

Gujarat University



GUJARAT UNIVERSITY

Estd. 1949

Department of English

BA (Hons.) Sem – 4 - English Syllabus(As Per NEP – 2020)

BA (Hons.) with English as DSC(Major/Minor)

(With effect from 2024 – 25)

BA (Hons)

Semester-4DSC-C-

ENG-242

Title: History of English Literature (1660-1750)

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Subject	English			Semester		04	
Course Title	History of English Literature (1660-1750)			Course Credit		04	
Category	Major Course			Course No.		242	
Course Code	DSC-C-ENG-242						
End Semester Examination				2 Hours		50 Marks	
Programme	Teaching Hours	Category	Credit	Internal Marks	External Marks	Practical / Viva Marks	Total Marks
B.A.	60	Major Course	04	50	50	NA	100

Course Objectives:

- To offer the students an introduction to the Age, Writers, and milieu of this historical period
- To enable the students to identify and understand the elements of the drama and poetry of this period
- To help distinguish the unique styles of poets and playwrights of the period
- To appreciate some representative texts of the prescribed period

- To analyse various techniques and devices used in the prescribed texts

Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, the students will be able to:

- Develop ability to understand the nuances of various texts
- Examine and identify the significance of socio-economic and political era of the prescribed period
- Enhance analytical skills to critically understand the authors, literary texts and place them in proper context
- Gain knowledge to appreciate the language of the period
- Develop critical thinking to evaluate the prescribed text with reference to the Age and Author

Syllabus of DSC-C-ENG-242

Title: History of English Literature (1660-1750)

Unit No.	Title/Author/Topic	Text
01 (15 Hrs)	A. Characteristics of the Restoration Age B. Characteristics of the Age of Pope C. Periodical Essays D. Rise of the Novel	<i>History of English Literature</i> by Edward Albert (Oxford University Press)
02 (15 Hrs)	William Congreve	<i>The Way of The World</i> (Oxford University Press)
03 (15 Hrs)	Alexander Pope	<i>The Rape of the Lock</i> (Surjeet Publications)
04 (15 Hrs)	Acquaintances (Non-detailed) See the Note below	No particular text is prescribed

Note: Unit 04

Questions of objective nature can be framed in which the students will be asked to write the name of the author, the year of publication, the form of the work and the age (period) to which it belongs.

List of Titles for Acquaintances:

1. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*
2. *All for Love*
3. *Hind and Panther*
4. *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*
5. *The Pilgrim's Progress*
6. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*
7. *The Seasons*
8. *Gulliver's Travels*
9. *Songs of Innocence*
10. *Dunciad*
11. *A Tale of a Tub*
12. *Tom Jones*
13. *Pamela*
14. *Joseph Andrews*
15. *Absalom and Achitophel*

Recommended Reading:

- Hudson, W.H. *An Outline History of English Literature*. Atlantic Publishers, 2008.
- Long, William J. *English Literature: Its History and its Significance for the Life of the English-Speaking World*. Ginn & Co., 1919.
(Digitalized in 2007: Project Gutenberg)
- Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford UP, 2004.
- Widdowson, Peter. *The Palgrave Guide to English Literature and its contexts 1500-2000*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

e-Content:

- Website: **English GUETA**
- Android/iPhone Application of **English GUETA**
- YouTube Channel of **English**

GUETA Modes of Evaluation:

1. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE): - Formative

(A) Attendance: 10 Marks

(B) Assignment: 10 Marks

(C) Mid-Term Evaluation: 30 Marks

After completion of the syllabus, the faculty member will conduct mid-term evaluation. The concerned faculty member will decide the mode of mid-term evaluation from the following:

❖ **MCQ-based Examination** (Online/Offline)

(30 MCQs of one mark each, Time Duration: 30 Minutes)

(OR)

❖ **Any one from the following:**

- O pen Book Exam
- Self-test

- Essay/Article Writing
 - Quizzes (On/Offline)
 - Objective Test
 - Class Assignment
 - Research/Dissertation
 - Case Studies
 - Report Writing
 - Interviews
 - Poster Presentation
 - Seminar
 - Paper Presentation
 - Viva Voce/Oral
- (OR)

❖ **Descriptive Examination**

The question paper pattern can be similar to the university exam pattern.

2. Semester End Evaluation (SEE): - Summative

- There shall be a semester end examination to be conducted by Gujarat University at the end of the semester.

The examination pattern is mentioned below:

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DSC (Major): 242 (Title: History of English Literature
(1660-1750)) **Examination Pattern for external exams:**

Q. 1. Long Answer based on Unit -1 (1/2) (Up to 650-700 words) Marks 10

Format 1: General Question **OR** General Question **OR**

Format 2: General Question **OR** Short Notes – 2 out of 2

Q. 2. Short Notes based on Unit -2 (2/4) (Up to 350-400 words) Marks 10

Q. 3. Long Answer based on Unit -3 (1/2) (Up to 650-700 words) Marks 10

Format 1: General Question **OR** General Question **OR**

Format 2: General Question **OR** Short Notes – 2 out of 2

Q. 4. Acquaintances based on Unit -4 (5/7) Marks 10
(The students need to write the name of the author, genre, literary period and year of publication of the work)

Q. 5. MCQs (10 out of 12) (From Unit 1 to 3) Marks 10

Total Marks:50

BA (Hons) Semester-4 DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT I

Question: What is Restoration? Why is it regarded as a landmark in the history of English literature?

Answer: Restoration – its meaning and significance

“This period (Restoration) takes its name from the restoration of the Stuart line (Charles II) to the English throne in 1660; it is specified as lasting until 1700”. (Prof. M.H. Abrams – “A Glossary of Literary Terms”)

Politically, thus, the period during 1660-1700 is known as “Restoration” in the history of English literature. Charles II, a witty, licentious, and fashion loving king ruled over England during this period. Socially also, this is a period of “Restoration”. With the accession of Charles II to the English throne, the life began with new phase in England. Even fully, the freedom and joy of public were restored. The theatres reopened which were closed in 1642. Parties, gatherings and fashions increased more freely in English society. The days of the imposed Puritanism were over and there was a fair welcome to a new, free approach to life. Politically, as well as socially then, this was a period of “Restoration”.

Literature Reflecting Restoration Spirit

Poets and writers contributed to poetry, prose and drama. In literature of this age, there is a note of intellectualism. Intellect seems to triumph emotion in the whole body of Restoration. Moreover, the literature of this period, fairly reflects the socio-political spirit of the age.

(1) Poetry

Poetry of Restoration, seems more to be a business of brain than heart. The main spirit in poetry was that of satire. Dryden, the Poet-laureate of the time, wrote satirical poems in the fashion of Roman satirists called Juvenal and Horace. Juvenalian satire fiercely denounces the vice while Horatian satire is to laugh at the vice. Dryden writes in “Discourse Concerning Satire”: “The true end of satire is amendment of vices”. So, Dryden exposes the vices of those who were against the King, the Whigs. Sometimes like Juvenal and frequently like Horace, Dryden satirises the King’s enemies such as Duke of Buckingham and Shadwell in his brilliant satire “Absalom and Achitophel”.

(2) Prose

In Restoration, the prose developed very well. A number of character writer of this age enriched the English prose. Among the character writers, the first important name is

Joseph Hall. In his book “Character of Virtues and Vices” Hall wrote about thirty characters and divided them into good and bad: eg. the wise man, the honest man and the true friend in contrast with the malcontent, and the flatterer. In his book, thus, Hall portrayed the eternally opposed poles – the good and the evil. Sir Thomas Overbury is another great character writer. He took his characters from all walks of life and portrayed them in an epigrammatic and witty style. In Restoration, the character writers are especially significant because they prepared a way of character portrayal for later 18th century writers like Richardson and Fielding.

(3) Drama

Restoration Comedy is a typical product of this period. Due to the importance of mannerism and fashion in English culture and as a result in comedy, Restoration Comedy is also named as “Comedy of Manners”. William Congreve’s “Old Bachelor” and “The Way of the World” and William Wycherley’s “The Country Wife” and “The Plain Dealer” are the foremost examples of Restoration Comedy. In these comedies, love is reduced to sex. Marriage is boredom and husband is a devil. Extra-marital affair is a matter of reputation. Marriage, in Restoration comedy is scoffed at and an attempt is made to rationalize sex. Men in parties are “hunters” and audacious and inviting women are also “huntress”. Critics have severely criticised Restoration comedy for its obscenity. Yet Restoration comedy is brilliant in style and dialogues. Dialogues in these comedies are sharp and witty; and repartee is the very soul of the conversation. The strength of Restoration comedy, like its weakness and limitations, was dependent upon the contemporary social situation.

Heroic tragedy is also a typical product of this period. Heroic tragedy means a tragedy of love and valour in an epic style. Dryden’s “Conquest of Garanda” is one of the better heroic tragedies, but his highest achievement is “All for Love”. Nathaniel Lee wrote

“The Rival Queens” While Thomas Otway wrote “Venice Preserved”. All these Restoration tragedies were serious in theme and treatment and grand as an epic.

Conclusion:

In toto, Restoration is an important period in the history of English literature and culture. The “Restoration” of Charles II gave a new force and colour to the public life and literary men of the time, not only politically, but also from the cultural and literary viewpoints. Had there not been “Restoration” there would have not been so forceful Restoration literature and English literature would have been poorer.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT I

Question: Discuss the silent characteristics of the literature of the Age of Restoration.

Ans:

(1) Historical Background / Restoration (1660)

The Puritans lost their power and supremacy in England by 1660. After this King Charles II was restored to the throne England in 1660. Therefore this age is called the Restoration period. Three historical events deeply influenced the literary movements of the age. These three events are: (i) the restoration of King Charles II; (ii) the Roman Catholic controversy; and (iii) the Revolution of 1688. Dryden was the chief writer of this age. This age is also called after his name – the age of Dryden.

