban apart, the most celebrated and enduring of the Restoration adaptations was Nahum Tate's *History of King Lear* of 1681. Tate (1652-1715), who claimed to have found the original tragedy 'a heap of jewels, unstrung and unpolish't', hamstrung his own version by omitting the Fool and by introducing a love-plot for Edgar and Cordelia and a happy ending in which Lear, Cordelia, and Gloucester all

survive. In common with Colley Cibber's melodramatic simplification of *Richard III* it was performed, in preference to Shakespeare's original, until well into the nineteenth century.

The natural enough preoccupation of much Restoration tragedy with politics also took its cue from Shakespeare, if a Shakespeare recast in a severely Roman mould. Dryden's *All for Love:* or, *The World Well Lost* (1677) claims to imitate the style of 'the Divine Shakespeare' while radically rearranging the story of *Antony and Cleopatra;* and Thomas Otway's *The History and Fall of Caius Marius* (1680) loosely adapts elements of *Romeo and Juliet* in a charged Roman Republican setting. The steady dignity of Dryden's blank verse in *All for Love*, and his decorous tidying-up of Shakespeare's complexities of plot in conformity with neo-classical canons, are likely to strike its modern readers (and its occasional audiences) as more appealing than the ambitious and extravagant heroics of his earlier tragedies such as *Tyrannick Love*, Or, *The Royal Martyr* (1669), *The Conquest of Granada* (1670), and *Aureng-Zebe* (1675). Dryden's fascination with the dilemmas of the great in antique or exotic settings is to some degree paralleled by that of Otway (1652-85). *Caius Marius*, like his far finer tragedies *Don Carlos, Prince of Spain* (1676), *The Orphan, or, The Unhappy Marriage* (1680), and *Venice Preserv'd*, or *A Plot Discover'd* (1682), originally served as vehicles for the tragic histrionics of the actor Thomas Betterton. All are high-flown and declamatory, showing suffering, emotional conflict, and intrigue shot through with mawkish sentiment. The situation of the noble Jaffeir, torn by opposed loyalties in *Venice Preserv'd* is, however, handled with real panache, while its echoes of contemporary English plots and counterplots give it a particular urgency which has ensured its periodic revival.

Shakespeare who served as an adaptable native model to the writers of tragedy in the 1660s, 1670s and 1680s proved far less influential on those who evolved a new comic style. If much Restoration tragedy deals with foreign politics, the comedies of the period are concerned with English philandery. In a period of literary history notable, in aristocratic circles at least, for its rejection of solemnity and moral seriousness, the darker and more questioning side of Shakespeare's comedies and the earnest morality of Jonson's provided hints rather than patterns. Restoration comedy, like the satyr-plays of the ancients, reverses and debunks the heroics of contemporary tragedy. *The Rehearsal* by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham (1628-87) cleverly burlesqued the extremes of the heroic mode through

a series of parodies. *The Rehearsal*, first produced in December 1671 and continuously adapted and flatteringly imitated in the eighteenth century, freely satirizes plays and playwrights, producers and actors, but its appeal to audiences must always have lain in a sneaking respect for the form it lambasts. The plays of Sir George Etherege (1634-91) and William Wycherley (1641-1715) are far more characteristic of the hybrid, symmetrical, sexual comedy popular in the reign of Charles II. Both are masters of a comedy, which accentuates the artificiality of the stage in order to mirror and comment on the sheen of the 'polished' society that produced it. Where contemporary tragedy can be heightened to a point of pompous absurdity, the comedy is frank and 'realistic'. Etherege's *The Comical Revenge*: or *Love in a Tub*, first performed at the Duke's Theatre in March 1664, was said to have 'got the Company more Reputation and Profit than any preceding Comedy'. It has a double plot in the earlier seventeenth-century manner: one, concerning the amatory rivalry of two gentlemen, is written in couplets; the other, dealing farcically with the antics of the playboy Sir Frederick Frollick and of his French valet, Dufoy, is both distinguished from its prose and partly mediated by the evident gentility of Sir Frederick. *She wou'd if she cou'd* (1668) is, as its suggestive title indicates, far more of a signal of what was to become the general current of contemporary comedy. Lady Cockwood, up from the country, frantically courts adultery despite her front of prudish respectability; Courtall and Freeman, both London libertines with names that indicate their predilections, ultimately find satisfaction in the arms of Sir Oliver Cockwood's younger kinswomen, Ariana and Gatty. The play presents its audience with two kinds of hypocrisy and double standards; the pretentious and reprobate Cockwoods are unmasked, but the gallants triumph through an alternative deception which wins them witty, willing and, above all, young lovers. Older lovers, it is implied, are implicitly ridiculous while young women of good society are the proper prey of those young men who dare to angle for them. Etherege's funniest and best-crafted play, *The Man of Mode*: or, *Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) brings this adulation of the successful philanderer to a dashing crescendo. Dorimant and Medley are, we assume, to be taken as models of merriment, cleverness, resilient 'good nature', and sexual irresistibility (or at least they see themselves as such); against them, Etherege pits a Frenchified fool, Sir Fopling Flutter, 'a person ... of great acquir'd follies' who fails where they win, who sparkles like tinsel where they attempt to blaze like well-cut diamonds (albeit paste diamonds). Yet it is in the very intensity and control of Dorimant's charm that much of the power of the play lies. He is a sceptical,

manipulative corrupter, but he is also a man capable of falling for Harriet Woodvil, a woman able to parry his wit and his maneuvers alike. *The Man of Mode* remains a quizzical and ambiguous play designed to divert a cynical world and to vex moralizing ones.

Wycherley's friend Dryden held that *The Plain-Dealer* (1676) 'obliged all honest and virtuous men, by one of the most bold, most general, and most useful satires which has ever been presented in the English theatre'. Despite Dryden's admiration of him as a satirist by inclination, Wycherley is rarely an earnest moralist. He is amused with, rather than scathing about, the dubious morals of society and he disconcerts more than he disturbs. He both enjoys and acknowledges the dangers of posturing. Wycherley's plays suggest that high society's cultivation of the superficial elevates wit and politeness above personal decency. The aimless confusions and longueurs of his first two comedies, *Love in a Wood,* or, *St James's Park* (1671) and *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672), contrast vividly with the mastery of construction and situation evident in *The Country-Wife* of 1675. Although he cannot be called central to the plot, the play's major character, the sexual gourmand Horner, establishes its sardonic tone. If the emerging love of the honest Harcourt and the stubborn Alithia is ultimately blessed, and a series of fools, hypocrites, and gulls are ruthlessly ridiculed, it is Horner who after a triumphant campaign of debauchery (hidden by the ruse that he is impotent following an operation for the pox) escapes any kind of retribution. Other characters prate about their 'dear, dear, honour' while Horner, whose name is a sexually loaded pun on the word 'honour', both undermines pretense and exposes the pretenders to contempt. *The Plain-Dealer* of 1676, in part an adaptation of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, is at once a more savage and more romantic play. Its ambiguous and world-hating protagonist, Manly, 'of an honest, surly, nice humour', has patriotically procured the command of a ship 'out of honour, not interest'. He is the 'plain- dealer' who announces to the audience in the Prologue that he has been created to disconcert: 'I, only, act a part like none of you'/ And yet you'll say, it is a fool's part too:/ An honest man who, like you, never winks/ At faults; but unlike you, speaks what he thinks.' Much hinges on the words 'plain' and 'honest' but rather than face the inevitability of the undeceived Manly's descent into a Timon-like rejection of the shams and deceptions of a parasitic society, Wycherley somewhat gratuitously delivers him into the arms of the chastely honest and abstract Fidelia. Although love does not exactly conquer all, reconciliation does, perhaps because Wycherley cannot really conceive of any

viable or acceptable alternative.

With the death of Charles II in 1685 and the flight to France of James II in 1688, direct royal patronage of the stage diminished (though James's daughter and successor, Mary II, maintained a discriminating interest in the theatre). A generation of playwrights passed with the political regimes, which fostered their wit, but both comedy and tragedy were set, even stuck, in smooth grooves. In the Preface to his tragi-comedy *Don Sebastian* of 1689-91 Dryden mourned that 'the Humours of Comedy were almost spent, that Love and Honor (the mistaken Topics of Tragedy) were quite worn out, that the Theatres could not support their Charges, and that the Audience forsook them'. Because of these discouragements he felt condemned as a dramatist 'to dig in those exhausted Mines'. This same Dryden could, however, recognize that by 1694 one major new talent had emerged, one hailed in his poem 'To Mr Congreve' as the true heir to Etherege's 'Courtship' and to Wycherley's 'Satire, Wit, and Strength'.

William Congreve (1670- 1729) achieved a startling popular success with *The Old Batchelour* in 1691 and followed it in 1693 with *The Double- Dealer* and in 1695 with *Love for Love*. Congreve acquired his mastery through a combination of instinct and experience. Each of his early plays advances his technique and assimilates the lessons of his predecessors. If his Spanish tragedy *The Mourning Bride* of 1697 might seem aberrant to latter-day readers, its initial popularity is testified to by the familiarity of its opening line ('Music has charms to sooth a savage breast') and of its famous observation that 'Heav'n has no rage, like love to hatred turn'd, / Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn'd'. His last and most brilliant comedy, *The Way of the World* (1700), was by comparison a failure with its public. Little of the play, Congreve remarked in its Dedication, had been 'prepared for that general taste which now seems predominant in the pallets of our audience'. To some later commentators, however, it is the last and greatest play of the 'Restoration' period, the climax of the dramatic experiments of forty years and the comedy that uniquely allows for both true wit and genuine feeling, for social satire and for the establishment of marital alliances based on tenderness rather than convenience. The impact of the play depends both on the complex social and family interrelationships of the characters and on the discrepancies between what is publicly declared and what is privately acknowledged. The importance of definition is especially evident in the relationship between Mirabell and Millamant. In the famous 'proviso' scene in Act

IV each lays down conditions to the other; though she has admitted to loving 'violently', she seeks a relationship which looks cold to the outside world ('let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while; and be as well bred as if we were not married at all'); he insists that she abhor the trivia that divert less intelligent women. Both determine to stand aside from the marital way of the world, and the way of much contemporary comedy, which the play's concluding couplets see as a 'mutual falsehood' and as 'marriage frauds' that are 'too oft paid in kind'.

The work of two of Congreve's far less subtle contemporaries serves to throw the quality of *The Way of the World* into further relief. Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) is now far better known as a flamboyantly inventive architect than as a dramatist. His buildings are brilliant, balanced, whimsical, and weighty; his plays are merely brilliant and whimsical. Vanbrugh had a hand in some eleven plays, most of them collaborations or adaptations from the Spanish and the French. Only two, *The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger* (1696) and *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), are completely his. A third, *A Journey to London*, was finished by Colley Cibber and produced posthumously in 1728 under the title *The Provok'd Husband*. *The Relapse* is a somewhat conventional response to, and a continuation of, Cibber's far drabber comedy Love's Last Shift. In the original production at Drury Lane, Cibber himself played Lord Foppington, the character to whom Vanbrugh allots his most effervescently witty and harsh lines. The discordant picture of marriage in *The Provok'd Wife* is relieved only by the suppleness of the colloquial comic dialogue in which the play abounds. The work of the Irish-born actor-playwright, George Farquhar (1677-1707), is marked by a shift away from the London-oriented comedies of his predecessors into the fresh fields of the English provinces. The *Constant Couple*, or *A Trip to the Jubilee*, produced in 1699, was one of the theatrical hits of its day but like its sequel, *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701) it seems a slight, if sexually candid, piece of work compared to the long-popular *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707). With the British victory at Blenheim of 1704 vividly impressed on the public mind, and with the military campaign against Louis XIV of France still being pursued, *The Recruiting Officer* had a particular contemporary currency. Despite its thin plot and the lightness of its intrigues, the play is tartly observant of the nastiness of a soldierly career and, in the resourceful Sergeant Kite, offers one of the finest comic roles in the English theatre tradition. *The Beaux' Stratagem* reveals an equally relaxed interplay of cynicism, realism, and romance. Its central male characters, Aimwell and Archer,

both 'gentlemen of broken fortunes', are fortune-hunters rather than rakes and success in their chosen provincial careers is ultimately determined by the emergence of their natural virtue. At a crucial point in the action Aimwell is obliged to admit that he is 'unequal to the Task of Villain' having been won over to the uprightness of love by Dorinda's 'Mind and Person'. It is an admission that might have seemed merely a cynical device in a play of the 1670s. By 1707 it may well have been taken as indicative of honest geniality but with the late 1690s, what the Victorian historian, Macaulay, later saw as the 'hard-heartedness' of 'Restoration' comedy was melting under the sun of benevolence. It was a form initially evolved to divert a jaded elite and to reflect on their manners and morals (or their spectacular lack of the latter). It was a form that flourished both because of the accuracy of the reflection and because of the cultivated artificiality of high society and the stage alike. When Dryden claimed that the new 'refinement' of conversation was a direct result of the influence of Charles II and his court, he was in part thinking of the new 'naturalism' of the stage. The King, he argued, had 'awakened the dull and heavy spirits of the English from their natural reservedness' and had loosened 'their stiff forms of conversation, and made them easy and pliant to each other in discourse'. The 'wit' of the period certainly follows the lead of the court in its 'hard-heartedness'. It is in part a revolution against moral seriousness and the kind of piety that is worn on the sleeve, in part an echo of a new respect for clarity and reason. The world of the seventeenth century had been turned upside down; crowns and miters had been knocked off heads only to be restored in a world that looked more cynically and questioningly at all forms of authority. Many of the private convictions, which had been revolutionary in the 1640's seemed reactionary in the 1680s. The drama of the 'Restoration' period ought, however, to be seen as an essential element in the literature of a revolutionary age. Unlike much of its satirical poetry the comedies of the last forty years of the seventeenth century have retained an immediacy, a subversiveness, and an ability to provoke the prejudices of audiences. If scarcely revolutionary in themselves, the plays of the period are a response to revolution and to the seventeenth century's experimental reversal of values. The comedies do not offer anything so pretentious as redefinitions but they do continue to irritate and laugh audiences into reaching out for definitions.

CHECK YPUR PROGRESS-I (CYP-I)

Fill in the blanks:

1. A neo-classical criticism was imported in Restoration Drama with 'rules' requiring the three 'unities' of _____.
2. The two different types of plays that came to be written and staged throughout the restoration period were _____ and _____.
3. _____ satirised the manners and affectations of social class or of multiple classes.
4. Dryden's *All for Love* radically rearranges the story of Shakespeare's _____.
5. _____by George Villiers burlesqued the extremes of the heroic mode through a series of parodies.
6. *The Man of Mode*: or, *Sir Fopling Flutter* was written by _____.
7. Mirabell and Millamant are characters in the well-known Restoration drama titled _____.

2.3 RESTORATION TRAGEDY

In this period tragic drama is represented by the heroic play, which has already been mentioned. During the first twenty years after the Restoration the rhymed heroic play reigned supreme. This form was introduced by Sir William Davenant and popularized by Dryden, who stated, "an heroick play ought to be an imitation (in little) of an heroic poem; and consequently that love and valour ought to be the subject of it." An impossibly idealistic love, in conflict with a strenuously proclaimed honour, led to exaggerated emotions and to stock characters, who were psychologically unconvincing and declaimed passages of bombastic rhetoric on all possible occasions. The form owed much to the contemporary interest in the French stage, in the work of Corneille and Racine, and in the French prose romances, from which many of its plots were taken. Even more important was the influence of the romantic drama of Beaumont and Fletcher, while the tradition of violent deeds, last seen in the work of Webster, Marston, and Ford, was here perpetuated in scenes of blood and crime. Stage settings were lavish in the extreme. From about 1680 onward we see the almost complete replacement of rhyme by blank verse, but the heroic motive remains, though this later period sees an increasingly frequent introduction of the pathetic note, which is seen at its strongest in Otway. It is also the period of numerous adaptations from the Elizabethan dramatists, and especially from Shakespeare. Perhaps the most notorious of them is the version of King Lear

in which Nahum Tate provides the play with a happy ending. Though the Restoration period was less rich in tragedy than in comedy, there are a few tragedians who deserve a brief mention.

Thomas Otway (1651-85). As was so often the case with the dramatists of the time, Otway had a varied and troubled career, closed with a miserable death. His first play, Alcibiades was produced in 1675; then followed *Don Carlos* (1676), The Orphan (1680), and his masterpiece, *Venice Preserv'd* (1682). Otway began his career in the typical heroic strain of the age, and *Don Carlos* is a fair specimen of the type, though, in sentiment and language, it is less exaggerated than is usual. His reputation rests, however, on two plays. In *The Orphan*, which, allowing for its period is lacking in heroics attributes and Otway struck the note of deep pathos which is his distinguishing feature, while the play has a calmness of tone and absence of rant unusual in its day. *Venice Preserv'd* is his finest work. Here the tragedy is on a grander scale than in *The Orphan*, and the characters are skillfully handled especially those of Jaffier and Pierre. The play has a rugged and somber force, and reveals a considerable skill in working out a dramatic situation. One authority on the drama believes it to have been revived more often than any play outside Shakespeare, which is an undeniable proof of its dramatic possibilities.

Nathaniel Lee (1653-92). Lee's life is the usual tale of mishaps, miseries, and drunkenness, with a taint of madness as an additional calamity. He wrote many tragedies, some of which are *Nero* (1674), *Sophonisba*(1676), *The Rival Queens* (1677), and *Mithridates*(1678). He also collaborated with Dryden in the production of two plays. During his own time Lee's name became a byword to distinguish a kind of wild, raving style, which in part at least seems to have been a product of his madness. But he can write well when the spirit is in him; he has a command of pathos, and all through his work he has touches of real poetic quality.

Elkanah Settle (1648-1724). Settle was in some ways the butt of his literary friends, and Dryden has given him prominence by attacking him in his satires. In his day he obtained some popularity with a heroic play, *The Empress of Morocco* (1673). It is a poor specimen of its kind, but his other dramas are worse. John Crowne(1640-1703). Crowne is another of the dramatists who attacked Dryden and who were in turn assailed by the bigger man. A voluminous playwright, Crowne's best-known works are the tragedies of *Caligula* (1698) a heroic play, and Thyestes (1681), in blank verse, and a comedy Sir Courtly Nice (1685). Crowne is quite a

good specimen of the average Restoration dramatist. The plays show some talent and a fair amount of skill in versification then Elkanth.Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) one among the last Restoration Tragedy playwright was a person of some importance, and was made Poet Laureate in 1715. His best-known plays are *Tamerlane* (1702), *The Fair Penitent* (1703), and the popular *Jane Shore* (1714). Johnson says of him, "His reputation comes from the reasonableness of someof his scenes, the elegance of his diction, and the suavity of his verse."

2.4 RESTORATION COMEDY

The new comedy was of slower growth than the heroic play, and, for some years after 1660, comedy was restricted to revivals of pre-Commonwealth plays, but the decadent, cynical spirit of the later age was alien to the romantic comedy of the Elizabethans. Even so, Restoration comedy drew its main inspiration from the native tradition, which had flourished before the closing of the theatres in 1642. In particular it was indebted to Beaumont and Fletcher and to Ben Jonson. Like the heroic play, however, comedy was strongly influenced by Continental writers, and especially by Moliere and the Spaniard, Calderon. It reflected closely the dissolute court life of the period, and, between that and the court life of France, there was a community of spirit, which led naturally to an interest in French comedy. Moliere provided English dramatists with ideas for plots and with an example of fine comic characterization; Spanish drama served to strengthen that love of intrigue and incident already firmly established in English comedy. But here it is important to stress that foreign influences, while important, were not the predominant factors in the evolution of Restoration comedy. They blended with a tradition already strongly established, and assisted the natural process of change demanded by the changing temper of the age, but they were transformed into something essentially English and contemporary. Thus the comedy of Moliere was changed into a harder, more loosely knit form, which lacked the warmth and depth of insight of the original.

The new drama is full of vitality, and moves with great pace, but the exuberance which led the Elizabethans to the poetic romance is supplanted by a polish and intellectual control which replaces emotion by wit, and poetry by a clear, concise prose which adds much point and gives a fine precision to the dialogue. Of this new style the pervading tone is one of cynicism, and the plays show a close, and often satirical, observation of life and manners, which recalls the work of Ben Jonson, and therefore is often referred as Comedy of Manner. Plots and subplots are intricate

and numerous, and center mainly upon amorous intrigues, which reflect an open contempt for the ordinary standards of morality, that, in Wycherley and others, often takes the form of gross sensuality. In the hands of the best and most restrained of the dramatists, Etherege and Congreve, the immorality still remains, but it is purged of much of its grossness and offensiveness by the fact that it is essentially intellectual, witty, and free from the cruder realism which mars Wycherley's work. The lack of passion and emotion in these plays gives them a polished, crystal hardness, which saves them from the worst forms of licentiousness. The immorality of Restoration drama was the object of fierce Puritanical attacks, the most notorious of which was the *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) of Jeremy Collier (1650-1726). Though this work is notable only for its wrathful tone and its stupidity as dramatic criticism, it provoked many replies from the offending dramatists, but beyond this its objections seem to have had no effect.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II (CYP-II)

Match the Authors with Their Works

COLUMN A	**COLUMN B**
Thomas Otway	*The Empress of Morocco*
Nathaniel Lee	*The Fair Penitent*
Elkanah Settle	*The Rival Queens*
John Crowne	*Venice Preserv'd*
Nicholas Rowe	*Thyestes*
Sir William Davenant	Introduced heroic play
Nahum Tate	Adapted *King Lear* with a happy ending
William Congreve	*Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*
Jeremy Collier	*The Way of the World*
George Etherege	*The Man of Mode*

2.5 COMEDY OF MANNERS

The characters in Restoration comedies are largely types, whose dispositions are sufficiently indicated by a study of their names. We have Sir Fopling Flutter; Scrub (a servant); Colonel Bully; Sir John Brute; Squire Sullen; Gibbet (a highwayman); Lady Bountiful. They have thus many of the qualities of the Jonsonian character, with its predominant 'humour'. But by the last part of the period there has evolved something distinct from the comedy of humours- the comedy of manners. A 'manner' is difficult to define. It does not imply the portrayal of life so much as a genteel, sophisticated brilliant quality, what one critic has called "a grace or habit of refined culture."

William Congreve (1670-1729). Congreve was born at Bardsey, near Leeds, of a good family, and was educated in Ireland at Trinity College, Dublin. In 1691 he came to London to enter the Middle Temple, but abandoned law for literature. He wrote all his plays before he was thirty, when he deserted the drama to spend the rest of his life as a very popular society gentleman, largely supported by generous government pensions. His first comedy was *The Old Bachelor* (1693), which was followed by the *Double Dealer (1693), Love for Love* (1695) and *The Way of the World* (1700). His one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697) was in the vein of the later Elizabethan tragedians and Congreve remains undoubtedly the greatest of the Restoration comedy-writers. In his work the comedy of manners reaches perfection. His plays are a faithful reflection of the upper-class life of his day but their undoubted immorality is saved from being objectionable by artificial wit, a hard-finish, and a total lack of realism. In the artificial society, which he depicts moral judgments would be out of place. The tone is one of cynical vivacity, the characters are well drawn, and Congreve's prose is lucid, concise and pointed and shows an excellent ear for rhythm and cadence. In all things he is the polished artist, whose distinctive quality is brilliance.

All Congreve's plays, except *The Way of the World*, had an immediate success, and it is ironical that this one should be singled out by posterity as his masterpiece. Free from the occasional sentimental touches which forms The Double Dealer, it is the best example of the comedy of manners skillful in characterisation, and completely free from the coarseness and realism which spoil the work of so many of his contemporaries.

William Wycherley (1640-1715). The productive period of Wycherley's life

was brief but fruitful. He produced four plays in five years: *Love in a Wood* (1671), *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672), *The Country-Wife* (1674), and *The Plain Dealer* (1676). He was a man of good family, and he was at Court, where he seems to have been no better than the average courtier of his time. His contemporaries call his plays "manly." By this; they probably refer to a boisterous indecency that riots through his comedies, in which nearly every person is a fool, and every clever man a rogue and a rake. He is much coarser in the grain than Congreve, and cannot keep his work at such a high level. Yet he shows much wit in handling dialogue, and has a sharp, though distorted, vision for human weaknesses.

George Etherege (1635-91). Not much is known regarding the life of Etherege; but he appears to have been a courtier, and to have served abroad in the diplomatic service. His three plays are *The Comical Revenge*, or *Love in a Tub* (1664), *She Wou'd if she Cou'd*(1668), and *The Man of Mode*, or *Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676). They are important in that they established the comedy of manners, which was later to be perfected by Congreve. They paint a true picture of the graceful, heartless, and licentious upper classes of the period. The prose dialogue is natural and brilliant, and its light, airy grace conceals some deficiency of plot and construction.

Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726). Vanbrugh's career, though much of it is obscure, seems to have been a varied one, for at different times he was a soldier, a herald, and an architect. His best three comedies are *The Relapse* (1696), *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), and *The Confederacy* (1705). Vanbrugh's plays lack the art and elegance of Congreve's, but they are full of energy and genial humour. He is fond of farce and good at caricature, and his plots, if daring, are soundly constructed.

George Farquhar (1678-1707). He had an adventurous career, was in turn a clergyman, an actor, and a soldier, and died when he was twenty-nine years old. The pathos of his early death has given him a fame of its own. He wrote seven plays, the best of which are the last two i.e., *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707). Farquhar comes late among the Restoration dramatists, and by his time the cynical immorality of the age seems to have worn thin. His temper is certainly more genial, and his wit, though it has lapses, is more decorous. In *The Recruiting Officer* and the plays which followed, Farquhar added something new to Restoration comedy, in taking his material from a wider life than the polite upper class depicted by Congreve, and his characters are more like ordinary people. His dialogue lacks the polish and sustained wit of Congreve, and

is nearer the level of normal conversation. In his rapidly developing humanity, and his growing respect for moral standards, Farquhar looks forward to the drama of Steele and the succeeding age.

Thomas Shadwell (1642-92). Little is known of Shadwell's life, and he has been remembered chiefly on account of Dryden portrait of him in *MacFlecknoe*. He deserves mention here, however, in his own right. He held the popular stage for over twenty years and wrote many plays, the best of which were The Sullen Lovers (1668), *The Squire of Alsatia*(1688), and *Bury Fair* (1689). Shadwell stood outside the development of the comedy of manners, and imitated closely Jonson's comedy of humours. His plays are generally coarse, but on occasion he shows real wit: his style lacks literary grace, but his plots are usually well constructed and show a fertile invention. He reflects, more accurately than anyone else, the everyday life of his time, and he has a keen satirical sense. He frequently deserts the level of the artificial, intellectual world of Congreve and, like Wycherley, stoops to a coarseness of passion that is repulsive. His later plays show a growing fondness for farce, and look forward to the sentimental drama.

2.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. The public theatres reopened in_____after eighteen years of official displeasure.

   a. 1661 b. 1660

   c. 1662 c. 1616

2. Dryden economically put the doctrinesof Aristotle's 'Three Unities' in his prologue to his play_____.

   a. *Aureng-Zebe* b. *The Indian Queen*

   c. *The Rival Ladies* d. *Secret Love or the Maiden Queen*

3. Dryden was the first to write Comedy of Manners with his play_____.

   a. Wild Gallant b. Sir Martin Mar-all

   c. The Mistaken Husband d. An Evening's Love

4. The most celebrated and enduring of the Restoration adaptations *History of King Lear* of 1681 was written by_____.

a. John Dryden b. William Congreve

d. George Etherege c. Nahum Tate

5. *The Way of the World* (1700) was his last and most brilliant comedy written by_____.

a. William Congreve b. Sir John Vanbrugh

c. William Wycherley d. Thomas Otway

6. Who wrote the play *The Man of Mode*: or, *Sir Fopling Flutter*?

a. John Dryden b. William Wycherley

c. William Congreve d. George Etherege

2.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. What is Comedy of Manners? Comment.

Q.2. Discuss briefly the characteristics of Restoration Drama.

Q.3. Write a short note on Heroic Tragedy.

2.8 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

1. action, place and time
2. Comedy of Manner, Heroic Tragedy
3. Comedy of Manners
4. *Antony and Cleopatra*
5. *The Rehearsal*
6. Sir George Etherege
7. *The Way of the World*

CYP-II

A–4; B–3; C–1; D–5; E–2; F–6; G–7; H–9; I–8; J–10

MCQs

1. 1660
2. Secret Love or the Maiden Queen
3. Wild Gallant

4. Nahum Tate
5. William Congreve
6. George Etherege

2.9 LET US SUM-UP

The London theatres opened to plays by the older dramatist Sir William Davenant (1608-68) and to adaptations of pre-Civil War drama, but there were no professional actors, and the new plays were different. Two public companies licensed by the King acted in purpose-built theatres rather like modern theatres. Shakespeare now became the stage's standby: his plots, language and morals were trimmed to suit fashions influenced by the plays of French dramatists. With Dryden and his followers neo-classical criticism was imported, with 'rules' requiring the three 'unities' of action, place and time although Shakespeare had ignored these rules. The critics turned Aristotle's point that most good tragedies have a single plot into a rule; and added the unities of place and time.

Drama now tried to be purely comic or purely tragic, and critics also embraced Aristotle's commendation of artistic unity, singleness of effect, and philosophic truth. To his doctrine that art should imitate the permanent traits in human nature, they added the principle that it should show virtue rewarded. These aims are irreconcilable in tragedy. In Nahum Tate's 1681 version of *King Lear*, Cordelia survives to marry Edgar. They offered lightly classicized entertainments of a semi-operatic kind to the Court and its friends. Noble arms and noble love strut and fret their heroic conquests, and debate the problems of honour in symmetrical couplets. These English tragedies lack the focus of French tragedy. It is hard to see them staged, but Dryden's *All for Love* (1678) reads well. It is a tidy version of *Antony and Cleopatra*, in a dignified blank verse, which works better than the heroic couplets of Dryden's previous tragedies.

Restoration comedy takes a pleasure in the vices it caricatures: it shows the manner of their life, pushing current trends to logical extremes. The hero of Wycherley's *The Country Wife* is said to be impotent from venereal disease, and no threat to womankind. His name, Horner, was then pronounced the same as 'honour', a word heard often in the play. Horner uses his safe reputation to dishonor the women of the play and give their husbands cuckolds' 'horns'. As compared to the tragedy, this genre achieved greater distinction and shame. It was the most

2.10 SUGGESTED READING

- *A History of English Literature* by Robert Huntington Fletcher
- *A History of English Literature* by Michael Alexander
- *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* by Andrew Sanders.

Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -II**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 3**

PRECURSORS AND PIONEERS OF ENGLISH PROSE FICTION

3.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce to English Prose Fiction and discuss the development of the genre from its genesis to the Restoration era. The lesson also aims to acquaint you with the pioneers of English Prose fiction and highlight their contribution. In this lesson, you will also be familiarised with the Restoration writers of prose fiction and appreciate the role played by them in the development of prose fiction. After reading this lesson, you will be able to trace the historical

development of English prose fiction from its origins to the Restoration era. You will be able to identify the pioneers of English prose fiction as well as describe their contribution to the genre. You will also recognise the major Restoration era writers of prose fictions and critically analyse their impact on the development of prose fiction in England.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Prose is a Latin word which means 'Straight forward' and in literature refers simply to any written piece of literary work that is built on sentence and paragraph rather then line and verse. It follows a natural flow of speech rather than a rhythmic structure and comprises of two broader sub categories like Fictional and Non-Fictional which includes almost all forms of literary genre except poetry. It is a broader umbrella term used for all types of communicative writing except for poetry and includes Literature, Journalism, Encyclopaedia, History, Philosophy, Law and almost everything.

3.2 ENGLISH PROSE FICTION: GENESIS

Beginning in the 14th century, the greatest prose work of the period is the singular volume which goes by the title of *The Travels of Sir John Maundeville.* According to the specific statement of the preface, this Maundeville was born at St. Albans, and set out on his journey in 1322; and his book purports to give a circumstantial account of what he had seen and heard during many years of wanderings in the Holy Land and the far east. It is now established, however, that no such person as the alleged author ever existed; that the work is a translation from the French of a certain Jean de Bourgogne; and that, instead of being a genuine record of travel, it is simply a compilation of fabulous stories out of Pliny, Friar Odoric, Marco Polo, and other retailers of the marvellous. The fact that even though it is only a translation, it keeps its place as the first English prose classic.

The great prose production of the 15th century, which is indeed the one really great book of the age, is the *Morte d'arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. Of the author we know nothing for certain except that he was a knight, and that, he completed his work in the ninth year of King Edward IV, that is, in 1470. This work is a compilation made from a number of French romances dealing with different portions of the vast cycle of legends which had grown up about King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, Malory's object being to digest the scattered stories into a connected summary. To this end he treated his materials with a very free hand, selecting, rejecting, abridging, adapting, and rearranging, to suit his purpose. His narrative has little unity or

proportion, yet when the immense difficulties of his task are considered, we must give him full credit for the measure of success which he certainly achieved. In style, it is artless, for Malory pays little attention to grammar, and his sentence structure is often faulty. But he is wonderfully racy and picturesque, and on occasion he becomes really impressive. The work remains a key transitional work that bridges medieval romance and early modern fiction.

While the 16th century found its chief imaginative outlet in drama, it was also active in the field of prose fiction. It did not indeed produce what we specifically call the novel, by which we mean the long story of contemporary life and manners. This was not established in English literature till more than a century after Shakespeare's death. But in other lines of fictitious narrative considerable progress was made.

Some stimulus in this direction was given by the work of the translators, who familiarised the reading public with Spanish and Italian romance and with Italian *novelle*, or short stories. The most important prose romance of the period is the work of John Lyly, best known for his comedies *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit* and its sequel *Euphues and his England.* The former was published in 1579, and the later, the following year. The first part tells of a young Athenian named Euphues, wealthy, handsome, and clever, who sets out on his travels. It is a sort of love story, but without action and what little narrative there is, is merely an excuse for endless discourses and moralisings. In the second part, Euphues visits England, and gives a long 'description of the country, the court and the manners of the isle'. The popularity of *Euphues* was extraordinary; in little more than half a century it went through ten editions-a great record at that time; everybody read it who could read anything; and the ladies of the court used it as a moral handbook, a guide to polite behaviour, and a model of elegance in speech and writing. It owes its continued fame mainly to its style called 'Euphuism'. It is characterised by extreme elaboration, artifice, and a number if specific rhetorical devices. Perhaps the outstanding feature of Euphuism is the excessive use of balanced antithesis which is combined with alliteration, similes, word-play, and punning.

The second place in Elizabethan prose romance may be assigned to Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia,* completed about 1581, though not published till 1613. To some extent this work carries on the tradition of the older romances of chivalry. Unlike *Euphues,* in which there is practically no story, it is full of incident. Its principal interest is provided by the adventures of the two friends, Pyrocles and Musidorus, while seeking to win the two Arcadian princesses, Philoclea and Pamela; but a large number of other characters are introduced, each of whom becomes the centre of a

separate story, and episodes arise within episodes to the great complication and confusion of the plot. Though Sydney does not overwork a few rhetorical devices, like Lily, his prose is of an extremely ornate and poetical kind, and while strikingly beautiful in places, in the long run it becomes wearisome because of its total want of simplicity and restraint.

Thomas Nashe's rambling narrative, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, or *The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594), is a picaresque tale of adventure, perhaps suggested by the Spanish Lazarillo de Tormes. The picaresque or 'rogue' novel was a suitable form for prose narrative in the infancy of the novel, for it did not demand any real integration of plot, but, by taking its hero on a series of adventures in different places, enabled the author to engage in a great variety of miscellaneous descriptive writing. *The Unfortunate Traveller* has been called the first English historical novel (the hero, who tells his story in the first person, was supposed to have lived much earlier in the century, and Nashe introduced some pseudohistorical episodes), but it is not really important as a contribution to the development of English prose fiction. It has its place in the history of English fiction, but as an interesting individual experiment rather than an 'influence'.

Robert Greene, like Nashe, was a dramatist, pamphleteer, and writer of prose fiction. His earlier writing includes romantic prose tales deriving in both style and kind of subject from Lyly's *Euphues*, which had many imitators in the 1580's. But in his romances, too, there is a progressive shedding of excessive rhetoric; the later ones, *Pandosto* (1588) and *Menaphon* (1589), being clearer in narrative outline and less prone to rhetorical digressions and elaborate soliloquies than the earlier. Thomas Lodge was another who combined pamphleteering with the writing of prose tales deriving from Greek romance. His *Rosalind* (1590), like Greene's *Pandosto*, was used by Shakespeare. The style of Lodge's prose romances is formal and rhetorical, influenced by Lyly, but at his best Lodge's narrative prose has a flow and a control that makes it much more satisfactory to the ear than many examples of the euphuistic style; the artificiality is there, but it is subdued to the narrative, which moves with conspicuous ease.

Perhaps the Elizabethan writer of prose fiction who is of most historical interest is Thomas Deloney, whose three tales (or groups of tales), *Jack of Newbury*, *The Gentle Craft*, and *Thomas of Reading*, all written in the 1590's, show him as the storyteller of the bourgeois craftsman. *Jack of Newbury*, for example, deals with the weavers: the hero is a heroic weaver who rises to become a famous and wealthy clothier employing large numbers of people. *Gentle Craft* deals with the shoemakers,

and contains the tale which Dekker used as the plot of his *Shoemaker's Holiday*. Deloney portrays and appeals to the new middle classes of the time, revealing the bourgeois society which arose after the medieval craft guilds had been replaced by the domestic system of manufacture. His style is somewhat pedestrian, but straightforward and competent, and the dialogue is particularly good which shows the first faint outline of the mature English novel, which was to develop as the special contribution to literature of the middle classes.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the blanks

1. The two broader subcategories of prose are _____ and _____.
2. *The Travels of Sir John Maundeville* is now believed to be a translation from the French work of a certain Jean de Bourgogne.
3. The *Morte d'Arthur*, compiled in 1470, is attributed to _____ _____.
4. The prose style called "_____" is associated with John Lyly's *Euphues*.
5. The most important prose romance of the Elizabethan period is _____, written by John Lyly.
6. Sir Philip Sidney's _____ features the adventures of the two friends, Pyrocles and Musidorus.
7. Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* is considered a _____ novel, a form that did not require integration of plot.
8. Robert Greene's *Pandosto* and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalind* were both later used by _____ in his plays.

3.3 ENGLISH PROSE FICTION IN THE RESTORATION ERA

The novel was not a sudden innovation at the end of the seventeenth century. Accounts of travels, which may or may not have been fictionalised to some extent, go back as far as the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, probably published in 1375. Other worlds and cultures, ways of living and believing, became a main characteristic of fiction through the Elizabethan age. Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) provides us with one of the earliest picaresque tales in English. It recounts 'the life of John Wilton' in a mixture of styles, anticipating the picaresque heroes and heroines of Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding just over a

century later. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* was also influential in 'fictionalising travel' and thus providing impetus to the growth of the novel.

In general, however, the exotic influence in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature was to be tamed; subsumed into recognisably English middle-class ways of thinking and brought into line with the worldview of the time. Englishness could always dominate over exoticism: English readers could usually feel they were superior to any of the outlandish behaviour or ways of life they read about. So, although the fascination with the exotic, seen in travellers' tales over the centuries from Mandeville to Raleigh, is a common them, the concern now was not simply to document but to accommodate experience within recognisable bounds.

A very popular genre in fiction of the Restoration period was the French romance, more samples of which were being translated into English. La Calprenède's *Cassandra* (1652, 1667, 1703) and *Cleopatra* (1652-59) were translated and abridged. Works by Gomberville and D'Urfé were also made available. These romances provided material for heroic plays. John Reynolds' *Flower of Fidelitie* (1650), John Crowne's *Pandion and Amphigenia* (1665) and Roger Boyle's *Parthenissa* (1654-69, 1676) are examples of English adaptations of such romances. Epistolary narratives were a common genre. Works such as Charles Gildon's *Post Boy Rob'd of his Mail* (1692-93) and Tom Browne's *Adventures of Lindamira* (1702) were essentially gossip-tales. Travel letters were widely popular. John Reynolds also published a range of crime stories in 1621 and his *The Triumphs of Gods Revenege against the crying, and execrable Siine of Murther* went into multiple editions, and was expanded into *God's revenge against the crying and execrable sin of adultery* (1679). Richard Head and Francis Kirkman produced some fictitious biographies of so-called rogues.

The vogue of the Heroic Romance continued for a few years during the seventeenth century. Soon a reaction appeared against the extravagance, crudity, monotony, and long-windedness of these romances, and English fiction took a new turn in the direction of realism and practical portraiture of the problems of middle-class society. The growing interest of the people in science also accounted for the decline of romances. The Royal Society formed in 1660 exercised a potential influence in bringing the readers and the writers on the path of sanity, rationality, realism and urged them to sever all ties with romancers moving in world of fanciful delights, vague imaginations and chimeras. Thus after a few decades of the seventeenth century, English fiction took to new lines of realism, and if traces of romances still continued as in tales of roguery and adventure, they were kept subordinated to the over-powering passion for realism. This change from romance to

realism, from roguery to morality was mainly brought about primarily by John Bunyan, Aphra Behn, and Daniel Defoe. These writers exercised a deep and profound influence in the development of English prose fiction during the seventeenth century.

Features of Restoration Fiction

- Used the epistolary form
- Allegories were common
- Gossip, scandal, sexual and marital intrigues with slightly salacious content became popular
- Romances and love stories used stock characters and situations
- The rogue or rake became a popular type

3.4.1 JOHN BUNYAN (1628-1688)

John Bunya towers above all other fiction writers of this time. Bunyan's first work *Grace Abounding* (1666), was an autobiographical narrative about his conversion and life as a preacher. The work was written while he was in prison for almost 12 years. It was during this time that he composed one of the most famous openings in English Literature:

> As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man cloathed with Rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own House, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the Book and read therein; and as he read, he wept, and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, "what shall I do?"

From here begins the journey of the man, Christian, in the greatest fictional work of the Restoration, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Presented in the form of dramatic episodes, Faithful, Hopeful, Diffidence, are characters we meet on the way. Bunyan's work is clearly an allegory about faith and salvation, forcing us to stop and think about the implications of what is being narrated. There is, in addition to theology, some social satire. Bunyan also published *The Life and Death of Mr Badman* (1680), an allegory warning readers against wickedness. In 1682, he published *The Holy War*, an allegory about an entire town that is taken over and retrieved by the faithful. In 1684, he published the second part of *Pilgrim's Progress*¸ dealing with the journey of Christiana and her children. *Pilgrim's Progress*, along with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, is perhaps one of the

most significant works in Christian literature.

John Bunyan was the first great writer in the seventeenth century who stood opposed to the vogue of the heroic romances. For the tale of rascality and wantonness he showed nothing but repulsion. The romances did not receive his blessing because he was too well acquainted with the late perversions in the current chapbooks. He paved the way for realism and rang the death knell of romances. He was a religious man having great reverence for the Bible. He sought to instruct the people of his times through his books. His conception of the world as battle-ground of good and evil spirits, his haunting area of eternal retribution, and his fierce evangelistic zeal were those his age and sect. These he attempted to transit to his readers through his books steeped in religious moral colour. Bunyan wrote a number of books which have been included in the realm of fiction though in writing them the idea might never have occurred to the author that he would be ranked among novelists or his place will be among be among the writers of fiction in the seventeenth century. The works of Bunyan are about sixty in all, but the four great works by which he is known to the reading public are *Grace Abounding*, *The Pilgrim's Progress, The Life and Death of Mr. Badman,* and *Holy War*. In these books emphasis was laid as much on the story as on the portrayal of characters. Simplicity of style was calculated and the foppery of phrase, which had been the bane of the age was deliberately eschewed. Correctness and realism were introduced. Bunyan also cultivated a lively manner of narration and the storyteller's art of capturing the imagination of the readers.

The Pilgrim's Progress was published in 1678. In form it is an allegory, a narrative in which such abstractions as sin, virtue, love, and evil are personified by individual characters through whom the moral of the story is made dramatically effective. Thus Christian is not only a Bedfordshire peasant of the seventeenth century but also a symbol of every man in search of salvation. We become simultaneously involved with his physical and his spiritual travail; and because of the simple but compelling suspense of the individual episodes in the story, we are inexorably caught up in Bunyan's moral vision.