(2) The Religion Controversy

James was the heir-apparent to the throne of England after Charles II. James was Catholic (papist) and Charles's brother. The King's religion was suspected which he secretly was a Roman catholic. People had tremendous fear for the Roman Catholics. The fear of the Catholics was baseless but widespread. This fear though groundless, but it was of such depth and intensity that it colours all the writings of the time. There was a controversy over the issue of the heir to the throne. Charles II had no legal child. But he had illegal child, Monmouth. The famous politician, Shaftsbury supported his case. He instigated the people against James. In England the Civil War was about to start on the question of the throne of England. This controversy is reflected in Dryden's famous satirical poem "Absalom and Achitophel". The strength of the religious-political passions of the time is reflected in the literature of this age.

(3) The Revolution (1688) change of Power

In 1688 James came to the throne of England. He was a Catholic. He had deep prejudices against the Protestants. So the Protestants were against him and they revolted. James was removed from the throne in 1688 by the people of England and replaced by Protestant Sovereigns. Henceforth the religious passions diminish in intensity, and the literature of succeeding years tends to emphasize the political rather than religious side of people.

(4)The New Classicism

By the year 1660 Elizabethan Romanticism had come to an end. At the Restoration there was absolute break from the past literature. There was entire change in subject and style; and there was new spirit in subject and outlook. There was different attitude and aim towards Elizabethan literature. Hence the Restoration literature is often set-up as antithesis to the previous Elizabethan age. It is called classical, as opposed to the Elizabethan romanticism. With the restoration, we enter upon a period in which, literature is intellectual rather than imaginative or emotional. The poetry became prosaic, the poetry was written in prose. The poet made his verse the vehicle of argument, controversy, personal and political satire. The writers of the Restoration age were the real creator of modern English prose.

(5) Imitations of the Ancients

The writers of this period lacked the creative genius of the Elizabethans, so they turned to the great classical writers, especially the Latin writers for the guidance and inspiration. The influence of the Latin writers, especially in heroic play, is clearly seen. They followed the certain rules in writing literature from the ancient writers. This habit is quite noticeable in the age of Dryden, which was deepened during the next age of Pope, thus Pope laid that the final test of excellence could be seen in

“Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem, To copy Nature is to copy them”.

(6) Imitation of the French

The French influence was predominant during the Restoration age because the King Charles II had lived in France for a number of years. The French influence spread from the court and the fashionable circle to the most cultivated classes in England. It left strong marks upon fashion and manners. There was great admiration for French literature. The effects of this literature were felt strongly in comedy, the outstanding literary product of the restoration. The influence of Moliere, the French comedy writer, was deeply seen on English comedy.

(7) The “Correct School”

The Elizabethans had drawn magnificently from ancient literature, but they used their imagination freely and joyously. The imitative work of the Restoration Period were frigid, superficial and of limited quality. The writers of this period did not make much changes in the rules of the ancients laid down for writing literature. Pope says that,

“Those Rules of old discovered, not devised,

Are Nature still, but nature methodized”

Thus they evolved a number of rules, and their central motto became “correctness”. This means avoidance of enthusiasm, moderately expressed and care for accuracy in poetical technique.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT I

Question: What are the literary characteristics of the age of Pope?

Answer: The age of Pope is sometimes called “The Classical age” or “The Augustan Age” of English literature. Both these terms are broadly employed to cover the age of Dryden as well as that of Alexander Pope (1660-1740). The general trends of this age are as follows.

[1] The Classicism: The literary movement that started after the Restoration was further intensified during this age. The drift away from the poetry of passion was more prominent during this age. The literature lost freshness, enthusiasm and imagination. The writers of this age gave much importance to correctness, rules, imitation and restraint. The poets accepted the ideal of wit and commonsense. The word classic denotes that: (1) The poets and critics of this age believed that the works of the writers of classical antiquity (ancient) present best of the models and better standards of literature, (2) like the Latin writers, the writers of this age including Pope believed in imitation of laws and rules imposed by the ancient writers. The writers gave importance to correctness in technique of writing poetry.

(2) The Political Situations : During this age the people were divided into two parties on the basis of politics, ‘the Whigs’ and ‘the Tories’ ‘Whig’ party stood eminently for the personal freedom of individual where as the ‘Tories’ believed in royal divine right. The ‘Tories’ came from the landed classes where as ‘Whigs’ came from trading classes. The literature of this age emphasized the political rather than the religious side of public affairs. During the age of Queen Ann the first half of the 18th century was a period of stability, steadily growing wealth and prosperity. The evils of the approaching Industrial revolution had not yet been realized. It was period of an aristocratic rule. There was no class consciousness. It was an age of tolerance, moderation and common sense.

(3) Political Writing: As we have seen, the rise of the two political parties, it accompanied political writings. The development gave fresh importance to men of literary ability. The both parties encouraged and bribed the authors to write in favour of their party.

The writers accepted more or less their counsels. In the previous ages the authors had to depend on their patrons, but during this age they acquired independence and importance. There was hardly a writer of the time who is free from the political bias. It was indeed the golden age of writing political pamphlets. After being a Whig, Swift became Tory, Addison was a Whig, Steele was a Whig and Tory in turn.

(4) The clubs and coffee-houses: The politicians are gregarious and the increased activity in politics led to a opening of political clubs and coffee-houses. These coffee-houses became the centre of attraction for the fashionable and public life. In these houses the great politicians and scholars met together to discuss problems on various subjects. The literature of this age exclusively reflected interests of society in the great centers of culture of coffee-houses.

(5) The Periodical Writing: The development of periodicals and journal writing is abundantly seen in this age. As a result new publishing houses were formed. Due to decline in drama, there was great increase in the size of reading public. This also led to rise of periodical writing. Addison and Steel published journals called “The Tatler” and “The Spectator”. They wrote periodical essays for these journals in which contemporary life is reflected. The periodical essays became popular in this age.

(6) Morality: The immorality of the Restoration, which was largely the reaction against Puritanism, soon faded during this age. William III and Queen Anne were severe moralists. Thus there was new tone in the writing of the time and a new attitude to life and morals. There was development in the attitude towards women, who were treated with new respect and dignity.

(7) Poetic Style :

In poetry heroic couplet became favourite of poets. This meter produced a close, clear and pointed style. Satires were all written in the heroic couplet.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT I

[3] Rise of Novel in 18th Century

Introduction

The novel is now most widely read of all kinds of literature, it is a kind which is comparatively new. The term for the novel in most European language is “roman”, which is derivative from the medieval “romance”. The English name, for the form is derived from the Italian ‘novella’ (meaning “tale, piece of news”), which was a short tale in prose. Now it is applied to a variety of writings whose only common attribute is that they are extended pieces of prose fiction. It is not very easy to define ‘novel’, yet some definitions can be used to understand this form. According to “Shorter Oxford Dictionary”, novel is “a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and actions are representative of real life and portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity”. The Encyclopaedia of Britannica says that a novel is “a sustained story which is not historically true, but might very easily be so ... Its plain and direct purpose is to amuse by a succession of scenes painted from Nature, and by a thread of emotional narrative”.

Factors responsible for the growth of novel in 18th century:

(1)Decline of the Drama: A steep decline in the theatre during the earlier part of 18th century can be considered as one of the factors responsible for the rapid growth of the English novel. The drama of this age did not satisfy the natural human desire for a story, which was fulfilled by novel in this age. In England during this period there was no other form of literature which could satisfy the needs of reading public. The Licensing Act of drama was passed in 1737 against drama during age, and this was attacked on Walpole and his ministers by Fielding and others. Under these circumstances the novel seemed to be the taste of the public.

(2) Rise of the Periodical Essay: The rise of the Periodical Essay provided acceleration to the rapid growth of the English novel. Addison and Steele popularized the periodical Essay. “The Spectator” laid the foundation of the novel of character. In the periodical we also have the origin of the social and the domestic novel. The novels were first published in the periodicals of the time. Since these papers were widely read, they cultivated the taste of the public for the future of the novel.

(3) Rise of Middle Class: The rise of middle class can be said to be a distinct force for the rapid growth and immense popularity of the novel. It was the outcome of a democratic movement in the 18th century England. Romance, like tragedy, made an appeal to the aristocrats and left common people out of the periphery. During the age, a consciousness of the rights of the people began to assume gravity and seriousness. It had assumed a political dimension. The novelist responded to this new development with utmost sensitivity. The common men, finding novels dealing with their problems and their own life, responded to the new literary genre with ardour and interest. In addition, the political trends took such shapes at the time that they proved conducive to the growth and development of the novel.

(4) Wider Scope: The scope of the novel gained in breadth and depth as it provided a bigger canvass than is allowed by other forms of literature. The novel was the instrument in which the author could express himself thoroughly. As compared to drama, it was the most suitable medium for analyzing the sentiments, feelings, and inner life of characters. The novel afforded a broader canvas for the depiction of character’s external and inner life in a leisurely fashion. The novelist could devote pages for such a depiction. Naturally, its appeal was greater than the drama.

English Novelists

[1] Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)

He is considered the inventor of the epistolary novel and the father of the novel of sentimental analysis. He introduced psychological studies of the characters, especially women. His first novel was *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, an endless series of letters telling of the trials and the final happy marriage of young maiden, published in four volumes during the years of 1740-41. Its chief fame lies in the fact that it is our first novel in modern sense, it is viewed solely as a sentimental novel. Its success was enormous. *Pamela* celebrates the middle-class value of chastity before marriage in opposition to the lasciviousness of the aristocracy. The theme of the persecuted maiden attracted many readers.

Richardson began another novel, a series of letters, which took six years. It was *Clarrisa* or *The History of a Young Lady*, published in eight volumes in 1747-48. This was another better novel, a sentimental novel, it was received with immense enthusiasm of all Richardson's heroines, Clarrisa is the most human character. In

her bitter grief and humiliation, she is a real woman, as contrasted with mechanical hero Lovelace. *Clarissa*, his second epistolary novel, is considered Richardson's masterpiece. It deals with a woman who tries to escape from a combined marriage to a man she does not like. She finds refuge at a nobleman's who seduces and rapes her. Clarissa refuses to marry him and eventually lives as an outcast condemned by society. In his another novel *Sir Charles Grandison* (1754), Richardson turned from middle class heroines to the story of an aristocratic man. It was a novel in seven volumes, whose hero was intended to be a model of aristocratic manners and virtues for middle class people.

[2] Henry Fielding (1707-1754)

Fielding was the greatest and the artistic novelist of this new group of writers. His first novel, *Joseph Andrews*, published in 1742, was inspired by the success of Pamela, and began as a burlesque of the false sentimentality and conventional virtues of Richardson's heroines. He took for his hero the alleged brother of Pamela, who was exposed to the same

kinds of temptations, he was turned out of doors by his mistress. Unlike Richardson, Fielding is direct, vigorous and hilarious. *Tom Jones*, his best novel published in 1749, is a picture of the life of the lower and upper classes of the 18th century society. Fielding depicts with humour and irony human weaknesses and stresses his tolerant attitude towards them. Tom is an unheroic character and has all the limits of the ordinary man. Fielding's next novel was *Jonathan Wild*, a story of rogue, which suggests Defoe's narrative. His next novel was *Amelia*, published in 1751, it is a story of a good wife in contrast with unworthy husband.

He was the first English novelist to introduce the burlesque element in the novel. He defined his novels as "comic epic poem in prose". The protagonist is involved in a series of apparently dangerous adventures. Fielding was different from De Foe and Richardson. He belonged to the aristocracy and unlike them, he did not believe in sexual chastity above all other virtues. Fielding wanted to ridicule the Puritan view of morality. In his novel, *Joseph Andrews*, he wanted at first to parody Richardson's *Pamela* but he put aside this idea and wrote a story based on the life and adventures of Joseph, Pamela's brother, and a friend of his. The situation is reversed and we have a young man who works at a lady's that wants to seduce him after her husband's death. Joseph, who is chaste and virtuous, refuses her advances.

[3] Laurence Stern (1713-1768)

In his own time, Sterne was considered an anti-novelist because he did not follow the type of the realistic novel. He is the closest novelists to the modern ones of all eighteenth century novelists. His novel *Tristram Shandy*, was written in installments in nine volumes between 1759 and 1767. It does not respect the 18th century type of the realistic novel. It is unconventional and very difficult to summarize. It recalls the stream of consciousness technique of Joyce and Woolf: it has no plot, no time scheme; it is full of the author's interventions, digressions, comments, asides, long quotations. When a digression takes

places, the author shifts from the main theme of the novel to other topics which are not related with what the character is going to do or say. The time of the story is interrupted to be resumed at the end of the digression. The temporal dimension is non-existent and clock time is abandoned for psychological time. The digressions allowed Sterne to tell events of the past or of the future in whatever order he pleased. The story is told in the first person singular by the main character, Tristram Shandy who remembers particular events of his past and present life. It starts with a flashback: we meet Tristram in the first volume as an adult but his birth happens in the third volume . We may suppose that Sterne was influenced by John Locke's theory of the Association of Ideas. His second novel *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, it is a curious combination of fiction, sketches of travel, miscellaneous essays on odd subjects.

[4] Tobias Smollet (1721-1771)

He apparently tried to carry on Fielding's work; but lacked Fielding's genius, humour and inherent kindness. His best three known novels are *Roderick Random* (1748), a series of adventures related by the hero; *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), in which he reflects brutal and worst experience at sea; and *Humphrey Clinker* (1771), his last work narrating the mild adventures of a Welsh family. Without any practical ability, he models his novels on *Don Quixote*, and result is simply a series of coarse adventure which are characteristic of the picaresque novel of his age.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT I-Topic-3 The Periodical Essay in the Eighteenth Century

The periodical essay and the novel are the two important gifts of eighteenth century to English literature. The novel was destined to have a long and multicolored career over the centuries, but the periodical essay was fated to be born with the eighteenth century and to die with it.

George Sherburn in *A Literary History of England*, states in this connection: "The periodical essay has been aptly described as dealing with morals and manners, but it might in fact deal with anything that pleased its author. It covered usually not more than the two sides (in two columns) of a sheet: normally it was shorter than that. It might be published independent of other material, as was *The Spectator*, except for advertising; or it might be the leading article in a newspaper."

Reasons for the Popularity:

The periodical essay found a spectacular response in the eighteenth century on account of various reasons. Fundamentally this new genre was in perfect harmony with the spirit of the age. It sensitively combined the tastes of the different classes of readers with the result that it appealed to all-though particularly to the growing middle classes. In the eighteenth century there was a phenomenal spurt in literacy, which expanded widely the circle of readers. They welcomed the periodical essay as it was "light" literature. The brevity of the periodical essay, its common sense approach, and its tendency to dilute morality and philosophy for popular consumption paid rich dividends. To a great extent, the periodical essayist assumed the office of the clergyman and taught the masses the lesson of elegance and refinement, though not of morality of the psalm-singing kind.

The periodical paper was particularly welcome as it was not a dry, high-brown, or hoity-toity affair like the professional sermon, in spite of being highly instructive in nature. In

most cases the periodical essayist did not "speak from the clouds" but communicated with the reader with familiarity. The avoidance of politics also contributed towards their popularity. Again, the periodical essayists made it a point to cater to the taste of women and give due consideration to the point of view of women. That won for them many women readers too. All these factors were responsible for the universal acceptance of the periodical essay in eighteenth-century England.

R. Humphrey observes in this connection: "If any literary form is the particular creation and the particular mirror of the Augustan Age in England, it is the periodical essay." The periodical essay was literally invented by Richard Steele on April 12, 1709, the day he launched his *Tatler*. Before *The Tatler* there had been periodicals and there had been essays, but there had been no periodical essays. The example of *The Tatler* was followed by a large number of writers of the eighteenth century till its very end, when with the change of sensibility, the periodical essay disappeared along with numerous other accompaniments of the age. The periodical essay remained the most popular, literary form. Writers such as Pope, Swift, Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith found the periodical essay an eligible medium. As a matter of fact it was, unlike the novel for example, the only literary form which was patronised without exception by all the major writers of the century. It is hard to name a single first-rate writer of the century who did not write something for a periodical paper. Mrs. Jane H. Jack says: "From the days of Queen Anne-who had *The Spectator* taken in with her breakfast-to the time of the French Revolution and even beyond, periodical essays on the lines laid down by Steele and Addison flooded the country and met the eye in every bookseller's shop and coffee-house."

The Tatler

The periodical essay was first of all given by Steele as *The Tatler*. Nothing of this type had been attempted in England or even elsewhere before him. "The Tatler": The

first issue of *The Tatler* appeared in 1709. At that time Joseph Addison, Steele's bosom friend, was functioning as Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in that country. Steele had not informed Addison of his design, but a single month detected him. and Addison's first contribution appeared on May

26. Though Addison contributed to *The Tatler* much less than Steele, yet he soon overshadowed his friend. Of the 271 periodical essays, 188 are Steele's and 42 Addison's; 36 of them were written by both jointly. All the material of *The Tatler* was purported by Steele to be based upon discussions in the four famous coffee-houses. As Steele says:

"The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, affectation, and recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behaviour."

Both Addison and Steele did good work each in his own way. Addison was a much more refined writer than Steele whom Macaulay aptly calls "a scholar among rakes and a rake among scholars." Addison's prose is, according to Dr. Johnson, a model of "the middle style." And this is his famous suggestion: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

The Spectator

Without any warning to his readers, Steele suddenly wound up *The Tatler* in 1711. But two months later *The Spectator* began its memorable career of 555 numbers up to 1712. Whereas *The Tatler* had appeared only three times a week, *The Spectator* appeared daily, excepting Sundays. The new paper became tremendously popular among English men and women belonging to all walks of life. The best of all the periodical essays, it is an

important human document concerning the morals and manners, thoughts and ideas, of the English society of the age of Queen Anne. Addison's fame chiefly rests on *The Spectator* papers. As A. R. Humphreys puts it: "Were it not for his essays, Addison's literary reputation would be insignificant; into them, diluted and sweetened for popular consumption, went his classical and modern reading, his study of philosophy and natural science, reflections culled from French critics, and indeed] anything that might make learning "polite".

A particularly happy feature of *The Spectator* was its envisagement of a club consisting of representatives from diverse walks of life. Among them are Sir Roger de Coverley, and eccentric but thoroughly lovable character and Tory baronet, one of the immortal creations of English literature. *The Spectator* drew a large female readership as many of the papers were for and about women. Though both Addison and Steele were Whigs, yet in *The Spectator* they kept up a fairly neutral political poise and, in fact, did their best to expose the error of the political fanaticism of both the Tories and Whigs. Further, *The Spectator* evinced much interest in trade and, consequently, endeared itself to the up-and-coming trading community which had its representative in The Spectator Club. However, much of the charm of *The Spectator* lay in its style-humorous, ironical, but elegant and polished.

The Guardian and other Papers

The tremendous popularity of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* prompted many imitations. Among them may be mentioned *The Tory Tatler*, *The Female Tatler*, *Tit for Tat*, and *The North Tatler*. The best of all was Steele's own *Guardian* which had 175 periodicals.

Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, and Others:

In the second half of the eighteenth century the periodical essay showed a tendency

to cease as an independent publication and to get incorporated into the newspaper as just another feature. The series of about a hundred papers of Dr. Johnson, called *The Idler*, for example, was contributed to the newspaper *The Universal Chronicle*. These papers are lighter and shorter than those published in the periodical paper *The Rambler*. *The Rambler* appeared twice a week. Dr. Johnson as a periodical essayist was much more serious in purpose than Steele and Addison had been. His lack of humour and unrelieved gravity coupled with his ponderous English make his *Rambler* papers quite heavy reading.

Oliver Goldsmith contributed to no fewer than ten periodicals, including *The Monthly Review*. His own *Bee* ran to only eight weekly numbers. *The Citizen of the World* is Goldsmith's best work—a collection of essays which originally appeared in *The Public Ledger* as "Chinese Letters". Goldsmith's essays are rich in human details, a quivering sentimentalism, and candidness of spirit. His prose style is, likewise, quite attractive; he avoids bitterness, coarseness, pedantry, and stiff wit.