The allegory in *The Pilgrim's Progress* takes the form of a dream by the author. In this he sees Christian, on the advice of Evangelist, fleeing all alone from the city of Destruction for he fails to persuade his wife and children to accompany him. Christian has to pass through the slough of Despond, the Interpreter's House, the House Beautiful, the valley of Humiliation, the valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Delectable Mountains,

the country of Beulah, of the Celestial City.

The second part of the book relates how Christian's wife Christiana, moved by a vision, sets out with her children on the same pilgrimage, under the escort of Great-heart, who after overcoming Giant Despair and other monsters, bring them to their destination. The second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not as successful as the first, largely because Bunyan did not think the road to conversion was fraught with as many dangers for women and children as it was for men. Thus the second part, though full of charming, homely detail, lacks the high suspense of the first part.

The Pilgrim's Progress is not a ponderous religious tract. It is rich in clever satire of the eternal human foibles. Bunyan is very hard on the glib, the hypocritical, and the superficial; his Vanity Fair is a brilliantly terse commentary on the materialistic life.

Although allegory is rare in English fiction, *The Pilgrim's Progress,* for all the crudeness of its fictional technique, exercised a great influence on the English novel, particularly in the eighteenth century. Its vivid handling of scenes from common English life-the roads, the scenery, the simple peasant homes that Christian comes upon-was not lost upon the more sophisticated novelists such as Fielding, Smollett, and later Dickens.

In the years since its first publication, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has taken an honoured place next to the Bible and Milton's *Paradise Lost* in the hearts of devout Englishmen. In the words of A.J.Wyatt, "His voice has gone out into all the world, for *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible and the *De Imitatione Christi* of Thomas a Kempis. Even sturdy old Tory Dr. Johnson ranked it with *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe* as the only books one wishes longer than they are. He asked Bishop Percy's little daughter what she thought of it; she had not read it' 'No! then I would not give one farthing to you,' and he put her down from his knee. All things considered, it is one of the miracles of literature. The allegory is maintained with unparalleled consistency. The style is simple, without slang or bad grammar. The power and 'grip' of the narrative must have been felt by every Englishman. Every impartial critic, pagan, and Christian alike, has appreciated the exalted merits of the work, both in allegorical narrative and in simple manly yet beautiful prose."

Commenting on Bunyan's achievement in Fiction, E.A. Baker remarks, "To recapitulate, Bunyan presented character intensively in Christian and Mr, Badman and in all its variety in the figures that throng the pages of *The*

Pilgrim's Progress and *The Holy War*. Hitherto, English fiction had hardly penetrated beyond the outward husk, but he exhibited the pangs and contributions, the fears and ecstasies of the mind and soul, as he himself had experienced them, and in the history of *Mr. Badman* traced the entire development of a character from the cradle to the grave. He drew life in its broad outlines and he painted manners and idiosyncrasies with a sureness and precision never before attained. Further, he excelled in the art of telling a story in a way that held the reader subdued. The dramatic interest never halts, it is sustained on the steady onward march as at the moment of suspense and crisis. No predecessor had so pictured scenery as to make it an integral element of story, giving depth and atmosphere. His dialogue also is the current language of man, the true vernacular, but skilfully and felicitously employed to carry the story forward and at the same time bring out the spiritual meaning. And all this was not acquired by study of that other craftsmen had done; if he had more learning, and if he had tried to write as others were writing; not less intent than he on exciting the interest of every potential reader, his books would have been something very different. His skill, his insight, his sureness of touch were due to the simplicity and directness with which he set down the things that possessed his mind. After all, his theme was always one and same-the momentous, all engrossing problem that ever haunted his imagination. A rich and ripe and sane experience enabled him to deal with that theme in several stories."

3.4.2 MRS. APHRA BEHN (1640-1689)

Aphra Behn wrote plays, short stories, and longer fiction. Her *Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave* was part of a collection of Behn's stories published in 1688 and became her most popular work. The love story of Oroonoko and Imoinda reverses the colonial, European stereotype of the 'brutal' and 'primitive' native (i.e., African) and makes her hero noble and intelligent. A mix of travel writing, romance and historical fiction, *Oroonoko*, set in Surinam, is the story of a black prince who ends life as a slave. By reversing the stereotype, Behn also provides one of the earliest critiques of colonization and the British presence in Surinam. An indication of her criticism can be gleaned from her description of the white colonial masters: "...such notorious villains as Newgate [the English prison in London] never transported ... possibly originally were such, who principles neither the laws of God or man, and had no sort of principles to make them worthy the name of men."

Obliged by circumstances to write for bread, she cheerfully and

attentively accepted the taste and attitudes of her day. She learned what there was to learn from other writers, and handled it on with all the improvement gained in her own practice. She gave a turn to realism and cut short the course of heroic romances.

Her first work was *Love Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1683). It comprised three series of letters, sometimes entitled *The Amours of Philander and Sylvia.* These letters were supposed to have been written between a young French nobleman, in the time of Hugenot rebellion in Paris, and his wife's sister, who elopes with him to St. Denis. But the whole story as a fraudulent attempt to exploit a contemporary scandal had excited a great sensation in London in 1682.

Mrs. Aphra Behn also wrote three short stories-*The Adventure of Black Lady*, *The Court of the King Bantam*, and *The Unfortunate Happy Lady*. The scene of all the three stories is in London. They depict London life realistically. Mrs. Behn harnessed her prolific pen in the service of fiction and wrote several works of which *The Unfortunate Bride* or *The Blind Lady a Beauty*, and *The Wandering Beauty* are quite interesting based as they are on the subject of love and snobbery.

In 1688 three of her best stories came out in single volume *Three Histories*: *Oroonoko* or *The Royal Slave*, *The Fair Filt* or *Tarquin Miranda* and *Agnew de Castro* or *The Force of Generous Blood.* In these three works, Mrs. Behn anticipated Defoe by adopting the trick of authenticating fiction by claiming to give the report of eye-witness. Many fictitious statements were accepted in good faith; and it is difficult even now to unravel the true form she invented.

Of these three works *Oroonoko* or *The Royal Slave* is a significant work representing the distinguishable tendencies of Mrs. Behn. The story refers to a royal prince of Africa. Her plot is based on a stock type, that of two lover separated by adversity and unexpectedly brought together again after many days. But she super adds a tragic reversal of fortune. The faithful pair seeks a voluntary death as a protest against tyranny and injustice. The elements of heroic romances are introduced in the story.

Oroonoko as a tale of a noble African, who is carried off to slavery in the English colony of Surinam illustrates the violence of the slave trade and the corruption of the primitive people by treacherous and hypocritical Christian colonisers. It is a novel of violence and cruelty and is ahead of its time in its defence of the 'noble savage' and its affirmation of an anti-colonial stance.

Behn was a controversial figure, despite considerable success as a writer for the theatre. She was accused of lewdness and of plagiarism. She was also politically active, and, in general, was an uncomfortable presence in the prevailing moral climate of the late seventeenth century. Perhaps it was this which led to her being ignored in literary history for many years.

She cannot be ignored, however, as the writer of some seventeen plays, and thirty works of fiction – some three decades before Daniel Defoe is credited with writing the first proper novels. She herself contended that the fact that she *was* a woman, and spoke out for women's rights and sexual freedom, had a negative impact on how she was received. Charges of immorality meant that even in the twentieth century, when Virginia Woolf and then the feminist critics attempted to retrieve her reputation, some shades of critical doubt remained. Whether this is a sign of critical and moral double standard remains open to debate, but if Defoe is to be considered one of the 'fathers' of the novel, Aphra Behn has more than a claim to be considered one of the genre's 'mothers'.

3.4.3 DANIEL DEFOE (1659?-1731)

Daniel Defoe was the son of well-to-do butcher, who did business in the very heart of the city of London, was trained for the non-conformist ministry, abandoned divinity for practical life; and in the course of a long and adventurer career as hosier, tile factor, foreign tradesman, printer, volunteer trooper, confidant to the king, inmate of Newgate cell, government spy, a fugitive from political prosecution and hero in the pillory of a sympathetic mob. He died in 1731, leaving behind several hundred authentic writings.

Defoe was the first great novelist who introduced as a new technique in realism. He was the pioneer among writers who invented narrative with a sense of reality. He introduced a new literary technique which may be called the technique of circumstantial evidence. He presented his accounts in such manner, as if, he was himself a witness of all the incidents narrated by him in his books. He introduced verisimilitude in narration and made his characters verify one another's testimony. He evolved a marvellous machinery of mendacity by which a lie was made so perfect that it out viewed truth at least in its appearance of circumstantiality.

Defoe's earliest work was his pamphlet, *Shortest Way with the Dissenters.* It was published in 1702. He presented the extreme views of the high church party and urged the extirpation of all dissenters. Defoe recommended that dissenting preachers be hanged and their congregation banished. He was

sentenced to stand three days in the pillory, pay a fine, and be imprisoned.

The greatest work of Defoe was *Robinson Crusoe* published in April 1719. The subject matter of this book was based on Dampier's *New Voyage round the world* and *A Voyage to the South sea and round the world* by Captain Edward. Taking his clue from these two books, Defoe described the adventures of Alxander Silkirk who was wrecked on the island of John Fernandez from 1704-1719.

The author put himself into the book; Robinson is unquestionably Defoe, and does exactly what Defoe would have done in the same position. That is why Robinson is the most complete and lifelike of Defoe's personages. Robinson Crusoe is Defoe in the part that came most natural to him, the part that he would have sustained with entire credit. In relating the doings and experiences of his hero Defoe portrayed his idea of a man, the kind of man he himself typified. He represented through Robinson a strong self-reliant practical man, who lived through rare fits of misgiving and despondency by his dogged effort and tenacity of will.

Robinson Crusoe is a book of adventure, liked both by old and young, and perhaps the best of all stories of adventure. The adventures are realistically presented in detail. Realism comes to the fore-front in this novel. Defoe gives us a matter-of-fact account of Crusoe's experience in feelings, clothing, and making himself comfortable. With realism a stain of morality is also combined, for Defoe's message to the middle class people through the character of Robinson Crusoe is to be patient, industrious, and honest. In short in *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe humanises adventure and makes it a thing of realism and morality.

E. A. Baker considers *Robinson Crusoe* as the first modern novel. He estimates the worth of *Robinson Crusoe* in the following words. "This is the novel in the complete modern sense, although it was not offered to the world as fiction, and differs considerably from the type ultimately established. The critic who laid down a novel must contain a love story and he would exclude *Robinson Crusoe*: there is hardly a woman in it. But it answers to our definition, *Robinson Crusoe* is not a masterpiece of story-telling, it is also an interpretation of life. Man is shown in it at grips with nature, not defending himself against a malicious foe, as in *Travailleurs de la Mer*, but wrestling his livelihood from his churlish bosom. *Robinson Crusoe* is the epic of work, as a novel it has all the essential constituents, unity of them, of action and of style, character, if not characters; narrative that could not be bettered; dialogue not yet like that of the

real world, but immensely nearer there to than the bells and beaux of Mrs. Behn and Mrs. Manely had ever talked. In mere strength and solidarity the fabric constructed by Defoe could not be excelled. Realistic fiction was established on granite foundation."

Defoe did nit confine his materialism, his matter-of-factness to things of this earth. The world of spirits was just as substantial for him. He wrote *A True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal the next day after her death to one mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury.* This is not a work of fiction, as has often been supposed but a piece of reporting, and beginning in the direction of fictitious narratives. Here the circumstantial realism comes to the forefront.

Later on Defoe brought out *The Life and Adventures of Captain Singleton*. The book is in the style of *Robinson Crusoe* and recounts the adventures of Singleton who was stolen in infancy and was sent to the sea.

Moll Flanders is Defoe's popular work. Moll Flanders, the heroine, is a rogue, but not one rejoicing in her rogueries. To the modern reader, her life is a serious study of the effects of heredity and environment in the making of criminals. The book tells us how criminals like Moll Flanders are made by social forces.

From the artistic point of view, *Moll Flanders* may be regarded as the female counterpart of *Robinson Crusoe*. Robinson's history was the history of a courageous and energetic man fighting a lonely battle in the most desperate circumstances. Moll Flanders's story that of a lonely woman cast upon her own resources, fighting a world that has done its world to destroy her body and soul. *Moll Flanders* is the history of thief and belongs to the type of picturesque fiction.

The Journal of the Plague Year is first rate example of historical fiction, and was constructed on the same lines as those followed in *Memories of a Cavalier*. The Journal unquestionably succeeds in giving the impression that it is by one who lived through awful time. It is badly put together. It is full of inaccuracies, oversights, repetitions and is marred by other signs of carelessness.

Defoe's *Colonel Facque* is a semi-historical work, whereas *Roxana* recounts the adventures of a glamorous heroine in search of power and self.

Defoe rendered great service to the English novel. He introduced realism and morality in the most fascinating form of adventure. Defoe's work in the reconstruction of prose fiction was to bring the novel down from the region where the plastic imagination roams at large, and fix it firmly on the solid earth.

He showed, more fully than any novelist before or since, the irresistible cogency of the circumstantial method. The speedy result of his realism was that the novel which had hitherto been a hybrid and non-descript affair, a sort of by-product of poetry, was at last differentiated as an independent art form.

In the novel Defoe introduced the popular vernacular strain of Delony and Bunyan. He wrote his work for the edification and delectation of middle classes and orders still humbler, saw their lives and circumstances, their interests and ideals represented with a sympathy and seriousness that had hitherto been accorded only their betters in the scale.

Defoe was not among the great creators of characters. So far as any of his figures catch our attention and come to live, it is through their beings chips of himself. All his men and women are extremely simple and strikingly bare of idiosyncrasies. The subtleties of personal disposition, the intricacies of temperament, the inner world of the feelings were to him a sealed book. He did not exhibit any remarkable intuition of feminine character in Moll Flanders or Roxana both admirably commonplace women. Defoe gave us human histories, not galleries of human characters. He put the interest in personal traits, but in what the people of the story do and undergo, and what effect it has upon their lives. And since, he always seems to be speaking the unvarnished truth, his people what they do and befalls them, and the world in which they move, seem as actual as the world of our own sensations.

3.5 GLOSSARY

romance: a genre of prose or verse that emphasizes adventurous elements, distinct from the realistic depiction of life.

isle: an island, especially a small one

antithesis: a figure of speech that employs two contrasting ideas, placed side-by-side, often within a parallel structure, to emphasize their opposition and create a more impactful and memorable effect

ornate: writing that is heavily decorated with elaborate and often complex language, figures of speech, and stylistic devices

picaresque: a genre of prose fiction that follows the episodic adventures of a roguish, often low-born hero who navigates a corrupt and chaotic society using their wit and cunning

rhetorical: the techniques and literary devices that a writer uses to convey specific ideas to the readers. There are many rhetorical modes in writing, but the most common are description, expository, narration, and persuasive.

epistolary: a style of writing where the narrative is conveyed through letters, diary entries, or other forms of written communication

preacher: In Christianity, a preacher is someone who delivers sermons or religious messages, typically in a church setting, to an audience of believers

allegory: a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one

pamphlet: a short, unbound booklet, typically with a paper cover, that focuses on a particular subject

3.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. What is the title of John Bunyan's most famous fictional work?
   A. *Grace Abounding*
   B. *Holy War*
   C. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*
   D. *The Pilgrim's Progress*

2. What literary form is *The Pilgrim's Progress* mainly written in?
   A. Epic poem
   B. Historical romance
   C. Allegory
   D. Satire

3. Who accompanies Christiana and her children in the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*?
   A. Evangelist
   B. Great-heart
   C. Hopeful
   D. Faithful

4. Which of the following is NOT a work by John Bunyan?

   A. *The Holy War*
   B. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*
   C. *Roxana*
   D. *Grace Abounding*

5. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* is set in which location?
   A. Jamaica
   B. London

C. Surinam
D. Barbados

6. Which theme is strongly present in *Oroonoko*?
   A. Industrial revolution
   B. Anti-colonialism and criticism of slavery
   C. Scientific discovery
   D. Political satire against monarchy

7. Which of the following statements about Aphra Behn is false?
   A. She was the first woman to earn a living by writing
   B. She was widely accepted and celebrated in her time
   C. She was accused of lewdness and plagiarism
   D. She was politically active

8. What is Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* primarily known for?
   A. Introducing feminist themes
   B. Allegorical critique of the monarchy
   C. Realistic portrayal of survival and adventure
   D. Satire on industrial capitalism

9. Which of the following best describes the character of Moll Flanders?
   A. A fearless pirate
   B. A heroic queen
   C. A rogue shaped by society and circumstances
   D. A religious reformer

10. Which of the following works is NOT written by Daniel Defoe?
    A. *The Journal of the Plague Year*
    B. *Colonel Jack*
    C. *The Pilgrim's Progress*
    D. *Moll Flanders*

3.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the origin and development of English Prose Fiction.
2. What are the characteristics of Prose Fiction in the Restoration era?
3. Who are the major writers of Prose Fiction writing during the Restoration era?

4. Critically evaluate John Bunyan as a writer of Prose Fiction.

5. Discuss the contribution made by Aphra Behn in the development of English Prose Fiction.

3.8 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. Fictional and Non-Fictional
2. *The Travels of Sir John Maundeville*
3. Sir Thomas Malory
4. Euphuism
5. Euphues
6. *Arcadia*
7. Picaresque
8. Shakespeare

MCQs

1-D; 2-C; 3-B; 4-C; 5-C; 6-B; 7-B; 8-C; 9-C; 10-C.

3.9 LET US SUM UP

The development of English prose has been very uncertain throughout ages since the beginning of Medieval English literature to nineteenth century writings. Although the Elizabethan age is called The Golden Age of English poetry and drama, English prose was set on the track of glory by such great prose writers as Lyly, Greene, Lodge, Nashe, Deloney and Dekker with Sir Philip Sidney on the forefront. Of the original prose writers of the Elizabethan age, John Lyly was the most famous. In 1578, the publication of his curious book, *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit* and its sequel entitled *Euphues and his England* in 1580 created a sensation. Restoration era marks a further development in the genre of English prose fiction with writers like John Bunyan, Aphra Behn, and Daniel Defoe coming to the literary scene. Although not novel in the modern sense of the term, the fictional narratives composed by these writers go a long way in standardising the genre of English Prose Fiction.

3.10 SUGGESTED READING

- *A History of English Literature.* Volume 1 by J.C. Mundra and S.C. Mundra

- *An Outline History of English Literature* by William Henry Hudson
- *A History of English Literature* by Pramod K. Nayar

Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -II**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 4**

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION POETRY

4.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the themes, style and the characteristics of the Restoration poetry. At the end of the lesson you would be able to explain the defining characteristics of Restoration poetry as well as recognize the major Restoration Poets and their contribution.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Restoration Poetry represents one of the most distinctive periods in the history of English Literature because of its characteristic shift from individual sentiments to larger public and philosophical expression and utterance. The age also commonly referred to as the 'Age of Dryden' was nonetheless very much different from the spirit of the Elizabethan literature. In the age of Renaissance even intellectual inquiry was started by the rapture of sense and feeling and there is a gradual change in the tone of the literature as well as in the temperament of writers.

With the Restoration we enter upon a period in which literature is intellectual

rather than imaginative or emotional. The new spirit is above all critical and analytical, not creative and sympathetic; it brings the intellect rather than the poetic imagination into play. The transformation of what is now fashionable to call the intellectual climate of the age was not simply a shift to a more rationalistic outlook, but it was mainly that. It is true that this change was not very conducive to the growth of poetry. Yet the new atmosphere did not make it impossible or even difficult for poets to write; it only made the writing of some kinds of poetry less easy.

4.2 RESTORATION PERIOD AND POETRY

The Restoration of Charles II on 4th April 1660 brought about a revolution in English literature. Charles I's famously happy, faithful and fruitful marriage was not mirrored by that of his eldest son Charles II. If the first Charles's court was characterized by what Clarendon calls 'gravity and reverence in all mention of religion', the second Charles's was, despite its cloak of Anglican conformity, far more inclined to accept and enjoy sexual, religious, and verbal license. The restored King, who had been schooled in a certain kind of elegant cynicism by his years in exile, set the tone of a cultured but libidinous court. The marked change of mood was evident not simply in the contrast between the personalities of two kings or between two types of court poetry but also in the reaction of certain influential patrons and writers against two older fashions: the dense, intellectual quirkiness of the school of Donne and the humourless, moral seriousness of Puritan writing and Puritan mores. The new ethos was one where sexual innuendo flourished. It was also one, which stimulated and fostered the stricter disciplines of poetic satire, a satire which fed on the contradictions, the ironies, and the hypocrisies of society. Most of the verses written by Marvell after the Restoration were the verse that was most admired by his later contemporaries, was of a political or satirical character. 'Sharpness of wit', spiced with a degree of profanity or ribaldry, was as much to Charles II's taste as were cultivated indolence, ministerially abetted chicanery, and the distractions of his mistresses. One of his most prominent courtiers, John Wilmot, *Earl of Rochester* (1647-80), is famously said to have reacted to the King's announcement that he would tolerate a relaxed frankness amongst his intimates with the impromptu quatrain:

We have a pritty witty king

Whose word no man relyson:

He never said a foolish thing,

And never did a wise one.

Unabashed, the King replied that though his words were his own it was his ministers who were responsible for his actions.

Rochester is the most subtle, brilliant, and scurrilous of the Restoration heirs to the poetry of Lovelace, Suckling, and Carew. In his work, and in that of less vitally intelligent poets such as Sir Charles Sedley (1639-1701) and Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset (1638-1706), Cavalier gallantry is rearticulated through the exercise of an indulgent world-weariness. As both his letters to his wife and the poems reveal, Rochester was capable of adjusting and interfusing the seeming anomalies of tenderness and cynicism, domesticity and debauchery, quick wit and meditative seriousness in his nature. Some of his periods of provincial exile from court were occasioned by his having overstepped the limits of royal tolerance as when he satirically assaulted the King with such couplets as

Nor are his high desires above his strength:

His sceptre and his prick are of a length

and

Restless he rolls about from Whore to Whore,

A Merry Monarch scandalous and poor;

others were elective interludes of recuperation, study, and meditation. 'He loved to talk and write of speculative matters', wrote Bishop Burnet, the man who brought him to a death-bed reconciliation with Christianity, but as much of his poetry suggests, Rochester also delighted in the pleasures that dulled and unperplexed thought. In *Upon Drinking in a Bowl* he proclaims Cupid and Bacchus his patron saints, washes his cares with wine, and turns to Love again. The songs An Age in her Embraces past, Absent from thee I languish still, and All my past Life is mine no more hedonistically announce that soul is sense and attempt to hold on to what 'the present Moment' offers. A more distinctly speculative, but no less wittily sceptical, poet emerges in his address to the 'Great Negative', 'Upon Nothing'. It is a poem which plays with the theological concept of a Nothing from which Something emerges, but it is also haunted by a sense of futility and universal human hypocrisy and it finally sees Nothing as an unholy trinity of 'the great Man's Gratitude to his best Friend, |

King's Promises Whores Vows'. Rochester's finest exercise in the satirical mode, *A Satyr against Mankind* (1675), returns to the idea of the basic falseness of all human pretension to honesty, virtue, wisdom, and valour, but it opens with a devastating undercutting of the great panjandrum of the age, human reason:

Reason, an Ignisfatuus of the Mind,?

Which leaves the Light of Nature, Sense, behind.

Pathless, and dangerous, wand'ring ways it takes,

Through Errour's fenny Bogs, and thorny Brakes ...

The deluded victim of this presumption to rationality first stumbles into doubts, is temporarily buoyed up by philosophy, and then finally and painfully recognizes the terrible error into which he has fallen:

Then old Age, and Experience, hand in hand,

Lead him to Death, and make him understand,

After a Search so painful, and so long,?

That all his Life he has been in the wrong.

The poem presents human life as a jungle in which creatures prey on one another and in which fear is the dominant stimulus to action ('Meerly for safety, after Fame they thirst; For all Men would be Cowards if they durst'). Unsurprisingly, Rochester seems to have felt a special affinity with his pet monkey. His portrait, now in the National Portrait Gallery in London, shows him crowning this monkey with a poet's laurels. In response, the monkey offers its master a mangled sheet of verses. Like much of Rochester's poetry it is a self-mocking artifice, at once cynical and provocative, flippant and serious.

Although poetic satire was a form cultivated by court wits, it was far from being an exclusively aristocratic property. Two highly esteemed satirists, John Oldham (1653-83) and Samuel Butler (1613-80), emerged from relative obscurity to assert their significance as professional, as opposed to amateur, poets. In the case of Oldham, who made a living as a schoolteacher and private tutor, literary fame came towards the end of a relatively short life and was largely assured by a succession of posthumous editions of his poems. Butler, the son of a Worcestershire farmer, achieved startling success only at the age of 49 with the publication of the first part

of *Hudibras* in 1662. *Hudibras* (Part II of which appeared in 1663 and Part III in 1678) proved to be the most popular long poem of its day, quoted, cited, imitated, admired, and flattered by parody. The reputations of both poets have since suffered from this initial blaze of contemporary adulation and the failure of later audiences to be enthralled by their work. Although the names of the major characters in Butler's *Hudibras* are derived from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, his mock-heroic, digressive narrative from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and much of his ironic tone from Rabelais's Gargantua, the prime objects of its satire are very much the products of the confused, divisive, post- revolutionary age. The poem's comically cumbersome octosyllabic couplets also allow for a considerable range of allusive comment on what Butler saw as the intellectual, political, and religious charlatanism of modern England. As a Baconian sceptic he was far more inclined to attack the prevalence of popular error and personal delusion than to hold up self evident truths or ideals. Hudibras aphoristically glances at churchmen and statesmen pursuing strategies of power under the guise of Presbyterian or monarchical principle:

To domineer and to controul?

Both o're the body and the soul,?

Is the most perfect discipline?

Of Church-rule, and by right divine.

If the varieties, obsessions, and peculiar rhetoric of English Puritanism prove to be the poem's main bugbear, and the petty theological divisions between the Presbyterian Sir Hudibras and his Independent squire, Ralpho, the initial focus of its satire, the introduction of the deluded astrologer Sidrophel in the second book and the reflection on the recent political disruption of the Civil War in the third serve to emphasize the breadth of Butler's satirical commentary.

Oldham, the son of a Puritan minister, is both a more disciplined and more directly classically rooted satirist. In the Preface to his imitation of Horace's *ArsPoetica*, for example, he aspires to put the Roman poet 'into a more modern dress, that is, by making him speak as if he were living and writing now'. Oldham's poetry looks back in order to attack the vices of the present; it reflects on precedent by insisting on a continuity in the expression of poetic indignation. The poems by which he was best known in his lifetime, the four vituperative Satyrs upon the Jesuits (1679-81), are unrelievedly angry denunciations of Jesuit machinations (a particularly

hot issue in the wake of the exposure of the so-called 'Popish Plot' to assassinate Charles II in 1678). If scarcely ever a gentle poet, Oldham is certainly a subtler one in his later work such as the *Satyr concerning Poetry, the Letter from the Country to a Friend in Town, or A Satyr address'd to a Friend that is about to leave the University, and come abroad in the World.* This last poem underlines the neglect and poverty which is the likely lot of a schoolmaster ('A Dancing-Master shall be better paid, Tho he instructs the heels, and you the Head') and it also reflects on the blessings of 'a close obscure retreat', a small estate sufficient to support a private man's withdrawal from the irritations of work and public affairs. Here in an English equivalent of Horace's Sabine farm, 'free from Noise, and all ambitious ends', the poet aspires to 'Enjoy a few choice Books, and fewer Friends, Lord of my self, accountable to none, But to my Conscience, and my God alone'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the blanks

1. The Restoration of Charles II occurred on _____.
2. _____ was a prominent Restoration poet known for his sharp wit and cynical, satirical poetry.
3. Rochester's most famous satirical poem is titled _____.
4. Samuel Butler's major satirical work, _____, was first published in 1662 and became the most popular long poem of its day.
5. The satirical characters Sir Hudibras and Ralpho in *Hudibras* represent divisions within _____.
6. John Oldham's series of poems attacking Catholic influence were titled _____.

John Dryden's *To the Memory of Mr Oldham* (1684) claims an affinitive sympathy between the two poets ('sure our Souls were near ally'd'). It also, somewhat unfairly, suggests that Oldham died before he had learned to purge his poetic style of 'harsh cadence', a ruggedness which Dryden held was not fully appropriate to satire. Dryden (1631- 1700) uses his elegy to display his own versatility; it is an exercise in modulation, a smooth play with couplets and triplets,

written in a pentameter which is subtly extended into an occasional hexameter and in couplets varied by a single effective triplet. Oldham is mourned both as a reflection of Virgil's Nisus, who slipped and failed to win a race, and as a poetic equivalent to Marcellus, the prematurely dead heir of the Emperor Augustus of whom much had been hoped. In both cases Dryden seems to be modestly projecting himself as the poet who has achieved the eminence denied to Oldham. As much of his criticism suggests, Dryden also seems to have seen himself as the heir to Milton's laurels. Nevertheless, his vision of Britain under the restored Stuarts is conditioned not by the idea of a stern republic outbraving the Roman, but by the example of the Imperial Rome of Augustus. In both periods the rule of an enlightened monarch could be seen as eclipsing the divisions of a preceding civil war. In the title of his elegy to Charles II, *Threnodia Augustalis* (1685), he glances at the parallel between the Emperor and the King while stressing the 'healing balm' of the Restoration and the maintenance of a distinctive brand of English liberty under the Stuart Crown ('Freedom which in no other Land will thrive | Freedom an English Subject's sole Prerogative'). This singular modern kingdom, Dryden maintained in the dedication to his tragedy All For Love (1678), required a disciplined poetry worthy of its heroic destiny and of its exalted place amongst the nations of Europe.

Though Dryden produced no heroic poem of his own, his quest for an English equivalent to Virgilian 'majesty in the midst of plainness' remained central to his patriotic mission as a poet. He continually strove for a Latinate precision, control, and clarity, but if his supreme poetic models were classical, his response to a select band of English writers suggests the degree to which he also saw himself as standing in a vernacular apostolic line. The Preface to his volume of translations - *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700) - stresses, for example, that he saw Chaucer as the prime figure in this canon (though his attempts at 'translating' certain of *The Canterbury Tales* into English 'as it is now refined' are far from distinguished tributes). This same Preface also declares a larger affinity in its assertion that poets have 'lineal descents and clans as well as families'. Spenser, he believes, 'insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfus'd into his body', while Milton 'has acknowledg'd to me that Spencer was his original'. Much of Dryden's most strenuous criticism appeared as prefaces to his own work but his most shapely critical manifesto, *Of Dramatic Poesie,* An Essay (1668), is a set piece written at a time of enforced theatrical inactivity during the Plague of 1665. It takes the form of a conversation between four characters in which the assertion of one is answered by the response

of another; each character is allotted a formal speech, one defending ancient drama, another the modern; one proclaiming the virtues of French practice, another (Dryden's patriotic mouthpiece) the English. There is no real dialogue in the Platonic sense though there is a good deal of name-dropping and, latterly, of weighing the respective merits of Jonson, Fletcher, and Shakespeare. Jonson ('the most learned and judicious Writer which any Theater ever had') stands throughout as a touchstone of theatrical 'regularity', while the more 'natural' Shakespeare ('the man who of all Modern and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul') is approvingly allowed the rank of an English Homer 'or Father of our Dramatick Poets'.

Three of the four disputants of *Of Dramatic Poesie* are typed as 'persons whom their wit and Quality have made known to all the Town'. The fourth, who seems to stand for Dryden himself, is clearly their social and intellectual equal. All are members of a court, which the essay's dedication confidently proclaims to be 'the best and surest judge of writing'. This was possibly the last point in English history at which such a flattering observation might be regarded as having a ring of authenticity. Dryden was also amongst the last influential writers to have sought and won discriminating court patronage and advantageous royal promotion. On the death of his erstwhile dramatic collaborator, Sir William Davenant, in April 1668, he was appointed Poet Laureate and in 1670 he also obtained the post of Historiographer Royal. Throughout his career he seems to have projected himself as an official spokesman in poetry. His early public verse- the grotesque schoolboy elegy *Upon the death of Lord Hastings* (1649), the mature tribute to the dead Cromwell; the *Heroique Stanzas Consecrated to the Glorious Memory of his Most Serene and Renowned Highness Oliver* of 1659, and the two fulsome panegyrics addressed to Charles II; *Astraea Redux* of 1660 and To *His Sacred Majesty* of 1661, testifies to a desire to be a representative voice. The nimble 'historical' poem, *Annus Mirabilis, The Year of Wonders* (1666-1667), is floridly dedicated 'to the Metropolis of Great Britain' both as a tribute to London's ordeal during the Great Fire and as a patriotic and emphatically royalist statement in the face of metropolitan resentment of the restored monarchy. In the poem it is the King's policies that serve to defeat the Dutch in war and the King's prayers that persuade Heaven to quell the flames.

Fourteen years elapsed between the composition of *Annus Mirabilis* and the

publication in 1681 of the political satire *Absalom and Achitophel*. They were years spent actively in writing for the theatre, an experience, which helped both to purge Dryden's verse of its early tendency to picturesqueness and to foster an interest in character and repartee. Dryden the satirist entertains through a witty intermixture of reasoned argument, refined technique, and invective. *Absalom and Achitophel* is a party poem, one designed to please friends by advancing their cause and to provoke enemies by ridiculing theirs. 'The true end of Satyre', he wrote in his preliminary declaration to his reader, 'is the amendment of Vices by correction'; the satirist himself is a physician prescribing 'harsh Remedies to an inveterate Disease', a disease affecting the body politic in which 'an Act of Oblivion were as necessary in a Hot, Distemper'd State, as an Opiate would be in a Raging Fever'. Dryden's reference here is specific. He wishes to memorialize and not to forgive the treasonable acts of Charles II's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, and his main abettor, the Earl of Shaftesbury, in attempting to exclude legally from the throne the King's proper successor, his brother, the Catholic Duke of York. The poem, which takes as its basis the biblical story of the rebellion of Absalom against his father David, is both a histoire à clef and a witty deflation of those, generally humourless Protestants whose first recourse in argument was to refer to biblical precedent or justification. Dryden's narrative makes little direct appeal to the sacred but it does allow the radiance of divine pleasure to reflect from David to Charles and it opens with a witty deflection of any taint of adultery on Charles's part by insisting that it is set 'In pious times ... Before Polygamy was made a sin'. The real joy of the poem lies in its exploration of forced parallels (Absalom and Monmouth, Achitophel and Shaftesbury, Saul and Cromwell, Pharaoh and Louis XIV of France, the Sanhedrin and Parliament, and the Jebusites - a name with a hint of 'Jesuit' about it - and English Catholics) and in its deftly scathing portraits, notably those of Shaftesbury, Buckingham (Zimri), and the Whig Sheriff of London, Bethel (Shimei). The aristocratic villains are introduced solemnly as if in a heroic poem; the less elevated, especially the shabby plotter Titus Oates (Corah), far more abusively ('Prodigious Actions may as well be done By Weavers issue, as by Princes Son'). Shaftesbury/Achitophel is cast as the Satanic tempter of the honourably gullible Monmouth/Absalom; he holds out the prospect of personal glory and public salvation, and he flatters the young man with perverted biblical images pregnant with a sense of a divine mission:

Auspicous Prince! At whose Nativity

Some Royal Planet rul'd the Southern sky;

Thy longing Countries Darling and Desire;

Their cloudy Pillar, and their guardian Fire:

. ..... ?

The Peoples Prayer, the glad Diviners Theam

The Young-mens Vision, and the Old-mens Dream

Thee Saviour, Thee, the Nations Vows confess;

And never satisfi'd with seeing bless ...

The poem, which has relatively little 'plot' in the strict sense of the term, is structured around a series of vivid arguments and apologies. It closes with a reasoned affirmation of intent from the 'Godlike' David, part a regretful denunciation, part a defence of royal prerogative, part a restatement of an ideal of constitutional balance. It is presented as a second Restoration with the King's position approved, in late baroque pictorial fashion, by an assenting God and a thundering firmament.

Shaftesbury's continued machinations against Charles's policy of support for his Catholic brother stimulated two pale satirical reflections of *Absalom and Achitophel*. The King himself is said to have provided the subject of Dryden's *The Medall: A Satyre Against Sedition* (1682), a frontal attack on Shaftesbury's character and on the motives of his party (the Whigs to whom the poem is slyly dedicated). The Second Part of *Absalom and Achitophel* of 1682 is largely the work of Nahum Tate, but Dryden's contribution of some two hundred lines of abuse, especially the sketches of the 'Heroically mad' Elkanah Settle (Doeg) and of Thomas Shadwell (Og), have a vicious palpability about them. Shadwell (1642-92) became the object of Dryden's satire partly as a result of his political affiliations, but more directly as a result of an increasingly unfriendly rivalry in the theatre (Shadwell's operatic adaptation of *The Tempest, The Enchanted Isle* of 1674, was a particularly galling success). Dryden's bitter distaste for the flippancy and shoddiness of Shadwell's work as a poet reached its peak in the lampoon which he had begun in the late 1670s but published only in 1682, *Mac Flecknoe*, or *A Satyr upon the True-Blew-Protestant Poet*, T.S. It is a poem which advances beyond critical sniping to a rage at the deathliness of human stupidity. Flecknoe, whom Dryden assumes to be an Irishman, finds his true heir in a loquacious Celtic bard, the

irrepressible (and non-Irish) Shadwell. The poem defines by negatives and discrepancies; it undoes epic pretensions by playing with mock-heroic and it purports to let dullness express itself while showing off the virtues of wit. The elevated tone of its opening couplet crashes once Flecknoe emerges as a fatuous Augustus seeking to settle his succession; Shadwell, the inadequate prince of a London slum, is enthroned bearing 'a mighty Mug of potent Ale' instead of an orb and, with a due sexual innuendo, a copy of his play *Love's Kingdom* instead of a scepter as a symbol of his impotent claims to literary worth.

Dryden's two philosophico-religious poems of the 1680s, *ReligioLaici, or A Layman's Faith* (1682) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687), are public defences of the authority of a Church rather than, as they might have been in the hands of earlier seventeenth-century poets, explorations of the springs of devotion or private faith. In the Preface to the earlier poem Dryden describes himself as one who is 'naturally inclin'd to Scepticism in Philosophy' though one inclined to submit his theological opinions 'to my Mother Church'. The poem sees the Church of England as serenely fostering 'Common quiet' in the face of attacks from Deists, Dissenters, and Papists and it blends within the form of a verse-epistle theological proposition with satirical exposition. Its striking opening image of human reason as a 'dim moon lighting the benighted soul' is developed into an attack on those Deists who reject the Scripturally based teachings of Christianity. As it proceeds, the poem also attempts to demolish both Roman claims to infallible omniscience and the Puritan faith in individual inspiration, but it ultimately begs the vital question of religious authority. This question is emphatically answered in *The Hind and the Panther*, Dryden's longest poem, written after his reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1685. It is a somewhat wordy and unworthy tribute to his new-found religious security, an allegorical defence of James II's attempts to achieve official toleration for Catholics in a predominantly Anglican culture and an attempt to prove the validity of Catholic claims to universal authority. It takes the form of a beast fable in which Quakers appear as hares, Presbyterians as wolves, Romans as hinds, and Anglicans as panthers. It is obliged to resort to the absurdity of a good-natured conversation about the mysteries of religion in which a hind actually attempts to persuade a panther, and to the incongruity of casting the Christian God as the nature God, Pan. Personal conviction and a certain political urgency coincided again in *Britannia Rediviva*, the propagandist public ode written to celebrate the birth of James II's heir in June 1688. Dryden's poem rejoices in the fact that the Stuart family has at last produced

legitimate male issue and it attempts to brush aside the protests of 'th' ungrateful Rout' who both doubted that the child was truly the King's and were profoundly uneasy at the prospect of an assured Catholic succession to the throne.

The birth of James's son was not received with universal rejoicing in his kingdom, bringing as it did a long- drawn-out constitutional crisis to a head and immediately precipitating the overthrow of an alienated regime and with it the Poet Laureate's pious hopes. With the abrupt end to his official career in 1688, Dryden's sense of a patriotic mission for English poetry was forced to take a new and less overtly political turn. Apart from his translations and his libretto for Henry Purcell's extravagant 'Dramatick Opera' King Arthur, or *The British Worthy* (1691), two late lyric poems - *A Song for St Cecilia's Day,* 1687, and *Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Musique. An Ode, in Honour of St Cecilia's Day* (1697) - proved of particularly fruitful impact on the eighteenth century. Both poems contributed to the fashion for the irregular stanzas and verse paragraphs of the 'Cowleyan' Ode. More significantly, both later attracted the attention of Handel, anxious to prove his credentials as a composer resident in England and as a setter of English texts. If in *Britannia Rediviva*(1688) Dryden had produced the right words for what was soon seen as a wrong and intensely divisive cause, in his two St Cecilia Odes he provided the occasion for an extraordinary exploration of the potential of harmony.

4.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. _____is a poem based on the falseness of human pretension to honesty, virtue, wisdom, and valour by John Wilmot.
   a . Absent from thee I languish still

   b .Upon Drinking in a Bowl

   c. An Age in her Embraces past

   c. A Satyr against Mankind

2. *Hudibras,* the most popular long poem of its day, quoted, cited, imitated, admired, and flattered by parody was written by

   a. John Oldham

   b. John Dryden

   c. Samuel Butler

d. John Wilmot

3. *Threnodia Augustali*s is an elegy to Charles II written by

a. John Oldham

b. John Dryden

c. Samuel Butler

d. John Wilmot

4. _____is a set piece written by Dryden at a time of enforced theatrical inactivity during the Plague of 1665.

a. Of Dramatic Poesie, An Essay

b. All For Love

c. Fables, Ancient and Modern

d. The Works of Virgil

5. Dryden's two philosophico-religious poems of the 1680s are_____.

a. Astraea Reduxand To His Sacred Majesty
b. Annus Mirabilis and Absalom and Achitophel
c. ReligioLaici, or A Laymans Faithand, The Hind and the Panther
d. None of these

6. Absalom and Achitophel is a _____satire.

a. Personal

b. Political

c. Social

d. Religious

4.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. Discuss the contributions made by Dryden to the Restoration Poetry.

Q.2. Discuss Satire and Wit as main characteristics of Restoration Poetry.

Q.3. Restoration period is also called the beginning of Neo-Classical age in Literature. Discuss.

4.5 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. 4th April 1660
2. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester
3. *A Satyr Against Mankind*
4. *Hudibras*
5. English Puritanism
6. *Satyrs upon the Jesuits*

MCQs

1. *A Satyr against Mankind*
2. Samuel Butler
3. John Dryden
4. *Of Dramatic Poesie, An Essay*
5. *ReligioLaici,* or *A Laymans Faith* and, *The Hind and the Panther*
6. Political

4.6 LET US SUM UP

The restored monarchy of Charles II inaugurated a new temper, and a cultural style, which lasted way beyond his era. Charles II's return gave literature chances it. The theatres opened, determined to reject Puritan earnestness. The king's friends came back from France with a more secular, skeptical and 'civilized' tone, and neo-classical ideas. By the year 1660 Elizabethan romanticism had all but spent itself. Of the great figures of the earlier era only one survived, John Milton, and he had still to write *Paradise Lost;* but in everything Milton was of the past. At the Restoration he retired and worked in obscurity, and his great poem reveals no signs of the time in which his later years were cast. The three major features of the Restoration Poetry is first, Moderation of words i.e. the precision or economical use of language and words, second, Realism i.e. that the writers of the age focused on creating a vivid and realistic representation of the society, and lastly, Reason based upon logic and scientific understanding as opposed to their metaphysical and romantic predecessors . The result of such distinctive characteristics developed restoration verse satire and, Judging and criticising became common in the society of the age and this habit naturally gave birth to the spirit of satire.

With the Restoration, the break with the past was almost absolute. It involved

English literature in the deepest degree; subject and style took on a new spirit and outlook, a different attitude and aim. Hence the post-Restoration period is often set up as the converse and antithesis of the previous Elizabethan age. It is called classical, as opposed to the Elizabethan romanticism due to their unequalled regards and urge to imitation of the Ancients. Lacking the genius of the Elizabethans, the authors of the time turned to the great classical writers, in particular to the Latin writers, for guidance and inspiration. This habit, quite noticeable during the time of Dryden, deepened and hardened during the succeeding era of Alexander Pope.