Thus the periodical essay presented general knowledge appropriate for circulation in common talk. This accomplishment had only rarely been achieved in an earlier time and now was to contribute to political harmony by introducing subjects to which faction had produced no diversity of sentiment such as literature, morality and family life.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT II

The Way of The World

Question: Restoration Comedy (Comedy of Manners)

Answer:

During the Age of Dryden, the comedy writers developed a new comedy out of the models of Ben Jonson and Moliere. This comedy was known as “Restoration Comedy” because it was practiced during the reign of Charles II. Since the manners of the characters were stressed specially in dramatic presentation, the comedy was named as “Comedy of Manners”. M.H. Abrams points out the nature of this comedy. “It deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in a sophisticated upper class society, and relies for comic relief in large part on the wit and sparkle of the dialogue – often in the form of repartee – a witty conversational give and take”. [A Glossary of Literary Terms] The senior comedian is Sir George Etherege known for “She Would if She Could”, William Wycherley is famous for “Country Wife”. William Congreve is perhaps the most conspicuous writer among all, widely reputed for “The Way of the World”. George Farquhar is still remembered for “The Beaux Stratagem”.

The characters in Restoration comedy become of the central interest. We find on the stage young gallants and fops with cards, stick and little snuff-boxes and vamps with their lap-dogs. Old men and women struggling to maintain their youth and charm, look extremely comic. Fools following a beautiful lady add much to our humour, Young heroes like Mirabell, heroines like Millamant and old woman like Lady Wishfort present a lively world of fashion and love-intrigue. Spiritual and emotional experiences of characters have no place in Restoration comedy because the men and women are more intellectual than imaginative. Technically, only a few characters are “individuals” as Mirabell and Millamant in “The Way of the World”. The rest of the characters are “types” who create lower comic situations only.

Themes in Restoration comedy are peculiar. Love-intrigues become the most outstanding theme of the comedy. In “Way of the World”, for example, we find Mirabell ending an affair with Mrs. Fainall and beginning a new one with Millamant. Moreover, a husband seen walking with his own wife could give rise to quite a scandal. And a woman trying to flirt with her own husband is considered to be a matter of shock and amazement. Jealousy is also an important theme. A jealous husband is perhaps the most mocked person in Restoration comedy. For Restoration audience, he is something of a pre-historic monster who is still in the process of evolution. Worldly pleasures become an important idea in Restoration comedy. In Sir Etherege’s “She Would if She Could”, Sir Oliver and Lady Cooked rush to London from country – he is to get drunk and she to pursue men.

Plots of Restoration comedy are complex as can be observed in “The Way of the World”, and sub-plots demand our attention. To grasp full meaning of comedy, a spectator has to be very careful in his observation. But once the mazes of plot are resolved, the comedy becomes extremely interesting. Setting achieves a special importance in Restoration comedy. Since this comedy is about fashionable city-dwellers, London with its coffee-houses, gardens, and streets appears to be a very familiar setting. Lovers here are not in the forest of Arden but in a well decorated room.

Realistic aspects of the comedy have to be viewed to grasp an artistic significance of it. The writers have presented a world in which they inhabited. Love-intrigues, tricks, craze for fashion, extra marital relations etc. is drawn by the writers from contemporary society. Emily Legouis comments on the realistic aspects of the comedy, “It is realistic because it over-flows with lively sketches taken straight from contemporary life ...”. [A Short History of English Literature] The question of morality has been widely debated in Restoration comedy, by a number of critics. Although many of them have found the comedy immoral, we can’t shut our eyes before its powerful advocacy by Prof. Bonamy Dobree, who stresses its artistic and realistic aspects. And above all, the writers have written these comedies to show them on the stage, and not to deliver it from pulpit.

Sparkling and racy dialogues of Restoration comedy contribute to the glory of English literature. The dialogues are sharp and witty, and hence, they become an important facet of the comedy. In fact, Restoration comedy played a vital role in refinement of English language.

To conclude, the Restoration comedy depicts “a brave new world” with amorous heroes and audacious and flippant heroines. The comedy becomes a brilliant presentation of Restoration life in an equally brilliant language.

The Way of the World - Play Summary

Before the action of the play begins, the following events are assumed to have taken place. Mirabell, a young man-about-town, apparently not a man of great wealth, has had an affair with Mrs. Fainall, the widowed daughter of Lady Wishfort. To protect her from scandal in the event of pregnancy, he has helped engineer her marriage to Mr. Fainall, a man whom he feels to be of sufficiently good reputation to constitute a respectable match, but not a man of such virtue that tricking him would be unfair. Fainall, for his part, married the young widow because he coveted her fortune to support his amour with Mrs. Marwood. In time, the liaison between Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall ended (although this is not explicitly stated), and Mirabell found himself in love with Millamant, the niece and ward of Lady Wishfort, and the cousin of his former mistress.

There are, however, financial complications. Half of Millamant's fortune was under her own control, but the other half, 6,000 pounds, was controlled by Lady Wishfort, to be turned over to Millamant if she married a suitor approved by her aunt. Unfortunately, Mirabell had earlier offended Lady Wishfort; she had misinterpreted his flattery as love.

Mirabell, therefore, has contrived an elaborate scheme. He has arranged for a pretended uncle (his valet, Waitwell) to woo and win Lady Wishfort. Then Mirabell intends to reveal the actual status of the successful wooer and obtain her consent to his marriage to

Millamant by rescuing her from this misalliance. Waitwell was to marry Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid, before the masquerade so that he might not decide to hold Lady Wishfort to her contract; Mirabell is too much a man of his time to trust anyone in matters of money or love. Millamant is aware of the plot, probably through Foible.

When the play opens, Mirabell is impatiently waiting to hear that Waitwell is married to Foible. During Mirabell's card game with Fainall, it becomes clear that the relations between the two men are strained. There are hints at the fact that Fainall has been twice duped by Mirabell: Mrs. Fainall is Mirabell's former mistress, and Mrs. Marwood, Fainall's mistress, is in love with Mirabell. In the meantime, although Millamant quite clearly intends to have Mirabell, she enjoys teasing him in his state of uncertainty.

Mirabell bids fair to succeed until, unfortunately, Mrs. Marwood overhears Mrs. Fainall and Foible discussing the scheme, as well as Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall's earlier love affair. Since Mrs. Marwood also overhears insulting comments about herself, she is vengeful and informs Fainall of the plot and the fact, which he suspected before, that his wife was once Mirabell's mistress. The two conspirators now have both motive and means for revenge. In the same afternoon, Millamant accepts Mirabell's proposal and rejects Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Lady Wishfort's candidate for her hand.

Fainall now dominates the action. He unmaskes Sir Rowland, the false uncle, and blackmails Lady Wishfort with the threat of her daughter's disgrace. He demands that the balance of Millamant's fortune, now forfeit, be turned over to his sole control, as well as the unspent balance of Mrs. Fainall's fortune. In addition, he wants assurance that Lady Wishfort will not marry so that Mrs. Fainall is certain to be the heir.

This move of Fainall's is now countered; Millamant says that she will marry Sir Wilfull to save her own fortune. Fainall insists that he wants control of the rest of his wife's money and immediate management of Lady Wishfort's fortune. When Mirabell brings two servants to prove that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood were themselves guilty of adultery,

Fainall ignores the accusation and points out that he will still create a scandal which would blacken the name of Mrs. Fainall unless he gets the money.

At this point, Mirabell triumphantly reveals his most successful ploy. Before Mrs. Fainall married Fainall, she and Mirabell had suspected the man's character, and she had appointed her lover trustee of her fortune. Fainall is left with no claim to make because Mrs. Fainall does not control her own money. He and Mrs. Marwood leave in great anger. Sir Wilfull steps aside as Millamant's suitor; Lady Wishfort forgives the servants and consents to the match of Mirabell and Millamant.

Character List

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

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

Fainall - A man-about-town. He and Mirabell know each other well, as people do who move in the same circles. However, they do not really like each other. Fainall married his wife for her money.

Mrs. Fainall - Wife of Fainall and daughter of Lady Wishfort. She was a wealthy young widow when she married Fainall. She is Millamant's cousin and was Mirabell's mistress, presumably after her first husband died.

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

Young Witwoud A fop. - He came to London from the country to study law but apparently found the life of the fashionable man-about-town more pleasant. He has pretensions to

being a wit. He courts Millamant, but not seriously; she is merely the fashionable belle of the moment.

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

Lady Wishfort - A vain woman, fifty-five years old, who still has pretensions to beauty. She is the mother of Mrs. Fainall and the guardian of Millamant. She is herself in love with Mirabell, although she is now spiteful because he offended her vanity.

Sir Wilfull Witwoud - The elder brother of Young Witwoud, he is forty years old and is planning the grand tour of Europe that was usually made by young men to complete their education. He is Lady Wishfort's nephew, a distant, non-blood relative of Millamant's, and Lady Wishfort's choice as a suitor for Millamant's hand.

Waitwell Mirabell's valet. At the beginning of the play, he has just been married to Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid. He masquerades as Sir Rowland, Mirabell's nonexistent uncle, and woos Lady Wishfort.

Foible Lady Wishfort's maid, married to Waitwell.

Themes in The Way of the World

The theme of this play is given us by Congreve in the title, *The Way of the World*. All the events and characters of the play can be related to this central theme. The obvious criticism is that the same "theme" can be ascribed to unlimited numbers of other, and quite different, novels and plays. Further, Congreve does not, in this play, seem to take a consistent position. Sometimes he is direct, sometimes ironic; sometimes he deplores, sometimes he approves; at times he is amused; and most of the time his position is a compound of all of these attitudes.

To get a more satisfactory statement we might use a different approach that would give a better sense of the texture of the play. Most Restoration playwrights supplied their plays

with alternate titles, or subtitles. Since Congreve did not, we might seek for the different subtitles that are appropriate. Each one would suggest a theme, although not the theme. These may put flesh on the bare bones the title gives us.