4.7 SUGGESTED READING

- *History of English Literature* by Edward Albert
- *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* by Andrew Sanders
- *A History of English Literature* by Robert Huntington Fletcher
- *A History of English Literature* by Michael Alexander

Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -III**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 5**

APHRA BEHN (1640-1689)

5.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the lesson is intended to acquaint you with the life history of Aphra Behn and the literary age to which she belongs. The lesson also focuses on her works and her contribution to literature. After reading this lesson you will get a clear perspective of the Restoration Period, the critical reputation of Aphra Behn and her position as a female writer in that era.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As the origin of Aphra Behn still remains a mystery, it is presumed by many thinkers and literary critics that she was born on December 14, 1640 in England. After working as a spy for England for some time, Behn became a dramatist, novelist, translator and poet. Behn used the pastoral pseudonym "Astrea". In fact she was the first woman to make a living through writing. Though Behn wrote many plays, her fiction draws more interest. Her short novel *Oroonoko* (1688) tells the story of an enslaved African prince whom Behn claimed to have known in South America. The themes of the novel *Oroonoko* - slavery, race, and gender as well as its influence on the development of the English novel helped to make it her best-known work. Behn, a versatile writer made an immense contribution to English literature.

5.2 APHRA BEHN'S BIOGRAPHY

5.2.1 HER LIFE HISTORY

As ambiguous details are available about her birth and parentage, it is estimated that Aphra Behn was born on December 14, 1640. Some critics say that she was the daughter of a gentleman named John Johnson, a close relation of Lord Willoughby. Others think Behn was the foster child of Johnson and still others think she was the daughter of a simple barber, John Amis, from Kent. Information about Behn's early life is scant and this may be due to intentional obscuring on Behn's part.

Behn, the child of the political tensions of the time, was born during English Civil War. According to one version of story Behn was travelling with Bartholomew Johnson to Surinam. Though there is no evidence, yet it

is supposed that he died on the journey, with his wife and children spending some months in the country. During this trip Behn said she met an African slave leader, whose story formed the basis for one of her most famous works, *Oroonoko.* In *Oroonoko* Behn gives herself the position of narrator and her first biographer accepted the assumption that Behn was the daughter of the lieutenant general of Surinam, as in the story. There is little evidence that this was the case, and none of her contemporaries acknowledge that she belonged to any aristocratic status. There is also no evidence that Oroonoko existed as an actual person or that any such slave revolt, as is featured in the story, really happened.

After her supposed return to England from Surinam in 1664, Aphra Behn married Johan Behn, a Dutch merchant possibly from Hamburg. Her husband died before the end of 1665, leaving Behn without a means of income. However, from this point the writer used the moniker "Mrs Behn" as her professional name.

Some critics assume that Behn may have had a Catholic upbringing as she once commented that she was "designed for a nun." Also the fact that she had so many Catholic connections, such as Henry Neville who was later arrested for his Catholicism, would have aroused suspicions during the anti-Catholic fervour of the 1680s. She was a monarchist, and her sympathy for the Stuarts, and particularly for the Catholic Duke of York may be demonstrated by her dedication of her play *The Rover II* to Henry Neville after he had been exiled for the second time.

5.2.2 FROM SPY TO PLAYWRIGHT

Behn's short time as a spy is well documented. She was employed by Charles II and sent to Antwerp in July 1666. Throughout her life, Behn was a loyal Tory and devoted to the Stuart family. She was employed as a spy due to her former connection with William Scot, a double agent for the Dutch and the English. While in Antwerp, Behn worked on gathering information about possible Dutch military threats and English expatriates during the Second Dutch War. However, like most employees of the King, Behn could not get paid. She returned to London penniless and promptly wound up in a

debtors' prison. Having no money, she was forced by her circumstances to make a living through writing. There were women writers at that time like Katherine Philips and the Duchess of Newcastle and many more. But most of the women came from aristocratic backgrounds and none of them was writing as a means of income. Behn wrote under the pastoral pseudonym "Astrea". During the turbulent political times of the Exclusion Crisis, she wrote an epilogue and prologue that brought her into legal trouble. She, thereafter, devoted most of her writing to prose genres and translations. A staunch supporter of the Stuart line, she declined an invitation from Bishop Burnet to write a welcoming poem to the new king William III. She died shortly after.

Behn is mostly remembered as a novelist but she was more famous for her plays. Behn became a "house playwright" for the Duke's Company, which was managed by Thomas Betterton. Between 1670 and 1687, Aphra Behn mounted sixteen plays on the London stage. Behn was a prolific and professional playwright.

The plays of Aphra Behn reveal her talent for clever dialogue, plotting, and characterization that rivals her male contemporaries. Comedy was her strength. Her dramas show a keen understanding of human nature and a flair for language and this was the result of her worldliness. Behn's plays frequently humanize prostitutes, older women and widows. Though she was a Tory, Behn questioned their treatment of women. This is most obvious in her portrayal of flawed heroes, whose political honor is at odds with their dishonorable conduct to women that are vulnerable to their sexual mistreatment. Despite her success, many critics were outraged by her lack of femininity. She competed on equal terms with men and never concealed her authorship or the fact that she was a woman. When attacked, she defended herself with counterattacks. After one of her plays, *The Dutch Lover*, failed, Behn blamed the prejudice against women's work. As a woman, she had suddenly become a competitor. This undeserving failure inspired Aphra Behn to add a feminist response to the play: "Epistle to the Reader" (1673). In it, she argued that while women should be allowed

equal opportunity for learning, this was not necessary for composing entertaining comedies. These two ideas were unheard of in the Restoration Theater and therefore quite radical. Even more radical was her attack on the belief that drama was meant to have a moral teaching at its heart. Behn believed that a good play was worth more than scholarship and plays had done less harm than sermons.

Perhaps the strangest charge thrown at Behn was that her play, *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), was bawdy. Behn defended herself by pointing out that such a charge would never be made against a man. She also stated that bawdy was more excusable for an author that wrote to support herself as opposed to one that writes only for fame.

Aphra Behn's outspoken tendencies and loyalty to the Stuart family was what wound up causing a pause in her career. In 1682, she was arrested for her attack on the illegitimate son of Charles II, the duke of Monmouth. In an epilogue to her play, *Romulus and Hersilia*, Behn wrote of her fear of the threat the duke posed to succession. The king punished not only Behn, but also the actress that read the epilogue. After this, Aphra Behn's productivity as a playwright declined sharply. She once again had to find a new source of income.

5.2.3 POETRY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVELIST

Behn turned to other forms of writing like Poetry, Short-Stories and Novels. Her poetry explores the themes she enjoyed: the inextricable intertwining of sexual and political power. Most of her poetry is about desire. It explores female desire for male and female lovers, male impotence from a female perspective, and imagining a time when no law curbed sexual freedom. At times, Behn's poetry seems to play with the conventions of romantic friendship and the possibility of going beyond it.

Behn eventually started writing fiction. Her first effort was *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and His Sister* (1684), based loosely on a real scandal involving Lord Grey, a member of Whig nobility, who had married the daughter of the Lord of Berkeley, but later eloped with another, Behn. The novel shows Behn's developing ambivalence towards authority

and its conflict with individual freedom. *Love Letters* was influential on the genre of erotic fiction, but it also contributed to the severer moral climate of the eighteenth century. The most famous and most important work of Aphra Behn was *Oroonoko* (1688) written at the end of her life. *Oroonoko* is a vivid portrait of colonial life in South America and the brutal treatment of the native population.

5.2.4 HER WORKS

PLAYS

- *The Forced Marriage (1670)*
- *The Amorous Prince* (1671)
- *The Dutch Lover* (1673)
- *Abdelazer* (1676)
- *The Town Fop* (1676)
- *The Rover*, Part 1 (1677) and Part 2 (1681)
- *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678)
- *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679)
- *The Young King* (1679)
- *The False Count* (1681)
- *The Roundheads* (1681)
- *The City Heiress* (1682)
- *Like Father, Like Son* (1682)
- *Prologue and Epilogue to Romulus and Hersilia, or The Sabine War* (November 1682)
- *The Lucky Chance* (1686) with composer John Blow
- *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687)
- *The Widow Ranter* (1689) – Performed posthumously
- *The Younger Brother* (1696) – Performed posthumously

NOVELS

- *The Fair Jilt*
- *Agnes de Castro*
- *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684)
- *Oroonoko* (1688)

SHORT STORIES

- *The Fair Jilt* (1688)
- *The History of the Nun: or, the Fair Vow-Breaker* (1688)
- *The History of The Servant*
- *The Lover-Boy of Germany*
- *The Girl Who Loved the German Lover-Boy*

POETRY COLLECTIONS

- *Poems upon Several Occasions, with A Voyage to the Island of Love* (1684)
- *Lycidus; or, The Lover in Fashion* (1688)

5.2.5 HER CRITICAL REPUTATION

Behn is famously remembered in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*: "All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds." Her grave is not included in the Poets' Corner but lies in the East Cloister near the steps to the church.

Behn is regarded as one of the significant dramatists of the seventeenth-century theatre and her prose work has contributed a lot to the development of the English novel. She is best known for her short novel *Oroonoko* (1688), the tale of an enslaved African prince. It is notable for its exploration of slavery, race, and gender.

Behn is an immensely prolific writer who also translated some works

from French. She received harsh criticism for often alluding to sexual desire. But she confidently stated that the works would not have caused problems if they had been written by a man. Behn's work frequently takes homoerotic themes, featuring same- sex love between women. One of her best known poems, "The Disappointment" is the story of a sexual encounter told from a woman's point of view that may be interpreted as a work about male impotence.

After the death of Aphra Behn, new female dramatists such as Ariadne, Delarivier Manle y, Mary Pix, Susanna Centlivre and Catherine Trotter acknowledged Behn as their most vital predecessor, who opened up public space for women writers. But during the 19th century, both the writer and her works were ignored and dismissed as indecent. Victorian novelist and critic Julia Kavanagh wrote that, "the disgrace of Aphra Behn is that, instead of raising man to woman's moral st andard, [she] sank woman t o t he level of man's coarseness". Nineteenth century commentator John Doran wrote that "her work wallowed in the moral morass."

In the 20th century, however, Behn's fame underwent a revival. Montague Summers, an author of scholarly works on English drama of the 17th century, published a six-volume collection of her work, in hopes of rehabilitating her reputation. Felix Schelling wrote in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, that she was "a very gifted woman, compelled to write for bread in an age in which literature catered habitually to the lowest and most depraved of human inclinations," and that, "Her success depended upon her ability to write like a man." Edmund Gosse remarked that she was, "the George Sand of the Restoration".

Behn is now regarded as a key English playwright and a major figure in Restoration theatre. George Woodcock regarded Behn as an important influence on the development of the novel, stating "It is as a founder of the school of realistic novel-writing that Mrs. Behn is perhaps most important."

The current revival of her reputation rides on the work *Oroonoko* (1688), a story that is taken to promote modern, progressive views on

gender, race and class. Todd maintains that the fiction has been co-opted by modern interests and that such views are not views that Behn clearly expressed. Her reputation is not helped by the fact that almost nothing is known of her first 27 years; and while she was a pioneer, she also faced debt for much of her life and was a propagandist and writer for hire. She was ambitious, desiring fame and literary prestige, which for a woman of the time and in times since, is often regarded as suspect.

5.2.6 RESPONSE TO HER DEATH

Aphra Behn died in April 1689. When she died, her literary reputation was considerable, despite the fact that she was politically out of favour with the new monarchs, William and Mary. She was buried in Westminster Abbey, which had recently become the resting place of honour for poets. Only a few days after her death the anonymous *An Elegy Upon the Death of Mrs A Behn, the Incomparable Astraea,* was published. The author, 'a young lady of quality' starts by praising Behn as a female champion, asking:

"Who now of all the inspired
Race, Shall take Orinda's
Place?
Or who the Hero's Fame shall
raise? Who now shall fill the
Vacant Throne?"

She then presents the loss of Astraea as a triumph for men, who can now reassert their rule over women:

"Let all our Hopes despair and
dye, Our Sex for ever shall
neglected lye;
Aspiring Man has now regain'd the
Sway, To them we've lost the

Dismal Day"

This lament for the 'female champion' represents the recognition that Behn might have earned as an enabling model for women writers. Behn is a champion of women, and a writer whose literary skill in describing the arts of love in her poetry and fiction is inextricably linked to her personal sexual experience.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Fill in the blanks:

1. Aphra Behn was employed as a spy by _____.
2. As a spy, Aphra Behn was sent to _____.
3. Aphra Behn wrote under the pastoral pseudonym _____.
4. The failure of the play _____ inspired Aphra Behn to add a feminist response to the play "Epistle to the Reader"
5. Aphra Behn's first effort at writing fiction was _____.
6. _____ is a vivid portrait of colonial life in South America and the brutal treatment of the native population.
7. _____ is one of her best-known poems in which the story of a sexual encounter is told from a woman's point of view that may be interpreted as a work about male impotence.

5.3 THE RESTORATION PERIOD (1660-1700)

The first half of the 17th century is known as the "Puritan age" because Puritanism was the dominant force during this period. First, King James I and then Charles I ruled England during these years. So this age is referred to as the Jacobean age or the Caroline age. It was an age of Transition. By this time the renaissance impulse had exhausted itself, the Elizabethan zest for life was gone, and there prevailed a mood of disillusionment and desolation. The scenario became even more decadent when Oliver Cromwell banned drama and even theatres were closed. The Restoration took place in 1660, when Charles II came to the throne. Charles I was defeated and beheaded. Charles II was the son of Charles I. With the coming of Charles II, there was a complete rejection of the Puritan ideals and way of living. In

English literature the period from 1660 to 1700 is called the period of Restoration, because monarchy was restored in England.Charles II and his followers, who had enjoyed a gay life in France during their exile, did their best to introduce that type of foppery and looseness in England also. They renounced old ideals and demanded that English poetry and drama should follow the style to which they had become accustomed in the gaiety of Paris. Instead of having Shakespeare and the Elizabethans as their models, the poets and dramatists of the Restoration period began to imitate French writers and especially their vices.

The result was that the old Elizabethan spirit with its patriotism, its love of adventure and romance, its creative vigour, and the Puritan spirit with its moral discipline and love of liberty, became things of the past. For a time in poetry, drama and prose nothing was produced which could compare satisfactorily with the great achievements of the Elizabethans, of Milton, and even of minor writers of the Puritan age. But then the writers of the Restoration period began to evolve something that was characteristic of the times and they made two important contributions to English literature in the form of Realism and a tendency to Preciseness.

Restoration writers, under the influence of French writers, gave emphasis to reasoning rather than romantic fancy, and evolved an exact and precise way of writing, consisting of short, clear-cut sentences without any unnecessary word. The Restoration poetry was mostly satirical, realistic and written in the heroic couplet, of which Dryden was the supreme master. He was the dominating figure of the Restoration period, and he made his mark in the fields of poetry, drama and prose. The poetry of Dryden can be conveniently divided under three heads—Political Satires, Doctrinal Poems and The Fables. Of his political satires, *Absolem and Achitophel* and *The Medal* are well-known.

The drama in England after 1660, called the Restoration drama, showed entirely new trends on account of the long break with the past. Moreover, it was greatly affected by the spirit of the new age which was deficient in poetic feeling, imagination and emotional approach to life, but laid emphasis on prose as the medium of expression, and intellectual, realistic and critical approach to life and its problems. As the common people were still under the influence of Puritanism, they had no love for the theatres. The dramatists had to cater to the taste of the aristocratic class

which was highly fashionable, frivolous, cynical and sophisticated. Its appeal was confined to the upper strata of society whose taste was aristocratic, and among which the prevailing fashions and etiquettes were foreign and extravagant. Comedy loses its ideal universality and wit succeeds humour. These new trends in comedy are seen in Dryden's *Wild Gallant* (1663), Etherege's *The Comical Revenge or Love in a Tub* (1664), Wycherley's *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer,* and the plays of Vanbrugh and Farquhar. But the most gifted among all the Restoration dramatists was William Congreve (1670-1720) who is well-known for his comedies *Love for Love* (1695) and *The Way of the World* (1700). In tragedy, the Restoration period specialised in Heroic Tragedy, which dealt with themes of epic magnitude. The heroes and heroines possessed superhuman qualities. The purpose of this tragedy was didactic—to inculcate virtues in the shape of bravery and conjugal love. It was written in the 'heroic couplet.' The chief protagonist and writer of heroic tragedy was Dryden. Under his leadership the heroic tragedy dominated the stage from 1660 to 1678. His first experiment in this type of drama was his play *Tyrannic love,* and in *The Conquest of Granada* he brought it to its culminating point.

The Restoration period was deficient in poetry and drama, but in prose it holds its head much higher in the hands of Milton and Browne, or in the succeeding ages in the hands of Lamb, Hazlitt, Ruskin and Carlyle. Dryden was the chief leader and practitioner of the new prose. In his greatest critical work *Essay of Dramatic Poesy,* Dryden presented a model of the new prose, which was completely different from the prose of Bacon, Milton and Browne. He wrote in a plain, simple and exact style, free from all exaggerations. Other writers of the period, who came under the influence of Dryden, and wrote in a plain, simple but precise style, were Sir William Temple, John Tillotson and George Saville better known as Viscount Halifax. Next to Dryden, John Bunyan was the greatest prose-writer of the period. Like Milton, he was imbued with the spirit of Puritanism, and in fact, if Milton is the greatest poet of Puritanism, Bunyan is its greatest story-teller. Bunyan's greatest work is *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Just as Milton wrote his *Paradise Lost* "to justify the ways to God to men", Bunyan's aim in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was "to lead men and women into God's way, the way of salvation, through a simple parable with homely characters and exciting events". Bunyan's other works are *Grace Abounding to*

the Chief of Sinners (1666), *The Holy War, The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680). It is true to call him the pioneer of the modern novel, because he had the qualities of a great story-teller, deep insight into character, humour, pathos, and the visualising imagination of a dramatic artist.

5.4 APHRA BEHN AND THE NEW THEATRE

Behn's career was spent struggling under the biased preconceptions of her male contemporaries and that her work represents a continual struggle to break out of this model. Behn was a canny woman and skilled dramatist. She rose to fame through her numerous and successful comedies by responding to the changed nature of the theatres after 1660. Behn exploited the erotic and commercial potential of the actress onstage. Behn drew on the established reputations of famous stars as she wrote her plays. A good example of this is the way in which she developed roles for Elizabeth Barry, one of the most famous actresses of the Restoration stage. In the 1670s Barry was known for her portrayal of tragic women, who were marked by their sexual passion, either in the form of the lustful villainess or as a heroine torn between sexual desire and duty. In the 1680s Behn wrote a series of heroines, prostitutes, and mistresses for Barry, all of who are passionate, seduced, and ultimately doomed to unhappiness. Barry's talent and her ability to capture the attention and sympathy of her audiences in this role meant that Behn was able to present the plight of the prostitute mistress as more complex and problematic than it had been previously.

Behn adapted John Marston's tragedy *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605) into a comic drama called *The Revenge* in 1680. In *The Revenge*, Behn took the grim story of the fiendish courtesan Francheschina, found in Marston's play, and transformed it into the story of Corinia (Barry's role). Drawing on Barry's specialism in 'whore with a heart of gold', Francheschina, the hardened and cynical prostitute of Marston's play was transformed in Behn's frail victim of libertine desire, a loving mistress, rather than a prostitute.

5.5 APHRA BEHN: THE FIRST LADY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

Aphra Behn was the pioneer of the female voice in literature. Behn made a major contribution to the Restoration literature. The publishing of her first play, *The*

Forced Marriage, made her the first woman in England to earn her living as a writer. Aphra Behn was the first professional woman writer. Her fame was marked by her libertine and revealing writing style during a time period when women did not have a place nor a voice in the patriarchal society of seventeenth century England.

Behn's work affected people of her time period, especially women, and is still effective today. One of Behn's most important benefactions to the literary world was the development of the novel as we know it today. She gave literature a new twist with her more personal, narrative style. In this style, the narrator speaks directly to the reader while telling the story, and is also part of the story. This makes the story much like a conversation. This form most closely resembles what we call today the authorial narrative strategy. This strategy has been adopted and developed by well-known writers such as Jane Austen and George Eliot (Nestvold 1), and continues to be used by contemporary writers today.

"Since Ian Watt's influential work, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), literary historians have generally considered *Robinson Crusoe* the first successful English novel and Daniel Defoe as one of the originators of realistic fiction in the eighteenth century, but he was deeply indebted to his female precursors and probably would never have attempted prose narrative if they had not created an audience for it in the first place" (Nestvold 2).

The true beginning of the novel started with women writers who opposed the regulations that defined the literary world during the Augustan Age (Sappho); Aphra Behn's first novel, *Oroonoko*, was of significant influence (Nestvold 2).

Behn's narrative strategy provided an open field for the female voice and a pathway through the emotional, sexual, and political alleys that were dominated primarily by men. Aphra Behn was a true liberator because her writing marks the birth of the female voice in English literature.

5.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Aphra Behn wrote in the _____

   A. Caroline Age
   B. Elizabethan period
   C. Restoration period

D. Victorian period

2. Charles II descended the throne of England in the year _____

A. 1642
B. 1649
C. 1670
D. 1660

3. The duration of the Restoration period is from _____

A. 1620-1660

B. 1660-1700

C. 1649-1660

D. 1600-1668

4. _____was the first play of Aphra Behn.

A. *The Forced Marriage*
B. The Amorous Prince
C. The Dutch Lover
D. *Abdelazer*

5. Aphra Behn died in the year _____.

A. 1700
B. 1699
C. 1689
D. 1669

6. Behn is famously remembered in _____as "All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds."

A. Dryden's *Essay on Poesy*
B. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*
C. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*
D. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*

7. The novel *Oroonoko* was written in the year _____

A. 1689

B. 1688
C. 1662
D. 1670

5.8 SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Write a brief note on the Restoration period.
2. Why is Aphra Behn known as "the first lady of English Literature"?
3. Comment on Aphra Behn's journey from a spy to a playwright and then finally a novelist.
4. Write a brief note on Aphra Behn's style of writing.

5.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Aphra Behn's contribution in the field of English Literature.
2. Explain Aphra Behn's development as a novelist.

5.10 ANSWER KEY

C Y P

1. Charles II
2. Antwerp
3. Astrea
4. *The Dutch Lover*
5. *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and His Sister*
6. *Oroonoko*
7. "The Disappointment"

M C Q s

1. C Restoration Period
2. D 1660
3. B 1660-1700
4. A *The Forced Marriage*
5. C 1689
6. C Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*
7. B 1688

5.11 LET US SUM UP

We can easily say that Behn was a myriad- minded individual when looking at the wide range of contributions she made to the literary world. Not only did she give women a voice through her writing, but she developed structure and principle so grounded that it has withstood over three centuries of literary criticism and development. Aphra Behn was a bright feminine liberal light that continues to shine today in subtle ways. Aphra Behn's work brings a sort of liberating and seductive essence to her writing. Behn was the pioneer of the female voice in literature.

5.12 SUGGESTED READING

- *The Passionate Shepherdess* by Maureen Duffy
- *Reconstructing Aphra: a social biography of Aphra Behn* by Angeline Goreau
- *The Theatre of Aphra Behn* by Derek Hughes
- *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf
- *Aphra Behn and the Restoration Theatre* by Abigail Williams
- *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn* by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd
- *Aphra Behn Stages the Social Scene in the Restoration Theater* by Dawn Lewcock.

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -III**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 6**

APHRA BEHN: *OROONOKO*

6.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, in the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the plot structure and the story of the novel *Oroonoko*. The lesson aims to enable the learners to examine the novel closely and thoroughly after reading its critical analysis. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to analyze the plot structure and narrative elements of *Oroonoko,* and critically examine the novel's themes, characters, and historical context.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Oroonoko is a novel written by Aphra Behn and published in 1688. The novel is about the grandson of an African king, his life and death as a slave, and his ill-fated love for the young woman, Imoinda. When you read *Oroonoko*, you might

find some aspects of the text different from contemporary novels. This is because the novel genre did not develop until sometime in the 17th century, and really did not become popular until the 18th century. Another surprising thing about this text is that Behn casts herself as a participant narrator (a narrator that is part of the story), yet sometimes she writes from the third person point of view. In other words, she tells part of the story in long passages as if she is only relating something she has heard or read. At other points she speaks as if she has met the main characters and is part of the story.

6.2 PLOT AND STORY OF THE NOVEL *OROONOKO*

Oroonoko Or *The Royal Slave* is a short novel by Aphra Behn, published in 1688, hardly a year before Behn expired. The novel begins with an extensive description of slave trade which was prevalent in the 17th century. Behn gives a detailed account of how slaves were brought from Africa to work on the sugar plantations of the colonized West Indies. *Oroonoko* is set first in what is present-day Ghana, called Coramantien at that time, and then in Surinam in the West Indies. Coramantien is a brave and warlike nation that participated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, selling prisoners of war to Western ships. Many people from Africa were captured and brought to the West Indies. In the West Indies, most of their work involved the vast sugar plantations owned by Europeans.

Oroonoko is an African prince from Coramantien who is tricked into slavery and sold to British colonists in Surinam where the narrator (Aphra Behn) happens to meet him. Behn's novel is the first person account of Oroonoko's life, love, rebellion, and brutal execution. Oroonoko has grown up away from the court, and has been trained to be a great military leader by Imoinda's father, King's top general. One day, during an intense battle, Imoinda's father takes a fatal arrow in the eye and saves Oroonoko's life. The seventeen-year-old Oroonoko becomes the new general, and returns to court as an elegant and intelligent young man. The narrator spends much time describing Oroonoko's noble characteristics, and is particularly interested in detailing his exceedingly fine physical beauty, which is a blend of Roman and African traits. While at court, Oroonoko visits the daughter of his foster father, the beautiful and pure Imoinda. They fall in love at first sight. They participate in a marriage ceremony but Oroonoko still has to ask his grandfather, the King, for his

blessing, in keeping with the patriarchal customs of the society.

However, the king, a lecherous old man, hears about Imoinda's beauty. After seeing her at court, he decides he wants her to become one of his concubines. While Oroonoko is off hunting, the king sends her the royal veil, a sign of invitation for attractive women to come to court. Imoinda is duty-bound to obey. The beautiful Imoinda is 'stolen' from Oroonoko by his aging grandfather, then present king. The King sends for Imoinda the sacred veil, thus commanding her to become one of his wives in King's harem, even knowingly that she was already married to Oroonoko. The King sends Oroonoko a message of regret for what he did, and hopes that his grandson will not seek revenge. Imoinda unwillingly spends time in the King's harem. Due to the strict laws of the Otan, Oroonoko is prevented from seeing Imoinda until the King invites him.

Oroonoko plans a secret meeting with the help of the sympathetic Onahal and Aboan to meet with Imoinda. They get eventually discovered. As punishment for her infidelity, the King sells Imoinda into slavery, an ignoble punishment, but he tells Oroonoko he has executed her because death was thought to be better than slavery. Upon hearing this, Oroonoko gives up his will to live and fight, and he abandons his troops, retiring to his tent. When they are about to lose, however, Oroonoko rouses himself from his lovesick stupor and leads his army to victory. An English sea captain comes to Coramantien, and Oroonoko receives him as a royal guest. The Captain double-crosses Oroonoko, however, inviting him onboard his ship and then kidnapping him, along with a hundred of Oroonoko's attendants. The Captain betrays Oroonoko and brings him across the Atlantic to Suriname, where he sells him to an intelligent and kind-hearted slave-owner named Trefry. Trefry gives Oroonoko the name "Caesar," and promises to help free him one day. Trefry also unwittingly reunites Caesar with Imoinda, whom Trefry knows as "Clemene."To Oroonoko's great surprise, Imoinda is at the same plantation. The two lovers are reunited under the new Christian names of Caesar and Clemene.

During Oroonoko's boat ride, the narrator describes Trefry, the young Cornish gentleman who has purchased Oroonoko. Trefry manages the plantation of an unnamed Lord. He is very good at math and linguistics and, like Oroonoko, can speak several languages. Trefry immediately recognizes that Oroonoko is different

from the average slave, due to his fancy garb and his regal attitude. Upon discovering that Oroonoko can speak English, Trefry guesses that Oroonoko is more exceptional than what he confesses to be. This assumption causes Trefry to admire Oroonoko, and to treat him with great civility. Trefry's behavior and their discovered common interests help Oroonoko relax on the boat ride. The two men engage in a mutually enjoyable conversation, and Oroonoko thinks that slavery under such an intelligent master might not be so bad. By the end of the ride upriver, Oroonoko has confided his story to Trefry and pledged his fortune and service to him. Trefry abhors the Captain's antics, and promises to help conduct Oroonoko back to his homeland. He also pledges to find out about the condition and location of Oroonoko's men, whom the prince is worried about. Because of his fresh experiences with betrayal, Oroonoko doesn't really believe that the promises of this "backearary," or white person, are necessarily creditable. But he also sees sincerity in Trefry's face, and is impressed enough by his wisdom to have some hope in his new master.

The narrator recounts various episodes of entertainment, including reading, hunting, visiting native villages and capturing an electric eel. Oroonoko and Imoinda live as husband and wife. As Imoinda's pregnancy develops, Caesar becomes increasingly restless and wants to take his new family back home. Though he esteems some white people, like Trefry and the narrator, he is also rightly suspicious of the lengthy delay regarding his release. He feels that he will once again be tricked and his family will remain in slavery. Indeed, this is exactly the plan of Deputy Governor Byam, who is part of the colonial government in Suriname and intends to keep Caesar a slave.

Because he is a man of action, Caesar (Oroonoko) determines to take matters into his own hands and convince the slaves to run away. Led by Caesar, they manage to escape, but their journey ends in disaster when the white colonists come after them. With the exception of Caesar's friend Tuscan, most of the slaves flee the group, leaving Caesar and a heavily pregnant Imoinda to confront the plantation owners. They all fight bravely and Imoinda wounds Byam in the shoulder with a poisoned arrow.

With the help of Trefry, Byam convinces Caesar to surrender peacefully and promises to fulfill all his demands. They write a contract, but Byam almost immediately breaks it. He sequesters Imoinda and brutally whips Tuscan and Caesar. Now that

he is fully awakened to Byam's treachery, Caesar vows revenge. He murders Imoinda and their child, with Imoinda's permission and blessing, to save them from prolonged suffering. Caesar then fails to enact his revenge against Byam, however, when he succumbs to a debilitating grief beside his wife's corpse.

When the colonists come looking for Caesar (Oroonoko), he is rescued against his will by his friends. Sick and dying, he tells them of his plan to kill Byam. They try to encourage him to abandon this idea and focus on recovery. One day, the ruthless Irishman Banister kidnaps Caesar at Byam's behest. Caesar is again tied to the stake, where he is slowly dismembered, dying without making a sound.

The novel is a blend of first and third person narrative. The narrator gives an account of actions in Africa and portrays herself as a witness of the actions that take place in Surinam. In the novel, the narrator presents herself as a lady who has come to Surinam with her unnamed father, a man intended to be a new lieutenant-general of the colony. He, however, dies on the voyage from England. The narrator and her family are put up in the finest house in the settlement, in accord with their station, and the narrator's experiences of meeting the indigenous people and slaves are intermixed with the main plot of the love of Oroonoko and Imoinda. At the conclusion of the love story, the narrator leaves Surinam for London.

The plot of the novel is well-knit. There are three significant sections. The novel opens with a statement of authenticity, where Behn claims that she is not writing fiction or pedantic history. She claims to be an eyewitness who writes without any embellished details or theme. She writes on the basis of complete reality. The narrator gives a vivid description of Surinam itself and the South American Indians there. She regards the locals as simple and living in a golden age (the presence of gold in the land being indicative of the epoch of the people themselves). It is only afterwards that the narrator provides the history of Oroonoko himself and the conspiracies of his grandfather and the slave captain, the captivity of Imoinda, and his own betrayal. The next section is in the narrator's present; Oroonoko and Imoinda are reunited, and Oroonoko and Imoinda meet the narrator and Trefry. The third section contains Oroonoko's rebellion and its aftermath.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the blanks:

1. *Oroonoko* is subtitled _____.
2. *Oroonoko* is set first in the present- day country of Ghana called _____ during that time.
3. Oroonoko has been trained to be a great military leader by _____.
4. Oroonoko fall in love at first sight with _____.
5. Oroonoko is tricked into slavery and sold to British colonists in _____.
6. As punishment for her infidelity, the King sells Imoinda as a _____.
7. Trefry gives Oroonoko the nickname _____.
8. In Surinam, Imoinda is known as _____.
9. Imoinda wounds _____ in the shoulder with a poisoned arrow.
10. Imoinda is murdered by _____.

6.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL *OROONOKO*

In the novel *Oroonoko,* Behn continues her experimentation with first-person narrative and circumstantial realism. The complexity of the novel makes her an important forerunner not just to later women storytellers but also the first writers of English novelistic fiction.

Oroonoko is thought to be a sharp condemnation of the slave-trade. This novel is read as an elemental conflict between goodness and the evil brought by greed and the corruption of power. While the central character is not a "noble savage", he is often cited as the prototype for that figure. The central character actually embodies the highest values of Western society and the people in charge, who should embody these values, are vicious hypocritical murderers. Perhaps most interestingly, the novel shows Behn's continuing ambivalence toward her loyalty to Charles II and then James II.

Oroonoko is the first English novel to show Black Africans in a supportive and sympathetic manner. At the same time, this novel, even more than William Shakespeare's *Othello*, is as much about the nature of kingship as it is about the

nature of race. Oroonoko is a king, and he is a king whether African or European, and the novel's regicide is traumatic and destructive to the colony. The theatrical nature of the plot follows from Behn's previous experience as a dramatist. The language Behn uses in *Oroonoko* is far more straightforward than in her other novels. Further, the novel is unusual in Behn's fictions by having a very clear love story without complications of gender roles.

Janet Todd argues that Behn deeply admired Othello, and identified elements of Othello in the novel. In Behn's longer career, her works center on questions of kingship quite frequently, and Behn herself took a radical philosophical position. Her works question the virtues of noble blood as they assert, repeatedly, the mystical strength of kingship and of great leaders. The character of Oroonoko solves Behn's questions by being a natural king and a natural leader, a man who is personally strong and is poised against nobles who have birth but no actual strength.

Ramesh Mallipeddi stresses that spectacle was the main mediator for the representation of alien cultures in Restoration England. Therefore, Behn describes Oroonoko's native beauty as a spectacle of 'beauty so transcending' that surpassed 'all those of his gloomy race.' She completely romanticizes Oroonoko's figure by portraying him as an ideal handsome hero; however due to the color of his skin, his body is still constricted within the limits of exoticism. Oroonoko has all the qualities of an English royal, but his ebony skin and country of origin prevent him from being a reputable European citizen. Due to these foreign qualities, his Englishness is incomplete. He has the English-like education and air, but lacks the skin color and legal status. Behn uses this conflicting description of Oroonoko to infuse some European familiarity into his figure while still remaining exotic enough. She compares Oroonoko to well-known historical figures like Hannibal and Alexander and describes Oroonoko's running, wrestling and killing of tigers and snakes. Albert J. Rivero states that this comparison to great Western conquerors and kings translates and naturalizes Oroonoko's foreignness into familiar European narratives. These historical allusions and romantic gallant feats allowed English readers to relate this exotic character with their own Western history and narrative tradition.

From the beginning of the novel, Oroonoko possesses a majestic quality that surpasses the character of any man or woman within the novel. Even while he is

subjected to a gruesome death, he never loses his composure and dignity. In addition to the content of his character, the speaker demonstrates the prince's greatness through his physical characteristics. In her text, Laura Brown elaborates on the speaker's analysis of Oroonoko's physical characteristics. The speaker describes Oroonoko as having European features "by which the native 'other' is naturalized as a European aristocrat… in physical appearance, the narrator can barely distinguish her native prince from those of England." Instead of identifying Oroonoko with physical features that are native to Africa, the speaker associates Oroonoko as a great man who looks and acts like a European-English aristocrat. He is respected as a decisive leader among his people, which is especially seen when he and his people are captured into slavery and the other slaves refuse to eat while Oroonoko is chained. Furthermore, his leadership is reinforced when the slaves support him in rebellions.

Imoinda, the love of Oroonoko's life, is a beautiful African woman who is sold into slavery after Oroonoko attempts to rescue her. When Oroonoko meets Imoinda, they instantly fall in love. His first encounter with her is described as, "a beauty, that to describe her truly she was female to the noble male, the beautiful black Venus to our young Mars, as charming in her person as he, and of delicate virtues" (Behn, 9). Oroonoko is smitten by her, instantly asks her for her hand in marriage, and without hesitation she agrees. Although the African tradition of having more than one wife is still prevalent during this time, Oroonoko assures Imoinda that he will never take on another wife. It is evident in the novella that Oroonoko and Imoinda's love for one another is unconditional. Once the King, Oroonoko's grandfather, hears different rumors of how beautiful Imoinda is, he becomes adamant on making her one of his women. Despite his grandson's deep affection and love for Imoinda, the King gives her a royal veil which officially marks Imoinda as one of the King's women. This is an honor that is nearly impossible to refuse and Oroonoko is angered by his grandfather's actions. Imoinda becomes a vital character by becoming the heart and center of this tragic travel narrative alongside Oroonko. Her beauty, strength, and flawless characteristics attract Oroonoko, the King, and even the reader for that matter. Oroonoko and Imoinda were constantly being separated once Imoinda gets sold into slavery. Regardless of how long they were apart, their love remained strong and eventually they are reunited. This never ending

love between Oroonoko and Imoinda is evident throughout the novella. Both characters are willing to announce their love, make brutal sacrifices, and remain passionate for one another which help in strengthening their unconditional love.

Through Oroonoko and other male characters, the speaker shows men as dominant leaders who are accompanied by strong female companions. In her text, *The Romance of Empire: Oroonoko and the Trade in Slaves*, Laura Brown emphasises the significance of female characters. Although men are obviously important in the novel, Brown states that "female figures—either Imoinda or the narrator and her surrogates—appear as incentives or witnesses for almost all of Oroonoko's exploits". Throughout the novel, Imoinda supports Oroonoko in all of his decisions, even when he suggests that he kill her to escape their slavery. Furthermore, Brown claims that Oroonoko is not alone during his execution because "[the narrator's] mother and Sister were by him". In addition to Brown, Stephanie Athey and Daniel Cooper Alarcon also examine the influence of women throughout the novel. In their text, *Oroonoko's Gendered Economies of Honor/Horror: Reframing Colonial Discourse Studies in the Americas,* Athey and Alarcon state that to better understand the novel, the reader should "first see the white and black women who mediate the exchange between male antagonists".Furthermore, they illustrate Imoinda's strength because she "fights at Oroonoko's side, while other slave wives urge their men to surrender".

Athey and Alarcon illustrate the importance of the narrator as a white woman. Because the novel is mediated by a white woman and Imoinda is portrayed as having European features, the text "uses slavery, rape, and dismemberment to foreground an economic competition for the black female body and to outline an implicit competition between black, white, and indigenous females". The authors believe that the narrator attempts to illustrate competition between the women in the novel and the significant role that Imoinda plays throughout the novel. Similarly to Athey and Alarcon, Margaret W. Ferguson illustrates the competition amongst females in the novel. *In Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender: Aphra Behn's Oroonoko,* Ferguson states that Behn creates "a textual staging of the implicit competition between the white English female author and the black African female slave-wife-mother-to-be". Ferguson explains that the competition

between the narrator and Imoinda arises out of the desire for Oroonoko's body and its ability to produce something extraordinary.

Research scholars have argued for over a century about whether or not Behn even visited Surinam and, if so, when. On the one hand, the narrator reports that she "saw" sheep in the colony, when the settlement had to import meat from Virginia, as sheep, in particular, could not survive there. Also, as Ernest Bernbaum argues in "Mrs. Behn's 'Oroonoko'", everything substantive in Oroonoko could have come from accounts by William Byam and George Warren that were circulating in London in the 1660s. However, as per J.A. Ramsaran and Bernard Dhuiq catalogue, Behn provides a great deal of precise local color and physical description of the colony. Topographical and cultural verisimilitude were not a criterion for readers of novels and plays in Behn's day any more than in Thomas Kyd's, and Behn generally did not bother with attempting to be accurate in her locations in other stories. Her plays have quite indistinct settings, and she rarely spends time with topographical description in her stories. Secondly, all the Europeans mentioned in *Oroonoko* were really present in Surinam in the 1660s. It is interesting, if the entire account is fictional and based on reportage, that Behn takes no liberties of invention to create European settlers she might need. Finally, the characterization of the real-life people in the novel does follow Behn's own politics. Behn was a lifelong and militant royalist, and her fictions are quite consistent in portraying virtuous royalists and put upon nobles who are opposed by petty and evil republicans /Parliamentarians. Had Behn not known the individuals she fictionalises in *Oroonoko*, it is extremely unlikely that any of the real royalists would have become fictional villains or any of the real republicans fictional heroes, and yet Byam and James Bannister, both actual royalists in the Interregnum, are malicious, licentious, and sadistic, while George Marten, a Cromwellian republican, is reasonable, open-minded, and fair.

It is unlikely that Behn went to Surinam with her husband, although she may have met and married in Surinam or on the journey back to England. A socially creditable single woman in good standing would not have gone unaccompanied to Surinam. Therefore, it is most likely that Behn and her family went to the colony in the company of a lady. As for her purpose in going, Janet Todd presents a strong case for its being spying. At the time of the events of the novel, the deputy governor

Byam had taken absolute control of the settlement and was being opposed not only by the formerly republican Colonel George Marten, but also by royalists within the settlement. Byam's abilities were suspect, and it is possible that either Lord Willoughby or Charles II would be interested in an investigation of the administration there.

The earliest biographers of Aphra Behn not only accepted the novel's narrator's claims as true, but Charles Gildon even invented a romantic liaison between the author and the title character, while the anonymous *Memoirs of Aphra Behn, Written by One of the Fair Sex* (both 1698) insisted that the author was too young to be romantically available at the time of the novel's events. Later biographers have contended with these suggestions, either to deny or prove them. However, it is profitable to look at the novel's events as part of the observations of an investigator, as illustrations of government, rather than autobiography.

In a scholarly article "Aphra Behn's Oroonoko: The Royal Slave Analysis and Summary," Britanny Kennedy writes that Behn begins the story with a statement of her legitimacy as an author. Immediately, she breaks the form of classic Aristotelian fiction, which Aristotle describes as an imitation of nature as a whole. Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) believed that fiction told what could happen instead of what did, making it superior to history, which is random and may not have a beginning, end, cause or effect. Behn makes it clear in the beginning of the novel that she is "an eye-witness," that this story is not heresy. Because she states that she is writing about true events, she begins her novel with this statement defending the legitimacy in order to make it believable to the reader: "…and it shall come simply into the world, recommended by its own proper merits and natural intrigues…without the addition of invention" (1). Throughout the novel, she gives extraneous detail, producing the experience of truth.

Oroonoko is often interpreted as an anti-slavery novel because of the way the narrator describes the struggle and injustices of a Coromantin slave from the Gold Coast, what is present-day Ghana. Behn's work is highly contradictory in the sense that although she breaks the Aristotelian models of writing fiction, she promotes Aristotle's idea of hierarchy in defense of an absolute monarchy. *Oroonoko* as a whole shows Behn's contradictory stance on what is legitimate authority. This paper

aims to examine these contradicting messages in order to understand this novel's historical and societal significance.

In 1649, England's King Charles I was captured and beheaded because of his resistance to instituting a constitutional monarchy. After his death, several theories about the need of a centralized government came into play, including Hobbes' *Leviathan* written in 1651. In 1660, the monarchy in England was restored. Behn lived through what has been called the most conflict-ridden period in British history. During this time, there were major debates on how the British government should be structured.

Aristotle believed that equality in politics is illogical because society exists by nature like a family and therefore must have hierarchy. During this time period, two major philosophers wrote about democracy and the structure of government. Hobbes (1588-1675) introduced the idea that a strong centralized government should exist, as long as it is made up of those that are governed. Locke (1632-1704) took this idea further and proposed that the consent of those that are governed is needed to have an effective centralized government. In Aphra Behn's novel, she profoundly rejects the idea of democratic society. For example, when Prince Oroonoko is amongst the slaves, dawning the same clothing as them, he is still treated like a figure of authority.

He begged Trefry to give him something more befitting a slave, which he did, and took off his robes. He had no fewer admirers than when he had his dazzling habit on: the royal youth appeared in spite of the slave, the people could not help treating him in a different manner, without designing it. As soon as they approached him, they venerated and insinuated it into every soul. So that there was nothing talked of but this young and gallant slave, even by those who yet knew not that he was a prince. (28)

Behn is illustrating to her reader that people with authority are given the power to rule even when dressed like a person with no authority. This is a rejection of democratic society, where authority is given to everyone equally. Behn's novel blatantly promotes the idea of an absolute monarchy. She refers to "the deplorable death of our great monarch" (7). Through the character, Oroonoko, she shows that some people are meant to be in power.

Behn consciously separates Oroonoko from the other slaves in his character description. She shows an obvious stigma against the other slaves and their races, yet, Oroonoko is described in a way that makes him powerful and unique compared to the others:

His face was not of that brown rusty black which most of that nation are, but perfect ebony, polished jet…His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. His mouth the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turned lips which are so natural to the rest of the negroes. The whole proportion and air of his face was so nobly and exactly formed that, beating his color, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable, and handsome. (7) Behn describes Oroonoko as completely Roman, except for his skin color. He represents a figure of authority, one that despite his race will have power over others. Similarly, his slave name alludes to a reincarnation of all that is Rome, the model of civilization: "Mr. Trefry gave Oroonoko that of Cesear; which name will live in that country as long as that (scarce more) glorious one of the great Roman" (28).

Behn's novel is highly contradictory and has themes of obtaining an absolute monarchy contrasted with a sympathetic view on Oroonoko, a noble slave. While breaking Aristotelian models of fiction, Behn encourages the philosopher's ideas on democracy and hierarchy. Her novel is neither pro-slavery nor anti-slavery. It is simply a historical narrative meant to capture the complications of societal structures.

6.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. When was the novel *Oroonoko* published?

   A. 1660
   B. 1658
   C. 1668
   D. 1688

2. Oroonoko fell in love with _____

   A. Imoinda
   B. Miranda
   C. Onahal
   D. Aboan

3. The lecherous King who fell in love with Imoinda and made her one of his concubines was none other than _____

A. Oroonoko
B. Oroonoko's Grandfather
C. Trefry
D. The English Captain

4. Oroonoko plans a secret meeting to see Imoinda with the help of

A. Onahal
B. Aboan
C. Both A and B
D. Byam

5. Who among them was sympathetic towards Oroonoko?

A. His Grandfather
B. Trefry
C. Byam
D. All the above

6. The novel is written in _____person narrative

A. First
B. Second
C. Third
D. A blend of first and third

7. What is the other name of the novel *Oroonoko*?

A. A Slave
B. A Royal Slave
C. A Slave Man
D. Anti-Slavery

8. How old is Oroonoko when he takes the King's place as general for his people?

A. 12
B. 14
C. 19
D. 17

6.5 SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief account of slave trade in the 17th century as described in the novel *Oroonoko*.
2. Write a brief note on Aphra Behn's narrative style.
3. Briefly describe the episode when Oroonoko is sold to a slave-owner Trefry.
4. Comment on the end of the novel *Oroonoko*.

6.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Describe the plot structure of the novel *Oroonoko*.
2. On the basis of the reading of *Oroonoko,* write a critical analysis of the novel.
3. Does Oroonoko emerge as the hero of the novel? Justify your answer.

6.7 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. The Royal Slave
2. Coramantien
3. Imoinda's father
4. Imoinda
5. Surinam
6. slave
7. Caesar
8. Clemene
9. Byam
10. Oroonoko

MCQs

1. D 1688
2. A Imoinda
3. B Oroonoko's Grandfather
4. C Both A and B
5. B Trefry
6. D A blend of first and third
7. B A Royal Slave
8. D 17

6.8 LET US SUM UP

In conclusion, *Oroonoko* is truly a fantastic work of literature. Aphra Behn's writing is subtle and bitingly political at times. Aphra Behn's personal background makes her an intriguing figure, especially considering how limiting a woman's role was in that society. Behn's protagonist Oroonoko, an African prince, falls in love with the beautiful Imoinda and eventually the novel shows his downfall to being sold into slavery. Behn's description seems to be intended to make Oroonoko more appealing to her audience—to show his nobility, to make his story of tragic downfall have a bigger impact, which leaves her contemporaries' perceptions of race open to speculation.

6.9 SUGGESTED READING

- *Oroonoko*: or, *The Royal Slave* by Aphra Behn
- *Oroonoko's Gendered Economies of Honor/Horror: Reframing Colonial Discourse Studies in the Americas* by Daniel Cooper Alarcon and Stephanie Athey
- *Versions of Blackness: Key Texts on Slavery from the Seventeenth Century* by Derek Hughes
- *Women and Slavery in Africa* by Martin A. Klein
- *Aphra Behn's Oroonoko: The Royal Slave Analysis and Summary* by Britanny Kennedy
- *Notes on Oroonoko* by J.A. Ramsaran
- *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* by Janet Todd

Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -III**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 7**

A DETAILED STUDY OF APHRA BEHN'S *OROONOKO*

STRUCTURE

7.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarize you with the major as well as the minor characters in the novel Oroonoko. The lesson also aims to deliberate upon the significant thematic concerns as well as discuss the feminine perspective and the problem of racism in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko. After going through this lesson, you will be able to identify and describe the major and minor characters, and the significant role that they play in Oroonoko. You will also be able critically analyze the key themes delineated in the novel, including the feminine perspective and the issue of racism.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), an intensely stirring work, has captivated scholars of Restoration English literature in the last two decades with its obvious preoccupations with race, class, and gender. Behn, an underappreciated writer whose fortunes in the scholarly world are rising, is an experimenter in literary forms that attempt to characterize cultural and national identities. The setting of the novel takes place in the New World, a slave uprising in the British colony of Surinam. Oroonoko is the extraordinary hero, but the narrator's failure to save him, her struggle against the social apparatus, is a distinctly novelistic device. And this struggle is ultimately concerned with constraints of race and gender.

7.2 CHARACTER-SKETCH OF MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL *OROONOKO*

7.2.1 OROONOKO; A HEROIC FIGURE

From the very beginning of the novel *Oroonoko*, Behn describes Oroonoko as being a heroic character. Since the narrator has faith in the protagonist, the readers are also led to believe in him. Oroonoko is depicted as an outstanding person. He is rich, noble, honorable, brave, and the list of all his positive attributes goes on. Oroonoko has many characteristics which contribute to him as a heroic character, but he also has some flaws that lessen his heroism.

Behn begins with a description of Oroonoko as being a brave young man, she states that at only seventeen he was "one of the most expert captains and bravest soldiers that ever saw the field" (2316). The reader realizes his natural ability as a leader. Oroonoko was adored by his people and "adorned with a native beauty so transcending all those of his gloomy race that he struck an awe and reverence even in those that knew not his quality" (2316). This quote in particular brings out another aspect of Behn's approach to portraying Oroonoko as a valid hero. He is different from the other members of his race. Even though Oroonoko is black he is still "worthy" of being a hero. Behn sets him apart in multiple ways in order to emphasize his greatness. She describes him as having a nose that is "rising and Roman, instead of African and flat" (2317), here Behn inserts more European looks upon him to appeal to her audience.

Behn provides examples of Oroonoko's bravery in the novel. She tells of his love for Imoinda, and his devotion and determination to save her from the king. Oroonoko even mourns her when he thinks she has died, at the risk of himself and his army, and only rouses to save his men (2330). Once he is captured on the slave ship Oroonoko decides to starve himself and die an honorable death rather than be lowered to the status of a slave (2332). These actions further support Oroonoko's grand traits.

After examining Oroonoko from the point of view of a reader in Behn's time, it's also important to analyze him from a modern perspective. Oroonoko still maintains all of the heroic characteristics described above, although his European features don't add to his heroism today, but he also has some glaring flaws that detract from his greatness. Oroonoko was perpetuating the slave trade as a prince. He sold prisoners of war as slaves to the Americans and was perfectly fine with it, this wasn't viewed as a bad thing in his culture at this time but now people realize how horrible it truly is. Oroonoko also kills Imoinda and her unborn child after he makes the plan to carry out his revenge on the governor. While he did this to protect her in his own way, and she was "pleading for death" (2354) after hearing his reasons, he still murdered her. Not only that, but his whole reason for killing her, to get revenge, he didn't even carry out. Instead he lied on the ground for days until he was captured and killed.

In the end Oroonoko still maintains many aspects of a hero, and depending on what perspective this story is viewed from, he may not even have any flaws. When analyzing Oroonoko in this way, his multitude of good characteristics do reveal him to be an honorable and brave person, but he also has a few large flaws that can't be ignored and are an integral part of him as a character. While he does have some inadequacies, Oroonoko is a hero, and was intended to be one.

7.2.2 NARRATOR

The Narrator is a female Englishwoman, and possibly the author, Aphra Behn, who lived in Suriname for a while and may have had similar experiences. Almost the whole of *Oroonoko* is told in the narrator's voice and from her perspective. For the most part, the narrator is open-minded and not entirely prejudiced in her opinions of the native people of the European colonies. She sees these "natives" as close descendants of Adam and Eve before the Fall of Man, but her opinions toward black Africans seem to be a bit gloomy. While she highly esteems Oroonoko, there is a sense that he is the exception, not the rule, when it comes to Africans. While the narrator dislikes how Oroonoko is treated, she never admits that she has a problem with the institution of slavery itself—the main injustice she decries is that a natural king like Oroonoko

should be treated so disrespectfully. The narrator admires the food and customs of the ethnic groups she comes into contact with, and in general she has a keen sense of adventure. She describes her health as poor, and is very sensitive to all kinds of odors. Her closest friends include Oroonoko and Imoinda, who often dine at her table.

7.2.3 IMOINDA

Imoinda is described as a "black Venus," corresponding to Oroonoko as the "black Mars." To the narrator, Imoinda perfectly complements Oroonoko in beauty and virtue. Her beauty often brings her unwanted attentions from men, however, even in the New World. This is a particularly big problem in Coramantien, where Imoinda catches the eye of the king. He takes her as his concubine, even though he knows she has pledged her love to Oroonoko and married him. Imoinda remains true to her husband, however, but this brings about her downfall when the king sells her into slavery. Not long after being reunited with Oroonoko in Suriname, Imoinda becomes pregnant. She then fights alongside Oroonoko to gain liberty and a better life for their unborn child. She is handy with a bow and arrow, and wounds Governor Byam during a slave uprising. Imoinda is also incredibly obedient to Oroonoko, and accepts her own death and her unborn child's murder at his hands out of her love for him.

7.2.4 BYAM

Byam is a deputy governor in Suriname. He is not afraid to use low and dishonorable tactics to keep things running smoothly on the sugar plantations. He is not well regarded amongst the colonists, who all love Caesar (Oroonoko) more and dislike the governor's manipulation of him. Byam initially pretends to be a great friend to Caesar, and promises him that he will one day be free, along with his wife and child, but in actuality Byam never intends to liberate them. He even lies to Caesar during the standoff in the forest, promising Caesar his freedom, but later breaks the contract they sign. Before this betrayal, however, Imoinda wounds Byam in the shoulder with a poisoned arrow.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I (CYP-I)

State whether the statements are true/false:

1. Oroonoko is described as possessing heroic traits and physical features that align more with European standards to appeal to the audience during that time. (True/False)
2. Oroonoko is depicted as showing no resistance and as a coward after he is captured on the slave ship. (True/False)
3. Oroonoko's involvement in the slave trade and the murder of Imoinda are considered major flaws in his character from a modern perspective. (True/False)
4. Aphra Behn has depicted Oroonoko as an unlikable and dishonorable man throughout the novel. (True/False)
5. Oroonoko becomes successful in carrying out revenge against the governor after killing Imoinda. (True/False)
6. The narrator of the novel *Oroonoko* is a female Englishwoman who may be Aphra Behn. (True/False)
7. The narrator has fully condemned the institution of slavery in the novel. (True/False)
8. Imoinda is described as the "black Venus," a complement to Oroonoko, the "black Mars." (True/False)
9. Imoinda willingly becomes the king's concubine in Coramantien. (True/False)
10. Imoinda fights in the slave uprising and even injures Governor Byam. (True/False)

7.2.5 TREFRY

Trefry is a young Cornish gentleman in Suriname. He is skilled in mathematics and linguists. He manages Governor Byam's affairs. He also speaks French and Spanish. Trefry buys Oroonoko from the Captain and, after getting to know Oroonoko's story, feels great sympathy for his plight. He gives Oroonoko the name Caesar and promises to help him back to his homeland. They become great friends, and Trefry always tries to look out for Oroonoko, though Oroonoko often gets frustrated by the lack of progress toward achieving his liberty. Trefry introduces Oroonoko to a beautiful slave he knows as Clemene, but whom Oroonoko realizes is actually Imoinda. After

Oroonoko is killed, Trefry begins to record his biography, but dies before he can finish it.

7.2.6 ABOAN

Aboan is a young warrior and good friend of Oroonoko. Aboan is basically Oroonoko's "wingman." He pretends to be in love with the much older Onahal, one of the king's old wives, to help Oroonoko. He visits Imoinda while she is cloistered in the Otan. Aboan is extremely loyal to Oroonoko and a good liar, and had the traits that help him seduce Onahal. Along with Oroonoko, he is captured and sent to Suriname as a slave.

7.2.7 ONAHAL

Onahal is a former wife of the King. Onahal takes charge of Imoinda after she becomes a concubine. Onahal's beauty has long since faded, and she is now sort of a head housekeeper of the Otan, the king's private court and inner sanctum. Onahal's job is to make sure everything is in order for the king's entertainment, whether that involves arranging court dances or evening activities with young concubines in his bedroom. Onahal falls in love with Aboan.

7.2.8 JAMOAN

Jamoan is the leader of the opposing army that captures Oroonoko's troops. For most of the fight, the lovesick Oroonoko pines for the presumed death of Imoinda. When Oroonoko returns to his senses, however, he helps defeat Jamoan's army, seriously wounds Jamoan, and then retains him as an attendant. They become good friends, and Jamoan helps cure Oroonoko of his melancholy over losing Imoinda.

7.2.9 TUSCAN

Tuscan is a slave in Suriname who stands out from his fellow slaves, not only because he is taller than the rest, but also because he has a "noble look" about him. He joins Oroonoko's uprising and stays with Oroonoko and Imoinda to fight against the colonists after the other slaves surrender. Tuscan is whipped alongside Oroonoko as punishment for leading the band of runaway slaves, but he later reconciles with Byam. Tuscan finds Oroonoko lying beside Imoinda's corpse, and he tries to save his starving friend from dying.

Oroonoko stabs Tuscan in the arm for his disloyalty and for trying to intervene in his affairs.

7.2.10 WILLOUGHBY

Willoughby is the lord governor of Suriname. He owns Perham Plantation and is supposed to come and help Oroonoko but he never does so.

7.2.11 THE CAPTAIN

The Captain is a seemingly well-bred and genteel English sea captain. He first pretends to be Oroonoko's friend. The Captain is welcomed at the Coramantien court and treated like a royal guest. One day, he sets a trap to capture Oroonoko and 100 of his men, so that he can sell them into slavery. After throwing a party on his ship and getting the men drunk, the Captain chains up Oroonoko and his attendants. When Oroonoko and his band refuse to eat, the Captain lies to Oroonoko, telling him that if he eats, the Captain will set everyone free at the next port. Ultimately the Captain delivers his prisoners to Suriname and sells them as slaves.

7.2.12 COLONEL MARTIN

Martin is a British colonel in Suriname. He is very well-respected amongst the colonists and is a dear friend of Oroonoko. He trusts his judgment like a child trusts a parent. Colonel Martin deplores the actions Byam takes against Oroonoko and tries to encourage Oroonoko to give up his vendetta (a blood feud in which the family of a murdered person seeks vengeance on the murderer) against Byam.

7.2.13 IMOINDA'S FATHER

Imoinda's father is an old and acclaimed general of Coramantien. He saves Oroonoko's life during a battle by stepping into the path of an arrow aimed at the prince. He dies and Oroonoko becomes the next general.

7.2.14 THE FRENCHMAN

The Frenchman is exiled from France for his heretical opinions. He becomes Oroonoko's tutor and teaches him morality, languages, and science. Though he is not very religious, the Frenchman is nevertheless very moral. He stays by Oroonoko's side after Oroonoko is captured and sold into slavery.

7.2.15 BANISTER

Banister is a rich and uncouth Irishman. He carries out Byam's orders to kidnap the recovering Oroonoko from Parham house and transports him to the whipping post. Banister is a member of the infamous Council, a body composed of former convicts and other ruthless characters led by Byam.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II (CYP-II)

Match the following

Characters	Description
1. Banister	A. A former wife of the king who oversees the Otan and falls for Aboan
2. Trefry	B. An uncouth Irishman who kidnaps Oroonoko and works for Byam
3. Jamoan	C. The English sea captain who traps and sells Oroonoko and his men into slavery
4. Byam	D. A young warrior and loyal friend to Oroonoko who pretends to love Onahal
5. Onahal	E. Wounded by Imoinda during a slave uprising and betrays Oroonoko
6. The Captain	F. Manages Byam's affairs, befriends Oroonoko, and begins recording his biography
7. Tuscan	G. A slave who joins Oroonoko's uprising but is stabbed for disloyalty
8. Aboan	H. Leader of the opposing army, later befriends Oroonoko after being wounded

7.3 PROBLEM OF RACISM IN APHRA BEHN'S NOVEL *OROONOKO*

Somnath Sarkar in an article "Problem of Racism in Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko*" writes that the novel is an example of racism in the sense of intrinsic

social inequality. *Oroonoko* is a violent text. From the incident of arrow-in-eyeball that puts Oroonoko next in the line of succession, to Oroonoko's final, brutal burning and dismemberment are all gruesome and horrifying. The violence is not limited to any one kind of person or people—the Africans, the Europeans, and even some of the Indian groups described by Behn's narrator all perpetrate horrific acts of violence. Even when Oroonoko takes matters into his own hands and kills his precious Imoinda, his body then fails him. He cannot get up and wreak his planned revenge on the whites. Instead, he languishes by her body, unable to move or leave.

The relationship between the oppressed groups in *Oroonoko* is characterized by sympathy but complicated by the different hierarchies governing behavior. The narrator is a member of colonial society, and that is the side she takes when open conflict breaks out. Oroonoko belongs to the soldier class of a society in which women are little better than property. But within the framework of the novel it is the romantic hero, Oroonoko, who is little better than property, an aristocratic hero of epic proportions trapped in a capitalistic plot.

Behn never criticizes slavery directly, but the perspective of the victimized hero promotes a critique of slavery nonetheless. On the one hand, the narrator insists that she has a certain amount of authority in the colonial society of Suriname, which would seem to imply participation in the racist-colonialist ideology, but on the other hand, Oroonoko is portrayed more positively than most of the colonists. It is not only the convincing details which contribute to achieve this effect; it is also the contradiction between the narrator's assumed social position and her actual powerlessness as a character within the framework of the plot.

7.4 FEMININE PERSPECTIVE IN THE NOVEL *OROONOKO*

Women were living in a patriarchal society in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries and unfortunately feminism as we know it today did not exist. Women did, however, express the desire to be equal to men and to be allowed to learn and do all the things that man had the opportunity to do. They spoke out against the injustices in very diverse and creative ways. In *Oroonoko,* Aphra Behn challenges many of the accepted notions of the female role at the time through her educated female narrator and her strong active female main character.

Aphra Behn voices a feminist perspective in *Oroonoko* through her educated female narrator and her strong female character, Imoinda. The narrator, even as a white person, is a part of the marginal position as a female in a patriarchal colonial society. She uses her authority as a white person to speak for Oroonoko, the hero, and tell his story. The narrator pities Oroonoko because he only has a female to tell his story. This illustrates the unequal worth of men and women in the novel as this shows that no male author would tell the story of a slave. This inequality is also a reflection of women at the time. Behn is writing the novel because the narrator is seen as a projection of Behn herself.

Imoinda is a black female dealing with slavery. Unlike the other slave women, Imoinda is not wholly passive, silent, and under the complete control of male dominance. She is quite active in the novel in many ways. There are two prominent examples of Imoinda's agency in the novel. The first is when she fights the slave owners, shooting bows and arrows, and eventually causing the demise of a man. In this scene the other slave wives stand back and watch their husbands, while the pregnant Imoinda takes control of her own actions and does what she feels needs to be done to ensure her and her unborn child's freedom. The other important example of Imoinda's active agency occurs when she "faster pleads for death" when Oroonoko suggests killing her, and then himself, to escape slavery. Here, Imoinda displays bravery, strength, and the ability to be active in an important decision that will ultimately be her fate. She is not only protecting herself from slavery and possible rape but she is also taking on the responsibility of being a mother and saving her child from being born into slavery and unfortunately, never knowing freedom. Both of these women challenge classical female roles by using their voices and actions to either tell their story or free themselves.

7.5 TRAGIC PLOT AND COMIC PLOT OF THE NOVEL *OROONOKO*

Oroonoko has both comic and tragic characteristics. The tragic plot in the novel tells the story of Oroonoko, a black slave, who was originally a prince in Africa. As a slave in Suriname, Oroonoko is sold to Blanford, a plantation owner, and the two men eventually form a friendship. During one of their conversations, Oroonoko mentions Imoinda, the woman he loves who is pregnant with his child. Soon after it is revealed to Blanford that Imoinda is a slave at a plantation also in

Suriname, Oroonoko devises a plan to escape. Before the plan occurs Imoinda and Oroonoko are reunited, and lead the escape together. The night of the planned escape comes and the slaves are stopped by a group of men, led by the Lieutenant Governor of Suriname. After a fight between the two groups, Imoinda is taken by the Lieutenant Governor, but after a fight and help from Balnford, she escapes. While separated from Imoinda, Oroonoko is approached by Aboan, and the two men agree that the only escape from this is to kill themselves. Aboan then stabs himself, and before Oroonoko gets the chance to do the same, he is found by Imoinda, and she too agrees to kill herself to keep her and her unborn child free from suffering in slavery. She stabs herself, and shortly after Oroonoko stabs himself too.

The comic plot in the novel tells the story of two sisters, Charlotte and Lucy Weldon, who are in Suriname and trying to find men to marry. Charlotte spends the majority of the play dressed up as Weldon, a man. The two are greeted by Widow Lackitt, and Weldon decides that she will marry her, knowing that the Widow has money, and that she is on the rebound because her husband has recently passed away. And soon Daniel is introduced, and Weldon and Widow Lackitt arrange a marriage for him and Lucy, even though it is clear upon their first meeting that Daniel wants nothing to do with her. Stanmore is introduced into the novel, and he and Weldon become friends instantly, Stanmore being completely unsuspecting that Weldon is a woman. Eventually Weldon and Widow Lackitt are married, and she gives him money, which he gives to Stanmore for ‘safe keeping' while he is out (in reality the plan is for him to go out and “die”, in which point his cousin [Charlotte, now as a woman] will come to Suriname and Stanmore will give her the wealth). When Charlotte comes, she ends up telling the truth to everyone that it was her, dressed up the entire time, and she and Stanmore make a promise to be married.

7.6 THEMES OF THE NOVEL OROONOKO

Theme of Slavery

Oroonoko shows the cruelty of slavery. Although Oroonoko himself is treated well, the rest of the slaves, including Imionda until she and Oroonoko are reunited, are shown as being treated poorly. In addition to this, Aboan, Imoinda and Oroonko’s suicides illustrate that death is preferred over slavery, and it is shown as the only

escape.

Theme of Race and Royalty

Oroonoko portrays the idea of whiteness as predominance. Imoinda is the only mentioned white slave throughout the play, and she is shown as strong and desirable, while the other slaves are shown as nothing more than slaves. In addition to this, she is the only female slave that fights during the escape. By making the prince and the white slave shown as powerful, and the rest of the slaves shown as weak, *Oroonoko* is showing the typical European view that power and light skin show superiority.

Gender

For the most part, *Oroonoko* portrays women as weak or condescending, with the exception of Imionda. Widow Lackitt is shown as man-hungry, and is easily fooled with the promise of love. Charlotte and Lucy are shown as using trickery to find men, as a way to get money. Lastly, the black female slaves are shown as weak, by cowering behind Imionda and the men when faced by the Lieutenant Governor. The men of the play, on the other hand, are shown as strong, smart, and for the most part, powerful.

7.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Cornish gentleman in Suriname introduces Oroonoko to a beautiful slave he knows as Clemene, but whom Oroonoko realizes is actually Imoinda.

   A. Byam
   B. Trefry
   C. Tuscan
   D. Martin

2. Imoinda is described as _____

   A. Black Fairy
   B. Black Mars
   C. Black Venus
   D. Black Mercury

3. Oroonoko is described as _____

   A. Black Jupiter

B. Black Mars
C. Black Angel
D. Black Monster

4. _____is a deputy governor in Suriname.

A. Byam
B. Trefry
C. Colonel Martin
D. Tuskan

5. Who among the following is referred to as Oroonoko's "wingman"?

A. Tuscan
B. Trefry
C. Imoinda
D. Aboan

6. _____became Oroonoko's tutor and teaches him morality, languages and science.

A. Banister
B. Imoinda
C. The Frenchman
D. Martin

7. _____kidnapped Oroonoko from Parham house and transported him to the whipping post on Byam's orders.

A. The Frenchman
B. Trefry
C. Tuscan
D. Banister

7.8 SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Briefly comment on the theme of Slavery as depicted in the novel *Oroonoko.*
2. Discuss the role of Imoinda's father in saving Oroonoko's life.
3. How did Aboan and Onahal help Oroonoko?
4. Bring out the thematic significance of the Comic Plot of the novel *Oroonoko*.

7.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Write the character analysis of Oroonoko.
2. Bring out the foil in the character sketch of Oroonoko and Imoinda.
3. Comment on the art of characterization in the novel *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn.
4. Discuss the main themes of the novel *Oroonoko.*
5. Comment on the feminine perspective of the novel *Oroonoko.*
6. How much conflict, tension, suspense, and curiosity is shown in the plot construction of the novel *Oroonoko*?
7. How is the theme of Racism inbuilt in the novel *Oroonoko*?

7.10 ANSWER KEY

CYP-I

1.True; 2.False; 3.True; 4. False ; 5.False; 6. True; 7. False ; 8. True; 9. False ; 10. True

CYP-II

1 → B; 2 → F; 3 → H; 4 → E; 5 → A; 6 → C; 7 → G; 8 → D

MCQs

1. B Trefry
2. C Black Venus
3. B Black Mars
4. A Byam
5. D Aboan
6. C The Frenchman
7. D Banister

7.11 LET US SUM UP

Behn's *Oroonoko* is interesting in the context of how literature participates in racist discourse. On the one hand, *Oroonoko* shows a resistance to facile racial categories, but at the same time it perpetuates categories it seems to reject. It is of

particular interest to literary history that such contradictions as these are situated at the beginning of modern novelistic discourse, and that they find their expression in such a seminal work as Behn's *Oroonoko.* The importance of Behn writing this novel is to give an image of the horrors of slavery to an ignorant English audience. Furthermore, it was a perspective not yet fully written about. Blacks were a minority and expected to behave a certain way, similar to the way that Behn was a female and expected to behave a certain way. By becoming a novelist, she undermined these expectations, just as Oroonoko tries to undermine the ideals imposed on him as a slave. Therefore, there is no one better to write a novel about society forcing a person to behave a certain way. Behn is able to give two perspectives of minorities in her novel because she is a female writing about a slave.

7.12 SUGGESTED READING

- "New Hystericism: Aphra Behn's Oroonoko: The Body, the Text and the Feminist Critic." *New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts.* Ed. Isobe Armstrong London: Routledge, 1992.283-295. Print by Ros Ballaster

- "Behn's Oroonoko, the Gold Coast, and Slavery in the Early-Modern Atlantic World." *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 39.1 (2010): 215-233. Web. 31 October 2011 by Adam Beach

- "Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko.*" *Women's Studies* 19.2 (1991): 159-181. Web. 31 October 2011 by Margaret Ferguson

- 'Where There Is No Novelty, There Can Be No Curiosity': Reading Imoinda's Body in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko or, the Royal Slave." *English in Africa* 28. 1 (2001): 105-117. Web. 31 October 2011 by Pumla Dineo Gqola

- "Conduct and Politeness in the Eighteenth Century." *Defining Gender 1450-1910 Online.* Adam Matthew Digital. 2003. Web. 31 October 2011 by Vivien Jones

Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -IV**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 8**

RESTORATION PERIOD

8.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the historical overview of Restoration Age, its socio-political happenings and its impact on the literary production of the age. The lesson aims to introduce you to the major poets of the Restoration era as well as familiarise you with the major trends and literary characteristics of Restoration poetry. After going through this lesson, you will be able to describe the socio-political and historical background of the Restoration Age and explain how the socio-political events influenced the literary activity. You will also be able to identify the major poets of the Restoration era and recognize the key literary trends of Restoration poetry.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The period from 1660 to 1700 is known as the Restoration period or the Age

of Dryden. Dryden was the representative writer of this period. The restoration of King Charles II in 1660 marks the beginning of a new era both in the life and the literature of England. The King was received with wild joy on his return from exile. The change of government from Commonwealth to Kingship corresponded to a change in the mood of the nation. In this period the Renaissance delight in this world and the unlimited possibilities of the exploration of the world, and the moral zeal and the earnestness of the Puritan period could no more fascinate the people of England. Moody and Lovett remark: But in the greater part of the Restoration period there was awareness of the limitations of human experience, without faith in the extension of the resources. There was the disposition to accept such limitations, to exploit the potentialities of a strictly human world. The historical events like the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the religious controversy and the revolution of 1688 deeply influenced the social life and the literary movements of the age.

8.2 LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION AGE

The literature of the Restoration period marked the complete breaking of ties with the Renaissance literature. It reflected the spirit of the age. The spirit of corruption and moral laxity, which were predominant in the social life of the restoration, are reflected in literature. The following are the chief features of the period:

1) Rise of Neo-classicism

The Restoration marks a complete break with the past. The people believed in the present, the real and the material. Moody and Lovett remark: In all directions it appeared as a disposition towards conservation and moderation. Men had learned to fear individual enthusiasm, and therefore they tried to discourage it by setting up ideals of conduct in accordance with reason and common sense, to which all men should adapt themselves. Rules of etiquette and social conventions were established and the problem of life became that of self-expression within the narrow bounds which were thus prescribed. All these tendencies were reflected in the literature of this period. The writers, both in prose and poetry, tacitly agreed upon the rules and principles in accordance with which they should write. Rules and literary conventions became more important than the depth and seriousness of the subject matter to the

writers of this period. They express superficial manners and customs of the aristocratic and urban society and did not pry into the mysteries of human mind and heart.

2) Imitation of the Ancient Masters

The authors of the period were not endowed with exceptional literary talents. So they turned to the ancient writers, in particular, to the Latin writers, for guidance and inspiration. It was generally believed that the ancients had reached the acme of excellence and the modern poets could do no better than model their writings on the classics. Thus grew the neo-classical school of poetry. The neo-classicists or pseudo-classicists could not soar to great imaginative heights or could not penetrate deeply into human emotions. They directed their attention to the slavish imitation of rules and ignored the importance of the subject matter. This habit was noticeable in the age of Dryden. It strengthened in the succeeding age of Pope.

3) Imitation of the French Masters

King Charles II and his companions had spent the period of exile in France. They demanded that poetry and drama should follow the style to which they had become accustomed in France. Shakespeare and his contemporaries could not satisfy the popular literary taste. Pepys wrote in his diary that he was bored to see Shakespeare‘s *Midsummer Night’s Dream.* The Italian influence had been dominant in Elizabethan period. Now began the period of French influence, which showed itself in English literature for the next century. Commenting on the French influence on the literature of this period W. H. Hudson writes: Now the contemporary literature of France was characterized particularly by lucidity, vivacity, and by reason of the close attention given to form – correctness, elegance and finish. It was essentially a literature of polite society, and had all the merits and all the limitations of such a

literature. It was moreover a literature in which intellect was in the ascendant and the critical faculty always in control. It was to this congenial literature that English writers now learned to look for guidance; and thus a great impulse was given to the development alike in our prose and in our verse of the principles of regularity and order and the spirit of good sense. As in verse pre-eminently these were now cultivated at the expense of feeling and spontaneity, the growth of an artificial type of poetry was the inevitable result. The famous French writers like Corneille, Racine, Moliere and Boileau were imitated. Boileau's good sense ideal became very popular. English writers imitated the French blindly; rather they copied the worst vices of the French, instead of their wit, delicacy and refinement. The French influence is seen in the coarseness and indecency of the Restoration comedy of manners. The combined influence of French and classical models of tragedy is seen in the heroic tragedy. The French influence is responsible for the growth and popularity of opera.

4) Correctness and Appropriateness

The work of the authors of the Restoration period was imitative and of limited quality. Since they lacked creativity and flight of imagination, they abandoned freedom altogether and slavishly followed the rules. Edward Albert writes: "Thus they evolved a number of rules which can usefully be summarised in the injunction Be Correct , correctness means avoidance of enthusiasm, moderate oppinions moderately expressed, strict care and accuracy in poetic technique; and humble imitation of the style of Latin Classics.

The new tendency, which reached its climax in the Age of Pope, is very clearly marked in the literature of the Restoration period. To Dryden, Dr. Johnson applied the term' Augustan' , saying that Dryden did to English literature what Augustus did to Rome, which he found of brick and left of marble. Dryden was the first representative of the new ideas that were to dominate English literature till the end of the eighteenth century.

5) Realism and formalism

Restoration literature is realistic. It was very much concerned with life in London, and with details of dress, fashions and manners. The early Restoration

writers , observes W. J. Long, "sought to paint realistic pictures of corrupt court and society, and emphasized vices rather than virtues and gave us coarse, low plays without interest or moral significance. Like Hobbes, they saw only the externals of man, his body and appetites, not his soul and his ideals…. Later, however, this tendency to realism became more wholesome". While it neglected romantic poetry, in which youth is eternally interested, it led to a keener study of the practical motives which govern human action. The Restoration writers eschewed all extravagances of thought and language and aimed at achieving directness and simplicity of expression. Dryden accepted the excellent rule for his prose, and adopted the heroic couplet, as the next best thing for the greater part of this poetry. It is largely due to Dryden that writers developed formalism of style, that precise, almost mathematical elegance, miscalled classicism, which ruled the English literature for the next century.

8.3 POETRY OF RESTORATION AGE

The poetry of the Restoration period is formal, intellectual and realistic. In it form is more important than the subject matter. S. A. Brooke writes: The *artificial* style succeeded to any extinguished the *natural,* or to put it otherwise, a more intellectual poetry finally overcame poetry in which emotion always accompanied thought.

(i) John Dryden (1631-1700). Dryden was the first of the new, as Milton was the last of the former school of poetry. He was a versatile poet. *Absalom and Achitophel* is a fine, finished satire on contemporary political situation. *Medal* is an attack on Shaftesbury. *Mac Flecknoe* is a biting attack on a former friend, Thomas Shadwell. *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther* are two doctrinal poems. Dryden appears as a great story teller in verse in *The Fables.* As a lyric poet his fame rests on *Song for St. Cecilia's Day* and *On Alexander's Feast.* Dryden is the representative poet of his age. He began the neo-classical age in literature. It was his influence and example which lifted the classic couplet for many years as the accepted measure of serious English poetry.

(ii) Samuel Butler (1612-1680). Butler's *Hudibras* is a pointed satire on Puritans. It was influenced by the satires of Rabelais and Cervantes. It has genuine flashes of comic insight. It is a great piece of satirical poetry and it stands next to Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel.* Butler is a remarkable figure in the poetic development of the Restoration period.

8.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION POETRY

MODERATION

Restoration poetry is considered moderate in the way it emphasises precision or economical use of language and words.

REALISM

The two lasting contributions of Restoration Period in English Literature are Realism and Preciseness. Writers focused on creating vivid and realistic representation of the corruption they saw in their society.

English writers tried to create a style that most resembled the way that people actually spoke and wrote. Moreover, they stopped use of classical allusion and Latin quotations etc.

REASON

One of the important Restoration poetry characteristics is reason. Instead of focusing on Metaphysical ideas which most of the prior Poetry had relied upon, it was inspired by many scientific developments of the time.These scientific developments encouraged people to use reason to solve problems.

These three major features-**Moderation, Realism** and **Reason** made Restoration poetry's style also known as the classical school of poetry dominated English Literature for more than a century.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the blanks:

1. The literature of the Restoration period marked a complete break with _____ literature.
2. The writers of the Restoration age turned to ancient _____ writers for inspiration.
3. The Restoration period is noted for the rise of _____, which emphasized reason, order, and decorum.
4. The _____ writers like Corneille, Racine, Molière, and Boileau were widely imitated during this period.
5. _____ found Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* boring, reflecting a change in literary taste.
6. The term 'Augustan' was applied by Dr. Johnson to _____ for his contribution to literature.
7. The _____ became the accepted measure of serious English poetry during the Restoration Age.
8. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* is a pointed satire on the _____.
9. The _____ influence encouraged lucidity, elegance, and finish in literary style.
10. Restoration drama, especially_____, became known for its coarseness and indecency.

8.5 MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN RESTORATION POETRY

Following were the major developments in Restoration Poetry-

1. Restoration Verse Satire

Satire can be described as the literary art of belittling a subject by making it funny and ridiculous and expressing the sense of amusement or disgust.

The manner of satirist is very different from that of a lyrical poet.Since hatred and disliking are unlovely things, the satirical poet usually avoids giving them direct expression. He makes frequent use of irony.

The Restoration Age is essentially the age of satire. The great influences of the time made Restoration Age the age of satire.

Judging and criticising became common in the society of the age and this habit naturally gave birth to the spirit of satire.

The open denial of false spiritual authorities became a duty and pleasure of Restoration Poets.

In ancient days, the satirists were honoured. The study of such satirists encouraged Restoration Poets to write satires.

Moreover, French influence also encouraged satire and ultimately, it became a fashion to write satires.

2. Mock-Epic

A mock-epic is that type of art which imitates in a sustained way, both the elaborate form and the ceremonious style of the epic poem, but applies it to narrate an ignorable subject matter.It draws on well-known themes.Thus mock-epic poetry is often able to form observations about contemporary culture, religion and social issues in a funny and meaningful style.

Mock-epic poetry heavily draws on the technique of satire, which means that, it uses irony, overstatement and criticism to mock its original subject, usually in an impressive manner.

The outstanding example of English Mock-epic is Alexander Pope's *The Rape of Lock,* which is the best of all the mock-epic or mock-heroic poems.

8.6 ANALYSIS OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

The Restoration of Charles II brought about a revolutionary change in life and literature. During this period, gravity, moral earnestness and decorum in all things, which distinguished the Puritan period, were thrown to the winds. The natural instincts which were suppressed during the previous era came to violent excesses. The King had a number of mistresses and numerous children. He was surrounded by corrupt and degenerate ministers. Profligacy was glorified in the royal court. Corruption was rampant in all walks of life. The Great Fire of 1665 and the Plague that followed were popularly regarded as suitable punishments for the sins of the profligate and selfish King. While London was burning and the people were suffering, the King and his nobles kept up their revels. The beginning of the Restoration began the process of social transformation. The atmosphere of gaiety and cheerfulness, of licentiousness and moral laxity was restored. The theatres were reopened. There was a stern reaction against the morality of the Puritans. Morality was on the wane. There was laxity everywhere in life. All these tendencies of the age are clearly reflected in the literature of the period.

During the Restoration period there was a rapid development of science. The establishment of the Royal Society was a landmark in history of England. The interest in science began to grow. The growing interest in science resulted in the beginning of rational inquiry and scientific and objective outlook. Objectivity, rationality and intellectual quality also enlivened the literature of this period. The French influence was predominant during this period because the King had spent the period of his exile in France. The French manners and fashion spread from the court to the aristocracy. It also influenced contemporary literature.

1) Religious and Political Conflicts

This era also witnessed the rise of two political parties the Whigs and the Tories. These parties were to play a significant role in English politics. The Whigs sought to limit the powers in the interest of the people and the Parliament. The Tories supported the Divine Right theory of the King, and strove to restrain the powers of the people in the interest of the hereditary rulers. The rise of these political parties gave a fresh importance to men of literary ability. Almost all the writers of this period had political affiliations. Dryden was a Tory. The religious controversies were even more bitter. The supporters of the Puritan regime were fanatically persecuted. The nation was predominantly Protestant and the Catholics were unduly harassed. The religion of the King himself was suspect. His brother James was a Papist (Roman Catholic). As Charles II had no legitimate heir, it was certain that after him his brother James, a Catholic, would succeed to the throne. Efforts were made to exclude James from the throne. The King sided with his brother and he removed all obstacles for the accession of James. Dryden's famous poem *Absalom and Achitophel* reflects the religious and political conflicts of the day.

2) The Revolution

James II ascended the throne in 1685. He soon revealed his Roman Catholic prejudices and he secretly tried to establish Catholicism in the country. He became unpopular within three years and the whole nation rose against him. The bloodless revolution of 1688 called the Protestant William and Mary of Orange to the throne. The country was once again restored to health and sanity. These deep and vigorous movements brought about certain changes in the inner social life. With the revival of factions and parties and the excitement caused by the Popish plot, a quality of force

and ardour revived in civic feelings, so that the tone of literature and of social life is somewhat modified. With the political and moral transformation which began in 1688, the very Keynote of English literature, as of English life, was greatly changed. It can be said that the last years of the seventeenth century form a distinct period. It is a brief but well-marked transition separating the Restoration from the age of classicism

8.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Historical events often influence literature. Which of the following did not occur during the Restoration period?

a) Charles II was restored to the throne
b) The French Revolution
c) The Great Fire of London
d) The Exclusion Bill Crisis

2. Which of the following literary sub-periods does not fall under the Neoclassical Period?

a) The Restoration
b) Jacobean Age
c) The Augustan Age
d) The Age of Sensibility

3. One of these men did not write during the Restoration period. Who?

a) John Milton
b) Thomas Otway
c) Sir Walter Scott
d) John Dryden

4. Which of the following is not an example of Restoration comedy?

a) Etherege's *The Man of Mode*
b) Wycherley's *The Country Wife*
c) Behn's *The Rover*
d) Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*
e) Congreve's *Love for Love*

8.8 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. Renaissance
2. Latin
3. Neo-classicism
4. French
5. Samuel Papys
6. Dryden
7. heroic couplet
8. Puritans
9. French
10. comedy of manners

MCQs

1. b
2. b
3. c
4. d

8.9 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have studied the social and historical aspects of Restoration period stressing the phenomena like concept of restoration, religious and political conflicts on the social sphere and the revolution that brought deep changes in the society in general and literary activities in particular. The lesson dealt with the facets of Restoration age like rise of neo-classicism, imitations of the ancient masters and their impact on the writings of the Restoration age, and introduction of correctness and appropriateness as well as formalism and realism in their writings. It also speaks of the prose and verse of the age. The emphasis is placed on the dramatic activities of restoration age' especially the birth of new tragedy called Heroic tragedy and comedy called Comedy of Manners. The important dramatists and their works are also introduced, followed by the discussion on the decline and decay of drama during Restoration Age.

8.10 SUGGESTED READING

- *A Handbook to Literature* by Holman C. Hugh and Harmon William
- *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700* by Elizabeth Howe

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -IV**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 9**

JOHN DRYDEN: *MAC FLECKNOE*

9.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear leaner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with Restoration period with reference to John Dryden and his works. The lesson also aims to familiarise you with the poem *MaC Fklecknoe.* After going through this lesson, you will be able to describe the life of John Dryden as well as his major works. You will also be able to explain the important lines of the poem *Mac Flecknoe.*

9.1 INTRODUCTION

John Dryden was an English poet, literary critic, translator, and playwright who was declared England's first Poet Laureate in 1668. He is seen as dominating the literary life of Restoration England to such a point that the period came to be known in literary circles as the Age of Dryden. Walter Scott called him "Glorious John".

Dryden was born in the village rectory of Aldwincle near Thrapston in Northamptonshire, where his maternal grandfather was rector of All Saints. He was

the eldest of fourteen children born to Erasmus Dryden and wife Mary Pickering, paternal grandson of Sir Erasmus Dryden, 1st Baronet (1553–1632) and wife Frances Wilkes of Puritan landowning gentry who supported the Puritan cause and Parliament. As a boy Dryden lived in the nearby village of Titchmarsh, where it is likely that he received his first education. In 1644 he was sent to Westminster School as a King's Scholar where his headmaster was Dr. Richard Busby, a charismatic teacher and severe disciplinarian. Having recently been re-founded by Elizabeth I, Westminster during this period embraced a very different religious and political spirit encouraging royalism and high Anglicanism.