Love

Certainly, the play can be seen as a dramatic presentation of varieties of love in the England of the year 1700. Central is the delicate handling of the love game as played by Mirabell and Millamant. They represent the ideal of the Restoration attitude, intense yet balanced, their love based on mutual esteem with no surrender of individuality. Contrasted with it are Mirabell's earlier and quite ambiguous love affair with Mrs. Fainall; the illicit love of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, presumably passionate, but wholly without mutual trust; the spurious court young Witwoud pays to Millamant; the direct and somewhat coarse approach of Sir Wilfull; and, at the opposite extreme completely, the aging and undignified longings of Lady Wishfort, vain, unrealistic, over-eager, desperate, and a little pathetic.

Love and Money :

Such an approach is closely related to that of love a la mode, although they are not identical. In the world whose way is presented here, love and money are values to be taken into account at all times. The sincerity of Mirabell's love does not make him lose sight of the importance of Millamant's fortune. Fainall marries for money to support an illicit love; apparently the thought of marrying Mrs. Marwood without adequate money (however "adequate" might be defined) is unthinkable. Money is Lady Wishfort's sole hold over her child and her ward. Even the marriage of the servants is built on a promise of a handsome sum of money. This is the world's way. Love without money is an impossible sentimental dream, although money often corrupts what love there is.

A Gallery of Portraits : Congreve's statements in the dedication, the prologue, and the epilogue suggest that this might be a valid subtitle. Since it is the way of the world to put

a premium on youth, Mirabell and Millamant stand at the center, representing all that is to be commended. Mirabell is the beau ideal: polished, poised, rational and balanced, witty and perspicacious without being what we might today call over-intellectual. Millamant is the belle: feminine, beautiful, witty, not prudish, but with a sense of her own worth. She has avoided the messiness and humiliation of sexual intrigue. Opposed to Mirabell are would-be wits, worthy but graceless bores, and deep intriguers. Opposed to Millamant are women who engaged in adultery and an old dowager without decorum. Every character reveals himself in action, and together they produce a gallery of self-portraits.

Jungle of High Intrigue

This subtitle would focus attention on some of the values of London society. Everyone is engaged in intrigue: Mirabell intrigues to gain consent to his marriage from Lady Wishfort, and this involves intrigue within intrigue, for he does not trust Waitwell. Fainall intrigues in turn. Everyone is involved in one or the other of these schemes — Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood, and the servants. Even Lady Wishfort in her willingness to marry Sir Rowland has a devious purpose — revenge on Mirabell. When Mrs. Fainall married her husband, that was part of an intrigue, as was his marriage to her. And as we see in the play, victory goes to Mirabell, not because of his virtue, but simply because he is the most successful intriguer.

Certainly all these possible subtitles, rather than any one, add up to the ironic commentary on society that is in the title, *The Way of the World*.

The Way of the World – Textual Questions

Question: [a] Justify “The Way of the World” as comedy of Manners.

OR

[b] Congreve's "The Way of the world" is a civilized comedy of manners which does not deal with natural folly, but affectations of fashionable society." Discuss.

Answer:

The title comedy of manners is generally applied to the comic plays which flourished in England during the period of Restoration. The principal writers of the comedy of manners in the Restoration period were Wycherley, Etherege, Congreve and Farquhar. The comedy of manners makes fun not so much of individual human beings as of social groups and their social manners. It is more or less satirical, though in a good natured way; it deals not so much with the natural follies but with affectations of fashionable society. The principal themes of the Restoration comedy are love, marriage, adulterous relationships, amorous and legacy conflicts among persons of the upper circles of society; and the characters generally include fops, fanatics, fools, imitators of French customs, conceited wits and flirts.

"The Way of the world" is a true picture of contemporary life. In fact this play presents the peak and the perfection of this type of comedy. It gives us a kaleidoscopic view of the morals, behavior, habits, fashions, affectations of the ladies and gentlemen of the times. It presents contemporary manners in a satirical light and allowing for the exaggeration which is inevitable in a satire. It has a lot of historical value as giving us a peep into the social life of the upper class people in London in the latter part of the 17th century.

The Restoration was a period of loose morals and "The Way of the world" gives us an adequate idea of the prevailing morality. Illicit love and adulterous relationships are fully conveyed to us through Fainall, Mrs. Marwood and even the hero Mirabell. Lady Wishfort's daughter became pregnant or thought that she had become pregnant, as a result of her illicit love affair with Mirabell, who in order to provide a cover for this affair, married her off to Fainall. From at least one remark made by Mirabell it would appear that

she is still carrying on with him. The husband, Fainall, refers to her as “a very arrogant wife, rank wife, all in the way of the world”, and to himself as “an anticipated cuckold in embryo”. The conjugal life of Mr. and Mrs. Fainall is depicted as unhappy. If they were seen talking to each other amiably in public, there would be a real sensation. Both feel ill-concerned hatred for each other. Fainall, who is a married man, has illicit relationship with Mrs. Marwood. It has to be borne in mind that Mrs. Marwood, though carried on love-affair with Fainall, is secretly in love with Mirabell.

Congreve exposes the worldliness and greed of the young men of the time. Legacy conflicts were common in those days. Young men sought rich heiress in marriage. Mercenary motives governed the matrimonial alliances led to intrigues. The intrigues were, indeed, the order of the day in social and domestic life. Fainall marries Lady Wishfort’s daughter for the sake of her money. He obtains a deed of settlement of the best part of his wife’s estate by means of hoax, and she is saved from bankruptcy by a precaution taken by Mirabell. In addition to these intrigues, we have amorous intrigues. Mirabell woos the widow, Lady Wishfort, though he actually wishes to marry Millament. He makes his servant, Waitwell, impersonate his uncle and pretend to marry Lady Wishfort in order to get consent for Millament’s marriage to Mirabell.

“The Way of the world” acquaints us with the vanities, affectations and fashions of women. Women are, indeed, presented to us in a ridiculous light. Mirabell’s satirical remarks in the proviso scene show that women were fond of wearing masks, going to theatre, idle gossip, discussing fashions and so on. Some of Millament’s own remarks are also a satire on women. For instance, she refers to her contemplation in solitude, her morning sleep, her general laziness, and so on. Lady Wishfort’s fastidiousness in her use of cosmetics to look alluring at the age of fifty five is also presented to us in a comic light. Millament breaks her fan in a fit of anger. There is a reference to lap-dog also. Even intelligent women like Millament encouraged a crowd of admirers around her in order to show off her vanity. Millament’s vanity consists in causing her lover pain in order to have

sense of power. The mutual jealousies and antagonism of the women are also made apparent. Mrs. Marwood is deeply jealous of both, Mrs. Fainall and Millament.

The fops and false wits are important part of Restoration comedy. They are represented here by Witwould and Petulant whose comments and affectations amuse us a good deal. These two are Millament's suitors for fashion sake. Passing vulgar remarks at ladies at the Mall is one of their pastimes. Petulant hires women to come and ask for him at the chocolate house in order that other men may take notice of him and feel jealous. These two friends are fond of drinking too. But the most amusing aspect of their friendship is that they constantly rail at each other and sometimes quarrel also. Witwould's portrayal of Petulant is very interesting in so far as he indicates at least half a dozen faults in him, the most serious being that "he never speaks truth at all".

In short, true picture of contemporary life, morals of characters, intrigues and conflicts, vanities and affectations of women, and fops make this comedy of Manners.

The Way of the World – Textual Questions

Question: [a] "The Way of the World" lacks coherence; the parts are more important than the whole". Comment.

OR

[b] "The plot of "The Way of the World" is intricate and perhaps a little lacking in coherence and strength". Discuss

Answer:

William Congreve's plots have been disappointed his admirers, and the plot of "The Way of the World" is no exception. In fact, the different intrigues in this comedy are considerably more difficult to follow than those in "Love for Love" and only a little less confusing than in "The Double Dealer". Complex, intricate, involved, baffling – such are the adjectives that can be justly used for the plot of this play. There is very little of physical action and movement in it; it even lacks coherence. In fact, the plot is over-ingenious, and gets entangled in its complications.

One reason for the intricacies of the plot is the perplexing relationships of characters. Sir Wilfull and Witwould are the nephews of Lady Wishfort and they are step-brothers. Sir Wilfull lives in country while Witwould lives in London. Millament is Lady Wishfort's niece, and Lady Wishfort holds half of Millaments fortune in her custody. Millament must not marry without Lady Wishfort's approval, because if she does, she will loose that part of fortune of which Lady Wishfort is the custodian. Mrs. Fainall is Lady Wishfort's daughter. When Mrs. Fainall gets into trouble with her husband, the situation is distressing not only for her but for her mother, Lady Wishfort. Mr. Fainall has, as he thinks, already acquired a right over a large part of his wife's estate, and wishes to acquire the remaining. He would also like to acquire Millament's fortune, and Lady Wishfort feels compelled to sacrifice everything, including Millament's fortune in order to save her daughter's reputation. These family relations are slowly revealed to us as we go through the play, and we find it rather difficult to remember them.

The Various Love-affairs: (a) Mirabell and Millament

The various love-affairs are even more complicated. Mirabell is in love with Millament and is seriously desiring to marry her. Lady Wishfort opposes this alliance, Mirabell has to find out a strange device. He poses as a suitor for the widowed Lady Wishfort, who is desperately anxious to get married again. One wonders how this pretence

on Mirabell's part could ever have helped him. In any case, the reality about Mirabell is revealed to Lady Wishfort by Mrs. Marwood, becomes hostile to him. If Mirabell and Millamant now marry against the wishes of Lady Wishfort, Mirabell would lose a half part of her fortune.

(b) Mrs. Marwood and Mirabell

(c) Mrs. Marwood and Mr. Fainall

(d) Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall

(e) Mr. and Mrs. Fainall

Mrs. Marwood has a selfish motive in revealing Mirabell's real design to Lady Wishfort. She herself was in love with Mirabell but received no response from him. She would therefore like to take revenge upon Mirabell, even though she still has a soft corner for him. She is now carrying on a love-affair with Mr. Fainall, who is married to Lady Wishfort's daughter. This is a clear case of adultery. At the same time Mrs. Fainall is on terms of great intimacy with Mirabell whose mistress she had been in the past. Mrs. Fainall, before being re-married, was carrying on love-affair with Mirabell, and there was an apprehension in her mind that she had become pregnant by him. Mirabell, instead of marrying her as we would normally expect from a decent man, got her married to Mr. Fainall. Mr. Fainall was known to be a man of questionable morals and honesty.

The Various Intrigues:

There are several intrigues amongst the main characters which further complicate matters. Waitwell, the servant of Mirabell, gets married to Foible, the maid servant of Lady Wishfort. This is a secret marriage which takes place under the instructions of Mirabell, who bribes both, Waitwell and Foible into this alliance. Waitwell, again under Mirabell's instructions impersonates Mirabell's uncle and, with the co-operation and help of Foible,

pretends to be a suitor to Lady Wishfort. Lady Wishfort is taken in by the imposture and gets into very embarrassing position. The imposture and Foible's share in it, are revealed to Lady Wishfort by Mrs. Marwood, who has been spying upon the movements of both, Mirabell and Foible. Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood make a plan to acquire the entire property and estate of Lady Wishfort, Mrs. Fainall and Millament. But Mirabell had anticipated some such trickery from Mr. Fainall and had taken the necessary precaution for protecting Mrs. Fainall's property by having got himself appointed as its legal trustee.

It is clear, then, that the various developments in the plot of "The Way of the World" are puzzling in the extreme. We have to be mentally alert all the time in the course of our reading or witnessing. There is a danger of our missing some links, we cannot fully enjoy the play as a whole. As a critic puts it, "It takes full three Acts to make the situation clear, and it is not until Act IV that the servant, Waitwell, appears disguised as rich uncle. By the time we know that the loves and hates of Mirabell and Millament, Lady Wishfort and Mrs. Marwood, Fainall and Mrs. Fainall, Sir Willful, Witwoud, Waitell, and Foible; but it is too tangled a plan to remember for long at a time". It was chiefly for this reason that the play was a failure on the stage when first produced.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT III

The Rape of the Lock – Alexander Pope

The Rape of the Lock is a humorous accusation of the vanities and idleness of 18th-century high society. Basing his poem on a real incident among families of his acquaintance, Pope intended his verses to cool hot tempers and to encourage his friends to laugh at their own folly.

Pope's use of the mock-epic genre is intricate and exhaustive. *The Rape of the Lock* is a poem in which every element of the contemporary scene raises up some image from

epic tradition or the classical world view, and the pieces are wrought together with a cleverness and expertise that makes the poem surprising and delightful. Pope's transformations are numerous, striking, and loaded with moral suggestions. The great battles of epic become attacks of gambling. The great, if unpredictable, Greek and Roman gods are converted into a relatively undifferentiated army of basically ineffectual sprites. Cosmetics, clothing, and jewellery substitute for armour and weapons, and the rituals of religious sacrifice are transplanted to the dressing room and the altar of love.

The verse form of *The Rape of the Lock* is the heroic couplet; Pope still reigns as the uncontested master of the form. The heroic couplet consists of rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter lines (lines of ten syllables each, alternating stressed and unstressed syllables). Pope's couplets do not fall into strict iambs, however, flowering instead with a rich rhythmic variation that keeps the highly regular meter from becoming heavy or tedious. Pope distributes his sentences, with their resolutely parallel grammar, in a way that enhances the judicious quality of his ideas. Moreover, the inherent balance of the couplet form is strikingly well suited to a subject matter that draws on comparisons and contrasts: the form invites configurations in which two ideas or circumstances are balanced, or compared against one another. It is thus perfect for the evaluative, moralizing premise of the poem, particularly in the hands of this brilliant poet.

The Rape of Lock was written with the object of bringing about a reconciliation between two families which had fallen out with each other over a trivial incident. One **Lord Petre** had offended **Miss Arabella** Fermor by clipping a lock: of her hair, and a bitter feeling resulted between the two families. Pope's friend, John Caryl, thought that the unpleasant- dress might be ended if the young poet would turn the whole affair into friendly ridicule. Pope accordingly set to work in which he playfully and mockingly describes the fatal coffee-drink ing at Hampton, in which the too daring aristocrat cut off Miss Fermor's lock and took possession of it.

The poem received the praise that it well deserved, for certainly, the young poet had executed his task with the greatest skill. **“No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious a trifle is to be found in English literature than *The Rape of the Lock*, even in its early form.”** Pope received Miss Fermor’s permission to publish the poem in a London Miscellany in 1712, and a wider circle of persons was able to read and admire it, though it seems that the lady and her family began to think that the poet was taking too much liberty with her name.

[Alexander Pope](#) was so excited by the success of the poem that he hit upon a plan by which he thought that the poem could be rendered more interesting and more important. The poets were much occupied with the machinery of epic poems, the machinery being composed of the gods and goddesses who, from the days of Homer, had attended to the fortunes of heroes and heroines in epic poems and dramas. ***The Rape of the Lock*** appeared in its new form, with fairies and an ingenious account of a game of cards and other improvements, in 1714. **“Pope declared, and critics have agreed, that he never showed more skill than in the remodelling of this poem; and it has ever since held a kind of recognised supremacy amongst the productions of the drawing room Muse.”**

The Rape of the Lock is a masterpiece of its kind and comes nearest to being a “creation” than anything else that Pope wrote. The poem has justly been regarded as the finest example of a witty mock epic ever written. There is in it a deft combination of the serious and the non-serious. According to some, its greatest achievement is the invention of the sylphs that lend to the poem tones of lightness and delicacy unique in English poetry. Its burlesque mockery of supposedly vicious aspects of high society is never altogether serious.

As an expression of the artificial life of the age of its cardplaying, parties, toilets, lap dogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking and idle vanities-***The Rape of the Lock*** is as perfect in

its way as Tamburlaine, which reflects the boundless ambition of the Elizabethans.

The poem is not only a satire on society it is also a witty parody of the heroic style in poetry Even the verse form is treated humorously. especially through its tendency toward anti-climax, as in the lines:

*Here thou, great Anna I whom three realms obey, Dost
sometimes counsel take-and sometimes tea.*

The satire in the poem is general and, on the whole, good-humoured.

Every part of the poem is excellently done, but notably fine are **the descriptions of Belinda's toilet, of the game of cards, of the cutting of the lock** as Belinda bends over the coffee pot, and of the gnome's visit to the Cave of spleen... The poem is a dainty little gem and Pope's most perfect piece. It is the epic of the reign of Queen Anne, the only epic possible for that age of reason.

Summary of The Rape of the Lock

Canto I

Synopsis:

The opening lines of the poem state its theme which is that affairs of love may lead to serious resentments and that insignificant events may cause great conflicts. There is also, in the opening lines, an invocation to the Muse of poetry. The poet tells the Muse that John Caryl suggested this poem and that Belinda inspired it. The poet asks the Muse **what strange motive could compel an aristocrat, Lord Petre**, to attack a gentle lady, Belinda (or Miss Fermor), and what stranger motive could compel a gentle lady to reject the suit of a Lord. Why should small men undertake such daring enterprises and why should soft-hearted ladies fly into such a terrible rage?

The sun rose and Belinda opened her bright eyes. It was the time when lap dogs shook their bodies and got up from their sleep; and lovers, who had not been able to sleep

throughout the night on account of the pangs of love got from bed. In other words, it was the hour of noon. After opening her eyes, Belinda again fell asleep. Her sleep was thus prolonged because her guardian sylph wanted to speak to her in a dream. Belinda's guardian sylph, Ariel by name, addressed her as the fairest of mortals and told her that numerous bright spirits kept flying around her all the time.

Ariel then went on to explain to the dreaming Belinda the nature of different categories of spirits. He told her that the vanities of a woman did not die with her death and that, even after death, she continued to feel an interest in some of those vanities. A woman after her death might not play cards, but she, in the form of a spirit, would feel interested in the cards held and played by other players. The pleasure that she took in riding in a splendid carriage and the pleasure she took in playing ombre when she was alive, remained with her even after death.

The dreaming Belinda was further told by Ariel that the purity or chastity of earthly maidens was protected by their guardian- sylphs. These maidens had to be saved when they felt tempted. under the stress of their passions, to yield to the amorous advances of their wicked lovers.

In conclusion, Ariel told Belinda that he was her guardian sylph and that he had come to warn her that she should remain cautious during the whole of that day because a terrible misfortune was likely to descend upon her.

Critical comment

Mock epic elements in this Canto

- The invocation to the Muse in the opening lines follows the epic manner of the Iliad. Cowley observes that the custom of beginning all poems with a proposition of the whole work and an invocation of some god for his assistance to go through with it was solemnly and religiously observed by all the ancient poets.

- The machinery. The machinery in the poem consists of sylphs and grains who play an active part in the story. Ariel, Belinda's guardian sylph, is introduced as early as line 19. It is Ariel who gives warning to Belinda in her morning dream that misfortune will befall her in the day.

Canto II

Synopsis:

This Canto opens with high praise of Belinda's beauty. Her emergence from her house is compared to the rising of the sun. The poet then describes her journey over the river Thames, in the company of beautiful ladies and well-dressed young gentlemen. The eyes of every one were fixed on her because of her superior charms. She gave her smiles to everybody but showed no special favour to anyone.

A reference is then made to the two graceful locks of hair with their bright ringlets which, hanging behind, embellished her ivory-white neck. Men who looked at her would have been captured by and kept as prisoners in, the maze of Belinda's locks of hair. The adventurous Baron, Lord Petre, greatly admired these bright locks of Belinda and had an ambition to possess this treasure. he was prepared to use force or rob Belinda of these locks.

Belinda was smiling, and the whole world looked happy. All were in a merry mood except the sylph, Ariel, who was invisibly accompanying Belinda. Ariel was weighed down by thoughts of the approaching misfortune to take all the necessary precautions. He reminded them that it was the duty of the sylphs to look after the welfare of beautiful ladies. They had to save the powder from the cheeks of beautiful ladies from, being blown away by the wind. On that particular day, however, they had to protect Belinda against a serious misfortune that threatened her. The nature of the misfortune was not known. It was not known whether this beautiful lady would allow her chastity to be violated, or some delicate China jar in her house would crack.