As a humanist public school, Westminster maintained a curriculum which trained pupils in the art of rhetoric and the presentation of arguments for both sides of a given issue. This is a skill which remained with Dryden and influence his later writing and thinking, as much of it displays these dialectical patterns. The Westminster curriculum included weekly translation assignments which developed Dryden's capacity for assimilation. This was also to be exhibited in his later works. His years at Westminster were not uneventful, and his first published poem, an elegy with a strong royalist feel on the death of his schoolmate Henry, Lord Hastings from smallpox, alludes to the execution of King Charles I, which took place on 30 January 1649, very near the school where Dr. Busby had first prayed for the King and then locked in his schoolboys to prevent their attending the spectacle.

In 1650 Dryden went up to Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he experienced a return to the religious and political ethos of his childhood: the Master of Trinity was a Puritan preacher by the name of Thomas Hill who had been a rector in Dryden's home village. Though there is little specific information on Dryden's undergraduate years, he most certainly followed the standard curriculum of classics, rhetoric, and mathematics. In 1654 he obtained his BA, graduating top of the list for Trinity that year. In June of the same year Dryden's father died, leaving him some land which generated a little income, but not enough to live on.

Returning to London during the Protectorate, Dryden obtained work with Cromwell's Secretary of State, John Thurloe. This appointment may have been the result of influence exercised on his behalf by his cousin the Lord Chamberlain, Sir Gilbert Pickering. At Cromwell's funeral on 23 November 1658 Dryden

processed with the Puritan poets John Milton and Andrew Marvell. Shortly thereafter he published his first important poem, *Heroic Stanzas* (1658), a eulogy on Cromwell's death which is cautious and prudent in its emotional display. In 1660 Dryden celebrated the Restoration of the monarchy and the return of Charles II with *Astraea Redux*, an authentic royalist panegyric. In this work the interregnum is illustrated as a time of anarchy, and Charles is seen as the restorer of peace and order.

Selected Works

Astraea Redux, 1660

The Wild Gallant (comedy), 1663

The Rival Ladies (tragicomedy), 1664

Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen, 1667

King Arthur, 1691

Cleomenes, 1692

Love Triumphant, 1694

The Works of Virgil, 1697

Alexander's Feast, 1697

Fables, Ancient and Modern, 1700

The Art of Satire

To the Memory of Mr. Oldham, 1684

Aureng-zebe, 1675

All for Love, 1678

Absalom and Achitophel, 1681

The Spanish Fryar, 1681

Mac Flecknoe, 1682

The Medal, 1682

9.2 POETIC STYLE

What Dryden achieved in his poetry was neither the emotional excitement of the early nineteenth-century romantics nor the intellectual complexities of the metaphysicals. His subject matter was often factual, and he aimed at expressing his thoughts in the most precise and concentrated manner. Although he uses formal structures such as heroic couplets, he tried to recreate the natural rhythm of speech, and he knew that different subjects need different kinds of verse. In his preface to *Religio Laici* he says that "the expressions of a poem designed purely for instruction ought to be plain and natural, yet majestic... The florid, elevated and figurative way is for the passions; for (these) are begotten in the soul by showing the objects out of their true proportion. A man is to be cheated into passion, but to be reasoned into truth."

9.3 POEM TEXT

All human things are subject to decay,

And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey:

This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young

Was call'd to empire, and had govern'd long:

In prose and verse, was own'd, without dispute

Through all the realms of Non-sense, absolute.

This aged prince now flourishing in peace,

And blest with issue of a large increase,

Worn out with business, did at length debate

To settle the succession of the State:

And pond'ring which of all his sons was fit

To reign, and wage immortal war with wit;

Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for nature pleads that he

Should only rule, who most resembles me:

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,

Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day:
Besides his goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty:
Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
Thou last great prophet of tautology:
Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way;
And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came
To teach the nations in thy greater name.
My warbling lute, the lute I whilom strung
When to King John of Portugal I sung,
Was but the prelude to that glorious day,
When thou on silver Thames did'st cut thy way,
With well tim'd oars before the royal barge,
Swell'd with the pride of thy celestial charge;

And big with hymn, commander of an host,
The like was ne'er in Epsom blankets toss'd.
Methinks I see the new Arion sail,
The lute still trembling underneath thy nail.
At thy well sharpen'd thumb from shore to shore
The treble squeaks for fear, the basses roar:
Echoes from Pissing-Alley, Shadwell call,
And Shadwell they resound from Aston Hall.
About thy boat the little fishes throng,
As at the morning toast, that floats along.
Sometimes as prince of thy harmonious band
Thou wield'st thy papers in thy threshing hand.
St. Andre's feet ne'er kept more equal time,
Not ev'n the feet of thy own Psyche's rhyme:
Though they in number as in sense excel;
So just, so like tautology they fell,
That, pale with envy, Singleton forswore
The lute and sword which he in triumph bore
And vow'd he ne'er would act Villerius more.
Here stopt the good old sire; and wept for joy
In silent raptures of the hopeful boy.
All arguments, but most his plays, persuade,
That for anointed dullness he was made.
Close to the walls which fair Augusta bind,
(The fair Augusta much to fears inclin'd)

An ancient fabric, rais'd t'inform the sight,
There stood of yore, and Barbican it hight:
A watch tower once; but now, so fate ordains,
Of all the pile an empty name remains.
From its old ruins brothel-houses rise,
Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted joys.
Where their vast courts, the mother-strumpets keep,
And, undisturb'd by watch, in silence sleep.
Near these a nursery erects its head,
Where queens are form'd, and future heroes bred;
Where unfledg'd actors learn to laugh and cry,
Where infant punks their tender voices try,
And little Maximins the gods defy.
Great Fletcher never treads in buskins here,
Nor greater Jonson dares in socks appear;
But gentle Simkin just reception finds
Amidst this monument of vanish'd minds:
Pure clinches, the suburbian muse affords;
And Panton waging harmless war with words.
Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,
Ambitiously design'd his Shadwell's throne.
For ancient Decker prophesi'd long since,
That in this pile should reign a mighty prince,
Born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense:
To whom true dullness should some Psyches owe,

But worlds of Misers from his pen should flow;
Humorists and hypocrites it should produce,
Whole Raymond families, and tribes of Bruce.

Now Empress Fame had publisht the renown,
Of Shadwell's coronation through the town.
Rous'd by report of fame, the nations meet,
From near Bun-Hill, and distant Watling-street.
No Persian carpets spread th'imperial way,
But scatter'd limbs of mangled poets lay:
From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of pies, and reliques of the bum.
Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby there lay,
But loads of Shadwell almost chok'd the way.
Bilk'd stationers for yeoman stood prepar'd,
And Herringman was Captain of the Guard.
The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,
High on a throne of his own labours rear'd.
At his right hand our young Ascanius sat
Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state.
His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
And lambent dullness play'd around his face.
As Hannibal did to the altars come,
Sworn by his sire a mortal foe to Rome;
So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,

That he till death true dullness would maintain;
And in his father's right, and realm's defence,
Ne'er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.
The king himself the sacred unction made,
As king by office, and as priest by trade:
In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
He plac'd a mighty mug of potent ale;
Love's kingdom to his right he did convey,
At once his sceptre and his rule of sway;
Whose righteous lore the prince had practis'd young,
And from whose loins recorded Psyche sprung,
His temples last with poppies were o'er spread,
That nodding seem'd to consecrate his head:
Just at that point of time, if fame not lie,
On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.
So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook,
Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.
Th'admiring throng loud acclamations make,
And omens of his future empire take.
The sire then shook the honours of his head,
And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,
Repelling from his breast the raging god;
At length burst out in this prophetic mood:

Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him reign
To far Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father's be his throne.
Beyond love's kingdom let him stretch his pen;
He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.
Then thus, continu'd he, my son advance
Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
Success let other teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.
Let Virtuosos in five years be writ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit.
Let gentle George in triumph tread the stage,
Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage;
Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,
And in their folly show the writer's wit.
Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence,
And justify their author's want of sense.
Let 'em be all by thy own model made
Of dullness, and desire no foreign aid:
That they to future ages may be known,
Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own.
Nay let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee, and differing but in name;
But let no alien Sedley interpose

To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.
And when false flowers of rhetoric thou would'st cull,
Trust Nature, do not labour to be dull;
But write thy best, and top; and in each line,
Sir Formal's oratory will be thine.
Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill,
And does thy Northern Dedications fill.
Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame,
By arrogating Jonson's hostile name.
Let Father Flecknoe fire thy mind with praise,
And Uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.
Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part;
What share have we in Nature or in Art?
Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,
And rail at arts he did not understand?
Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein,
Or swept the dust in Psyche's humble strain?
Where sold he bargains, whip-stitch, kiss my arse,
Promis'd a play and dwindled to a farce?
When did his muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
As thou whole Eth'ridge dost transfuse to thine?
But so transfus'd as oil on waters flow,
His always floats above, thine sinks below.
This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,
New humours to invent for each new play:

This is that boasted bias of thy mind,
By which one way, to dullness, 'tis inclin'd,
Which makes thy writings lean on one side still,
And in all changes that way bends thy will.
Nor let thy mountain belly make pretence
Of likeness; thine's a tympany of sense.
A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,
But sure thou 'rt but a kilderkin of wit.
Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep,
Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep.
With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write,
Thy inoffensive satires never bite.
In thy felonious heart, though venom lies,
It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen iambics, but mild anagram:
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful province in acrostic land.
There thou may'st wings display and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways.
Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents suit,
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.
He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
For Bruce and Longvil had a trap prepar'd,
And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.
Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,

Born upwards by a subterranean wind.

The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,

With double portion of his father's art

on's merits (or lack thereof) during the coronation.

9.3.1 EXPLANATION OF LINES

Lines 1-2

All human things are subject to decay,

And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey:

Dryden begins with a lofty commentary on mortality, God, and kings, his introduction to what we can only assume will be a grandiose epic of Homeric proportions.

As we will soon discover, the entirety of the poem is written in rhymed heroic couplets, typical of the epic style. (Check out "Form and Meter" for more on how this poem is put together.)

From this initial couplet, Dryden creates the atmosphere of an epic, a grandiose story of gods and kings, in line with the tradition of poetic big names like Homer or Milton.

Lines 3-6

This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus,

young Was call'd to empire, and had govern'd

long:

In prose and verse, was own'd, without

dispute Through all the realms of Non-sense,

absolute.

This is no epic; it's a satire written in mock-epic form. In these lines we get a sense of the poem's true tone, in all its biting, sarcastic glory.

Here's our first appearance from the title character, one Mac Flecknoe, the monarch spoken of in line 2. This could be a reference to Richard Flecknoe, an earlier English poet likely of Irish origin. Flecknoe was regarded to be a poetaster—basically someone who writes bad poetry—known for having to pay to get his poems published. Like Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, Flecknoe's rule was long and successful. But of course Flecknoe's domain isn't Rome, but rather the "realms of Non-sense," of which he is the poet-king. This distinction does not reflect well on his literary talents.

Lines 7-14

This aged prince now flourishing in
peace, And blest with issue of a large
increase, Worn out with business, did at
length debate To settle the succession of
the State:
And pond'ring which of all his sons was
fit To reign, and wage immortal war
with wit; Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for nature
pleads that he Should only rule, who
most resembles me:

The end of our king's life is near, however, and it is time now for him to declare his successor to the throne.

He has been blessed with a "large increase" (a.k.a. an ample brood of offspring), and he must choose which one of his children will inherit the kingdom.

So how will he make this decision? He will choose the heir who is most like the king himself, in wit and poetic ability (or, as Dryden implies, lack thereof).

Something tells us we aren't exactly going to get Shakespeare as the next king.

Lines 15-18

Shadwell alone my perfect image
bears, Mature in dullness from his

tender years. Shadwell alone, of all

my sons, is he Who stands

confirm'd in full stupidity.

Enter Thomas Shadwell, the hapless subject of Dryden's ire.

Instead of writing out the full name of "Shadwell," Dryden's original text actually reads "Sh—", implying a certain scatological expletive (hint: it rhymes with "snit"). It also implies the name of the writer: Shadwell.

Dryden's meter, however, consisting of ten syllable lines, requires a two-syllable word there. The full name "Shadwell" fits the bill.

In his supreme dullness and stupidity, it is Shadwell alone who appears fit to inherit the throne from Flecknoe.

Let's take a moment to step out of the kingdom of nonsense and back into reality: Shadwell and Dryden were once friends, but their relationship soured over several disagreements. They had divergent political views, as Dryden supported the Stuart monarchy while Shadwell was a member of the opposing party, called the Whigs.

They had religious differences, too, given Dryden's Catholic sympathies and Shadwell's Protestantism. And they had a running debate over the merits of Shakespeare and his contemporary Ben Jonson; Dryden was a Shakespeare fan, while Shadwell considered himself the leading student and heir to Jonson's legacy.

This festering contentiousness between the two writers reached a boiling point when Shadwell published "The Medal of John Bayes" in 1682, which attacked Dryden head-on. Dryden responded within the year with "Mac Flecknoe." Though Shadwell would go on to replace Dryden as Poet Laureate of England, it seems that Dryden ultimately had the last laugh, given the legacy of "Flecknoe."

Lines 19-24

The rest to some faint meaning make

pretence, But Shadwell never deviates

into sense.

Some beams of wit on other souls may
fall, Strike through and make a lucid
interval; But Shadwell's genuine night
admits no ray, His rising fogs prevail
upon the day:

Back to the realm of nonsense, where Shadwell is undeviatingly daft and impenetrably dense. No beam of intelligence or wit can reach him in his "genuine night." In other words, he's a complete moron.

Here, the irony present in Dryden's mock-heroic style becomes, especially clear. Dryden drops insult after insult, berating the intelligence and substance of his victim— but in the lofty language and style that might be used to exalt the many virtues of a Homeric hero.

Lines 25-32

Besides his goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty:
Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the
plain, And, spread in solemn state, supinely
reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but types of
thee, Thou last great prophet of tautology:
Even I, a dunce of more renown than
they, Was sent before but to prepare thy
way;

Nope, you didn't read that first line wrong: it's the seventeenth-century equivalent of a fat joke.

He's thoughtless as an oak, Dryden (using a simile) says of Shadwell. We guess he probably had more intellect than a tree, but either way—ouch.

Dryden then refers two earlier English poets and playwrights: John Heywood

and James Shirley. Neither of these two writers garnered much acclaim during their day, presumably preparing the way for more lackluster writers to come.

A "tautology" is basically just a redundancy, the unnecessary repetition of information. Dryden accuses these poets, most importantly Shadwell himself, of bad, illogical writing.

Lines 33-40

And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget
came To teach the nations in thy greater
name.
My warbling lute, the lute I whilom
strung When to King John of Portugal
I sung, Was but the prelude to that
glorious day,
When thou on silver Thames did'st cut thy
way, With well tim'd oars before the royal
barge, Swell'd with the pride of thy celestial
charge;

Well, it looks like some definitions are in order here. A "drugget" is a rough woollen fabric.

Norwich was the largest city in Norfolk County, Shadwell's place of origin.

"Whilom" is an archaic term for "once," as the speaker once played lute (a stringed instrument) for King John of Portugal. Dryden actually spent some time in Portugal, having written a number of pieces dedicated to the Portuguese monarch.

The river Thames runs through London.

In this section, the speaker addresses Shadwell directly in the second person, remembering as the writer appeared in the capital aboard a ship on the river ("thou on silver Thames").

Lines 41-48

And big with hymn, commander of an
host, The like was ne'er in Epsom
blankets toss'd. Methinks I see the new
Arion sail,
The lute still trembling underneath thy nail.
At thy well sharpen'd thumb from shore to
shore The treble squeaks for fear, the basses
roar: Echoes from Pissing-Alley, Shadwell
call,
And Shadwell they resound from Aston Hall.

The speaker describes as Shadwell rides into London victorious, as if he were the commander of a large army.

"Epsom blankets toss'd" is a reference both to *Epsom Wells*, a 1672 play by Shadwell, as well as to a line from another of his plays, *The Virtuoso*, which debuted in 1676.

Arion was an ancient Greek poet and musician. As the story goes, he was riding home on a ship when the sailors decided to kill him rob and rob him of his wealth. He was permitted to sing one last song accompanied by his lyre and, after doing so, he jumped into the water—where he was saved by a dolphin who carried him to shore.

Apparently there was an actual "Pissing-Alley" in London during Dryden's day, where the locals would do their business (charming). Though, open sewers were commonplace everywhere.

"Aston Hall" likely refers to a Birmingham mansion, constructed several decades prior to the publication of the poem.

Lines 49-55

About thy boat the little fishes throng,
As at the morning toast, that floats along.

Sometimes as prince of thy harmonious
band Thou wield'st thy papers in thy
threshing hand. St. Andre's feet ne'er kept
more equal time, Not ev'n the feet of thy
own Psyche's rhyme:
Though they in number as in sense
excel So just, so like tautology they
fell,

The term "toast" refers to waste in the river (ew). It's not an entirely flattering introduction for Shadwell.
St. Andre was a French master of dance, who choreographed Shadwell's 1675 opera libretto Psyche.

Dryden puns on the word "feet" here, referring to the feet of the dancer St. Andre, as well as to the metrical feet and rhyme scheme of Shadwell's Psyche.

We also get another dig at Shadwell's "tautology," his poorly constructed writing.

Lines 57-63

That, pale with envy, Singleton
forswore The lute and sword which he
in triumph bore
And vow'd he ne'er would act Villerius
more. Here stopt the good old sire; and
wept for joy In silent raptures of the
hopeful boy.
All arguments, but most his plays,
persuade, That for anointed dullness he
was made.

Who are these folks, you wonder? John Singleton was a court musician and

singer, and Villerius is a character in Sir William Davenant's 1656 tragicomic opera, *The Siege of Rhodes*. He was a knight, and the grand master of Rhodes. The envious Singleton, the speaker implies, will be grand master of London no more, now that Shadwell is in town.

It can't be denied: Shadwell, in all his dullness, is the only man for the job. Everyone else is just playing for second place.

Lines 64-71

Close to the walls which fair Augusta
bind, (The fair Augusta much to fears
inclin'd) An ancient fabric, rais'd
t'inform the sight, There stood of yore,
and Barbican it hight:
A watch tower once; but now, so fate ordains,
Of all the pile an empty name remains.
From its old ruins brothel-houses rise,
Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted
joys.

"Augusta" refers here to London. The word "august" originally means to inspire reverence or awe, reinforcing the poem's mock-epic tone.

London was in a state of fear during this time due to the so-called "Popish Plot," an alleged conspiracy suggesting that the Jesuits planned to assassinate King Charles
II. The plot turned out to be completely inaccurate.

The Barbican ("it hight" means "it was called") was a defensive fortification located in London. Its former glory is gone, however, as it has become the site of brothels, for the purpose of "polluted joys."

Lines 72-78

Where their vast courts, the mother-strumpets keep,

And, undisturb'd by watch, in silence sleep.

Near these a nursery erects its head,

Where queens are form'd, and future heroes

bred; Where unfledg'd actors learn to laugh

and cry, Where infant punks their tender

voices try,

And little Maximins the gods defy.

Here Dryden paints for us a picture of a "nursery," where the brothel children learn to be actors. His tone is quite ironic here, seeing as this brothel is an unlikely birthplace for "queens" and "future heroes."

We have more terminology to clear up: the term "punks" refers to prostitutes.

Also, Maximin was a character in Dryden's own 1670 drama *Tyrannick Love*—a tragic hero.

Lines 79-84

Great Fletcher never treads in buskins

here, Nor greater Jonson dares in socks

appear; But gentle Simkin just reception

finds Amidst this monument of

vanish'd minds:

Pure clinches, the suburbian muse

affords; And Panton waging harmless war

with words.

John Fletcher was an early seventeenth-century playwright known for his tragedies; in the ancient Greek tradition, "buskins" were the kind of boot worn by actors when performing tragedies.

Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Fletcher's and an idol of Shadwell's, was a playwright best known for his comedies, for which performers on stage generally wore socks.

"Simkin" is a dramatic term for a simpleton or a clown, while "clinches" is another word for puns, of which Thomas Panton was a well-known

practitioner.

In short, the speaker explains here that there is no room for tragedies or comedies in this place; only fools and punsters who wage "harmless war[s] with words" may find an audience here.

Lines 85-89

Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,
Ambitiously design'd his Shadwell's throne.
For ancient Decker prophesi'd long
since, That in this pile should reign a
mighty prince, Born for a scourge of
wit, and flail of sense:

What better place for Shadwell to reside than here, this unfortunate part of town devoid of good writers and culture? It is here that Flecknoe sets up Shadwell's new throne.

Thomas Dekker was an ill-regarded English writer, and a victim of Ben Jonson's satire, The Poetaster. A prophecy from Dekker, in this sense, is hardly a shining endorsement—though this anticipated prince without wit or sense seems to perfectly fit the bill.

Dryden is right back at belittling Shadwell. The previous twenty lines have served to set up Shadwell's new domain as a place of ill repute and lack of taste—now Shadwell is about to assume his place on the throne.

Lines 90-93

To whom true dullness should some Psyches
owe, But worlds of Misers from his pen
should flow; Humorists and hypocrites it
should produce, Whole Raymond families,
and tribes of Bruce.

These lines make reference to three of Shadwell's plays: *The Miser, The*

Humorists,
and *The Hypocrite*.

Raymond is a character from *The Humorists*, and Bruce is a character from *The Virtuoso*.

Dryden is taking a shot at every Shadwell work he can.

Lines 94-101

Now Empress Fame had publisht the
renown, Of Shadwell's coronation
through the town. Rous'd by report of
fame, the nations meet, From near Bun-
Hill, and distant Watling-street. No
Persian carpets spread th'imperial way,
But scatter'd limbs of mangled poets lay:
From dusty shops neglected authors come,
Martyrs of pies, and reliques of the
bum. It's coronation time!

Shadwell's fame stretches from "Bun-Hill" to "distant Watling-street"—which in reality was hardly distant at all. The speaker's ironic statement shows the narrow limits of Shadwell's influence.

It is not "Persian carpets" and other traditionally royal, luxury items that line the street for his coronation, but rather the "scatter'd limbs of mangled poets." This thought suggests that Shadwell's ascension to the throne occurs at the expense of good and sensible poetry.

In times of scarcity, paper from books would often be repurposed for other needs. Lining pie tins was one such usage, and toilet paper was another ("reliques of the bum")—classy.

Dryden's use of toilet humor contrasts with the elevated tone of the poem, combining high art and lowbrow jokes effortlessly.

Lines 102-109

Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby there
lay, But loads of Shadwell almost chok'd
the way. Bilk'd stationers for yeoman
stood prepar'd, And Herringman was
Captain of the Guard.
The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,
High on a throne of his own labours
rear'd. At his right hand our young
Ascanius sat Rome's other hope, and
pillar of the state.

Lots more identification is called for here. Got your notes ready?

The speaker again makes reference to mediocre poets John Heywood, James Shirley, and now includes John Ogleby—a Scottish translator and cartographer who also happened to write bad poetry. These poets may be bad, the speaker suggests, but Shadwell is even worse.

"Bilk'd stationers" refers to the booksellers who cannot sell Shadwell's shoddy poetry. "Yeomen" were royal attendants.

Henry Herringman was a publisher and bookseller, who published Dryden, as well as Shadwell. "Hoary" means "white," referring here to the elderly Flecknoe as he appears.

Ascanius was a hero and king featured in Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*. He was one of the founders of the Roman people. Much like Shadwell, he inherited the throne from his father.

The reference here to Rome reinforces the mock epic tone, the speaker ironically likening Shadwell's situation to that of the classical heroes of old.

Lines 110-117

His brows thick fogs, instead of glories,
grace, And lambent dullness play'd
around his face. As Hannibal did to the
altars come,
Sworn by his sire a mortal foe to Rome;
So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be
vain, That he till death true dullness would
maintain; And in his father's right, and
realm's defence,
Ne'er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.

The speaker ironically describes Shadwell's dullness as "lambent," or glowing, playing around his face as if it were wit or some semblance of radiance.

Hannibal was a general from Carthage who warred against Rome. As commanded by his father, he swore to combat Rome as long as he lived. Thus, Shadwell swears to wage war on wit and sense, all in the name of "true dullness" and the defense of the realm.

Lines 118-123

The king himself the sacred unction
made, As king by office, and as priest
by trade:
In his sinister hand, instead of
ball, He plac'd a mighty mug of
potent ale;
Love's kingdom to his right he did
convey, At once his sceptre and his
rule of sway;

"Unction" here refers to the process of anointing a new king with sacramental oil. We know that Richard Flecknoe's day job was as a priest.

The term "sinister" just means "left," so the speaker is referring to the king's left hand. The word "sinister" in modern English comes from that Latin word for left- handed. (Sorry, southpaws.)

At his coronation, the king of England would be presented with a scepter and orb as a symbol of power. In this case, instead of an orb, or ball, the new king is presented with booze, implying the dimwitted dullness of the new monarch.

Love's Kingdom was another of Shadwell's plays.

Lines 124-131

Whose righteous lore the prince had practis'd
young, And from whose loins recorded Psyche
sprung,
His temples last with poppies were o'er
spread, That nodding seem'd to consecrate
his head: Just at that point of time, if fame
not lie,
On his left hand twelve reverend owls did
fly. So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's
brook, Presage of sway from twice six
vultures took.

In this section, we get another reference to Shadwell's psyche.

Shadwell also had an addiction to opium, which is made from poppies.

According to Roman myth, Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, was visited by twelve vultures who told him where to establish the city. Again, Dryden mockingly juxtapositions this debased narrative with classical epics,

comparing Shadwell's coronation and visitation by owls to the founding of Rome.

Lines 132-138

Th'admiring throng loud acclamations
make, And omens of his future empire
take.
The sire then shook the honours of his
head, And from his brows damps of
oblivion shed Full on the filial dullness:
long he stood, Repelling from his breast
the raging god;
At length burst out in this prophetic mood:

A throng of admirers cheers Shadwell on, as he takes his seat on the throne.

Of course, he is so daft, the speaker claims, that he literally sweats obliviousness.

By "filial," the speaker means that Shadwell inherits his dullness from the old king Flecknoe.

And thus Flecknoe prepares to address the crowd. (This ought to be good…)

Lines 139-144

Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him
reign To far Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his dominion may no end be
known, And greater than his father's
be his throne.
Beyond love's kingdom let him stretch his pen;

He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.This passage consists of Flecknoe's speech regarding the coronation of his son.

The kingdom apparently stretches all the way from Ireland to Barbados,

which seems impressive until you realize that he's referring to the vast, but empty, Atlantic Ocean. (Cue the sad trombone.)

"Let my son's rule be even greater and more impressive than my own," Flecknoe (basically) exclaims, and "let him write freely throughout his domain."

Lines 145-154

Then thus, continu'd he, my son
advance Still in new impudence, new
ignorance. Success let other teach,
learn thou from me Pangs without
birth, and fruitless industry. Let
Virtuosos in five years be writ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of
wit. Let gentle George in triumph tread
the stage, Make Dorimant betray, and
Loveit rage;
Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the
pit, And in their folly show the writer's
wit.

Flecknoe continues. In a nutshell, he says: "Let my son increase in blind ignorance as his rule proceeds, producing more and more terrible works."

We also get another reference to Shadwell's *The Virtuoso,* which no one, the speaker explains, will ever mistake for having any wit or substance.
Sir George Etherege was a comedic playwright and contemporary of Shadwell and Dryden. Loveit, Cully, Cockwood, and Fopling are all characters from his plays. Dryden actually seems complementary of "gentle George," making note of his wit.

Lines 155-164

Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy
defence, And justify their author's want of
sense.
Let 'em be all by thy own model
made Of dullness, and desire no
foreign aid:
That they to future ages may be
known, Not copies drawn, but issue
of thy own. Nay let thy men of wit
too be the same, All full of thee, and
differing but in name; But let no
alien Sedley interpose
To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.

Shadwell's characters, on the other hand, are as uniformly dull as their creator. The term "want" means "lack," referring to Shadwell's lack of sense.

Sir Charles Sedley composed the prologue for Shadwell's *Epsom Wells*, but Flecknoe reminds his heir that he must not allow others to contribute any wit to his own wit-lacking texts. He wouldn't want to actually write anything worthwhile now, would he?

Lines 165-174

And when false flowers of rhetoric thou would'st
cull, Trust Nature, do not labour to be dull;
But write thy best, and top; and in each
line, Sir Formal's oratory will be thine.

Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy
quill, And does thy Northern Dedications
fill.
Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to
fame, By arrogating Jonson's hostile
name.
Let Father Flecknoe fire thy mind with
praise, And Uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.

Dryden continues to belittle Shadwell's writing ability with irony, as Flecknoe goes on, praising Shadwell's virtues.

You need not try to be dull, Flecknoe reminds his heir. You simply have to be your own dull self and the rest will take care of itself. That's quite the pep talk.

Sir Formal Trifle is the main character in Shadwell's *The Virtuoso,* remembered for his haughty, elevated speaking style.

Shadwell would often dedicate his plays and poems to the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, located in the northern part of the country.

Shadwell was a great admirer of comedic playwright Ben Jonson, and attempted to write in his style. Jonson, however, was a much superior writer. Dryden considered Shadwell to be "arrogating," or unjustly claiming Jonson's legacy, as the criticism here suggests.

We get another reference to John Ogleby and his pedestrian poetry, who should be envious of Shadwell's ability to write far worse.

Lines 175-182

Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no
part; What share have we in Nature or in
Art?
Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,

And rail at arts he did not understand?

Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein,

Or swept the dust in Psyche's humble strain?

Where sold he bargains, whip-stitch, kiss my

arse, Promis'd a play and dwindled to a farce?

We're given another reference to earlier playwright Ben Jonson, whom Shadwell greatly admired. Dryden scoffs at the notion that Shadwell would consider himself the heir to the legacy of Jonson, given Jonson's status as a much superior writer.

Other things to know about for this section include the fact that "rail" means to reproach, or speak out against.

Prince Nicander is a character in Shadwell's psyche.

Finally, "whip-stitch" and "kiss my arse" were catchphrases used by some of Shadwell's characters. Dryden takes a shot here at the lack of substance in Shadwell's plays, which the speaker proclaims are nothing more than cheap farces.

Lines 183-192

When did his muse from Fletcher scenes

purloin, As thou whole Eth'ridge dost

transfuse to thine? But so transfus'd as oil

on waters flow,

His always floats above, thine sinks

below. This is thy province, this thy

wondrous way, New humours to invent

for each new play:

This is that boasted bias of thy mind,

By which one way, to dullness, 'tis inclin'd,

Which makes thy writings lean on one side

still, And in all changes that way bends thy
will.

Here we get more references to comedic playwrights John Fletcher and George Etherege, whom it seems Dryden viewed more favorably than Shadwell.

The Ancient Greeks developed a theory in medicine that the human body was made up of four humors, which contribute to temperament and wellbeing. Ben Jonson famously pioneered the "Comedy of Humors" genre, writing plays that featured four main characters, each representing one of these humors. Shadwell attempted to copy this style in his own plays, including his aptly titled, *The Humorists*.

In the epilogue of *The Humorists*, Shadwell writes: "a humor is a bias of the mind," which is why that phrase appears here.

We're told that Shadwell doesn't have to worry about things like humor in his writing, though. His work is inclined to be dull and uneven. Shadwell is really getting flamed here.

Lines 193-202

Nor let thy mountain belly make
pretence Of likeness; thine's a
tympany of sense. A tun of man in
thy large bulk is writ,
But sure thou 'rt but a kilderkin of wit.
Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly
creep,
Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic
sleep. With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self
to write, Thy inoffensive satires never bite.
In thy felonious heart, though venom
lies, It does but touch thy Irish pen,
and dies.

Look out, here comes another fat joke. Jonson was also a heavy guy, like Shadwell. But while the size of their bellies may compare, their writing certainly does not.

Here the word "tympany" means "a swelling," while "tun" refers to a barrel for beer or wine. A "kilderkin" is a quarter of a tun. So quickly we move from a fat joke to a stupid joke.

When Shadwell tries to be dramatic ("thy Tragic Muse"), he just makes the audience laugh; when he tries to be funny ("thy Comic"), he puts the audience to sleep.

His satires lack punch and his plays are insipid and vacuous. In other words, they are super-lame (in case, you know, you hadn't picked up on that idea by now).

Lines 203-208

Thy genius calls thee not to purchase
fame In keen iambics, but mild
anagram:
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy
command Some peaceful province in acrostic
land.
There thou may'st wings display and altars
raise, And torture one poor word ten thousand
ways.

The term "iambics" refers here to satires in the classical tradition, commonly written in iambs—much like Dryden's own poem.

An "anagram" is a rearranging of letters in a word, and refers here to a common practice in seventeenth-century poetry where writers would arrange their poems on the page in certain shapes, like wings or altars.

This style was viewed by purists as "false wit."

Another example of this style is acrostic poetry, in which the first letter of each line spells out a word. Dryden accuses Shadwell here of writing cheaply in this manner.

Lines 209-217

Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents
suit, Set thy own songs, and sing them to
thy lute.
He said, but his last words were scarcely
heard, For Bruce and Longvil had a trap
prepar'd, And down they sent the yet
declaiming bard.
Sinking he left his drugget robe
behind, Born upwards by a
subterranean wind. The mantle fell to
the young prophet's part, With double
portion of his father's art.

In Ancient Greece, Homer's epic poems would often be sung by traveling performers, generally with accompaniment from a stringed instrument like a lyre. In medieval Europe, bards followed in this tradition, singing epic poetry while playing the lute.

We get a reference to Bruce and Longvil, two characters in Shadwell's *The Virtuoso*. In the play, they pull a trap door to dismiss the haughty Sir Formal Trifle in the middle of one of his rambling speeches.

Dryden leaves us with a biblical reference, an allusion to the story of Elijah, in which Elisha picks up the elder prophet's mantle after he departs to heaven in a whirlwind. This is the origin of the modern expression "to take up the mantle." And as Elisha carries on in the absence of his mentor, Shadwell is left as the inheritor of his father's crummy drugget ("woolen fabric"), and equally crummy legacy. Of course, though, he has a "double portion of his father's art." That sounds awesome, but then you realize that this means he has an even sharper knack for writing terrible poetry than his predecessor.

And there we have it. “Mac Flecknoe” in all its scathingly hilarious glory. Sorry Shadwell. We can still feel the burn all the way from here.

9.4 LET US SUM UP

Mac Flecknoe is the poet-king of the realm of nonsense. After many years as ruler, however, the time comes for him to step down. Ultimately, he chooses his son Thomas Shadwell, a poet of unparalleled dreadfulness, as his successor. Shadwell is the worst writer in all the land, and thus, the perfect man for the job.

Upon arriving in the city of August (a.k.a. London), Shadwell is crowned king of the realm of nonsense. Mac Flecknoe himself delivers a brief speech on his son’s merits (or lack thereof) during the coronation.

At this point all the action pretty much stops, as the poem devolves into a thinly- veiled, full-force condemnation of Shadwell’s writing and character by the speaker. In the end, crowned and ready to rule in his father’s footsteps, Shadwell is poised to sink poetry to an even lower level.

9.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q. Discuss Dryden as a Satirist.

Introduction

Dryden is one of the greatest English satirists. He is the first practitioner classical satire and after him was to remain a vogue for about one hundred and fifty years. From the very beginning of his literary career Dryden evinced a sharp satiric bent. He translated some of the satires of the Roman Writer Persist when he was only a pupil at Westminster. Further, in his comedies he produced numerous passages of sparkling satire. He keenly studied, the satirical traditions of Rome and France, and whatever satire, England had to offer. But it was not till he was about fifty then he came to write *Absalom and Achitophel*- the first of the four major satire works on which his reputation as a poet is based. With his practice he gave a new form and direction to English satire and raised it to the level of French and Roman satire. He made satire not only a redoubtable weapon to chastise a personal and police enemies but also an important, if not a very exalted, genre of

literature which was later to attact such great writers as Pope, Swift, Addison and Dr Johnson, Dryden's four important satire are:

a. *Absalom, Achitophe*

b. *The second part of the Absalom, Achitophel Chiefly written by Nahum tate and including about 200 lines by Dryden*

c. *He Medal*

d. *Mac Flecknoe*

Dryden's contribution and Place:

Mac Flecknoe as a satire does not fall in with the native English tradition of Langland, Gascoigne Donne, Lodge, Hall, Marston, Cleveland, , was carried on by his contemporaries, like Oolham, and Samuel Butler, Just as in his non- satiric poetry he reacted against the "romanticism, of the Elizabethans and the confusion, grotgesquencess, and formlessness, of thee imitators, of Donne, similarly in his satire he broke away from the harshness, formlessness, and denunciatory tone of the English satirists before him. He seems to have looked for inspiration not towards them but- a neon classicists as he was towards the Roman satirists-Horace, Juvenal, and Persius- and their French followers, the most outstanding of whom was his adored Boileau.

Both as a critic and as creative writer, Dryden emphasized and felt the need for artistic control and urbanity of the matter. For all successful satire these qualities are of the nature of pre- requisites,. It is most essential for a satirists to hide his disgust and moral animus behind a veil of equanimity and urbanity of manner. If he just loses his head at the sight of object which is to be the target of his attack and comes out with open denunciation and direct name- calling he will not be a successful satirist. A satirist is a propagandist in so far as his efforts is to direct the sympathies of the reader into harmony with his own and against the object sought to be satirized. Naturally enough, if he speaks, too openly from the position, of a partisan he will cut little with the reader. So the satirists should not appear too serious to serious to be taken seriously. Of course, he should be very serious, but he should give the impression, of not being very serious, or even neutral between the two opposite points: one of which his efforts is to promote and other to counteract. He

should lessen, as far as possible, the intensity of self-involvement through the employment, of some sly indirection of technique. Dryden himself was aware of it when he said that the satirist should make a man, 'die sweetly' Call him a fool or a rogue without using these. ' opprobrious terms'. He distinguished between the 'slovenly butchering' done by a bad satirist and the dexterous stroke which severs the head but leaves sanding. Seldom does Dryden indulge in an open denunciation or invective, but he often uses such indirect techniques, as irony, sarcasm, and above all exuberant wit. It is what primarily distinguishes him from his predecessors who were always open and direct in their attacks. His satire is indirect, and, therefore, smooth., urbane and without angularities, or harshness. The same is the case with is versification. He found a good satiric vehicle in the heroic couplet and chiseled and planned it to brilliance. His versification avoids the harshness, deliberately cultivated by his young friend Oldham, who also employed the heroic couplet. Observes Hugh Walker, "It is this combination, -- smoothness of verse, lucidity of style urbanity, of manner, which makes Dryden's satire so strikingly original. English there had hitherto been nothing comparable to it".

Controlled contempt

Dryden's satire is remarkable as an artistic expression of control attempt. Broadly speaking, the three great English satirists, Dryden, Pope, and Swift =- work through different channels. Dryden is a master of scorn and attempt, Pope of rage and Swift disgust. Of course all of them artistically control theirs respective presiding feeling, else they would not have been 'great. Dryden who is ' satirists Dryden who, in T.S.. Eliot's, phrase, is' the great master of attempt', unlike his predecessor, does not take any moral airs. Donne, Hall, and Marston, seem to be speaking from the a moral elevation, as if they were saints whose moral sense has been outraged. Now, this takes for granted a kind of moral pose which debars satire from assuming an appearance of genuineness or sincerely. Once this moral pose has been seen through by reader, he cannot accept to be dictated or' moved 'by the satirists whom he knows to be an erring being like himself. Dryden speaks as one civilized being to others., without pretending, to give them lessons, in morality. For one things, he eschews all moral and religious issues. This issue he tackles concerns politics, taste and good breeding, and, only incidentally morals or

religion, Saintsbury observe : 'It never does for the political satirist to lose his temper and to rave and ant and denounce with the air of an inspired prophet.' As a critic says, 'Dryden assumed no moral airs, firmly controls his satirical spirit and skillfully selects the points and manner of his attacks… the result is a humorous disdainful, and incisive mockery'.

Dryden's elevating style

One of the Dryden's unique gifts is his capacity to ennoble and elevate the objects of his satire even when his movies is to demean or depress them, the buoyant vigor of his piety does not let them touch the lowly ground. T.S Eliot was the first to direct the attention, to this point when he wrote in his Essay on Dryden:' 'Much of Dryden's unique arts consists in his ability to make the small into the great, prosaic, into the poetic, thee trivial into the magnificent' Even when Dryden pours the vials of his scorn on such characters, as Titus Oates,, Slingsby Bethal, and Shadwell,. He gave them something, of heroic dignity. He extends the dimension of their being (in the case of Shadwell, his physical being too!) and makes them 'poetic'. His scorn diminishes,. And depresses them, but his poetry extends, and exalts them. His personal animus is often lost in the energy of creation, so that Mac Flecknow, become much more important, than the real man called Shadwell, Corah than Titus, Oates, and Shmei than Slingsby Bethal. Personal envy and malice shed their grossness, and are burnished into real poetry. The end product has little resemblence with the material Dryden starts with. Bonamy Dobree observes" 'We have only to think of Mac Flecknoe to forget Shadwell, to think of Anchitophel is to forget Shaftesbury, the person who lost in the history, satires are part of our national consciousness. Everything all the time compared not with something little but with somethings great.' That way, Dryden's modus operandi is much different from Pope's. When Pope satirises, he diminishes; when Dryden satires, he exalts,

By exalting and enlarging, the objects of his satire, Dryden also raised the lowly genre of satire to the level of epic. This was no small achievement, His work *Absalom and Achitophel*, to which he gave the title ' a poem' and not a ' satire'- is the first instance of a English satire, As Jack has pointed in Augustan Satire, this poem consists of peculiar not only to one ' kind' of poetry, but to many kinds, epic satire, panegyric, etc. The style seldom becomes slow the kind of which may be

employed for an ordinary satire. Even in his mock- heroic satire Mac Flecknoe which is conceived on a much lower plane than *Absalom and Achitophel,* Dryden does not use very low or vulgar imagery to punish Shadwell, The use of contemporary location, streets etc, has a further ludicrous effect. In *Absalom and Achitophel,* the use of biblical parallels, has an exalting effect but in *Mac Flecknoe* the reference to concrete historical details has the effect to the mock heroic. Thus in a word whereas *Absalom* and *Actitophel* is a heroic satire, *Mac Flecknoe* is a mock- heroic satire. However, in both the satirist works through high, and not low or vulgar, imagery and idiom.

The exalting, effect on his satiric objects is made possible by Dryden's effective and powerful handling of heroic couplet, poetic measure which it was to his credit to perfect into an excellent vehicle of satire by giving to it neatness epigrammatic cogency and smart and felicitous phrasing, fully exploiting the scope it has for balance and antithesis. To a large extent he regularized the heroic couplet by discouraging the license taken by the earlier practitioners of his measure. He gave each line five regular stresses and avoided as far as possible what is called enjambment or the trailing of sense from the one couplet to the next. His couplets are mostly end- stopped. And after every line there is generally a natural stop. However, he himself took liberties with the location of the caesura and shifted it within the line or even dispensed with it altogether at times. His handling of the heroic couplet is not as strict and disciplined as Pope's for instances, he sometimes uses an alexandrine instead of a regular pentameter, and sometimes the couplet grows, into a triplet. Pope was strict to avoid such license, and he even took Dryden to task for it. Nevertheless, Dryden's heroic couplet are more energetic racy and spontaneous looking than Pope's. As a master of contempt-sometimes expressed in ironical terms. - Dryden finds the couplet a very handy medium. Many of his couplets come out with sizzling and scarifying intensity and the sound of some of them, as Saintsbury puts it resembles, the sound of a slap in the face.

Dryden's Major satires:-

(1) *Absalom and Achitophel* is Dryden's best satire. It was perhaps written at the suggestions of Charles II and was out just a week before the trial of Shaftesbury for sedition. I was thus political in nature and was the representation of

the Tory point of view. Its purpose to malign Shaftesbury as an enemy of peace and the nation and seducer of the Duke of Monmouth-the King's illegitimate son. The poem is conceived on near- epic dimensions though it contains many elements below the dignity of an epic proper. There is much too little action though considerable ternseness. Much of the interest of this work lies in the satirical portraits of Shaftesbury, the Duke of Buckingham, Slingsby Bethal, and Titus Oates veiled behind the biblical or pseudo biblical figures of Achitophel, Zimri, Shimei and Corah respectively. The poem, says Sir Edmund Gosse, ' really consists of satirical portraits, cut and polished like jewels and flashing malignant light from all their facets.' There are some portraits of some allies of the king , but they are not so effective. Indeed, Dryden is the great master of the satiric portraits which was quite fashionable at that time. Unlike Pope he gave his portraits typical, and often, universal character and significance that historical character sought to be satirized is often lost in the finished poetic portraits.

(2) The two hundred odd lines which Dryden contributed to the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* authored by Nahum Tate constitute its best part. The rest of the poem is beneath criticism,, and even contempt. In his contribution, satirized a Shadwell and Elkanah settle in the character of Og and Doeg respectively.

(3) *The Medal, subtitle A satire against Sedition*, was again tropical; in genesis. In spite of *Absalom and Achitophel* , Shaftesbury was released from captivity. To commemorate his release Whigs struck a medal bearing an effigy of their hero. This stung Dryden into action and The Medal was the result . He calls Shatesbury ' the pander of the people's heart' and takes him to task for his seditious activities which would, Dryden alleges, plunge the country into the ruin. He vigorously upholds, as in *Absalom and Achitophel* Hobbe's theory of political covenant.

(4) *Mac Flecknoe* is the only satire in which Dryden lashes a personal enemy though his target Shadwell was a vigorous upholder of the Whig cause. The sub-title the work is a satire on the true Blue Protestant Poet, T.S' Of course, 'T.S. is Thomas Shadwell'. The poem is of the nature of a lampoon. Dryden ridicules Shadwell by representing him as a fittest heir to Flecknoe - the king of realm of dullness. Flecknoe was a voluminous and terribly dull poet of Ireland. He is shown to single out Shadwell, one of his numerous progeny, as

Shadwell of alone of all my sons is he

Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.

Then is described the coronation of Shadwell in a mock- heroic style. The poem was to serve as a model for Pope's *Dunciad* - one of the most powerful poems of the eighteenth century.

Q How is Dryden 'the father of English criticism ?'

Introduction

Dr Johnson decorated Dryden with the medal of the fatherhood of English criticism.' Dryden', he wrote, may be properly considered as a father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition.' Dr. Johnson's tribute to Dryden should not be allowed imply that no literary criticism, existed in England before Dryden. Some literary criticism, did exist before him, but much of it was not worth the name. In general English literary criticism, before Dryden was patchy, ill- organized. cursory, perfunctory, ill-digested, and heavily learning on ancient Greek and Roman, and more ancient Italian, and French, criticism, It had no identity or even life of its own, Moreover, an overwhelming proportion of it was criticism, of the legislative, and little of it that of the descriptive kind. Dryden evolved and articulated an impressive body of critical principles, for practical literary appreciation and offered good examples of descriptive criticism himself. It was said of Augustus that he found Rome brick and left it marble. Saintsbury avers that Dryden's contribution to English poetry was the same as Augustus' contribution in Rome. With still more justice we could say that Dryden found English literary criticism' brick' and left the 'marble'

Dryden's Critical Works:-

Dryden was truly a versatile man of letters. He was playwright (both tragic and comic), a vigorous and fluent prose writer, (justifiable then of modern English prose), a great poet (one of the best satiric poets of English so far), a verse translator, and, of course, a great literary critic. His literary criticism, makes a sizable volume. Much of it, however, is informal,. Occasional, self - vindication, and, as F.R Leavis terms it in his appreciation of Dr. Johnson as a critic Dryden wrote only one formal critical work the famous *Essay Of Dramatic Poesie*. The rest of

his critical work consists of his three classical lives, (Plutarch, Polybius, and Lucian), as many as twenty five critical prefaces, to his own works, and a few more prefaces to the works of his contemporaries, These critical prefaces are so many bills of fare as well as apologies for the writing to which they are prefixed, In his critical work Dryden deals as the occasion arises, most literary questions which were burning issues of the day, as also some fundamental problems of the literary creation, apprehension and appreciation which are as important today as they were at the very inchoation of literature. He deals, satisfactorily or otherwise, with such issues as the process of literary creation, the permissibility or otherwise, tragic - comedy- the three unites, the Daniel-Campion controversy over rhyme-versus-blank, verse, the nature and function of comedy, tragedy, and poetry in general, the function and test of good satire and many others. Here is, indeed, to steal a phrase, from him. 'god's plenty'. No English literary critic before Dryden had been so vest in range or sterling in quality.

Dryden: the Father of English Descriptive Criticism

Out of this 'God's plenty' of Dryden's critical works perhaps the most valuable passages are those which constitute descriptive criticism. George Watson in his excellent work *The Literary Critics* divides literary criticism into three broad categories listed below:-

(i) "Legislative Criticism: including books of rhetoric.". Such criticism claims to teach the poet how to write or write better. Thus it meant for writer and not the reader of poetry. Such criticism flourished before Dryden who broke new ground.

(ii) 'Theoretical criticism or literary aesthetics'. Such criticism had also become a defunct force. Today it has come back with a vengeance in the shape of various literary theories.

(iii) Descriptive criticism of the analysis of the existing literary work. 'This says. Watson, 'is the youngest of the three forms, by far the most voluminous and the only which today possesses any life and vigour of its own'.

Whether or not Dryden is the father of English criticism' it is fair enough to

agree with Watson that ' he is clearly the founder of descriptive criticism in English'. All English literary critics before him such as Gascoigne, Puttenham, Sidney, and Ben Jonson were critics of the legislative or theoretical kind. None of them concerned himself with the given literary works for interpretation and appreciation. Of course, now and then, Dryden predecessors did say good or bad things about this or that writer, or this or that literary compositor, for instance, Sidney praised Shakespeare and commented on his contemporaries . However, such stray comments were not grounded on any carefully formulated principles of appreciation. 'Audiences' says Dr. Johnson,' applauded by instinct, and poets perhaps, often pleased by chance'. Dryden was, to repeat Dr. Johnson's words., 'the the writer who first taught is to determine upon principles the merit of composition'. Dryden ' practiced' what he ' taught'. He was the first in English' to attempt extended descriptive criticism.'. Thus he established a new tradition and did a single service to literary criticism Watson says: 'The modern preoccupation, with literary analysis emerges, patchily, but unmistakable, in his prejudiced and partisan interest in his own plays and poems'.

It is to be noted that one of Dryden's prefaces to his own work is of the nature and apologia meant to defend in advance the poet's reputation by attempting to answer the possible objection likely to be raised. Such justification leads him often to the analysis of his creative works and the discussion of principles to determine,' the merit of composition'.

Dryden's Important Descriptive Criticism

Dryden's very first critical essay-the dedicatory letter to his first published play *The Rival Ladies* (1664) contains the germs of descriptive criticism. However, the first critical analysis of the literary work in English was the ' examen' of Ben Jonson's comedy the *Silent Women.* Embedded in Dryden's only formal work of criticism - *essay of Dramatic Poesie* This 'examen', in Watson's words, 'is the earliest substantial examples of descriptive e criticism in the language .'Dryden select *The Silent Woman* as 'the pattern of perfect play.' Of this play, Dryden proposes

to 'make a short exam, according to those which the French observe,,' 'The intrinsic merit of the examen', unlike the historical, is very limited. It is not only crude, but imprecise, so much so that Watson's words, 'it would not be acceptable as pass work in any modern school of English'. When facts does not suit his conclusion, Dryden had little scruple in misrepresenting them. For Example he says that the action of the play 'lies all within the compass of two houses'. When the fact is that there are three houses and a lane, In spite of such patent inaccuracies, the 'examen' is, in the words of David Daiches,' a technical achievement of high order and probably the first of its kind in English.

Dryden's criticism of Shakespeare , Beoumount and Fletcher, and Causer is much more substantial than this,' examen,' his aggressive nationalism distorts to some extend this appreciation of English writer. However, he has quite a few illuminating remarks to make. As regards Shakespeare Dryden finds him strangely cowed down by the worthless and vituperative criticism, of his contemporary, rhymer, but is appreciation of Chaucer's *Canterbury tales* is superb and eminently readable, even today. His very acute anslysis of Chaucher's characterization in his *Preface, to the Fables* remain, in the words of Atkin in *English Literary criticism*: *17th and 18th centuries*, 'something rare and of permanent value in English criticism'.

Dryden's Liberalism, Scepticism, Dynamism, and Probabilism

As a literary critic, Dryden was certainly influenced by ancient Greek and Roman Critics (such as Aristotle, Longinus, and Horace) later Italian and contemporary French, critics (as Rapin and Boileau). But this influence did not go beyond a limit. The age in which he lived accepted this influence in all spheres of literature and Dryden was isolationist enough to escape the spirit of age. However, his fundamental liberalism,, skepticism,, dynamism, and probablism- not to speak of this admirable sanity and common sense - helped him to fight quite a few dogmas and conventions imported from abroad. The French new- classicists of his age stuck to their Aristotelian guns with tenacity While paying due respect to Aristotle, Dryden refused to swear by his name . He demolished, for example, the formidable trinity

of the so-called 'three unities' ,the prejudice against tragic- comedy, and the rigorous enforcement of the principles of decorum. He was not abide bound, neo- Aristotelian like his contemporaries rhyme who denounce Shakespeare for his refusal to fall in line with the principles of Aristotle. Dryden seems to have had belief, like Longinus and romantic, in inspiration and the inborn creative power of the poet. He favoured the romantic extravagances of Shakespeare and candidly criticized ancient roman and contemporary French drama which strictly followed all the 'rules'. Of course, he favoured regularity,' and due deference to some basic 'rules' composition, but, unlike, say Rhymer, he refused to worship these rules and to consider them as substitutes, for real inspiration and intensity of expression. Dryden's intellectual skepticism, which Louis I, Bredvold stresses in *The intellectual Milieu of John Dryden*, was greatly responsible for his liberal and unorthodox outlook. His probabilism as a literary critics is both his strength and weakness. While discussing an issue, he argues, very often, from both the sides and leaves the conclusion hanging in the air . In the *Essay Of Dramatic Poesie*, for instance , he compares ancient and modern drama, Elizabethan playwrights of his country and French playwrights of his own age. Rhyme and blank verse, but these issues are discussed by four interlocutors and Dryden (though very easily recognizable in Neander) is, apparently at least, non committal. His somersault on the question of the relative merit of rhyme and blank verse may be variously quoted as a time serving trick or as an example of his dynamism, but the undeniable facts remains that as a literary critics he is flexible enough to keep the issue open. Watson remarks : Dryden's whole career as a citric is permeated by what we might tactfully call his sense of occasion. Pyrrhonism, or philosophical skepticism, liberated him from the tyranny of truth'. And further: 'Dryden's is remarkable as a critic note only for the casual ease with which he contradicts himself, but for the care he takes in advance to ensure that there will not be much in future to contradict'.

Dryden's Historical sense

Dryden's impatience with classical 'rules' arose mainly from the abundant 'historic sense'. He was the first critic who emphasized the dynamic Character of

literature . Literature, according to him is expressive of genius of a nation and it necessarily keeps pace with the times. It is simply not possible to formulate a body of rule applicable to literatures of different nation in various ages. He affirmed that what was liked by ancient Greeks and romans ' were models for all times and in all languages'. He was not, therefore, covered down by the authority of Aristotle.. He declared: " it is not enough that Aristotle had said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides: and, if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind'. This outspoken assertion comes partly from Dryden's 'cultural patriotism' but partly from his keen historic sense

Dryden the Father of comparative criticism

Watson says: 'The chief triumph of 'examen' lies in the attempt at comparative criticism, in his balancing of qualities of the English drama against those of the French. It is undeniably the first example of such criticism in English, and among the very earliest in any modern language'. Dryden, Scott- James says, "opens a new field of comparative criticism.' In the course of his critical works, Dryden critically compares Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, Chaucer and Ovid, Chaucer and Boccaccio, Horace and Juvenal, ancient and modern drama, rhyme and blank verse as vehicles of drama, and so on. This method of comparative criticism, is very rewarding and illuminating and a favorite instrument of modern critics.

Q. Critically examine Dryden's views on dramatic Unities

Dryden's views on dramatic Unities amply bring out his liberalism and freedom from the shackles of classical bondage. In an age bound down to the literary cannons of neo classical criticism, Dryden had the boldness to defend the claims of genius to write according to one's own convictions and aesthetic taste without submitting to the rigorous rules and prescriptions of the ancients . He brushed aside all arbitrary bans upon freedom of composition and judgment. This is how he looked upon the observance of the three dramatic unities.

It is generally believed, though erroneously that the concept of dramatic unities was first given by Aristotle. But whosoever may have first provided them, they

were meant to guide the play wrights to construct, his plot with plausible and aesthetic taste. Aristotle said, the poet, therefore who would construct his plot properly is not liberty to begin or end where he pleases,, but must conform to these principles.' Referring, to unity of Times Aristotle said,' Tragedy Endeavour , as far as possible, to confine its action within the limits of a single revolution of the sun'.

The concept of Dramatic unities

There are three dramatic unities , They are (i) Unity of time, (ii) Unity of Place, (iii) Unity of Action Dryden consider them one by one.

Unity of time By Unity of time is meant that the duration of action of a play should not exceed the time limit of a natural day i.e. twenty four hours. This means that the time of feigned action, or the fable of the play, should be proportioned as near as can be to the duration of time in which it is represented on the stage. Since all plays are acted in the Theater in the space of time much within the compass of twenty four hours that play is to be thought the nearest imitation of nature, whose plot or action, is confirmed within the limits of a natural day. This would further mean that all the parts of play should be, as far as possible, equally subdivided. Dryden says:' It is the poet's duty to take care that no Act should be imagined to exceed the time in which it is represented on the stage, and that the intervals and inequalities of time be supposed to fall out between the Acts.

Unity of Place: the second unity is the unity of place: By unity of place the ancient meant that the scene ought to continue through the play in the same place where it was laid in the beginning. The scene should not be allowed to shift from place to place. The scenes can be shifted at the most to place near to each other, as in the same town or city. This would make the action plausible or credible. and freedom from the shackles of classical bondage. In an age bound down to the literary cannons of neo classical criticism, Dryden had the boldness to defend the claims of genius to write according to one's own convictions and aesthetic taste without submitting to the rigorous rules and prescriptions of the ancients . He brushed aside all arbitrary bans upon freedom of composition and judgment. This is how he

looked upon the observance of the three dramatic unities.

Unity of Action: by unity of action is meant that the Dramatist should present on the stage one great and complete action. All the situations turns of events, even the obstacles, equally labored and given importance, would destroy the unity of effect or action. It means that there should be no under plots or subplots in a good play. Also, there should be no dmixture of the serious and the comic scenes A play can either be a tragedy or a comedy, but not the dmixture of the two. On this, ground, there can be no tragic- comedy

Commenting upon these unities, Dryden says: ' If by these rules we should judge our modern plays,' its probable that few of them would endure the trail.' But Dryden defends the English playwrights for not always observing the three dramatic unities.

Violations of the Unities:

The English Dramatists, notably Shakespeare did not always observes the three dramatic unities, The English dramatists were guided more by their genius and their own dramatic skills than by the rules of ancients. They violated the observance of the three unities. Dryden defended the English dramatists against the charge of violation of the unities.

Dryden's liberalism, his free critical disposition, is best seen in the justification of violation of the three unities of the time, place and action on the part of the English Dramatists and in his defence of the English tragic - comedy. As regards the unities, his view is that (a) The English violations of unities lends greater copiousness and variety to the English Plays. The unities have a narrowing and cramping effect on the French Plays, and they are often betrayed into absurdities from which the English plays are free , (b) The English disregard of unities enables them to present a more 'just' and ' lively' picture of human nature. The French plays may be more regular, but they are not so ' lively'. In other words, their representation is not so

pleasant and delightful than any French Play, even though he has not observed the unities, (d) the English, when they do observes the rules, as Ben Jonson has done in *The Silent women,* show greater skills and art than the French. *The Silent women* is a regular as any French play, and yet is entirely free from the absurdities of the later. (e) There is no harm in introducing 'bye-concernments' or ' sub-plots, for they impart variety, richness and copiousness to the play. In this way, the writer can present a more 'just' picture than the French with their narrow and crimpled plays, and (f) to the view that observance of the unities is justified on the ground, that their violations results in improbability, that it places too great a strain on the imagination of the spectators and that credibility is stretched too far, he replies that it is all a question of '*dramatic illusion'*

At one place Dryden asks, '*why should imagine the soul of man more heavy than the senses*'? 'This sentence' says David Diaches ' is worthy to stand beside Dr. Johnson's later,' that imagines, more'? Dr Johnson says the last word on the problem of dramatic illusion when he writes that the spectators are always in their senses and they know full well that' the stage is a stage' and the play is play' They credit the drama, with all the credit due to a drama' It is credited, whenever, it moves , just as a picture of a real original as representing to the real auditor what he would himself feel, if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done . The reflection that strikes the heart is not, that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we are ourselves may be exposed.' If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players to be unhappy,' but that we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her baby, when she imagines that death may take it away from her'. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction, if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more. Limitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities to mind.' In this respect Dryden anticipates, Johnson, though he does not say all this clearly and elaborately.

9.6 SUGGESTED READING

- *The Works of John Dryden*, 20 vols., by H. T. Swedenberg Jr. et al.
- *John Dryden The Major Works* by Keith Walker
- *The Works of John Dryden* by David Marriott
- *John Dryden Selected Poems* by David Hopkins
- *John Dryden Selected Poems* by Steven N. Swicker and David Bywaters

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -IV**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 10**

JOHN DRYDEN: *MAC FLECKNOE*

10.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of the lesson is to discuss some of the important theme and symbols in John Dryden's poem *Mac Flecknoe.* The lesson also aims to acquaint you with the characters of the poem. After going through this lesson, you will be able to critically analyse the poem *Mac Flecknoe* and identify the key themes and symbols that have been used by John Dryden. You will also be able to list the major characters as well as describe their role in the poem.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Mac Flecknoe is the finest short satirical poem in which Dryden has treated Thomas Shadwell with humorous contempt. *Mac Flecknoe* is both a personal and literary satire. In *Mac Flecknoe*, not only reference of prevailing political crisis can be found but the political and dramatic activities of Shadwell are also mentioned.

Dryden presents Shadwell as a dull poetaster, a corpulent man and a plagiarist. Dryden uses the heroic couplet for satirical purposes. Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* was followed by his another piece *The Medal*, which was answered by Thomas Shadwell in *Medal of John Bayes*, a coarse satire on Dryden. He decided to avenge himself on Shadwell and Dryden fully revenged himself by the publication of *Mac Flecknoe* in 1682.

Dryden presents Shadwell as a dull poetaster, as an idiot. He is the dullest son of Flecknoe. He "never deviates into sense" He was born as an enemy of wit and common sense and at the time of coronation he swore that he will maintain dullness until death. Dryden exposes the dramatic skill of Shadwell by saying that his comedies make people shed tears and his tragedies create laughter.

Dryden also accuses Shadwell for copying from other's work without paying the attribute to them. And further Dryden ridicules Shadwell's physical built up; Shadwell is a fat and bulky fellow but without brain and common sense. He suggests Shadwell not to base his characters upon the experience and knowledge of mankind. His men of wit should also be like him. Shadwell's borrowings are as distinct as oil in the water. He should not claim likeness with Ben Jonson, because Jonson was a learned man but Shadwell was a perfect stupid. Jonson's satires are great pieces in literature, his comic pieces were effective but Shadwell is so poor in using satire that they do not offend the person satirized there in.

Mac Flecknoe is a personal satire but nowhere has Dryden stooped too low in exposing Shadwell. And satire in the poem is enlivened with wit and humor. The heroic verse implied in the poem magnifies its effect. And the words themselves constantly create the comic ambience. Epithets like perfect, genuine, confirmed are used with epithets such as dullard, stupid to create ambivalence. But ambivalence disappears once the reader goes through the poem and deciphers the intention of

the author.

Some critics like J.C. Collins and George Thorn Drury are of the view that much of the satire in *Mac Flecknoe* is undoubtedly unjust. He was not a confirmed dullard as Dryden refers him; though he was not a great poet, he was the comic dramatist of some repute. But for us as a student of literature, the poem is a perfect piece in the pile of English literature for its uniformity, precision, artistic regularity and literariness.

To sum up Dryden's two hundred lines of abuse, especially with the sketches of Thomas Shadwell in a negative manner is a result of his political affiliation, but more directly as a result of an increasingly unfriendly rivalry in the theatre. The poem defines by negatives and discrepancies; it undoes epic pretensions by playing with a mock-heroic.

10.2 *MAC FLECKNOE* SYMBOLISM

Human waste

The poet creates a dismal image by mentioning more than once human waste. Every time human waste is mentioned, the image created is linked with Shadwell, becoming a motif in the poem. The motif appears for the first time when London is described before Shadwell's arrival. The water in the port is described as being filthy with human waste that just floats on the water. Another reference towards human waste is made when the crowd coming to greet the new king is described. The poet notes how they all seem to come from a single place, the Pissing Alley, a real alley found in London during Dryden's period.

Influential poets

Throughout the poem, the name of numerous poets is mentioned thus becoming a motif. The reason why the names of other poets appear is to compare Shadwell with them. Dryden uses the name of brilliant poets like Ben Jonson to accentuate the idea that Shadwell will never reach his level of literary talent but he also uses the names of other poets, less known and without talent, with the purpose of making sure that the reader knows in which category to place Shadwell.

Jokes

Being a satirical poem, jokes and puns addressed to Shadwell appear frequently.

Dryden compares Shadwell with inanimate objects like barrels and trees to highlight the idea that Shadwell is incompetent and to hint that Shadwell is obese. The poet does not only attack Shadwell's intelligence and appearance but also the characters created by Shadwell. Throughout the poem, Dryden mentions numerous works written by Shadwell and criticizes them harshly.

Cheering crowd

The cheering crowd who comes to welcome Shadwell back is used as a symbol to characterize the people who support Shadwell and his work. The people are common, uneducated people, coming from brothels and infamous alleys and symbolizing the ignorant part of the population. The poet wants to emphasize by using this description that Shadwell's work is inferior and only "inferior'' people can enjoy it. The cheering crowd can be seen as a symbol that stands for the quality of Shadwell's work and its value.

Small Kingdom

The poet mentions the Kingdom over which Shadwell rules and uses it as a symbol to emphasize the influence or lack of it Shadwell has. When Mac Flecknoe talks about the kingdom Shadwell will get, he describes its boundaries by mentioning two street names. While at a first glance these names seem to delineate a large territory, in reality it refers to a short street that existed in London during Shadwell's time.

10.3 *MAC FLECKNOE* THEMES

Competition

A little bit of friendly competition never hurt anyone. Unfortunately for Thomas

Shadwell, this was not a friendly competition. John Dryden tears into Shadwell with a vengeance in "Mac Flecknoe."

Respect and Reputation

Shadwell thought himself to be following in the footsteps of great playwright Ben Jonson. He even copied Jonson's style in many of his plays.

Cunning and Cleverness

Cunning and cleverness are Dryden's bread and butter. "Mac Flecknoe" would fall flat as merely an unconvincing critique without Dryden's wry wit and tremendous sense of comedic irony.

Literature and Writing

In many ways, "Mac Flecknoe" is not merely a critique of a single bad writer, but a commentary on bad literature in general.

10.3.1 ANALYSIS

Many critics do not agree with Dryden about the true worth of Shadwell as a literary artist. Many consider him to be a worthy comic dramatist. However, Dryden has ridiculed every aspect of Shadwell's personality. Moreover, he has even ridiculed another poet he disliked by connecting him to Shadwell by establishing similarities in their artistic skills. Although Dryden has been quite spiteful in ridiculing Shadwell, he has not been coarse.

10.3.2 CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The poem displays a perfect use of mock-heroic style. The tone of the poem seems to be very serious. The language used for the description of characters and events is highly elevated. Heavy adjectives have been used to describe the qualities of the protagonist of the poem. But, all this has been done with the sole purpose of making the ridicule hurled on Shadwell to be more effective. Dryden has been able to give rise to comic effect as well by exhibiting mock graveness in making fun of Shadwell.

Dryden has used multiple allusions in the poem. He has alluded to some classical works as well as some works belonging to the 17^{th} century. The seriousness he has shown towards maintaining the quality of his language and ideas through the poem as well as the allusions he has used show the value Dryden attached to satire as a genre.

Dryden does not leave anything to the imagination of the reader regarding the extent to which he disliked Shadwell. Mac Flecknoe's father says that his reign will be as distended as his son's body. So, Dryden did

not hesitate even a bit in attacking the physical appearance of Shadwell.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

1. In *Mac Flecknoe*, human _____ is repeatedly mentioned to create a dismal image linked to Shadwell.
2. Dryden compares Shadwell with inanimate objects like barrels and _____ to mock his intelligence and appearance.
3. Dryden uses the names of poets like _____ to highlight Shadwell's lack of literary talent.
4. The poem *Mac Flecknoe* uses the _____ style to mock Shadwell in a serious, elevated tone.
5. Dryden praises Shadwell as one of the most innovative poets of the Restoration period. (True/False)
6. The poem makes frequent references to classical and 17th-century literature through allusions. (True/False)
7. Dryden makes no comment on Shadwell's physical appearance in the poem. (True/False)
8. Dryden's satire in *Mac Flecknoe* is marked by coarse and vulgar language. (True/False)

10.4 CHARACTERS

Mac Flecknoe

The first name mentioned in the poem is Mac Flecknoe and the poet reveals that Mac Flecknoe is the monarch over a non-sense kingdom. Mac Flecknoe ruled over his kingdom for a long time and he reached the point where he had to name a successor. During Mac Flecknoe's speech after Shadwell's coronation, the poet transmits the idea that Mac Flecknoe not only lacks in talent but that he also despises all those who have more talent than him and those who can write better than him. Mac Flecknoe has no desire to get better and considers that being mediocre is a safe place for a writer. He even encourages Shadwell to remain always dull and to reject those who may want to help him get better with his writing. Mac Flecknoe is used in the poem in a satiric way and many believe that when Dryden used the name Mac Flecknoe he referred to a real British poet ,Richard Flecknoe, known for having no literary talent whatsoever but for paying others to write his poems for him. The difference between him and the other characters mentioned in the poem is

that while Shadwell and Singleton were the contemporaries with Dryden, Richard Flecknoe was a poet who lived long before Dryden's time.

Shadwell

Shadwell is presented as being Mac Flecknoe's son, the one who resembles his father completely. When the poet describes him, Shadwell is presented as being stupid, dull and boring, having no intelligence whatsoever. Shadwell is the main subject in the poem written by Dryden and the harsh description Dryden offered was a result of a feud he had with a contemporary writer named Thomas Shadwell. Certain details regarding Shadwell's past are included in the poem leaving no question regarding who the character is based on. Dryden makes numerous jokes aimed at Shadwell and his talent rather lack of talent and he manages to create the image of an incompetent writer who is loved by no reason at all. The references made towards human waste and linked with Shadwell's name transmit the idea that for Dryden, Shadwell is just as valuable as trash and that he has no real purpose in life.

Singleton

The name Singleton appears once in the poem when Shadwell's arrival in London is described. There are not many details given about him but it is mentioned that Singleton is jealous that Shadwell was named heir to the throne and not him. Because of this, one can assume that the writer believed that just like Shadwell, Singleton has no literary talent and that Singleton is just as witless as Shadwell. Just like in Shadwell's case who was based on a real person, Singleton is also a writer who lived during the same time as Dryden and Shadwell.

10.5 GLOSSARY

Succession	**To occur in a series**
Decay	**To break down**
Flourishing	**To prosper and rise up**
Deviate	**To move from**
Lucid	**Intelligible**
Solemn	**Serious**

Anointed **To smear with oil**

10.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. When we talk about the Restoration Period in English literature, roughly what time does this refer to?

   A) 1200-1300 AD
   B) 1660-1689 AD
   C) 1740-1776 AD
   D) 2030-2130 AD

2. Who was the famous playwright mentioned several times in "Mac Flecknoe," whom Thomas Shadwell greatly admired?

   A) Ben Jonson
   B) William Shakespeare
   C) Richard Flecknoe
   D) Tennessee Williams

3. Which one of these is not a play by Thomas Shadwell (and thus not made fun of in the poem)?

   A) *Epsom Wells*
   B) *The Virtuoso*
   C) *The Humorists*
   D) *Spamalot*

4. Which distant relative of Dryden went on to write the landmark English satire "A Modest Proposal"?

   A) Alexander Pope
   B) Jonathan Swift
   C) Lewis Carroll
   D) Stephen Colbert

5. Dryden and Shadwell had many disagreements, but what was their main political disagreement?

   A) Dryden was a Protestant, while Shadwell was a Catholic
   B) Dryden supported the monarchy, while Shadwell was a Whig
   C) Dryden was a Democrat, while Shadwell was a Tory

D) Politics smolitics. Who needs it.

10.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the following quote from *MacFlecknoe*: "All human things are subject to decay/And, when fate summons, monarchs must obey."?

Ans) In John Dryden's satirical poem *Mac Flecknoe*, the following lines can be found:

All human things are subject to decay,

And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.

The quote refers to the fact that no one, not even monarchs, can stop death when it comes.

The lines can be meant to detail the fact that all of mankind will, at one time or another, succumb to death ("subject to decay"). The reference to fate (something unavoidable) details the fact that death is, naturally, unavoidable. Dryden also mentions monarchs in the lines. This reference is important given that they (monarchs) were seen as being the most powerful at the time of the text's writing. That being said, even monarchs did not have the power to stop death.

Outside of the human aspect of death, Dryden is also referring to not only humans, but all "human things." Human things refer to those items which were created by humans (which means both life, through birth, and all man-made objects). Therefore, Dryden is basically saying that all things on earth, created by man, will fall to decay. The only things which will not fall to decay are those things not created by man.

2 How is Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* a mock-heroic poem?

Ans) Dryden was the greatest master of his time in the art of the mock-heroic poem. These follow the form of classical heroic poems written by early masters, specifically by Homer as *Illiad* and *Odyssey* are the standards from which mock-heroics are constructed: The elements remain the same though they are employed to mock with satire and parody rather than to praise.

The form, in imitation of the heroic standard, begins with a tribute to the

Muse inspiring the poet to write. In Pope's mock epics, the muse may be the human who inspired him to wax satirical, like Carlyle for *The Rape of the Lock*. However, for *Mac Flecknoe*, Dryden's inspiration seems to have been the contemplation of "Fate":

All humane things are subject to decay,

And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:

In mock-heroics, other formulaic standards are followed, such as the ritual dressing for battle, processions of valor, calling upon the aid of gods, and victory celebrations. In *Flecknoe*, the ritual dressing, such as Achilles (Homer) and Belinda (Pope) were privileged to, seems to have been substituted by a ritual *undressing* as Flecknoe's successor to "Emperor of ... Prose and Verse" has his demerits categorized and satirized:

Sh—— alone, of all my Sons, is he

Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.

In imitation of Homer, Dryden includes references to Greek gods and mythology as in his reference to Arion, the mythological Greek poet who was borne across seas by dolphins. Dryden concludes his mock-heroic with a celebratory calling of the Homeric-like champion to arms where Flecknoe passes the mantle and departs—actually, in a Biblical allusion to Elijah, he departs and then the mantle falls upon Sh—.

And down they sent the yet declaiming Bard.

Sinking he left his Drugget robe behind,

Born upwards by a subterranean wind. [215]

The Mantle fell to the young Prophet's part,

With double portion of his Father's Art.

3 Access the contribution of Dryden to English literature theory and judgment.

About the middle of the seventeenth century there was perceptible withdrawal from the Renaissance critical tradition, a new body of theory known as neoclassicism served a fresh impetus and a new decision on the critical enquiry. By

about 1675 there were counter influences. This new creed, expounded by Corneillie,. Saint Evremond, above all, Boileau's' translation of' Longinus', cast doubt to the newly accepted creed, and directed the intention to more general ana basis problems. They found eloquent expression in the critical works of Dryden in the Restoration age. The general problems discussed by these writers are the nature and art of the poetry, forms of poetry and critical standards and judgment.

1. Nature of poetry

'For Plato', David Daiches has put it, 'the poet' world was second hand imitations of reality, and thereof of no value; for Aristotle, the poet could by the proper selection and organization of incident, achieve a reality more profound than that represented by the casual surface of things which we meet in ordinary experience; for Sidney, the poet created a world normally better than the real world, for the edification and improvement of the reader', Aristotle stated that the poet might initiate' thing as they were or are', ' things as they are said or ought to be', or again, things as they out to be'. Hobbes described a strict verisimilitude to the utmost limit of poetic liberty. Dryden warms against a such restriction of poetry within the confines of factual truth. He, therefore commends, supra-natural themes.

Poetry, for Dryden, is essentially an imitation in their ideal form. Hence in poetry the idealized form of life and humanity is depicted. Such a theory has a kinship with Aristotle's's ideal imitation'. Poetry, therefore, is' ideal imitation.' ' Dryden qualifies the statement by saying this' imitation' is not the same as Hobbe's verisimilitude', but a *spiritual process*, This is a new conception which he has gathered from Boileau's ' Longinus'. Following ' Longinus' Dryden observed that imitation was a process of the spirit which aims at recapturing that vital force which had gone to the making of great masterpieces. The effect of ' such imitation,; Dryden, contended, was that of inspiration and illuminating This is a signal departure from the neo- classic creed.

Dryden in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, defines a play as ' a just and lively image of the human nature, representing its passion and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instructions of mankind'. Such a view is utterly at variance with Sidney's view. The function of poetry, for Dryden, is to inform the reader, in a lively and agreeable way, of what human

nature is like. "The delight comes' ,interprets, Daiches, ' from the recognizing in fictional characters in fundamental psychological truths; While the instructions is not moral instruction., but instructions in the facts of human nature'. Such a position takes us to the vies that literature is a form of knowledge rather than a technique of persuasion.

2. Poetic Technique

Dryden maintains that in all poetry certain rules are necessary. These rules are no ' magisterial prescription', but rotational principles, founded on a good sense and reasons. Dryden observes in the preface to *Annus Mirabilis*

'The first happiness of the poet's imagination is properly invention, or the finding of though second of fancy of variation, deriving or molding of that though, as the judgment represent it proper to the subject; the third is elocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that though, as found and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words,; the quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy and the accuracy in the expression.'

So we have three phases in the poetic process

(a) **Invention**: Invention is the first moment in the poetic process. For the invention of the subject-matter there are no rational rules. A happy genius is enough, and that is a gift of nature. T.S.. Eliot believes, that Dryden's 'invention; includes the sudden eruption of the germ of a new poem possible and merely as a state of feeling.

(b) **Fancy:** The next phase is a fancy which covers arrangement or design. Each poem or play should be all of a piece free from irrelevance sand trifling ornament, Dryden calls fancy ' variation' deriving or moulding of thoughts.'

(c) **Elocution**: The' third happiness' of the poetic process is elocution. The act of finding the proper words 'clothing and adorning' the thoughts begins only after the operation of fancy is complete. This finding of the words, and the order of words expressive of the underlying mood are to be fulfilled by the third phase of the poetic process. For Dryden, ' imitation' is the whole process of poetic creation in which invention, fancy and elocution are successive stages.

3. Diction and versification

Dryden recognizes that both diction and versification play an important part in the poetic process. Dryden's main task in English', as Atkins had observed' was therefore to give sweetness to the poetic diction and choosing words only for elegance but also for sound; while varying quality of English vowels should be carefully studied and vocalic effects skillfully arranged.'

Dryden objects to use of dialect archaic forms. He defends however, the use of Latin expression,. That is what precisely Milton did. Dryden states his dislikes for compound words and objects to the use of technical terms.

In the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden, as Neander upholds the case for rhyme, later, realizes that blank verse is more suitable than rhyme for dramatic purposes. He suggest that 'Pindaric' has its own grace, He pleads for variety in the use of heroic couplet. Dryden strongly disapproves irregularities like hemistiches . He, of course, approves, the occasional use of Alexandrine and triplet rhymes for variety.

4. Literary Judgment

"The business of criticism", Dryden declares, "is not mainly that of finding fault." "Criticism, as first instituted by Aristotle," says Dryden, "was a process of noting those excellence which should delight a reasonable reader." This should be the first concern of the critic. Obviously Dryden learnt it from Boileau's 'Longinus'. It was the excellence that ultimately determined the value of literary work. Dryden derived from ' Longinus' another basic truth that test of time is the criterion of all great literature.' Generally to have pleased and through all ages' he writes, ' must bear the force of universal tradition'.

Acquaintance with earlier masterpiece of art may also help in this direction. Added to this, a critic should poser some amount of psychological insight into ' the cause and reasons of that which moves pleasure in a reader.' Historical factors and the social conditions of the age have a great bearing on the creation of a poem or play.

Dryden further contends that true judgment 'takes a view of the whole together whether it be a good or not'. In such a evaluation petty fault- finding is avoided.

Dryden anticipates the Victorian pronouncement that every new poet has to create the taste to which his work is to be appreciated.

4. Give functions of the poetry according to Dryden.

Traditionally the function of the poetry was laid in a formula of three words, to teach, to delight and to move. Of these three functions varying stress was laid on one or the other function. By critics belonging to various schools of criticism,

The classical poets and critics emphasized the ' instructional' function of poetry. Dryden offered classicist on this point and believed' that the primary function of poetry is to please'. Moral preaching is the preacher's business He says,' delight is the chief, if not the only end of poetry, instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poetry only instructs as it delight". As for himself he said, 'My chief endeavour are to delight the age in which I live.' But, of course, he qualifies the term delight and says that delight offered by poetry must be of highest type, a delight that may move and transport the soul of the reader.' It is true,' he says,' that to imitate well is a poet's work, but to effect the soul, and excite the passions and above to move admiration which is the delight of serious play, a bare imitation will not serve".

Poetry as Imitation:- Poetry, according to Dryden, as according to the Plato or Aristotle, is an imitation, but Dryden uses the term, ' imitation' in a different sense, from Plato's or Aristotle's. According to Plato poetry is an 'imitation' of the ultimate abstract Reality or Idea. According to Aristotle poetry is the imitation of nature including human nature and the natural phenomena of the universe. But according to Dryden poetry is not a photographic and Mechanical imitation of life and nature; it is a selective of aesthetic imitation, of life and nature. The poet imitates only those aspects of life and nature that are beautiful. Pleasure, giving and elevating. In the process of imitation,, the poet has to follow the process of selection and elimination selecting the beautiful and eliminating the ugly aspects. According to Dryden it aims at making something more beautiful than life or nature. Dryden says,: There may be too great likeness, as the most skilful; painters affirm that there may be too near a resembles in a picture; to take every lineament and feature, is not make an excellent piece; but to take so much only as will make a beautiful resemblance of the whole; and with igneous flattery of nature, to heighten the beauties of

some part, and hide the deformities, of the rest'. In this sense the poet is not merely an imitator, he is rather a creator, and his creations, are more beautiful than the original objects he imitates. Poetry, therefore, according to Dryden is the representation of life so far as it is beautiful. Hence it is that Dryden does not hold realism or naturalism in poetry as a mark of excellence,. When we speak of poetry or art, we speak of beauty, and when we speak of the pleasure of poetry we men a pleasure arising out of the beautiful. The end of art cannot be dissociated from beauty.

His Defense of Rhyme: Dryden advocated the used of Rhyme for great poetry. Longinus and Sidney had pleaded before him that rhyme is not necessary for poetry . Dryden says that in high poetry rhyme may not be indispensable, but it is highly necessary to impart it the impression of imaginative reconstruction of life. He says that rhyme exercises a kind of discipline or restraining power upon the vagrant fancies and emotions of the poet. He holds that poetry should be written in a language and forms slightly different and more sublime than conversational language and mode of expression. A good poet would prefer to use verse instead of prose, and rhyming verse instead of blank verse, because prose is too near the nature of converse, blank verse, nearer than rhyme

Drama, however, according to Dryden, should not be written in rhyme, He says. That ' rhyme is unnatural in a play because dialogue there is presented as the effect of sudden though, for a play is an imitation of nature and since no man without premeditation speaks in rhyme, neither ought he to do in on the stage. For this reason says Aristotle,' it is best to write tragedy in that kind of verse which is least such, or which is the nearest prose. This is blank verse'.

Plot and Workmanship: Aristotle had propounded that plot was the soul of drama, and that a great play could be written without character, but not one without plot. According to Dryden, Aristotle has over emphasized the importance of plot. Plot is, of course, necessary, but what is even more important, is workmanship. Therefore Dryden says, ' The story is the least part of the work and of the graces of the poem'. Dryden goes on the say that it is workmanship that makes the foundation of a great poem or a great play., What Dryden is concerned to prove is that plot is nothing till it has become the subject of treatment; the raw material is a slight matter; everything depends on what results after the poetic faculty has been at work upon it.

He says that the work of the artist is like the work of watch- maker or a gunsmith whose works are more the work of art than of the basic material of which they are made. He says, ' In General, the employment of a poet is like that of curious gun-smith or watch- maker; the iron or silver is not his own but they are least part of that which gives the value, the price lies wholly on the workmanship. And he who works duly on a story, without moving laughter in a comedy, raising concernment in a serious play, is no more to be counted a good poet, than a gunsmith of the Minories is to be compared with best workman of the town.'

These are the original and wholly English vies introduced into English criticism, by Dryden, It is on the basis of these consideration that Dryden is called 'the Father of English Criticism'.

10.8 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. waste
2. trees
3. Ben Jonson
4. mock heroic
5. False
6. True
7. False
8. False

MCQs

1. b
2. a
3. d
4. b
5. b

10.9 LET US SUM UP

Mac Flecknoe is one of the most famous satires. It is a poem written in mock epic style by Dryden. The satire is significant for being a personal attack by one poet on another. Dryden wrote this poem as a personal attack on another of the famous poets of his time, Thomas Shadwell.

In the poem, Dryden has presented Shadwell as the heir to the kingdom of poetic dullness. Dryden has attacked even Shadwell's physical appearance by presenting him as a plump person. His personal opposition to Shadwell's political views also get reflected in the poem, despite that the poem does not have political elements in it.

Richard Flecknoe was another poet whom Dryden disliked. In the poem, he talks about the occasion when Flecknoe was looking for the heir to succeed his kingdom of dullness and nonsense. Dryden has presented Shadwell as the dullest son of Flecknoe. He presents the situation depicting Shadwell's coronation in an apparent seriousness. Using the mock-heroic style, he uses elevated language to write about ridiculous facts he attaches to Shadwell's personality. He says that at the time of his coronation, Shadwell took an oath to devote his skills throughout his life to the maintenance of dullness.

Dryden does not feel satisfied in stating that Shadwell's comedies give rise to sadness and tragedies to laughter. He even states Shadwell to be a plagiarist. Shadwell had been quite fond of considering himself an heir to Ben Jonson. Dryden ridicules him for this as well.

10.11 SUGGESTED READING

- *Dryden and Shadwell, The Literary Controversy and 'Mac Flecknoe'* by Richard, L. Oden
- *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume C* by Julia Reidhead et al.

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -V**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 11**

GEORGE ETHEREGE—*THE MAN OF MODE*

11.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the life and works of Georger Etherege, the Restoration dramatiats, best-known for his play *The Man of Mode.* The lesson also aims to introduce you to the times in which he lived and wrote, as well as briefly introduce you to the play *The Man of Mode.* By the end of this lesson, you will be able to identify key facts about the life and career of George Etherege as well appreciate him as a prominent Restoration dramatist. You will also be able to summarize the play *The Man of Mode* as well as explain the significance of the play in the context of the Restoration era.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Restoration Age in English Literature began in 1660 with the return of Charles II to the English throne. This period saw the revival of theatre and literature, especially Restoration comedy, known for its wit and satire of high society. George Etherege was a leading playwright of this era. His most famous play, *The Man of*

Mode, reflects the elegance, humor, and social life of the time, which makes him a key figure in Restoration drama.

11.2 RESTORATION PERIOD

One of the most important and interesting aspects of literature is the way it responds to and is inevitably shaped by the political context in which it is written. Some of the best examples of this can be found in the Restoration period, which lasted from 1660 to around 1688. The name 'restoration' comes from the crowning of Charles II, which marks the restoring of the traditional English monarchical form of government following a short period of rule by a handful of republican governments.

At the heart of this literature is the attempt to come to terms with the political events that had occurred in previous decades. The writings of this time are both innovative and varied; the style and subject matter of the literature produced during the Restoration period spanned the spectrum from definitively religious to satirical. In 1688, James II, Charles II's brother, was removed from the throne, which many scholars mark the end of Restoration literature.

Political Context

In addition to conveniently providing the title for the period, the restoration of Charles II has a particularly defining influence on the literature that was written in the second half of the 17th century. The political events of the previous decades resulted in tremendous turmoil for the English people.