Critical comment

The opening lines of this Canto are, like the closing passage of Canto I, a tribute to Belinda's beauty and charm.

The machinery of the poem is further enlarged and developed in this Canto. Ariel speaks to his fellow spirits about the various tasks that they have to perform.

Ariel's speech contains some very famous lines (Lines 253-258) in which the poet has employed what is called "zeugma".

Canto III

Synopsis:

The boat carrying Belinda and her party took them to Hampton Court, a palace where the great Queen Anne sometimes held political consultations with her advisers and sometimes attended tea parties. To this palace, the gallant young men and the beautiful young ladies came to enjoy for a while the pleasures of the royal court. Their conversation covered a wide range of trivialities, much of it attacking the character of various personalities.

At this hour Belinda, urged by a desire to become famous, was to meet two adventurous knights in a contest at ombre. The three contestants immediately got ready for the battle. Each player held nine cards, the number nine corresponding to the number of the Muses. At one stage it seemed that Belinda might lose the game, but in the end, the victory fell to her. Belinda felt delighted with the mumps and her shouts of joy seemed to reach the sky. Belinda, says the poet, did not realise that this day of victory would soon be converted into a day of disgrace, for her.

Just at that time, a lady called Clarissa took out from her case a pair of scissors. The Baron felt tempted to make use of this weapon. He took the scissors from Clarissa and spread them just behind Belinda's neck to cut off one of the two locks. At this, a thousand

sylphs immediately came to protect Belinda's hair. Just at that moment, Ariel discovered that, despite all her pretence, there was a human lover hidden in Belinda's heart. This discovery made Ariel realise that he could no longer protect her because spirits like him could protect only maidens who had pure minds and who had no room in their hearts for earthly lovers. Seeing no alternative, Ariel reconciled himself to what was about to happen, and he withdrew from the scene. The Baron then cut off a lock of Belinda's hair. Realising what had happened, Belinda grew furious. Lightning seemed to flash from her eyes, and her screams of horror rent the skies. When a woman loses her husband or her lap dog, she does not utter such loud cries as Belinda uttered on this occasion. The victorious Baron felt jubilant on having come into possession of the glorious prize, namely, Belinda's lock of hair. The Baron had made Belinda realise the power of steel (of which the scissors were made).

Critical comment

The opening lines of this Canto are a perfect example of the mock-heroic manner. First comes a description of Hampton Court, and then a mingling of the great and the little great Queen Anne sometimes taking counsel and sometimes tea.

The description of the card game is masterly. Here we have a classic account of the game of ombre. The description of coffee-making and coffee-drinking is also part of Pope's satire on the life of the time. How the Baron clipped the lock from Belinda's head is very amusing.

Canto IV

Synopsis:

This Canto opens with a rhetorical account of the rage, resentment and despair of Belinda over her ravished hair. This brief account is followed by the journey of a gnome to the gloomy Cave of Spleen and the success he attained in his mission. Umbriel greeted the goddess Spleen. He told her that a beautiful girl, by the name of Belinda, did not care

at all for the power of the goddess Spleen and that she always remained cheerful and kept a thousand others also equally cheerful. The goddess Spleen gave Umbriel a bag that was filled with the strength and intensity of all the sighs, sobs, screams, outbursts of anger, and loud quarrels, that are breathed out by women. Then she gave him a phial containing the fears which bring about fainting fits, and also containing gentle sorrow, soft griefs and plenty of tears.

Umbriel went back and opened his bag directly over the head of Belinda and Belinda's lady-friend, Thalestris. At this, Belinda began to burn with inhuman wrath, and Thalestris added fuel to the fury that had risen in Belinda's breast. In her mood of rage, the friend went to Sir Plume and called upon him to recover the precious lock from Lord Petre. But Sir Plume's challenge to Lord Petre proved utterly futile. Lord Petre declared that he would keep the lock always. Umbriel now broke the phial over Belinda's head and, as a result of that, Belinda felt grief-stricken and, heaving a sigh, cursed the fate that had overtaken her.

Critical comment:

Pope's description of melancholy, gloom in this Canto is as effective and successful as his description of high spirits, brightness, and elegance in the earlier Cantos. The description of the strange and fantastic figures seen in the Cave of Spleen.

Pope scoffs at the interpretation of the word "honour" as understood and used by the upper social circles of the time, the words of Thalestris truly depict the prevailing morality:

The lament of Belinda over her loss of a lock is an example of comic pathos. the loss is magnified to great proportions and her regret at having sought the pleasures of court-life is amusing rather than touching.

Canto V Synopsis:

Belinda's words of lament failed to touch the Baron's heart who stuck to his purpose. Then Clarissa addressed the audience. Clarissa asked why beautiful women were so greatly admired and honoured, why they were the objects of the passion of even wise men, why, they were regarded by men as angels, and why they were worshipped by men. She said that all the honours that women received were useless they were able to retain by their good sense what they achieved through their beauty. But Clarissa's speech produced no effect. Thalestris gave a call to the women to get ready for the fight and, with the speed of lighting, she rushed forward to take part in the battle with the men. It was an epic fight. It was the kind of battle in which gods and goddesses have been shown as fighting by Homer in his *Diad*. Umbriel felt happy to see the mischief that he had caused.

The furious Belinda rushed at the Baron and threw a pinch of snuff at a point exactly below his nostrils. The Baron began to sneeze and the sneezing went on, while tears flowed from his eyes. Then she drew out a hairpin that was a family heirloom This hairpin became a dagger-like instrument in her attack. The baron cried that his only regret while dying would be that he would leave her behind to be courted by others. Belinda shouted for the return of her lock of hair. She spoke more angrily even than the furious Othello demanding the handkerchief from his wife, Desdemona. But Belinda's lock of hair was not to be found anywhere. Only the Muse of Poetry knew whether the lock had flown. The Muse had seen the lock ascending to the sky in the shape of a new star with a long line of hair trailing behind it.

In conclusion, the poet urges Belinda to stop lessening the loss of a lock of her hair. Her lock is now adding a new lustre to the bright heavens. Not all the hair of which beautiful ladies are proud shall arouse as much envy as the lock that she had lost. She will die over time but that particular lock of her hair will be immortalised by the Muse of Poetry as a sacred object. The Muse will give to that lock, which is now a constellation, the name of "Belinda".

Critical comment

Clarissa's speech in this Canto contains the moral of the poem this speech is a parody of the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus in Homer's Iliad. Clarissa's plea for good humour in her speech. reminds us that Pope intended this poem to dispel the unpleasant feeling that had arisen in Miss Fermor's family through Lord Petre's theft of the lock of hair.

Question: Discuss “The Rape of Lock” as a social satire.

Answer: Satire Defined and Explained

The word “satire” is derived from the Latin word “Sature Lanks”. Long defines as, “a literary work which searches out the faults of men or institutions in order to hold them up to ridicule”. According to Dryden “the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction”. A good satirist is a critic whose aim is to reform or correct human weaknesses, vices or follies, and the weapon which he uses for his purpose is that of laughter. His aim is to laugh at human folly, hypocrisy, vanity etc, and soto scorn it into shame. He rarely attacks directly, but clothes his attack in allegory, fable, mock-heroic, parody, or burlesque. Concentration and brevity intensify the effect, so verse is a better medium for satire than prose, though there have been good satirists in prose also. The example of Swift readily comes to our mind as one of the best English satirists in prose.

Satire may be of two kinds (a) Personal and (b) Impersonal . Personal satire is aimed at some individual. It, too, can be effective in the hands of master, but generally it has a tendency to degenerate into personal invectives. In Impersonal satire or genuine satire, the satirist passes from individual toto the type, from ephemeral to eternal and universal. Satires predominates in the works of Pope. Even a cursory glance at his poetry reveals that his major part of it consists of satire. *The Rape of Lock, The Dunciad, Moral Essays, Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated* are the best of his satires.

There were various factors which gave a satire turn to the genius of Pope. The spirit of the times favoured the growth of this literary form. Literature was allied to politics; nearly every writer of the day was used by the two political parties – The Whig and the Tory – to hurl abuse at each other. Moreover, it was believed that the function of literature is not merely to entertain but also reform. Authors

tried to improve the manners and morals of the people. Thus the aim of Addison was to enliven morality with wit and wit with the morality. The result was the predominance of satire and Pope could not escape the influence of the age.

The circumstances of Pope's life and his character also predisposed him to satire. He suffered from a number of disabilities. He was weak, sickly, and deformed. His life was a long disease. He suffered much at the hands of his enemies who spared neither his family, his work nor his personal deformities. He wanted to be even with them. His ill-health made him ill-tempered and peevish. He was quick to take offence. He was extremely vindictive. He stored up in his memory all the taunts and sneers of his enemies, and when the occasion came, he replied to them with virulence and brutality. The aim of much of his satire is to cause pain to his enemies. His vindictive nature did not spare even ladies with whom he had once been on friendly terms. He had cunning and scheming nature. He planned his attack with great cunningness and is often coarse and indecent. Moreover, he was a catholic and Catholics in the age suffered from number of handicaps. They could not lead normal life. Pope wanted to have his revenge upon the Protestants, who were the cause of his misery. He, therefore used the weapon of satire to have his revenge upon them.

The Rape of Lock is Pope's first satire. This social satire was prompted by a slight occasion. A lover (Lord Peter) raped his beloved's (Arebella Fermer) lock. The lady was indignant and two families fell off. A common friend, Caryll, asked Pope to write something to laugh away the anger of the lady, so that cordial relations between the two families be established once again. The result was this delicious little thing which has been praised by even the worst critics of Pope. Hazlitt called it "the most exquisite specimen of filigree work" and Johnson praised it as, "the most airy, the most ingenious, the most delightful" of all Pope's

compositions.

The Rape of Lock is a mock-epic. It is a mocking poem in which Pope mocks not only at the “little unguarded follies” of the fair sex, but at the artificial life of 18th century as a whole. The fashion, the artificiality, the vanity and frivolity of the age is exposed and ridiculed with the unfailing grasp of a master. “The piece sparkles in every line, the touch is never too heavy, an air of gay good humour is preserved throughout.”