The divisions between those who supported a more traditional form of government and those who wanted a more republican form of government led to strong tensions throughout England. These tensions led to the English Civil War, which lasted from 1642 to 1651 and was a particularly brutal experience for many British people. The war culminated with the beheading of Charles I in 1649, and from 1649 to 1659, various forms of republican government ruled Britain.

In 1660, Charles II became king, thereby restoring the English monarchy. After the death of Charles II in 1685, his brother, James II, took over the throne. William III removed James II in 1688 and took over the English throne in 1689. This act is often referred to as the Glorious Revolution because the transfer of power was not very bloody.

Some scholars use the displacement of James II as one place to mark the end

of the Restoration period.

Philosophical Context

The start of the Restoration period roughly coincides with the beginning of what is known as the Enlightenment, which lasted until the end of the 18th century. The Enlightenment was defined by an emphasis on reason and logic; the thinkers of the period, moreover, helped to develop the modern science that treats the natural world as a knowable and testable subject.

Although the influence of the Enlightenment on the Restoration period is tremendous, it's important to note the humility towards human reason that is common to much Restoration literature. Many Restoration writers viewed the changes to their government, and the violence that these changes brought with them, as the direct result of those who dogmatically held to their ideology. In this sense, the political events that occurred in England provide insight into the skepticism that is at the heart of Restoration literature.

The Theatre

One of the most significant aspects of Restoration literature is the return of the theatre. As a result of the influence of religious and political leaders who believed it to be sinful, the theatre had been closed for eighteen years. Charles II, however, was a big fan of drama and quickly allowed and encouraged the theatre's presence.

This period saw many innovations in theatre, including the important new genre called Restoration comedy. In stark contrast to the humble spiritual themes that were common to the literature before 1660, Restoration comedy was frequently crass, largely sexual, and often focused on the interactions of the elite members of English society. Popular writers of Restoration comedy include John Dryden, George Etherege, and William Congreve. Although Restoration literature is commonly considered to end around 1688, Restoration comedy was written into the 1700s.

Poetry

Like theatre, poetry was strongly influenced by the political context of the mid-seventeenth century. In contrast to the poetry popular in the first half of the seventeenth century that emphasized religious truths, Restoration poetry focused more on the glory and powerful potential of human beings to understand and improve the world. Many poets attempted to outline ways to live and write and praised the

importance of thinking for oneself.

One form that this belief in human potential took was an emphasis on classical literature. Many poets cited the importance of learning from Greek and Roman poets and some became famous for their translations of ancient poetry. Despite this trend of praising the potential of humans, Restoration literature is incredibly diverse and includes many poets who produced poetry that attempted to guide people back to traditional religion as well as stinging satire.

11.3 GEORGE ETHEREGE'S LIFE AND WORKS

Sir George Etherege, (born c. 1635, Maidenhead, Berkshire, England—died c. May 10, 1692, Paris), was an English diplomat and creator of the Restoration-era comedy of manners. Etherege probably accompanied his father to France in the 1640s. About 1653 his grandfather apprenticed him to an attorney in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.

Etherege's first comedy, *The Comical Revenge*; or, *Love in a Tub*, was premiered at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1664. An immediate success, it was novel in its exploitation of contemporary manners, especially in the intrigue of the stylish Sir Frederick Frollick. It still followed earlier tradition, with its romantic plot, in heroic couplets and blank verse, and farcical subplot. Its success gave Etherege an entrée into the world of fashion, where he became the boon companion of the literary rakes Sir Charles Sedley, the earl of Rochester, and the earl of Dorset.

She wou'd if she cou'd, Etherege's second comedy (1668), failed because of poor acting. It was the first comedy of manners to attain unity of tone by shedding the incongruous romantic verse element.

From 1668 to 1671 Etherege was in Turkey as secretary to the English ambassador, Sir Daniel Harvey. After his return he wrote the prologue for the opening in 1671 of the new Dorset Garden Theatre. There his last and wittiest comedy, *The Man of Mode*; or, *Sir Fopling Flutter: A Comedy*, was produced with acclaim in 1676. He was knighted in 1680.

Etherege was appointed envoy to the Diet in Ratisbon in 1685. His two Letterbooks from there include personal, as well as official, correspondence. Although irresponsible, Etherege showed qualities of loyalty, and he followed his king, James II, to Paris after that monarch was deposed in the Glorious

Revolution (1688).

Known to his friends as easy and gentle, Etherege had a relish for life and a shrewd knowledge of men. His style of comedy was successfully cultivated by his successors and persisted to modern times. His own plays, however, failed to hold the stage after the mid-eighteenth century. His love lyrics are among the most charming of their day.

George Etherege's List of Works

i. *She Would if She could: A Comedy*

ii. *The Comical Revenge* or *Love In a Tub*

iii. *The Man of Mode* or *Sir Fopling Flutter: A Comedy*

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Restoration period in English literature began in the year _____.
2. The term "Restoration" refers to the crowning of _____.
3. The Restoration period is known for the revival of _____, which had been closed for eighteen years.
4. Restoration comedy often focused on the lives and manners of _____ society.
5. George Etherege's first comedy was titled *The Comical Revenge; or,* _____.
6. George Etherege's most famous and witty play is _____.
7. Etherege followed _____ to Paris after he was deposed in the Glorious Revolution.
8. George Etherege was knighted in the year _____.

11 .4 *THE MAN OF MODE*

Between 1668 and 1671 Etherege went to Constantinople as secretary of the English ambassador Sir Daniel Harvey. After a silence of eight years, he came forward with one more play, which would be his last. *The Man of Mode* or, *Sir Fopling Flutter*, widely considered the best comedy of manners written in England

before the days of Congreve, was acted and printed in 1676, and enjoyed an unbounded success. This may be attributed to the belief that it satirises, or at least references, well known contemporaries of London. Sir Fopling Flutter was a portrait of Beau Hewit, the reigning exquisite of the hour, Dorimant a reference to the Earl of Rochester, and Medley a portrait of Etherege himself (or, equally plausible, of his fellow playwright and wit Sir Charles Sedley); while even the drunken shoemaker was a real character, who made his fortune from being thus brought into public notice.

11.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1 George Etherege belongs to _____period

(a) Restoration
(b) Romantic
(c) Neo-classic
(d) Victorian

2 Restoration comedy is also called as _____

(a) Comedy of Humours
(b) Comedy of People
(c) Comedy of Children
(d) Comedy of Manners

3. The name 'restoration' comes from the crowning of _____

(a) Charles I
(b) Charles II
(c) James I
(d) none of the above

4. Restoration period lasted from _____to around _____

(a) 1660, 1688
(b) 1760, 1788
(c) 1860, 1888
(d) 1560, 1588

5. The subtitle of *The Man of Mode* is _____

(a) Sir Fopling Flutter
(b) Sir Popling Plutter
(c) Sir Beagley

(d) Sir Roger

6. *The Man of Mode* was produced in _____

(a) 1677
(b) 1676
(c) 1678
(d) 1679

11.6 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. 1660
2. Charles II
3. the theatre
4. elite
5. *Love in a Tub*
6. *The Man of Mode*
7. James II
8. 1680

MCQs

1. (a) 2. (d) 3 (b) 4. (a) 5. (a) 6. (b)

11.7 LET US SUM UP

George Etherege was recognized for his Restoration Comedies which portray the lives and manners of the people of Restoration age. *The Man of Mode* or, *Sir Fopling Flutter*, is widely considered the best comedy of manners written in England before the days of Congreve. *The Man of Mode* satirises, or at least references, well known contemporaries of London of the Restoration period.

11.8 SUGGESTED READING

- "George Etherege."Wikipedia.org. Wikipedia, n.d. Web. 11 Oct. 2017.
- *The Plays of Sir George Etherege* by Michael Cordner

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -V**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 12**

GEORGE ETHEREGE-*THE MAN OF MODE*

12.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to offer detailed summary as well as act-wise critical analysis of the play *The Man of Mode.* The lesson also discusses the various characters who play an important role in the drama for a better appreciation of the comedy *The Man of Mode*. After going through this lesson, you will be able to summarize the plot of *The Man of Mode*, as well as critically analyse each act. You will also be able to identify the major characters in the play and evaluate their personalities and motivations and the role that the play in the story.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The Man of Mode is a Restoration comedy by George Etherege that revolves around the witty and charming rake Dorimant who is known for his flirtations and clever manipulations, pursues various women while maintaining a carefree attitude toward relationships. His main romantic interest is Harriet, a woman of virtue whom he ultimately tries to win over despite his reputation. Other important characters include Sir Fopling Flutter, a vain and foolish aristocrat obsessed with fashion, and Mrs. Loveit, a witty widow with her own designs on Dorimant. The play explores themes of love, deception, and social manners in the fashionable society of late 17th-century London. The play's plot unfolds through witty dialogue and complex interactions, showcasing the social games of seduction and rivalry. Through sharp satire and lively repartee, *The Man of Mode* critiques the superficiality and vanity of Restoration high society. The characters' charm and flaws combine to create a comedy that remains both entertaining and insightful.

12.2 *THE MAN OF MODE* - SUMMARY

In Act I, Dorimant, a roguish gentleman, complains to his friend Medley about his waning affection for Mrs. Loveit, his current mistress. An orange-woman tells him about a pretty young woman talking about him in the marketplace. Medley figures out it is a young heiress named Harriet, whose mother, Lady Woodvill, reputedly hates Dorimant because she has heard of his licentious ways. Dorimant is intrigued, especially after Medley praises her wit and wildness.

He also tells Medley he is interested in another woman, and sighs that he is tired of how boring his love life has become. He misses drama and conflict. He may have it soon though, for Belinda, his new lover, plans to go to his old lover, Mrs. Loveit, under the guise of their friendship, and provoke a conversation about Dorimant just for fun.

Another friend, Young Bellair, comes in. He has been absent a lot recently due to his new love, Emilia. The men discuss another man newly arrived in town – a great fop named Sir Fopling Flutter, who is inordinately concerned with his dress and appearance and is a man of "acquired follies." Dorimant decides to set him on

Mrs. Loveit.

After Young Bellair is summoned out and returns, he relays the distressing news that his father, who knows nothing of Emilia, has actually made a match for him and will disinherit him if he refuses. Medley suggests he simply ignore his father and see if he will actually go through with his vows of disinheriting his son.

Young Bellair decides to go talk to Emilia, and the men disband, Dorimant ready to tease and pique Mrs. Loveit.

In Act II, Lady Townley, the sister of Young Bellair's father, talks with Emilia, who has recently taken up residence with her. They do not think Old Bellair knows about Emilia and Young Bellair's relationship. Young Bellair enters and he tells Emilia he does not want to marry Harriet Woodvill, the woman to whom his father engaged him.

Old Bellair enters. He teases Emilia for looking dour, but seems quite taken with her. Later he tells his son not to be glum about his arranged marriage.

After he leaves, Medley pays his friend Lady Townley a visit. The two of them gossip with Emilia and talk of various affairs.

Later Mrs. Loveit talks with her waiting woman, Pert, about how she loves Dorimant. Belinda enters and begins, due to her own love of Dorimant, to hint to Mrs. Loveit that Dorimant has been unfaithful. Mrs. Loveit is distressed.

When Dorimant himself comes in, cool and gallant, Mrs. Loveit rages at him. He insults her back and insinuates she has been with another man, a fop. She knows he is lying and is incensed. Belinda becomes wary of Dorimant after seeing how he treated the other woman.

In Act III, Busy, Harriet's waiting woman, teases her mistress about loving Dorimant. Harriet pretends she does not. Young Bellair, her betrothed, comes in. To their delight, they discover neither wants to marry. He admits he loves Emilia, and there is the hint that she loves Dorimant. They pretend to care for each other, though, so his father will not notice anything amiss.

Later on, Lady Townley, Medley, Emilia, and Belinda converse. Belinda admits she thinks Dorimant is not a good man, but the others defend him as witty and well bred. When Dorimant joins them, she tells him she no longer cares for her. He reminds her that she vowed to do something the next day. He also tells her she must

tell Mrs. Loveit to go to the Mall that evening since Fopling will be there.

Fopling joins their party. They are full of compliments for the man, but they disguise their amusement and mockery. Fopling is ridiculous and self-absorbed, especially when it comes to his appearance.

That evening almost everyone is in the Mall. Young Bellair and Harriet walk together, and Dorimant meets them. Harriet charms him and she pretends not to care for him. They engage in witty repartee until she feigns annoyance. Her mother arrives and says she has heard Dorimant, whom she has never actually met, is around and therefore they must leave. After Lady Woodvill and Harriet leave, Dorimant confesses his interest in her to Medley.

Sir Fopling is also promenading, and when Mrs. Loveit and Belinda arrive, Dorimant prepares to be amused by the encounter between the fop and his former lover. Mrs. Loveit knows Dorimant is watching and pretends to like Fopling, which annoys Dorimant, although he has moved on to loving Harriet.

In Act IV, Dorimant pretends to be a man named Mr. Courtage to fool Lady Woodvill so he can be around Harriet. It works well; he charms Lady Woodvill immensely. Everyone else is amused, especially when she tells the real Dorimant how much she hates Dorimant.

Harriet and Dorimant talk together, both trying to hide their feelings behind barbed words and arch looks.

Fopling joins the party and amuses everyone.

Later Belinda and Dorimant meet, and she tells him she is frustrated by the tricks he is playing on Mrs. Loveit. After she leaves, Dorimant's coach takes her to the Mall without her permission and she becomes afraid that Mrs. Loveit will hear of this.

That evening the gentlemen gather and Young Bellair tells his friends he is going to secretly marry Emilia and thwart his father's wishes.

In Act V, Mrs. Loveit becomes suspicious of Belinda because of the coach she arrives in, but the coachman lies at Belinda's request and Mrs. Loveit puts aside her fears. Dorimant arrives; they quarrel, he tells her she has been seen with Fopling, and they part.

At Lady Townley's, Emilia and Young Bellair are now married. Emilia and

Busy, Harriet's waiting woman, tease Harriet about Dorimant. Dorimant joins them and he and Harriet verbally spar. Both clearly love each other but are slow to admit it.

When Old Bellair arrives, the marriage is made clear. He is angry that everyone, including his own sister, has bamboozled him.

Mrs. Loveit and Belinda join the party and Dorimant is vexed that his shame never seems to end. Harriet is amused at his former lover's righteous anger, however.

Dorimant announces to the party that he is prepared to marry now, and tries to make peace with Belinda, who only wants to be left alone. Old Bellair comes to terms with his son's marriage. Sir Fopling also joins them and is flummoxed at Mrs. Loveit's cold reception of him.

When Lady Woodvill arrives Dorimant, who she still thinks is Mr. Courtage, is revealed. She is enraged at first, but when her daughter tells her how much she loves him and everyone else supports his good character, she softens.

Mrs. Loveit leaves after Harriet coolly mocks her. All prepare to dine before Dorimant joins his new fiancée and her mother in the country.

12.3 CHARACTERS LIST

Dorimant

The handsome, witty, and devilish protagonist, Dorimant loves the thrill and drama of chasing women but does not want to settle down until he meets his match in Harriet. He is defended by most who know him, although despised by his scorned mistresses, Mrs. Loveit and Belinda. He loves games, flirtation, and disguise, but is a cogent enough critic to recognize another game-player—Fopling. While not necessarily likeable, it is difficult not to admire Dorimant.

Medley

More or less a stand-in for the audience and the playwright, Medley is friends with all of the players but is outside the drama himself. He is witty, wise, and wry, and knows everything that is going on. He is a defender of Dorimant and a critic of Fopling, a supporter of the pairs of lovers, and a smart commentator on events and people.

Old Bellair

The father to Young Bellair and brother of Lady Townley, he is an old-fashioned, crass, and crotchety old man. He betroths his son to Harriet and vows to disinherit him if he refuses to marry her; he flirts cruelly with Emilia, his son's actual love. He accepts the reality of the situation by the end of the play, and gregariously invites all to dine with him.

Young Bellair

The son of Old Bellair and nephew of Lady Townley, he is secretly engaged to Emilia and later marries her against his father's wishes. He is more religious and upstanding in his behavior than his friends.

Sir Fopling Flutter

A fop of the most pronounced fashion, Fopling arrives in town and amuses the main characters. He is excessively mannered, artificial, and concerned with his appearance. He feigns humility but is very proud of what he takes to be his strengths. He lacks wisdom and perspicacity. Regardless, he is kind enough, and those around him only tease him gently. He falls for Mrs. Loveit.

Emilia

A young and beautiful woman secretly engaged (and later secretly married) to Young Bellair. Lady Townley supports her. Her husband's father behaves roguishly toward her. She is also a friend of Harriet's, and a supporter of Dorimant.

Harriet

A wild, beautiful, and artifice-free young woman who admires Dorimant for his wit and manners. While she does not like to play games, she initially tries to hide her feelings from him in order to test his devotion. She is independent wealthy, but lives in the country. She is well-mannered but rather callous, which is why she is an excellent match for the wily Dorimant.

Mrs. Loveit

A passionate and bitter mistress of Dorimant, she flies into a rage and vows revenge when she learns he no longer wants to be with her. She is old-fashioned as she adheres to outdated codes of chivalry and courtship, which is why she feels so betrayed by him. She is eventually chastened by Harriet, her rival.

Belinda

Dorimant's young mistress who is first gleefully game to hurt Mrs. Loveit in order to

please Dorimant, but eventually comes to feel that he is a terrible person, with whom she does not wish to associate. She is self-serving and does not wish Mrs. Loveit to find out that she is responsible for any of the plot to make her upset.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Fill in the blanks:

1. Dorimant complains to his friend _____ about his lack of interest in his current mistress.
2. Medley tells Dorimant about a young heiress named _____ who has been speaking about him.
3. Dorimant is intrigued by _____ because of her wit and wildness.
4. _____ is a man obsessed with fashion and external appearance.
5. Young Bellair is secretly in love with _____, not Harriet.
6. Dorimant sends Belinda to _____ to stir drama between her and Mrs. Loveit.
7. In the Mall, Dorimant meets _____ and engages in witty repartee with her.
8. To fool Lady Woodvill, Dorimant pretends to be a man named _____.
9. In Act V, Young Bellair reveals he has secretly married _____.
10. _____ acts as a witty commentator on the actions and characters throughout the play.

12.4 DETAILED SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Prologue

Sir Car Scrope, Baronet, explains that poets often fare poorly, perishing young. They never want to leave plays undone or lie still. The audience usually likes a gaudy and grim sort of humor, and now to France the play goes. Scope notes wryly that it is the audience's follies that provide fodder for playwrights, and every year with its new distempers and scandals brings more for poets to write about. He concludes by admonishing the audience not to be too severe about what they see on the stage because it is usually what they end up admiring at home.

Act I

Scene I

It is a dressing room with clothes laid out. Dorimant enters, looking at a note

from Mrs. Loveit. He mocks a love note as being dull and useless after the act of love is over. He laughs that women are usually right when they detect in men's notes their waning passion.

Handy enters and Dorimant orders him to call a footman. Handy says none are available and Dorimant becomes annoyed. He asks who is chattering outside, and is told an orange-woman and the shoemaker.

The orange-woman is summoned, and she starts to lay her spread of fruit. Dorimant is very rude to her, but she still informs him that there was a woman in the marketplace that was very taken with him. Dorimant assumes that she is an "awkward ill-fashioned country toad" (50) but the orange-woman says that is not true at all. The young woman saw him at the Change and was interested in what he said. Dorimant laughs that he did see a "mask" (whore) there.

Dorimant's friend Medley enters. He asks why Dorimant suffers the orange-woman, a "bawd", to be there. She asks for her money for the fruit, but Dorimant teases that he will not pay her till she produces the young woman. She protests that the woman might be very innocent.

She also refuses to tell the men the woman's name or where she lives, but does say the mother is a "good gentlewoman" who thinks Dorimant is "an arrant devil" (52). Medley figures out that the mother is Lady Woodvill and her daughter is Harriet. He tells Dorimant that Harriet is rich, and the most beautiful creature he had seen a year ago. He also says she is witty and wild.

The orange-woman, who resides in the same locale, tells them even a vesting judge could not help but stare at Harriet when he came over. She becomes annoyed with Medley, though, and demands her money so she can leave.

She and Handy depart. Medley turns to Dorimant and asks when he last saw Mrs. Loveit, his second-choice woman, and how things are. Dorimant says they are fine but that she is incredibly jealous. He says he has a note for her apologizing for not seeing her. Medley says this is because he is of late with a new woman .

Dorimant tells Medley that he actually hopes things will get heated between the women because he is tired of all the calm lately; he needs to make a woman "break her fan, to be sullen, or foreswear herself" (55) to be amused. Medley is tickled by this and says he will help. Dorimant replies that the woman herself is

already doing everything, because she plans visiting Mrs. Loveit, who is ostensibly her friend, and to start a conversation that will provoke the other woman to extreme jealousy. He will then tell her how obnoxious she is and how he hopes another fop will take her away.

Medley asks why bother with the nice note first, and Dorimant says it is to keep her at home for a while so the new woman can visit.

The shoemaker comes in and the men tell him he lives above himself and must reform his life. The shoemaker complains that "poor folks can no sooner be wicked, but th'are railed at by their betters" (56). He adds that his journeymen friends are benefitting from all the exploits of the dissolute rich of late.

Medley and Dorimant are annoyed, and send him out. Young Bellair enters the room; he is another young nobleman. He apologizes for not being around more often. Medley smirks and says he hopes that he is enjoying the affairs of happy lovers. Bellair, who is more religious, protests the comments. Medley laughs that he himself has as many doubts in religion as he does in love.

Handy is fiddling with Dorimant's clothes and the rich man tells him to stop it. Handy says that he knows how Dorimant likes his clothes to be just so, and Dorimant admits he loves to be well dressed. Bellair compliments his friend's sartorial acumen.

The men talk of a very fashion-inclined man coming to town: Sir Fopling Flutter, who, Bellair says, "thinks himself the pattern of modern gallantry" (59). They critique his appearance and Dorimant observes that he is a man of "great acquired follies" (59). Bellair says he has already been around to the ladies, including Mrs. Loveit. Dorimant laughs that he is glad about that.

Bellair then asks Dorimant how his affair with Belinda, the new woman, is, and Dorimant waves his query away, saying that young ladies approach love as young men do fighting–first with excitement, then they turn away. Bellair is called away. Medley and Dorimant praise their friend's looks. Dorimant says their friendship reflects well on both. They discuss Bellair's intended marriage to Emilia, who is discreet and a perfect lady. They mock the idea of marriage, though.

Bellair comes back, distraught. His relationship with Emilia was secret, and his father just decided to make a match for him, to which if he did not consent he would be disinherited.

Medley suggests ignoring his father, marrying Emilia, become disinherited, and then live off the fame. Bellair despairs, saying he might not marry at all. Medley laughs that this would ruin the joke. The young man decides to visit Emilia and see how things stand.

They agree to meet for dinner at Long's. Bellair leaves.

Dorimant gets a letter from another lady named Molly asking for money. He is amused. Medley and Dorimant prepare to go to Long's.

ANALYSIS

The language is a bit turgid and "old-fashioned", there are many unfamiliar words and allusions, and the characters do not seem realistic or easy to get a grasp upon. With some time and research, though, this play can yield much pleasure. Even the first act alone contains a plentitude of wit and charm, and Dorimant certainly appears to be a delicious rogue whose future exploits are certainly worth following.

Before delving into character and plot analysis, it is necessary to get a bit of background about what Restoration theater was like. When the theaters were reopened in 1664, the new plays had a great deal of adultery, fornication, cursing, and heroes and heroines who were largely irreligious or blasphemous. Many people tend, then, to see Restoration theater as a response to Puritan ideals. The way Restoration plays were staged, which seemed to bring today's stage with which we are familiar into being, actually has its origins in private theaters. Women as actors, seen to be something the Restoration heralded, had been done earlier as well.

The world of Restoration drama is light, gay, pleasant, and stylish, both in dress and conversation. Wit was of paramount importance. Restoration comedy dealt not with the low-born but with the rich and their follies; the fop was the most important character type. The follies that these dramas dealt with were of manners, not morals, and the laughter at the fop was not harsh or cruel but more "genial and self-indulgent". Restoration comedy is "realistic and escapist" at the same time. Its characters' desires to find some personal fulfillment, and is escapist in that it idealizes the gallant and the lady and its unrealistic solving of issues regarding money and freedom.

The first act features hero, Dorimant, conversing with his friend Medley as

well as two minor characters, the shoemaker is of little importance but the orange-woman is important as she provides Dorimant with his first hint of Harriet's interest in him. Dorimant's main character traits are visible from the first: he is concerned with his dress (as evinced in his exchange with Handy), he detests boredom and loves drama, and he is a lothario and plans to exchange one mistress for another. And although he cares for his dress and has wit and manners, he is derisive of Sir Fopling Flutter, whose care for those things is both too pronounced, too artificial, and too lacking in an accurate comprehension of his attainment of them.

ACT II

Scene I

Emilia and Lady Townley walk in together, the latter saying it is such a coincidence that her own brother should take up residence in the house where Emilia is, and that she is sure that he does not know that Emilia is the woman his son loves.

Young Bellair, Lady Townley's nephew, enters. Emilia tells him she fears for his constancy because of the rival set before her. Young Bellair is indeed upset that his father insists he must marry Harriet or be disinherited.

Old Bellair enters, paying his respects to Emilia, his neighbor. He flirts with her, telling her not to look so serious and to cheer up. His son returns after having stepped out for a moment. His father cuffs him and tells him not to look glum, and that a rich wife is no curse. He takes his son and they depart.

Lady Townley says knowingly that the old man is smitten with Emilia as well. She is not certain of this.

A page enters and says Mr. Medley would like to come by. The ladies agree, speaking of how they love to hear his gossip and intrigues.

Medley enters and Lady Townley comments that he has been a stranger of late. Medley complains of having to spend an interminable time playing cards with Lady Dealer. They joke about her.

Lady Townley asks about his friend Mr. Dorimant and all his mistresses. They also joke about Mrs. Loveit's extreme jealousy.

After this, they ask for new songs or novels, and he tells them of a couple titles about ladies with their diversions and affectations. They smile at him, and Lady Townley asks him now for "an account of the state of love as it now stands"

(69). He replies that there have been plenty of new malice, revolutions, indiscretions, and misfortunes.

Scene II

Mrs. Loveit and Pert enter, the former distressed by her lover Dorimant who is ignoring her. Pert is frustrated that he has not written to her friend or seen her for two days. Mrs. Loveit groans that she knows he is a devil but there is something about him she cannot resist.

Pert asks for his excuse and she says he told her it was business. Pert comments wryly that business may be a new mistress. Belinda enters, and the women embrace. Belinda says she has been absent because she has been with a woman recently. She is the woman Dorimant was carrying on with, however, and tells herself she is going to put her plot into motion.

She asks Mrs. Loveit if she was at Westminster Abbey with Dorimant because she saw him there with a woman. Mrs. Loveit becomes incensed as Belinda paints a picture of Dorimant and the lovely woman. Belinda pretends to be sorry and upset for her friend.

Mrs. Loveit becomes more vocal in her rage, wishing harm to Dorimant and jealousy and pain to the woman. Dorimant himself then enters, in opposition to Mrs. Loveit's commands to her page. Feigning ignorance, he asks her why she seems in an ill humor. Mrs. Loveit seethes "faithless, inhumane, barbarous man" (73), which secretly thrills Dorimant. He tries wanly to calm her down as she insults him. He also pretends to be annoyed with Belinda for causing this trouble by telling Mrs. Loveit about the woman, but tells her privately to meet him later.

Mrs. Loveit cries out, asking if this is the constancy he promised, but he says he is too old for that. She calls him a "dissembler" and a "false man" (74). He contends that any vows he made were when he was in love. She tells him to leave but when he does, she tries to pull him back.

Dorimant states that "when love grows diseased, the best thing we can do is to put it to a violent death" (75), which makes her upset. He tells her he knows about her and Sir Fopling Flutter; she is aghast and calls him a liar. He smiles that she is ruining her reputation. He is jealous. He departs.

Mrs. Loveit is distraught but Pert says to let him go. Belinda says she dreads

the man's tongue as her friend should have dreaded his attentions. Mrs. Loveit vows revenge.

Belinda wonders how poorly he used Mrs. Loveit, and if Dorimant will treat her that way someday as well.

ANALYSIS

Mrs. Loveit is not an inherently fascinating character, but she has provided much fodder for critical discussion because of the way Dorimant treats her. Audience may feel uncomfortable at how she is so poorly used by the character who is supposed to be our protagonist, but it is a bit simplistic to just accuse Etherege of being cruel or a misogynist and move on.

The character of Mrs. Loveit allows the play to parody heroic drama and emphasize the superiority of the freer present than the "hypocritical, illusory, and joyless past." The character is ridiculous due to her over-the-top violent passions and her adherence to the codes of love, hate, jealousy, and revenge. She is the classic example of the termagant, a shrewish and nagging woman with a long presence in literature of the seventeenth century. A termagant has intense passion and becomes incredibly irate when rejected. She vacillates wildly from emotion to emotion and quests for revenge. She is always undone and "loses" by the end of the text.

Etherege clearly favored the termagant as a way to parody the "literary and social conventions of the past". Whereas the play celebrates *joie de vivre* and living in the moment, Mrs. Loveit is bound by code and the heroic ethos. She is representative of the *precieux* (French ladies of intelligence and learning from the seventeenthth century) and Etherege combines "the regimented mentality of the *precieuse* with the chaotic egotism and pits the resulting hybrid against his own ideal, the supple, witty, emancipated Harriet." Mrs. Loveit speaks the lingo of the *precieuse* in terms of oaths and honor and constancy as well as rages petulantly like the termagant.

While Mrs. Loveit was ably described in Act I, she makes her first appearance here in Act II. She is complaining about Dorimant, and her waiting woman Pert is lamenting, "To be two days without sending, writing, or coming near you, contrary to his oath and covenant? 'Twas to much purpose to make him swear. I'll lay my life there's not an article but he has broken" (69). Mrs. Loveit expects Dorimant to

adhere to the code. She also has an absurd view of viewing Dorimant in terms of religion—devil and angel. Her first appearance is not a vital woman endowed with comedy and pathos, but a caricature oblivious to what she is and to the usages of her world.

When Dorimant comes into the scene, joining Belinda, the professed "friend" of Mrs. Loveit as well as veiled threat, he pushes Mrs. Loveit into her rage. She has violated standards of order and grace.

Mrs. Loveit's character is obnoxious and hilarious. Through her transgressing *precieuse* conventions and taking on the persona of the termagant, she is Etherege's manifestation of his disdain for artifice in life and literature, and his celebration of contemporary life's pleasures.

ACT III

Scene I

In Lady Woodvill's lodgings, the maidservant Busy tries to get Harriet to fix her hair and not be so wild. Harriet laughs that women spend too much time on their looks, trying to alter what nature gave them, which is what men do with their wit. Busy reminds her that her intended is out with her mother and his father right now. Busy says how genteel, how handsome Young Bellair is, but Harriet is not impressed.

Harriet asks her to stop talking about it and to sing something instead. Busy teases her and sings what Harriet has been singing since she saw Dorimant.

Young Bellair comes in, and he and Harriet regard each other. They join hands and both, to their surprise, announce their disobedience and their desire not to marry each other. He admits he is in love with another, and she comes close to admitting it as well.

They wonder how to delay the proceedings, and Young Bellair devises a plan for them to play a game—pretend they are in love with each other. Harriet muses that she does not know how to act like she is in love since she never has been, but she will try.

Old Bellair and Lady Woodvill come in. Harriet and Young Bellair start their plan. They provide quiet instructions to each other on how to stand, look, and flirt. He tells her to fan herself, heave her bosom, smile, and look "sparkish" (82). They commend each other on their performance.

Their parents notice and are pleased. A servant announces the coach has arrived, and Old Bellair and Lady Woodvill agree to meet at Lady Townley's. Young Bellair privately muses at his father's interest in a light meal with Emilia.

Scene II

At Lady Townley's house she (Lady Townley), Medley, and Emilia talk. Emilia finds herself slightly piqued by Medley's insouciance. Belinda comes in, rather sad about Mrs. Loveit's treatment at the hands of Dorimant. Emilia says that she will judge Dorimant on her own rather than listen to talk about him. Everyone adds their opinion, though, calling him witty, principled, and, according to Belinda, "strangely ill-natured" (84). Medley finds her severe, and Lady Townley says he is not a lover of hers but is a pleasant friend.

They talk of how Mrs. Loveit does not really know Sir Fopling and the time she met him found him annoying.

Dorimant arrives. Everyone encourages Belinda to talk to him, and she tells him he made her hate him. He feigns shock and says he was only obeying her commands. He tells her she needs to remember their engagement tomorrow at five in the morning. She is initially resistant but he wears her down. He then asks her how Mrs. Loveit was, and she says she had gotten over her rage and is trying to defy him. He tells Belinda to have Mrs. Loveit meet him in the park; Belinda is sad but cannot resist him.

Emilia chides Dorimant but he laughs that women are responsible for all these games.

Belinda exits and Mrs. Townley comes in. Dorimant compliments her on her popularity, but Emilia wonders if she is not too much a fan of company. Lady Townley breezily replies that it is good to have universal taste and enjoy wit. Emilia grumbles that fools become obnoxious after the first or second time seeing them.

Sir Fopling Flutter arrives and everyone is happy to see him and tease him.

He comes in, full of obsequious words and greetings. He begs Dorimant to be intimate with him, and cannot hear the man's mockery. Lady Townley tells him to not ignore the beauty before him in Emilia, and Fopling turns to her and praises her. He also tries to get Medley to admire his gallesh (a vehicle).

Everyone begins to admire Fopling's outfit loud, and he compliments himself

along with their observations about his pantaloons, breech, gloves, periwig, and so on.

Fopling muses about finding a lady and Dorimant tells him Mrs. Loveit is interested in him. Fopling is little confused, saying the woman seemed not to be interested in him, but Dorimant assures him it is affectation. He tells Fopling to meet her in the park. Fopling departs.

The group offers their opinions: "a fine-mettled coxcomb", "brisk and insipid", "pert and dull" (91). Medley says he will meet Dorimant at the Mall in a bit. Dorimant asks if the ladies are coming and they say they have their own business.

The women wait for Old Bellair to arrive.

Scene III

Harriet and Young Bellair walk along the Mall, away from her mother. Young Bellair asks her about Dorimant, and she says she finds nothing frightful about him even though her mother assumes any woman who meets him loses her virtue.

Dorimant himself enters, and walks up to the couple. He asks his friend if this is the woman his father wants him to marry, and Young Bellair says yes. Dorimant compliments her beauty. Harriet is pleased but pretends to be nonchalant.

Dorimant asks her what kind of play she prefers, and she says in public and limited, but that he seems to like private, masked play. They jest for a bit but Harriet tells Young Bellair to come along, as Dorimant is growing dull because of his affectation. Dorimant replies that she loves the attention men pay her, as he observed it earlier. She says she does not beg for attention like he does, and pretends to act like him.

Lady Woodvill arrives and tells her child to come along; she has heard Dorimant is in the area and wants to flee from the plague. She clearly does not recognize the real man before her, as they have never met.

As they are leaving, Sir Fopling and a large equipage with footmen and a page enter. Dorimant is annoyed that they are gone, but is happy with Harriet's beauty.

Medley comes in and tells his friend he espied Mrs. Loveit and Belinda not far off. Dorimant laughs that he will be amused to see Fopling speaking to her soon.

He plans to speak to her civilly and make her frustrated just as Fopling comes up.

Belinda, Pert, and Mrs. Loveit enter. Pert says she is glad Mrs. Loveit ignored Dorimant but the latter says she has no feelings at all for him anymore. She plans to let Fopling make advances to her and go along with them because it will incense Dorimant and make him jealous. Belinda is worried that Dorimant will indeed fall back in love with her friend, and wants to stop this from happening.

Fopling comes in and he and Mrs. Loveit greet each other fondly. They spend pleasant minutes critiquing some riff-raff in the Mall. Medley and Dorimant observe, with Medley wondering that she seems to like him. Dorimant curses that this seems to be a counter-plot.

Mrs. Loveit and Fopling continue to chatter and get along swimmingly, but Dorimant grows jealous. He tries to hide it, and Belinda watches him and concludes he is not jealous. Fopling, Mrs. Loveit, Pert, and Belinda exit the scene.

Dorimant is annoyed, and Medley is amused at his friend's distress. Dorimant knows his former lover hates Fopling and wants to expose this.

A footman comes up to them with a note from Young Bellair asking them to come over. He writes that Mrs. Woodvill did not know Dorimant, so he must pretend to be Mr. Courtage, a man known for courting old women. He laughs that this must be Harriet's idea, and is pleased.

ANALYSIS

The presence of Sir Fopling Flutter, whose name is in the subtitle to the play, as well as his complete opposite, Harriet, makes for an interesting act. Fopling is the character all the other characters are gently lampooning for his affectation and ridiculousness. He is overly concerned with his dress, his manners are too artificial, and he has no discernment. The circle critiques him as "a fine-mettled coxcomb", "brisk and insipid", and "pert and dull" (91). Dorimant comments in response to Emilia's statement that many may see him as a wit that "Nature has her cheats, stums a brain and puts sophisticate dullness on the tasteless multitude for true wit and good humour" (91).

Fopling, and the scene with Harriet and Young Bellair feigning to be in love with each other, are indicative of one of the play's most pervasive themes—disguise

and affectation. While not the exact same thing, they work together in much of Restoration drama. As critic Gamini Salgado writes, "Affectation is one form of disguise; it is disguise which is imperfectly aware of its own nature and objectives, and as such it comes half-way between conscious dissimulation and the candid presentation of the 'real' personality." In Restoration drama it is taken for the norm that one's outward appearance does not match one's inward makeup. Society dictates that men and women "dress up their real thoughts and feelings in polite trifling and elegant gesture, to hide the true expression on their faces behind a delicately wrought fan." Someone like Dorimant is the hero because he does this with aplomb, and someone like Fopling is the fool because he does not have a handle/control on why he does what he does or how to carry it out with ease.

Harriet is an interesting character because she both plays this game and doesn't. She does indeed pretend like she does not like Dorimant as much as she does, but everything she says to that effect is rooted in the fact that she does not actually care for artifice or dissimulation. She uses "affectation of affectation", as Salgado notes, which is seen in how she mocks and teases Dorimant's words and behavior when he initially tries to court her.

Harriet, as critic Rose A. Zimbardo writes, is "the agent and instrument of nature" because she is the "mistress of forms" who can "assume many masks and be confined by none. She is aware of mutability and does not seek the false security of oaths." This contrasts her with Mrs. Loveit, who thinks Dorimant's words of love and swearing of affection actually have meaning because they are part of a code.

Harriet's outward appearance is a manifestation of this. She is always described as wild and wanton, and Busy tries valiantly to get her to conform her appearance to sartorial norms. She may play little games, but they serve nature's ends. She will bring about self-knowledge and real love in Dorimant, further the pure marriage of Emilia and Young Bellair, and vanquish the absurd Mrs. Loveit, who is "the slave of empty forms" and is obsessed with self-love.

As for Belinda, the third in Dorimant's trifecta of wooed women, she is a bit more complicated. On the one hand, she is vicious and has no problem from the outset with hurting Mrs. Loveit. On the other hand, she does feel bad and tries to

atone for her earlier behavior by urging Dorimant to let her alone. A deeper look at this character, though, does not yield much to earn her further sympathy. In the comedy, she is first introduced as a "vizard," or a mask. Like Harriet, she is a mistress of forms but to her own advantage and self-protection. Her goals are the same as Dorimant's initially: "self-love and self-gratification operating under a quite un-libertine regard for respectability." She never comes clean to Mrs. Loveit, preferring to lie and slink away rather than demonstrate true character.

ACT IV

SCENE I

At Lady Woodvill's lodging, Dorimant, Young Bellair, Harriet, Lady Woodvill, Old Bellair, Emilia, Lady Townley, and Medley are present.

Old Bellair pretends he does not love Emilia to his sister, but he does. Lady Woodvill thinks Dorimant is Mr. Courtage, and complains about how lewd people are nowadays, especially those like Dorimant. He agrees, and mocks young men of the day. Harriet observes and wryly calls him a perfect fit for her mother. Dorimant compliments older woman and their intelligence and charms, and Lady Woodvill is pleased. When she compares him to the vile Dorimant, everyone else laughs but she does not get the joke. She and Dorimant dance with each other.

Old Bellair comes up to Emilia and jokes with her. He pretends not to be interested and tells Dorimant she is ugly. Medley and Emilia encourage Dorimant, after he has extricated himself from the other women, to talk to Harriet.

Dorimant asks Harriet why she looks so cold and scornful, and she replies she does not care to look artificial or fake; she is too wild and independent. Dorimant encourages her to wear a gentle smile but she says it is too bad he does not care for her face as is. He tells her she ought to go to court where everyone can see her beauty, but she says she does not want to be taken apart by everyone. She comments scornfully, "Beauty runs as great a risk exposed at court as wit does on the stage, where the ugly and foolish are all free to censure" (107).

Dorimant is taken with her but does not want her to know. He acts insouciantly, pretending to be madly in love with her, ironically. She is skeptical and laughs.

Sir Fopling enters with a group of people, all wearing masks. Everyone recognizes his pomposity and is amused. Medley drily says it is a group of French

riff-raff he picked up to be his dancing equipage. His own disguise tickles Sir Fopling but Young Bellair gently says only unmasked people can be in this gathering. Dorimant reminds Fopling he must call him Courtage.

Sir Fopling talks about how popular he was in Paris and how many intrigues he had. Harriet says those he had at court tonight should weary him and not engage in any more. Fopling brags of all the beauties in Paris, and says some said they were Dorimant's friends.

Harriet asks who the obsequious masked people in the room are, and Fopling responds that he brought them there to entertain them. She says she would rather see him dance. He feigns modesty and everyone whispers behind his back that he is not very talented. He tries a little jig, fully pleased with himself. Harriet comments that she is enjoying this very much.

Old Bellair, Lady Woodvill, and Lady Townley come back into the room after leaving for a few minutes. Harriet teases her mother for liking Courtage so much, and her mother exclaims that at least he is not Dorimant. She says if her daughter were not already engaged, she could think of Courtage.

Dorimant remembers that Belinda will be arriving soon, and is concerned now that he is in love with Harriet.

He asks Lady Woodvill if she knows Fopling, and she says worriedly that she does and that Dorimant is sure to be in his company soon. She tells Harriet to come along with her quickly. Dorimant goes to help them to their carriage.

Old Bellair says he wants a drink with Medley. Medley asks where Fopling is going, and the latter says he must talk with Courtage. Medley tells him he will be along in a second.

When Old Bellair goes to get a bottle, his son comes in. He tells Medley that he and Emilia have a plan. Everyone toasts; Medley teases Old Bellair by saying the toast is to Emilia, and the old man gruffly says he does not care for her.

Sir Fopling sings a drinking song. After he concludes he suggests he and Medley go see Dorimant. Medley agrees, and Young Bellair decides to go as well. Fopling announces for their lights to be lit for their promenade, but the other men are confused, as it is daytime. Fopling says to do it anyway because it is impressive.

SCENE II

It is Dorimant's lodging, and Belinda enters. She tells him she is fearful and hopes he will be discreet now. She expresses her frustration over how he treated Mrs. Loveit and asks him to promise not to see her again. He does.

She wants to go, but Dorimant asks her to stay. Handy announces that Medley, Young Bellair, and Fopling are coming. Belinda is agitated and begs him to let her go. He agrees.

His friends are amused at his having a young lady in his room of late. Fopling looks around and asks why he does not have a mirror in there, as it makes rooms better. He also tells Dorimant he needs a handsome cravat, and that he has brought a man with him who does an excellent toilet.

Medley asks Fopling about Mrs. Loveit. Fopling is happy, and boasts about her behavior the previous night. He comments that he is writing a song. The others ask to hear it and, after bragging of learning in Paris, launches into the song.

Fopling's footman comes in and the former asks if the bath is ready. He leaves. Medley asks Dorimant when he will have his revenge on his former lover. His friend replies soon, and asks if he shall come. Medley says he is engaged with Bellair in the business of matrimony. Young Bellair tells Dorimant he is sure Harriet loves him, explaining how she only seems well when she is speaking of him and becomes angry when someone defames him. He then comments wryly that his own father loves Emilia. Dorimant encourages his friend to conduct the wedding soon.

They prepare to disband, and Young Bellair tells his friend he must think of marriage with Harriet, or else he will not get close to her.

SCENE III

It is the Mall. Belinda is brought there and is disconcerted; she had forgotten to give directions and does not want Mrs. Loveit to see her.

Mrs. Loveit's footman comes up to her and says his mistress would desire her company. Belinda agrees. She quickly tells the chairman that if anyone ever asks, he should say he took her elsewhere, not to Dorimant's.

ANALYSIS

The plot, which is admittedly rather thin, thickens as much as it can in this act.

Young Bellair and Emilia are keeping their relationship secret and Dorimant is pursuing Harriet. Fopling toasts his success with Mrs. Loveit. Dorimant pretends to be Mr. Courtage to appeal to Lady Woodvill and the rest of the company goes along with it. Belinda rues her involvement with Dorimant but must go along with his plan while avoiding detection by Mrs. Loveit. By the end of this act the audience is left wondering whether or not the two relationships will come to pass: will Young Bellair and Emilia marry, and will Dorimant attain the full, open love of Harriet?

Even though it is relatively easy to guess at the outcome of both of these, in regards to the latter it is worth asking whether audience want Dorimant to succeed. Indeed, the question of Dorimant's likeability has haunted critics for centuries. Robert D. Hume takes up this question in his article on the play. First of all, he explains that this question matters very much because of the very thinness of the plot; the play has a "plot of character" rather than a "plot of action", and everything is somewhat fragmented, unrelated, resolved too easily, or unrealistic.

Dorimant's behavior toward his mistresses is undoubtedly cruel, and it is also important to note that his marriage to Harriet will be economically advantageous to him because of her independent wealth. However, Belinda and Mrs. Loveit are unlikeable characters. Harriet is a good match for him because she is cold and steely. Hume writes that this is not a particularly romantic match, and "unless (against all evidence) we are to consider Harriet a blinded fool, we must suppose that she knows what she is getting in Dorimant and wants it. So we either pity her folly or class her as one who can out-Dorimant the devil himself. I incline to the latter."

Dorimant's giving in to Harriet renders his brutality in previous acts less demonstrative. He is not entirely redeemed, but he gets to be a source of amusement for the audience. Etherege's allowing Harriet to win "sharply undercuts any reveling in the powers of a Machiavellian rake", and while he mocks his characters, "he does not lecture us with a devastating critique."

There is more to say about Dorimant as the hero of the text. The Restoration may have been an era of artifice, but it was also a very secular and human era. It was skeptical, satirical, and had little faith in absolutes. The hero of this text, as in most Restoration literature, is somewhat isolated, and there is "an undercurrent of loneliness against which the heroes are obscurely struggling". Indeed, at times Dorimant seems desperate, or tired, or merely continuing his games because he

thinks he has to.

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that the scenes with Dorimant and Harriet engaging in their repartee give the play its reputation: the wit is top-notch, sparkling, lucid, and at a marvelous pace. This is precisely why the play has endured on the stage.

ACT V

SCENE I

At Mrs. Loveit's house, she and Pert talk about how obnoxious Fopling is. Belinda is announced, and Mrs. Loveit is suspicious because the same man who always carries Dorimant around was the one who brought her. She bids the footman to ask the man where he had taken her, and grumbles that women are as false as men.

Belinda comes in, and lies about the country gentlewomen she was spending time with. Mrs. Loveit pretends to believe her. The footman comes in and whispers to Mrs. Loveit, which annoys Belinda. The footman repeats the lie Belinda had bidden the chairman to use, and Mrs. Loveit relaxes.

Dorimant is announced. Belinda grows pale and knows she is undone. After seeing her look faint, Pert leads her away to lie down. Mrs. Loveit prepares herself for Dorimant, hoping she can seem cold and no longer in love.

Dorimant enters and teases her about his not being as gallant as Fopling. Mrs. Loveit retorts that "these noisy fools, however you despise 'em, have good qualities, which weigh more—or ought to at least—with us women than all the pernicious wit you have to boast of" (126). Smiling, Dorimant asks her to explain. She consents, and says first they really admire women, not just flatter them. Then, she says, they are assiduous and are always of service. Dorimant laughs that that is because they are excessively idle.

She continues, saying their conversation diverts better. He says all they do is play with fans and commend women's hair. She says it is better to laugh at others than be laughed at oneself. He thinks fops believe too well of themselves and commend women too much, and that women like to believe the men they want to easily deceive. Furthermore, fools are designed for "properties, and not for friends" (127).

Mrs. Loveit calls attention to his own lies, and this is not the first time he has lied to her. She lambasts him for wanting the whole town to know how he used her and have the town think she loves him still. Finally, she asks why he came to her.

He says that he wanted to let her know of her growing reputation and infamy. This enrages her. He notes how she went for a walk with Fopling, to which she says that he seems to find more pleasure in ruining women's reputations than enjoying their endearments.

He feigns being distraught at her attentions toward that fop, but she boldly says she does not feel bad for acting like that since he pushed her to it. Dorimant asks if she is that far gone, and when she says yes, suggests that they must part.

Mrs. Loveit is incensed at him and wishes him gone as soon as possible. She tells him he made her anger as powerful as her love once was, which is why she did what she did. Dorimant remarks wryly that his friends will never let him forget it.

He tells her she must meet Fopling in the Mall tonight to "justify my love to the world" (129). This seems ridiculous to her, and she refuses to do a "shameless thing to please your vanity" (129).

Belinda and Pert enter, and Dorimant starts. Belinda thinks he looks guilty. Her friend sighs that Belinda always seems to have the luck to see her being abused by this man. Belinda asks why he is here, and starts to criticize him.

Dorimant knows he must submit to their vitriol for the time. Mrs. Loveit tells her friend she need not be overly concerned with Dorimant, but Belinda says she is too upset for her.

When Pert begins to speak up, Dorimant excuses himself. He whispers to Belinda before he leaves that he is not as guilty as she imagines and will clear himself later. Mrs. Loveit hears this and spits that he might as well do it now. He ignores her and departs.

Mrs. Loveit says she will find the woman who is the cause of all this and take off her mask to expose her to the world. Belinda wishes to herself that she could escape, and that she will never do anything like this again. She says aloud that she is tired, but Mrs. Loveit rages that she herself will never sleep again and will endeavor to make all mankind as restless as she is.

After she leaves, Belinda sighs "I knew him false and helped to make him so.

Was not her ruin enough to fright me from the danger? It should have been, but love can take no warning" (131).

SCENE II

At Lady Townley's house, she, Medley, Emilia, Young Bellair, and the chaplain stand together. Young Bellair and Emilia were just secretly married. Old Bellair comes in, looking for his son and exhorting him to be ready for his marriage to Harriet today.

Lady Woodvill, Harriet, and Busy enter. Old Bellair tells his son that they need to work on the paperwork, and brings Medley with him as the witness. He, his son, Medley, and Ladies Townley and Woodvill leave.

Harriet tells Emilia she does not want to be married to a man she does no love. Emilia advises her to talk to a wise man about it, and slyly suggests Dorimant. Harriet says she does not think of him and responds to Emilia's praises of him with critiques. Busy chimes in and sings a song Harriet had been singing about Dorimant, which frustrates Harriet.

Dorimant enters the room and sings the last line of the song, which he also knows well. Harriet blushes and feels her love for him well up, but tries to contain it. He teases her about the song and then whispers his congratulations to Emilia, who tells him to focus on Harriet for the time being.

Dorimant offers Harriet his service in helping her with her planned forced marriage, to which she retorts that he is where all young ladies turn to when trying to escape marriage. She tells him she is not interested in falsehoods and that there is no truth in people's faces, since they hide their feelings and display whatever they want to.

Dorimant points out the true color in her cheeks, and she admits that it is hard to see real repentance in a man's face. He says he will renounce all for her, and she chides him for being a fanatic and asks if he could handle staying in the country with her for a while. He says he would give up London forever for her because his passion knows no bounds. She says wryly that she will believe him when he talks that way when actually in the country. He asks for a promise and for hope, to which she says his own behavior will dictate that.

Busy tells Harriet that Dorimant obviously loves her and she should admit it too, but Harriet balks at that as immodest. Dorimant, while they speak, turns to

Emilia in some frustration. She says she will try to speed things up, and asks Harriet what she has resolved to do about the proposed marriage to Young Bellair. Harriet states she will not do it.

Lady Townley comes in, and the parson, Mr. Smirk, comes out of the closet. Harriet is startled. Old and Young Bellair, Medley, and Lady Woodvill come back in the room. Old Bellair announces it is time, and greets the parson. The parson smiles and says he has already done his duty. To Old Bellair's shock, Emilia and Young Bellair kneel, and Lady Townley laughs that her brother ought to give his blessing to his son and new wife.

Flummoxed and angry, Old Bellair proclaims that he was cheated. Lady Woodvill is also angry, and calls for Harriet to leave.

Mrs. Loveit and Belinda come in, which privately distresses Dorimant. He turns to Harriet and asks her how she likes Mrs. Loveit. She asks if she is not one of his mistresses, and he says she has been at times. She scoffs at the other woman's fakeness.

Mrs. Loveit asks gaily if Dorimant is a bridegroom today. This reveals his true identity to Lady Woodvill, who is stunned that he is not actually Mr. Courtage. She feels betrayed and Harriet tries to talk to her about it, but to no avail.

Mrs. Loveit comments that Harriet is an heiress and rich, and Dorimant sighs that he must give up his interest to his new love. He does not reveal Belinda's role in recent events, for which she is grateful. He tells Mrs. Loveit that he wants no more mistresses and wants Harriet as a wife instead. Then he turns to Belinda but she tells him not to talk to her and she will not hate him.

Medley and Old Bellair and Harriet tell Lady Woodvill that Dorimant is a civil gentleman, but Lady Woodvill insists she will not see her daughter ruined. Harriet sighs that her fortune is not in her mother's power, but her mother replies that her person is. She is surprised when her daughter says that she wants to marry Dorimant. In fact, Harriet says she will marry no other man. She adds that she will not marry him without her mother's consent, which melts Lady Woodvill's heart.

Medley elbows Old Bellair and says he cannot refuse to bless this, to which the old man agrees.

Fopling and his page enter. Fopling comments that it is windy and asks if his

periwig is okay. He walks up to Mrs. Loveit and says her people directed him to her here. She sniffs that she hopes they will direct him better next time. He becomes a bit disconcerted with her cool behavior, especially after she complains about how foolish she was in entertaining him last night.

Lady Woodvill turns to Dorimant and says everyone's kind words have changed her opinion about Mrs. Loveit hears this and complains to Belinda, "There's nothing but falsehood and impertinence in this world. All men are villains or fools; take example from my misfortune" (142).

Harriet sneers at her that Dorimant has been her god too long and she needs another. Mrs. Loveit is offended that she is jeered by Harriet and tells herself she will never leave her hose again. Harriet laughs that she ought to go into a nunnery.

Fopling, oblivious, asks for Mrs. Loveit's hand, and she flees the room. He thinks she is mad.

Old Bellair asks them all to stay and dine before they depart. It is planned for Dorimant to come to the country to visit Harriet and her mother. Harriet jokes about the isolation of the place, but Dorimant sincerely insists his soul has given up its liberty and he will go there with no qualms.

Music and a dance are struck up.

EPILOGUE

Mr. Dryden says most modern wits don't seem realistic, but Sir Fopling is well done because he resembles all of us. Wherever he goes he picks up part of us and "his bulky folly gathers as it goes" (145) and grows like a snowball.

ANALYSIS

With this act the play comes to a close. Everything is more or less neatly wrapped up, characters that one do like get what they want, and characters that one does not like are chastised and humiliated. This is not really a play of action but rather a play of character; there was little doubt the storylines would work out in Dorimant, Harriet, Emilia, and Young Bellair's favor. Dorimant seems to have learned his lesson, and, as critic Gamini Salgado notes, "when, in the best comic tradition, the hero has learnt the lessons which the heroine knew all along, the comedy is over."

Most critics tend to acknowledge the wit and the intelligence and the

lampooning of certain types of people and their misguided and misshapen proclivities, but do not see anything more profound. Robert D. Hume writes, "What kind of play is *The Man of Mode?* It mingles a number of elements—straight romantic lovers, a fantastic fop, some elderly 'humours' characters, and a high-life rake who finally meets his match. Little happens: the whole concoction is a piece of cream puffery." He does not see high satire or high seriousness.

In terms of the comedy and wit, Rose A. Zimbardo sees the play occupying an important place in the history in English comedy. She writes that it stands as a "crux in the evolution of English comedy" because Etherege is "midway between the imitation of nature as idea and the imitation of nature as human actuality." He symbolizes a "progression toward the idea of human nature freed from the iron fetters or social expediency but bound by the golden chains of natural necessity." She admires the way he "turns heroic structure to mock-heroic purpose."

The way Etherege mocks pretension, foolishness, foppery, and obliviousness is worth lauding. Sir Fopling is amusing to the other characters and to the audience, but the traits he possesses are not appealing. Mrs. Loveit's defense of him and Dorimant's responses to her points is a perfect encapsulation of what is wrong with him. Dorimant points out his "excessive idleness", his insipidness, his excessive superficiality, and his belief that such fops "commonly indeed believe too well of themselves, and always better of you than you deserve" (126). Of course, Dorimant is no peach, but Etherege uses Harriet to redeem him and leaves Fopling at the mercy of our amusement/disdain.

12.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. In the Prologue, Sir Car Scrope remarks that playwrights get material for their work from:
   A) Royal decrees
   B) Religious scripture
   C) The audience's own follies
   D) Greek mythology

2. Medley identifies the young woman from the marketplace as:
   A) Emilia
   B) Lady Townley

C) Belinda
D) Harriet

3. What is Dorimant's attitude toward boredom and calm in his love life?
   A) He appreciates the peace
   B) He seeks to avoid drama
   C) He longs for excitement and conflict
   D) He plans to settle down quietly

4. Who is Sir Fopling Flutter?
   A) A shoemaker turned nobleman
   B) A wealthy but ridiculous fashion-obsessed man
   C) Dorimant's younger brother
   D) The new servant in Dorimant's house

5. When Young Bellair learns of his father's plans to marry him to Harriet, he:
   A) Is delighted
   B) Accepts it immediately
   C) Plans to flee the country
   D) Becomes distraught due to his secret love for Emilia

6. What literary archetype does Mrs. Loveit best embody according to the analysis?
   A) Ingenue
   B) Termagant
   C) Tragic heroine
   D) Wise elder

7. Why do Harriet and Young Bellair agree to pretend they are in love with each other?
   A) To make Dorimant jealous
   B) To please their parents while secretly avoiding marriage
   C) Because they've fallen for each other
   D) To test Lady Woodvill's loyalty

8. What is the main comedic irony of the scene where Lady Woodvill meets Dorimant in the Mall?
   A) She recognizes Dorimant as her long-lost nephew
   B) She praises Dorimant without realizing who he is
   C) She unknowingly insults her own daughter
   D) She flirts with Dorimant despite being his enemy

9. What does Harriet's attitude toward personal appearance reveal about her character?

A) She is vain and fashion-obsessed
B) She rejects artifice and values naturalness
C) She wants to impress Dorimant
D) She tries to imitate Sir Fopling

10. Why does Lady Woodvill not recognize Dorimant?
A) He is wearing a mask
B) He uses a false name, Mr. Courtage
C) He disguises himself as a servant
D) He avoids her entirely

11. What role does Belinda play in the plot?
A) She is Dorimant's cousin
B) She is a spy for Lady Woodvill
C) She is one of Dorimant’s lovers who feels regretful
D) She tries to marry Sir Fopling

12. Why do Young Bellair and Emilia get married in secret?
A) Because Emilia is of higher rank
B) Because Old Bellair wants Young Bellair to marry Harriet
C) Because they are underage
D) Because Emilia is already engaged

13. Which of the following best describes Sir Fopling Flutter?
A) A brilliant orator and philosopher
B) A modest and grounded nobleman
C) A vain and oblivious fop obsessed with fashion and appearances
D) A romantic hero who sacrifices for love

14. What does Harriet ultimately decide about Dorimant?
A) She will marry him only if her mother agrees
B) She will leave London to forget him
C) She will expose him to the town
D) She will become a nun

15. What does the Epilogue suggest about Sir Fopling?
A) He is the play’s true hero
B) He is a tragic character
C) He represents foolishness that everyone shares a piece of
D) He will reform and become wise

12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Dorimant as the protagonist of *The Man of Mode.*
2. Analyse the character of Harriet and compare and contrast Harriet with Mrs.Lovert.
3. Evaluate the character of Sir Fopling Flutter and why Etherege has used "Sir Fopling Flutter" as the subtitle of the play "*The Man of Mode*".
4. Analyze the title of the play *The Man of Mode, or, Sr. Fopling Flutter: A Comedy*.
5. Analyse Mrs. Loveit as an eccentric character.
6. Write in your own words about the character "Belinda".
7. Discuss the mall scene in Act III.
8. Analyse Harriet and Dorimant's behaviour towards each other in Act IV scene i.
9. How Act IV proceeds and evaluate its importance in the play.
10. Discuss the plot-construction of the play *The Man of Mode.*
11. Analyse the beginning and ending of the play *The Man of Mode.*

12.7 LET US SUM UP

The Man of Mode is a Restoration comedy, that is comedy of manners which depicts the lives and manners of the people of the age. Etherege uses the subtitle Sir Fopling Flutter as he represents the foppish behaviour of the men of the age. Etherege mocks pretension, foolishness, foppery, and obliviousness of the period through his comedy *The Man of Mode.*

12.8 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. Medley
2. Harriet
3. Harriet
4. Sir Fopling Flutter
5. Emilia
6. Mrs. Loveit

7. Harriet
8. Mr. Courtage
9. Emilia
10. Medley

MCQs

1- C; 2- D; 3-C; 4-B; 5-D; 6-B; 7-B; 8-B; 9-B; 10-B; 11-C; 12-B; 13-C; 14-A; 15-C

12.9 SUGGESTED READING

- "The Man of Mode." by George Etherege. *www.gradesaver.com.*
- *The Man of Mode, or, Sr. Fopling Flutter: A Comedy* by George Etherege.

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Course Code: EL-401 **UNIT -V**

Course Title : English Literature **LESSON NO. 13**

THE MAN OF MODE

13.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the various literary technique that George Etherege has used in *The Man of Mode* such as wit, humour, symbols, and motifs. The lesson also aims to offer an analysis of the role played by women in the drama as well as analyse *The Man of Mode* as a comedy of manners. Dear learner, by the end of this lesson, you will be able to identify and explain the various literary techniques used by George Etherege in *The Man of*

Mode, including wit, humour, symbols, and motifs and demonstrate how these literary techniques enhance the comedic appeal of the play. You will also be able to analyze the significance of women characters in the drama and their contribution to the plot. Further, you will be able to critically evaluate *The Man of Mode* as a comedy of manners.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The Man of Mode is a Restoration comedy by George Etherege that satirizes the manners and affectations of London's upper class through the charming and witty rake, Dorimant. The play explores themes of love, affectation, disguise, and marriage. George Etherege uses Wit and humour in *The Man of Mode* to expose the hypocrisy of the characters, especially through sharp dialogue and playful banter. As a fine example of comedy of manners, *The Man of Mode* satirizes the behaviours and social customs of the aristocratic elite through witty dialogue and exaggerated characters. It humorously exposes the pretensions, romances, and hypocrisies of Restoration society.

13.2 WIT AND HUMOUR IN *THE MAN OF MODE*

In Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, or *Sir Fopling Flutter*, one becomes intimately acquainted, once more, with the most brilliant society which Restoration comedy has to offer us. Etherege's hero, Dorimant, superlatively well-bred, witty, engaging, is the finest of all fine gentlemen in Restoration comedy. Belinda may object (though not in her heart) that Dorimant is "a man of no pincples." But his brother-gallant, Medley, is on the alert to rebuke her with the ironical reminder: "Your man of principles is a very fine thing indeed!" Dorimant is, of course, inconstant. He exclaims: "Constancy at my years! 'tis not a virtue in season; you might as well expect the fruit the autumn ripens I' the spring."

He is, of course, a dissembler. "Good nature and good manners," he admits, corrupt him, causing him even to "willfully mistake art for nature," in order to "avoid offence." Dorimant and Harriet become acquainted by means of a formal wit encounter, in which they exchange similitude. They elaborately compare love intrigues to gaming, Dorimant taking his cue for the beginning of the conversation from a remark which he has overheard Harriet make to Young Bellair.

DORIMANT. You were talking of play, madam; pray what may be your stint?

HARRIET. A little harmless discourse in public walks, or at most an appointment in a box barefaced at the playhouse; you are for masks and private meetings where women enegae for all they are worth, I hear.

DORIMANT. I have been used to deep play, but I can make one at small game when I like my gamester well.

HARRIET. And be so unconcerned you'll ha' no pleasure in it.

DORIMANT. Where there is a considerable sum to be won the hope of drawing people in makes every trifle considerable.

HARRIET. The sordidness of men's natures, I know, makes 'em willing to flatter and comply with the rich, though they are sure never to be the better for 'em.

DORIMANT. 'Tis in their power to do us good, and we despair not but at some time or other they may be willing.

HARRIET. To men who have fared on this town like you 'twould be a great mortification to live on hope, could you keep a Lent for a mistress?

DORIMANT. In expectation of a happy Easter, and though time be very precious, think forty days well lost to gain your favour.

HARRIET. Mr. Bellair! Let us walk, 'tis time to leave him; men grow dull when they begin to be particular.

The acquaintance thus artificially begun soon ripens into love. By the third interview Harriet finds herself unable to look Dorimant in the face, for, as she explains in an aside: "My love springs with my blood into my face, I dare not look upon him yet." Still not looking at him, she jeers at him as gaily as ever, urging him to "play the dying fop" for her diversion. At last, begging her to read his secret in his eyes, Dorimant has a chance to observe her face, and swears then the sincerity of his love "by the inimitable colour" in her cheeks. Her love is revealed, but not by verbal confession; and she rails on to the end of the interview. Later, she explains to her maid that her "sense of modesty" enforced all this fine acting, and adds: "May he hate me—a curse that frights me when I speak it—if ever I do a thing against the rules of decency and honour!" Her comment betrays the principle which animates

all such graceful courtship scenes in Restoration comedy.

Dorimant, Harriet, and the young people of fashion among their friends enforce their own wit at the expense of the fools of the play. These discerning young persons are quite of the opinion announced by Lady Townley:

> Tis good to have an universal taste; we should love wit, but for variety be able to divert ourselves with the extravagancies of those who want it.

Among those who "want" wit, according to Lady Townley's standard, are Lady Woodvil and Old Bellair, both of whom make themselves ridiculous in exhibiting old-fashioned notions about society, the madly jealous mistress, Loveit, and, most important of all, that "pattern of modern foppery," Sir Fopling Flutter.

The "sophisticate dullness" of Sir Fopling, which can pass for wit only with "the tasteless multitude," is a special source of delight to Dorimant and his circle, and is encourgaded by them as generously as possible. Sir Fopling belongs to the fraternity of affected fops. Dorimant briskly sketches Sir Dopling's characters in the remark: "He went to Paris a plain bashful English blockhead, and is returned a fine undertaking French fop."

Sir Fopling has pet affectations, regarding the fineness of his clothes, the brightness of his wit, and his talent for courtship. The character Sir Fopling enhances by contrast the attractiveness of Dorimant. One laughs at Sir Fopling because he so clumsily parodies social fashions which Dorimant interprets with unfailing grace and distinction. One laughs at Dorimant because his assumed affectation admits of so poor and incomplete an expression of an attractive and vigorous personality.

13.3 SYMBOLS, ALLEGORY AND MOTIFS

Symbol: Harriet's hair

Harriet's wild hair symbolizes the wildness of her character and her association with nature.

Motif: Music and Dance

Throughout the play characters sing and dance. These actions are part of the elaborate societal rituals that determine taste and class. Music can also illuminate

characters' true feelings, as is the case when Busy gently mocks Harriet by singing the song that expresses her interest in Dorimant.

Symbol: Mirror

The mirror that Fopling wishes to see in Dorimant's apartment is a symbol of his own vanity and self-interest.

Motif: Masks

Masks are frequently employed in the text: Belinda is first courted while wearing one; Fopling wears one; and Mrs. Loveit speaks of "unmasking" Harriet. Masks cover up one's features, as well as one's true feelings and motivations.

Symbol: The Orange-Woman

The orange-woman symbolizes nature, and by introducing Harriet into the play, she reinforces the fact that Harriet too is a symbol of nature, that is purity, authenticity, wildness, vivacity, lack of artifice.

13.4 *THE MAN OF MODE* - THEMES

Affectation

Nearly all of the characters in the play are well versed in affectation, meaning that they disguise their true feelings, emotions, mannerisms, and beliefs behind a wall of artifice. This is done to conform to society's expectations that their outer appearances do not match their inner life; thus, roiling emotions, immodest inclinations, bouts of anger or despair, or anything else that may be considered improper to air to one's companions are kept submerged. It is a veritable game that the characters must play. Those who are skilled at it, such as Dorimant, are admired, while those who do not quite understand what is expected of them, like Sir Fopling, whose affectation is bombastic, are ridiculed. Etherege generally supports this reality of his day, but through Harriet also demonstrates how being a little more authentic is both possible and laudable.

Marriage

The play generally has a positive view of marriage, but it takes awhile for it to manifest itself. Young Bellair and Emilia want to marry, and one largely understands and supports their desire to do so, but the protagonist, Dorimant, spends most of

the play ridiculing the institution and reveling in his affairs and exploits. He does not want to be trapped by oath or claim or contract, and with women such as Mrs. Loveit, that makes sense. However, the play becomes much more traditional by the end when Dorimant meets his match in Harriet and decides that he is indeed the marrying kind. The play ends with one marriage (Bellair and Emilia) and an engagement, which shows Etherege conforming to a positive view of marriage, but also demonstrating that marriage is best when it is entered into freely and with wisdom and discernment.

Manners and Decorum

Every character in this play seems to be obsessed with their actions and the actions of others. They critique, complain, and monitor each other; sometimes they try to do the same for themselves (but not as often, of course). Sir Fopling's manners and decorum come under the greatest of scrutiny; he is certainly mannered and decorous, but has taken that to an excessive level. He is called "insipid" and "pert" by the circle, although they do admit that his manners are polished enough that he may fool others, who might therefore consider him a great wit. Mrs. Loveit, by contrast, has few manners. She is also ridiculed, mostly because she cannot control herself or exercise restraint or decorum. Her rages and tantrums reveal her as a woman lacking modesty and class, and that, according to Etherege and contemporary audience, is a grosser offense than being a fop or a fool.

Tradition verses Modernity

A few of the characters represent tradition, while others represent modernity. In their views on marriage and modesty, as well as their way of conducting themselves, Old Bellair and Lady Woodvill represent a more traditional, old-fashioned worldview. Mrs. Loveit also represents this, as she has an outmoded view of love and courtship. Young Bellair and Emilia represent a middle perspective, as they value traditional marriage but are open-minded to new modes of behavior. Medley, Dorimant, and Harriet are more modern because they are completely open and/or accepting of the new norms of sexual behavior and marriage as a match of equals.

Folly and Foppishness

The play's great strength comes from its wittiness in exposing and critiquing folly and foppishness. While all of the characters have some degree of undesirable characteristics (Dorimant is a womanizer; Belinda is self-interested; Harriet is cruel), Sir Fopling Flutter is the main target of censure. He certainly knows a lot about dress, but that is it. He has no substance, no inner being. He tells Dorimant he needs more mirrors, and comments tellingly "In a glass a man may entertain himself" (118). His affectation is all there is to him.

Social Class

While this theme is not as obvious as others in the play, it is still there lurking beneath the surface. Comedy in the Restoration era used the exploits of the rich as the basis for its plot, reveling in the glittery, amusing milieu in which these men and women operated and schemed. Their follies and mistakes were fodder for critique and commentary, and, of course, humor. However, there are also lower-class characters in this play too: the orange-woman, the shoemaker, and the waiting women Busy and Pert. Etherege gives the waiting women some clever lines and amusing moments, and allows the orange-woman to perform the crucial act of introducing Harriet to the story, but overall they are not significant to the drama. Etherege's world is of the rich rake, the masked woman, the titled fop, the prudish Lady, and the beautiful heiress.

Disguise

Nearly all of the characters use disguises. Belinda is introduced as a masked woman. Feelings are hidden and masked, such as Harriet's true feelings for Dorimant, Belinda's role in the plot to embarrass Mrs. Loveit, Dorimant's plans for his lady love. Even the "pure" love of Emilia and Young Bellair is hidden, and he and Harriet play their role as a besotted betrothed couple. Fopling wears a mask to one of the gatherings as well, but as he has nothing to hide because he has no inner life, he is encouraged to take off the mask. Everyone else, though, wears their masks almost

all the time, and it takes a special occasion, such as Harriet finally getting Dorimant to be authentic with her, for them to drop them.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

State whether true or false:

1. Dorimant is portrayed as the most virtuous and principled character in *The Man of Mode*. (True/False)
2. Harriet openly confesses her love to Dorimant during their second meeting. (True/False)
3. Sir Fopling Flutter is admired for his fashionable manners and genuine charm. (True/False)
4. Dorimant and his circle laugh at Sir Fopling because of his shallow imitation of fashionable society. (True/False)
5. Harriet's wild hair is a symbol of her untamed nature and connection to authenticity. (True/False)
6. Masks in the play represent the concealment of true identity and emotions. (True/False)
7. Etherege suggests that affectation is a necessary skill in Restoration society, but also shows that authenticity has value. (True/False)
8. The play ends with Dorimant continuing his rakish lifestyle, rejecting any form of commitment. (True/False)
9. Sir Fopling's concern with appearance and style makes him the embodiment of folly and foppishness. (True/False)
10. Mrs. Loveit is ridiculed in the play for her uncontrolled emotions and lack of decorum. (True/False)

13.5 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN *THE MAN OF MODE*

Around the mid-seventeenth century, England, renowned for its theatrical genius, introduced a new, astounding feature to its public stage: actresses. Heroines played vital roles within playwrights' satirical plots, and audiences flocked to the playhouses to witness the portrayals. Despite the multidimensional nature of female characters that was developing in literature, Sir George Etherege's dramatic satire

illustrates a return to the traditional treatment of women within the process of courtship and love. Premiering several years after the addition of women to the stage[s] of the London theaters, *The Man of Mode* depicts women within Restoration society as oppressed, inferior objects.

The Man of Mode revolves around the life of Mr. Dorimant, a witty, seductive man involved with Mrs. Loveit, Bellinda, and Harriet, but subplots concerning other characters such as Emilia also exist. Amongst these individuals, several project their true selves, but others wear "masks". Ultimately, most of the characters wish to be accepted by society on the surface; almost all of the women remain under the constraint of their male lovers' authority and society's customs.

Still adhering to the passive role assigned to her through society's accepted custom, honest Emilia remains an object of male affection. She and her love interest, the also virtuous Young Bellair, avoid the scheming activities of their peers, but do not censure them either. In order to appear like an accepted lady, Emilia participates in Medley's recounting of the latest rumors of scandal. In actuality, she has grown to enjoy the conversations. Upon Medley's arrival, she exclaims to Lady Townley, "I love to hear him talk o' the intrigues. Let 'em be never so dull in themselves, he'll make 'em pleasant in the relation". Language of and about seduction seduces Emilia. The narration pleases and interests her, not the immoral significance of the words. One can conclude that Emilia's innocence may be merely a consequence of her ignorance. Because she lacks insight and possesses a reserved demeanor, she does not respond to the gossip or to the initial flirtations of Old Bellair. She is unaware and undesiring of anything except identifying herself with her husband in a joyous marriage. For her, the play ends happily; she and Young Bellair are joined. Blinded by innocent passion, Emilia willingly assumes the role of conventional compliance.

Sharing a similar sightlessness from love, vulnerable Belinda voluntarily assumes the role of object of a man's yearning, abandoning any hope for true autonomy as a subject in the process. Infatuated with Dorimant, she wishes for him to sacrifice his old mistress, Mrs. Loveit, for her even though she knows that he is a womanizer, and she will just be one in a series of interchangeable women: "I sigh to think that Dorimant may be / One day as faithless and unkind to me" (II.ii.) she

says early in the play. Later, she admits, "I knew him false and helped to make him so. Was not her ruin enough to fright me from danger? It should have been, but love can take no warning" (V.i.). Bellinda is conversant with Dorimant's intentions; she has had ample occasions to observe his vows of faithlessness while acting as Mrs. Loveit's socially acceptable friend. In spite of this, she allows him to gain the advantage over her and defeats herself.

The passionate Mrs. Loveit refuses to accept abandonment by her lover, Dorimant. She rejects remaining a passive object and actively seeks revenge, first through the avenue of jealousy, using foolish Sir Fopling:

> He [Dorimant] is not jealous; but I will make him so, and be revenged a way he little thinks on…'Twill make him uneasy, though he does not care for me. I know the effects of jealousy on men of his proud temper…'Tis the strongest cordial we can give to dying love. It often brings it back when there's no sign of life remaining. But I design not so much the reviving his, as my revenge. (III.iii.)

Nonetheless, Dorimant uncovers her plan: "I know she hates Fopling and only makes use of him in hope to work me on again" (III.iii.). Later recognizing this obstacle, she opts to completely unsex herself, sacrificing the "female traits" of honesty and reputation in a rash attempt to corrupt Dorimant. While trying to even the score, Mrs. Loveit, who seems more victim than victimizer, is exorcized by the play as if she were a sinister menace. Her behavior becomes a threat that must be repudiated. Unlike Belinda, she attempts to gain an advantage and does not admit to her gender. Mrs. Loveit's venture into the masculine domain of sexual intrigue and power manipulation is suppressed not only by the male but also by the female characters. She is punished for engaging in the male activity of assertiveness regarding her wild, uncontrolled desires.

Also considered wild, Harriet is a departure from the passive, modest woman, exhibiting several "unfeminine" traits. Unlike Mrs. Loveit or Belinda, she expresses her desires and feelings; her perspectives dominate instead of society's or others' beliefs. By refusing to settle for the man her mother has selected for her to marry, Harriet demonstrates independence: "I think I might be brought to endure him [Young Bellair], and that is all a reasonable woman should expect in a husband;

but there is duty in the case, and like the haughty Merab, I 'Find much aversion in my stubborn mind,' which 'Is bred by being promised and designed'" (III.i.). Besides rebelling from the accepted standard of arranged nuptials, she also abstains from the female practice of using "hoods and modesty, masks and silence, things that shadow and conceal – [women] think of nothing else" (III.i.). Harriet does not feel it is necessary to patch or paint or even to soften her expression for the man she loves. She rejects the artificial nature of civilization's "masks."

Harriet is one of the few characters who prefer to shun hypocrisy; she proudly publicizes her true persona, wild yet virtuous and witty. Her true feelings, however, are hidden throughout the entire play: "I feel as great a change within, but he [Dorimant] shall never know it" (III.iii.). She uses her acknowledged intellectual and conversational wit to mirror Dorimant's behavior and desires, and, unlike the other women in his life, does not reveal her own. Harriet evades Dorimant's language, disrupting the flow of his wit with sarcastic retorts and mocking gestures, trapping him as he has trapped others. In order to accomplish this task, she acquires a deep understanding of love and his character, bringing him to face his enemy, confessing the pangs of sincere passion in words and actions: "When your love's grown strong enough to make you bear being laughed at, I'll give you leave to trouble me with it" (IV.i.). "Do not speak it if you would have me believe it. Your tongue is so famed for falsehood, 'twill do the truth an injury" (V.ii.). Until he amalgamates his words and his actions, Harriet treats Dorimant the way he treats Mrs. Loveit. However, Harriet still maintains her wholesome respectability: "Dost think I have no sense of modesty? May he hate me – a curse that frights me when I speak it – if ever I do a thing against the rules of decency and honor" (V.ii.). Harriet play[s] the role of the wit to entice Dorimant into a relationship that is both sexual and honourable. She engenders the act of seduction by actively participating in it:

HARRIET. To men who have fared in this town like you, 'twould be a great mortification to live on hope. Could you keep a Lent for a mistress?

DORIMANT. In expectation of a happy Easter; and though time be very precious, think forty days well lost to gain your favor.

HARRIET. Mr. Bellair! Let us walk, 'tis time to leave him. Men grow dull when they begin to be particular.

DORIMANT. Y'are mistaken: flattery will not ensure, though, I know y'are greedy of the praises of the whole Mail…As I followed you, I observed how you were pleased when the fops cried, "She's handsome"… how wantonly you played with your head, flung back your locks, and looked smilingly over your shoulder at 'em.

HARRIET. I do not go begging the men's, as you do the ladies' good liking, with a sly softness in your looks and a gentle slowness in your bows as you pass by 'em. As thus, sir. Is not this like you? (III.iii.)

By mocking his seductive actions and deceptive charms, Harriet is demanding equality. According to Robert Markley, Harriet's continual mimicking is a form of control. Her success in winning Dorimant's love results from outplaying him at his own game and demanding actions from him; she is able to force him into the role of the dutiful suitor, who is even willing to leave London and court her in the country.

Harriet's actions at the play's conclusion, however, do not finally support a reading of her character as feminist. Douglas Young's interpretation views Harriet's final appearance as substantially subjective:

> Etherege could hardly have drawn the character of Harriet without having some respect for women as individuals in a world in which feminine individuality did not count for much….That Harriet can insult, defy, and make fun of Dorimant and, at the same time, win his admiration indicates her power…In Etherege's play-world, she stands as his equal. (82, 79)

It appears that Harriet may have solely used her wit as a means to lure Dorimant into marriage and fatherhood, using her wit as a vehicle for patrilineal succession. The beguiling strength that Harriet displays as an assertive, independent subject in the presence of both men and other women begins to crumble into that of a submissive object. Instead of continuing to make use of her equalizing wit, Harriet abandons the notion of pressing Dorimant further regarding his sincerity, trust, and honesty. Instead, she settles for the role of the weak woman. Just like Emilia's, Harriet's goal is marriage, and once its achievement nears, her independence seems to disappear. However, the marriage of Dorimant and Harriet is left unresolved at

the termination of the play; it is up to the imagination if Harriet's honorable wit will cause the "devil" or the "undefaced angel" to prevail in his heart. Nonetheless, her wit dwindles as she decides to submit herself to him without his making any further concrete commitment. Additionally, her submission is noticed when in one breath, she disobeys her mother, yet wishes to maintain her loyalty by saying, "I would, and never will marry any other man….But I will never marry him [Dorimant] against your [her mother's] will" (V.ii.). Harriet's success in winning Dorimant's love fades into an objective act of surrender; she retreats to the accepted, time-established standards.

Even though female characters mostly dominate the actions of "The Man of Mode", the overall portrayal of Restoration women is pessimistically downgrading; the apparently subversive act of placing actresses upon the stage only "masked" the social degradation of women's strength of mind. The characters of Emilia and Belinda voluntarily settle for the role of object. They imply that the roles of women have regressed; instead of being educated, assertive, and independent, their lives center on the acquisition of or servitude to a husband/man. The character of Mrs. Loveit initially appears powerful, but she is eroded from her position by society because of her vigorous, uncontrolled passions and desires. The subjecthood of the witty and virtuous heroine, Harriet, is upheld throughout the work only to dwindle into submissive obedience within the patriarchal value system. Etherege's sense of social practices in the Restoration world does not endorse equality of the woman in the husband-wife relationship; the woman may be allowed to wittingly pursue her lover, but, ultimately, she is still an object at his mercy.

13.6 *THE MAN OF MODE* AS A COMEDY OF MANNERS OR RESTORATION COMEDY OR AS A SATIRE ON THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

The Man of Mode, or *Sir Fopling Flutter* is a comedy by George Etherege that satirizes the behavior of the libertines, courtiers, and wits of London during the seventeenth century. First performed in 1676, the play is characterized by the carelessness of its characters as they pursue amours, seductions, betrayals, and revenge. Etherege sustains a tone of wit and elegance in the language of the play as his characters promenade through the glittering world of upper-class Restoration

London. It is the fashionable world of theatricals, parks, drawing rooms, and bed chambers, of people who can sleep through the morning, of masks, flirtations, stylish clothing, and sexual intrigues that returned to London after the fall of the Commonwealth, the period of Puritanical government that ended in 1660 with the restoration of the English monarchy.

It is a world of people for whom life is a game and a series of poses. *The Man of Mode* (*mode* is another word for fashion or style) presents a society in which a person's quality is measured by the cut of his or her clothing, the elegance of his or her stance, by the *appearance* he or she makes as a member of society, and by the quality of wit and detachment evident in his or her speech. At the center of its presentation of foppery and idle pleasure seeking, where regard for morality or the feelings of other people is considered to be bad form, is the conflict between bachelorhood and matrimony. Both Dorimant and Sir Fopling Flutter are fops. Both exhibit care for clothing and external presentation. It is not only about these two characters, the other characters also display the same concern about the artificial manners.

The five acts of *The Man of Mode* are framed by a prologue and an epilogue. Each of them teasingly taunts and even reprimands the members of the audience with the assurance that the matters of concern and manners of behavior that occupy the characters of *The Man of Mode* faithfully reflect and reproduce the audience's own. The play itself shows the vanity of human conceit, the self-centered pleasure-seeking of Dorimant, the extravagant vanity of Sir Fopling, the lascivious appetite of Old Bellair, the petulant jealousy of Mrs. Loveit, and the blind and far-from-impregnable virtue of Lady Woodvill. In short, Etherege satirizes the artificiality of the Restoration period which is represented by mask worn by the characters of the comedy.

Etherege mocks the style of the Restoration by the collusion between Young Bellair and Harriet to assume the poses of lovers after they have agreed not to be lovers. They reveal the artifice and superficiality of a conventional liaison as they direct each other in ways to stand and in the gestures to make that signal the appearance of infatuation.

The Man of Mode satirizes various elements of London society. *The Man of Mode*,

for instance, satirizes fops (Dorimant and Sir Fopling Flutter), rakes the country, lustful women (such as Mrs. Loveit and Belinda, Harriet's mother) who cannot govern their passions, old, lustful men (such as Old Belliar), and even orange women.

The three important themes—sex, money and intrigue—form the plot of the comedy. Dorimant has amorous relationship with Mrs. Loveit. But at the same time, he is involved with Belinda, a friend of Mrs. Loveit and also pursuing Harriet for her love. Mrs. Loveit in order to make Dorimant jealous plays with the feelings of Sir Fopling Flutter. Belinda is aware of the relationship between Dorimant and Mrs. Loveit but still secretly involves with Dorimant and cheats her own friend.

Harriet likes Dorimant and Young Belliar loves Emilia and wants to marry her. Harriet and Young Belliar in order to avoid the forced marriage and young Belliar who does not want to lose his father's property, decides to mask that both Harriet and Young Belliar are in love with each other. Old Belliar, who is unaware of the fact that Emilia is the lover of his own son, starts liking Emilia and pretends to others that he does not like her. Harriet's mother who openly declares that she hates Dorimant wants to have relationship with Mr. Courtage, actually Dorimant in mask. Both Old Belliar and Harriet's mother do not care about the age difference and are driven out of their uncontrolled passions.

The Man of Mode acquired historical significance because of its influence on the Restoration drama that followed it, giving rise to the comedies of William Congreve and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, comedies of wit that reflect and satirize the manners and morals, especially in their habits of love, courtship, and domesticity—of the members of the upper class during the Restoration.

13.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1 Write a short note on wit and humour in "The Man of Mode".

2 Discuss "The Man of Mode" as a comedy of manners.

3 Analyse "The Man of Mode" as a Restoration comedy.

4 Evaluate "The Man of Mode" as a satire on the contemporary society.

5 Discuss the various themes in "The Man of Mode".

13.8 ANSWER KEY

CYP

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True

13.9 LET US SUM UP

George's Etherege's The Man of Mode is a play that utilizes humour, wit, and satire to criticize the foolishness and vulnerability of the contemporary society. Etherege examines the mannerisms, dialogues and behaviours of different characters which are representative of the people of the period. A predominate theme that appears is the suppression of women. *The Man of Mod*e criticizes the rakish society in which it is set.

13.10 SUGGESTED READING

- *The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy* by Kathleen M. Lynch
- *The Seventeenth-Century Literature Handbook* by Robert C. Evans, and Eric J. Sterling.
- "The Role of Women in *The Man of Mode*" by Jennifer L. Jacknewitz.
- *The Feminist Voices in Restoration Comedy: The Virtuous Women in the Play-Worlds of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve* by Douglas Young