The Rape of Lock is the triumph of the insignificant. The mockery arises from the exaltation of the trivial. At every step there is skilful mingling of the great with the trivial. For example, we are told, the scream of Belinda, when the lock is cut, is as loud as the shrieks which rend the skies. “when husbands or when lapdogs, breathe their last.” The mockery here arises from the bringing together of husbands and lapdogs, the insinuation being that ladies, like Belinda, care as much, perhaps more, for their lapdogs as for their husbands. Excessive fondness of the fair sex for lapdogs is thus satirised.

Pope had no very opinion of the fair sex and in his essay on the character of the women he wrote, “every women is at heart a rake”. They are like grown up children, now attracted by one toy. Their vanities have no end. They love not for worth of character, but for coaches, sword-knots and such other glittering things. They have nothing useful to do. They leave their beds late in the day, and the only drudgery they know is the drudgery of the toilet which is usually lengthened out till late in the afternoon. The powers they worship are “cosmetic powers”, “their toilet” is as important for them as a sacred rite and their maids are called, “inferior priestesses” who worship the goddess in the glass.

In Pope’s mock heroic, the forms of chivalrous devotion to women are combined with the reality of cynical contempt. The force of Pope’s raillery is increased by

his neat and dextrous handling of the heroic couplet. Pope's work-manship bears the stamp of Dryden, but in the fullness of sound, energy and majesty he excels his master. In the handling of his chosen metre, as well as in the force and vividness of his satirical portraiture, he leaves Dryden far behind. John Dennis, therefore praises his skill and says "It is as a satirist that Pope, with one exception, excels all English poets, and Pope's careful workmanship often makes his satirical touches more attractive than Dryden's."

Pope's power and range of satire was indeed unrivalled. If he could be coarse and malignant, he could also be warm, tender and affectionate. This aspect of his character is fully brought out by his masterpiece, "The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot". He used one instrument, but he used it effectively and carried it to perfection. According to Hugh Walker, "For energy Dryden, and for polish Pope, are the culminating points of classical satire in verse in the English language."

Question: The Rape of the Lock as a Mock- Heroic Poem

OR

The Rape of the Lock as a Parody of the Epic

An epic may be loosely defined as a narrative in verse in which heroic actions are related in an elevated style. We get the mock epic when the exalted style and manner of an epic are used for a trivial subject. A heroic comical poem thus becomes a travesty of the epic style. The mocking effect is created by treating a trivial, worthless subject in an exalted manner and style, reminding the educated of many paralld passages in the greatest epics. Thus in a mock- epic there is a contrast between the trivial theme and lofty treatment.

The mockery of the epic manner is as old as the epic itself. When Pope wrote The Rape of the Lock, he was doing nothing new. He was only improving on what had already been done. His mock-epic is more complete, more perfect and more

delicate than any other work in the genre. It is the perfection of the mock-heroic for in it the poet, “mocks at the maximum amount of the epic”. (Tillotson) The poet has employed different forms and devices, to effect his purpose. Everything happens which does happen on a much diminished scale.

The Rape of the Lock is perhaps the most outstanding example in the English language of the genre of mock-epic. The strategy of Pope’s mock-epic is not to mock the form itself, but to mock his society in its very failure to rise to epic standards, exposing the grandeur of the traditional epic subjects and the bravery and fortitude of epic heroes: Pope’s mock-heroic treatment in *The Rape of the Lock* underlines the ridiculousness of a society in which values have lost all proportion, and the trivial is handled with the gravity and solemnity. The society on display in this poem is one that fails to distinguish between things that matter and things that do not. The poem mocks the men it portrays by showing them as unworthy of a form that suited a more heroic culture. Thus the mock-epic resembles the epic in that its central concerns are serious and often moral, but the fact that the approach must now be satirical rather than earnest is symptomatic of how far the culture has fallen.

Pope’s use of the mock-epic genre is intricate and exhaustive. *The Rape of the Lock* is a poem in which every element of the contemporary scene raises up some image from epic tradition or the classical world view, and the pieces are wrought together with a cleverness and expertise that makes the poem surprising and delightful. Pope’s transformations are numerous, striking, and loaded with moral suggestions. The great battles of epic become attacks of gambling. The great, if unpredictable, Greek and Roman gods are converted into a relatively undifferentiated army of basically ineffectual sprites. Cosmetics, clothing, and jewellery substitute for armour and weapons, and the rituals of religious

sacrifice are transplanted to the dressing room and the altar of love.

Let us now consider in what different ways the poet has parodied the epic style and substance.

[1] An epic is characterised by length and its story covers years. Pope's mock-heroic, on the other hand, is short and its action covers only a few years.

[2] The hero of an epic is drawn on larger scale. He is heroic in his figure, in his labour and in his deeds. Pope's poem has no hero, but only a heroine, a mere slip of a girl, a mere fashionable butterfly, like any figuring in the unheroic pages of the Spectator. But her screams and the flashes of lightning from her eyes are like those of an epic hero.

[3] An epic poet always makes use of supernatural machinery. Pope also has introduced a machinery in imitation of the epic. But while the gods of the epics are stupendous creatures, Pope's sylphs are tiny creatures. They have insect wings, sit on cards, and fifty at least are required to form fence round the petticoat of Belinda.

[4] In the epics, the chief of the supernatural beings (Jove, for example, in the Homeric epics) threatens the inferior gods or angles with all sorts of tortures in Hell. In the Rape of the Lock, Ariel, too, threatens his sylphs in the epic manner with punishment, but these tortures are merely cruelties decided from the toilet-table.

[5] The epic hero performs certain rites and says his prayers to please the celestial beings and get their blessings for success in the forthcoming deeds of valour. In the Rape of the Lock, we get an intimation of the epic-rites in the prayers which Lord Peter offers to the God of Love and the offering of garters

and other love-trophies he makes to please the god of love and get his blessings.

[6] The epic-hero goes out for some mortal battle which forms the subject of the; but here Lord Peter only goes out to commit the rape of the lock, and it is to get success in this object that he performs the sacred rites. Thus the theme of the Rape of Lock is obviously trivial and unsuitable for epic treatment.

[7] Similarly, the arming of the epic-hero is parodied by Belinda's toilet, described pompously and at length, ending with the line "Now awful beauty puts on all its arms".

Besides this general mockery of the epic form and substance, we also get a witty parody of the heroic style. The style is equally pompous and exalted, but it has been used for low and trivial matters. As Pope himself pointed out, "the use of pompous expression for low action is the perfection of the mock-epic."

There are several ways in which the pompous epic or heroic style has been mimicked by Pope.

[a] An epic begins with an invocation to some god or goddess. Pope begins his mock-epic with an invocation to the goddess of poetry in the right epic style.

"Say what strange motive goddess could compel

A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle"

[b] The use of "He said", "He spoke", etc at the end of a speech, is a recurring feature of the epic style. Pope makes frequent use of such expression.

[c] The use of long drawn out similes is an important feature of the Homeric epics, and Pope has made frequent use of such similes in his mock-epic. Thus the simile of a battle on a green field is used throughout to elevate a game of cards.

Pope's hero-comical poem is a classic of the mock-epic. It mimics the epic style and also mocks at the luxury, the pride, the vanity and the folly of the times of Queen Anne.

BA (Hons) Semester-4DSC-C-ENG- 242 UNIT IV

List of Titles for Acquaintances:

(1) Name of the Work: Decline and Fall of Roman Empire

Name of the Author: Edward Gibbon

Type of Work (Literary genre): Non-fiction (History)

Year of Publication: 1681 Age: Age of Restoration

(2) Name of the Work: All for Love

Name of the Author: John Dryden

Type of Work (Literary genre): Heroic Tragedy

Year of Publication: 1678 Age: Age of Restoration

(3) Name of the Work: The Hind the Panther

Name of the Author: John Dryden

Type of Work (Literary genre): Allegorical poem

Year of Publication: 1687 Age: Age of Restoration

(4) Name of the Work: Essay on Dramatic Poesy

Name of the Author: John Dryden

Type of Work (Literary genre): Criticism

Year of Publication: 1688 Age: Age of Restoration

(5) Name of the Work: Pilgrim's Progress

Name of the Author: John Bunyan

Type of Work (Literary genre): Fiction (novel)

Year of Publication: 1688

Age: Age of Restoration

(6) Name of the Work: The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy

Name of the Author: Laurence Sterne

Type of Work (Literary genre): Novel

Year of Publication: 1759-1767

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(7) Name of the Work: Gulliver's Travels

Name of the Author: Jonathan Swift

Type of Work (Literary genre): Novel

Year of Publication: 1720-25

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(8) Name of the Work: Dunciad

Name of the Author: Alexander Pope

Type of Work (Literary genre): Poetry (satire)

Year of Publication: 1728-42

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(9) Name of the Work: Songs of Innocence

Name of the Author: William Blake

Type of Work (Literary genre): Poem

Year of Publication: 1789

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(10) Name of the Work: The Seasons

Name of the Author: James Thompson

Type of Work (Literary genre): Poetry

Year of Publication: 1730

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(11) Name of the Work: A Tale of a Tub

Name of Author: Jonathan Swift

Type of Work (Literary genre): Prose (satire)

Year of Publication: 1704

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(12) Name of the Work: Tom Jones

Name of the Author: Henry Fielding

Type of Work (Literary genre): Picaresque novel

Year of Publication: 1749

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(13) Name of the Work: Pamela

Name of the Author: Samuel Richardson

Type of Work (Literary genre): Novel

Year of Publication: 1742

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(14) Name of the Work: The Rape of Lock

Name of the Author: Alexander Pope

Type of Work (Literary genre): Narrative Poem

Year of Publication: 1712

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

(15) Name of the Work: Absalom and Achitophel

Name of the Author: John Dryden

Type of Work (Literary genre): Satiric Poem

Year of Publication: 1681

Age: Age of Neoclassicism

