POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME (CBCS)

in

E N G L I S H

SEMESTER – I

COR – 103

Restoration to the Age of Sensibility Poetry and Drama (1660-1788)

Self-Learning Material

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI-741235, WEST BENGAL

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Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning

University of Kalyani

COR – 103

Restoration to the Age of Sensibility: Poetry and Drama (1660 - 1788)

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SEMESTER – I

Restoration to the Age of Sensibility: Poetry and Drama(1660-1788)

BLOCK-I

Absalom and Achitophel by John Dryden

CONTENT STRUCTURE

OBJECTIVES

Dryden wrote only three major satires – *Mac Flecknoe, The Medal* and *Absalom and Achitophel.*

Nevertheless, it is as a satirist that he is known to many modern readers. Some of his other poems, such as *Absalom and Achitophel* Part II and *The Hind and the Panther*, contain incidental satire, but *Absalom and Achitophel* is, by common consent, his best. This is a complex poem rooted in the politics of Dryden's time and making use of biblical story for polemical ends. In this module, therefore, we shall have to discuss the historical background, take a look at the Biblical story that Dryden has used for satiric purposes and then make a critical study of the poem.

Unit 1 (a): HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE POPISH PLOT AND THE EXCLUSION BILL

It is impossible to fully appreciate the poem without some knowledge of the political issues involved, and since religion and politics were then almost inseparable- as they often unfortunately are even today - we must also try to understand the religious conflicts. In fact, the main political issue, as we shall see, turned on a religion question. *Absalom and Achitophel* was published in November 1681 when a leading political figure of the time, the Earl of Shaftesbury, was imprisoned in the Tower of London and awaiting trial. In his *Augustan Satire*, Ian Jack states categorically that the poem was "timed to influence Shaftesbury's trial." But a more recent commentator, James Anderson Winn, maintains that by the time Dryden's poem appeared, on or about 17 November, Shaftesburg's release was inevitable. During the preceding months, new publications for or against Shaftesbury appeared about every week, while during the same period Dryden was polishing his poem. Shaftesbury was a Whig and the Grand Jury, whose verdict would be crucial, consisted largely of Whigs. On 18 October, a Whig named Rouse had in fact been exonerated by the Grand Jury from the politically motivated charges brought against him. Moreover, Dryden's poem was published just a week before the beginning of Shaftesbury's trial.

The Earl of Shaftesbury was imprisoned for his role in leading the political opponents of Charles II's rule. The opposition to the king mainly manifested itself through two significant events in seventeenth century British politics — the Poppish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis. And the poem was timed to influence Shaftesbury's trial."

Shaftesburywas imprisoned for his role in leading the political opponents of Charles II's rule. The opposition to the king mainly manifested itself through two significant events in seventeenth century British politics - the Popish Plot andthe Exclusion Crisis. When Charles II was invited from hisexile in Franceand the monarchyofEngland wasrestored to him, there was nationalrejoicing in that country. The 'Restoration'occurred in 1660 in the midst of widespread resentment against the strict Puritan rule of the last fourteen years, and Charles, whose father Charles I had been executed by the Puritan revolutionaries in 1649, took full advantage of the anti-Puritan and anti-Republican mood to launch repressive measures against Protestant dissenters, most of whomwere Puritan. But the unpopularity of the Puritans did not mean that England, which adopted Protestantism as its official religion duringtheruleof Elizabeth's father, HenryVIII'would welcome Roman Catholicism. There were Roman Catholics in England of course, but theywere in a minority. Besides, Protestant Englandhadalwaysregarded Catholics as politicallydangerous. Thesuspicionof Catholics at home was intensified by distrust ofthe politicaldesigns of Catholic countries like Spainand France. There was great national jubilation as well as the sense ofa missionaccomplishedwhen Protestant England undertheleadershipof QueenElizabethdefeatedthenumericallysuperior Spanishforces in afamous nava battle at Cadiz in 1587. So far as English Catholics were concerned, there was a continuous ideologicalcampaignagainst them by Protestant clergymenand theologians; the political campaign against the Catholics intensified with the discovery of the Gunpowder plot in 1605. The motive behind the plot was to blow up Parliament House with King James I, his Queen and many others inside the building. The leaders of the conspiracy were alleged to be Catholics. During the reign of James's grandson, Charles II, an equally sinister plot was supposedly hatched by Catholics to accomplish their religious and political objectives. This conspiracy came to be called the Popish Plot, after the Pope, head of the Catholic Church, and for Protestants, the symbol of false religion and sinisterdesigns. England's powerful Catholic neighbour, France, whichhad nowtakenthe place of Spain as the target of Protestant English nationalism, was also suspected to have instigated the plot. In Absalom and Aclitophel the Popish plot is described as the "wished occasion" eagerly seized by the King's opponents, the Whigs. In fact, Shaftesbury, the leader of the Whigs, is said to have remarked on the Plot :

"I will not say who started the game but I am sure I had the full hunting of it". The game was actually started by Titus Oates, a disreputable Catholic who had fled to the Continent in 1675 to escape a charge of perjury. Oates returned to England in 1678 and declared that he had evidence of a Catholic plot to murder Charles II andoverthrowthe Protestant religion in England by Frenchand Irish armies. Oates's revelations were almost wholly fictitious; but Parliament, dominated by the Whigs, adoptedaresolutiontothe effect that "there has beenandstill is adamnableand hellish plot, contrived and carried on by Popish recusants [those who refused to attend services of the Church of England], for the assassinating and murdering the king, and for subverting the government and

destroying the Protestant religion". Between, December 1678 and July 1681 morethanthirtypeople were condemned for being involved in the plot. Coleman, the Duchess of York's secretary, was arrestedon the charge of possessing treasonable material, and since Charles's brother, the Duke of York, James, was a Catholic, he too was implicated in the plot. One incident in particular gives a fairlygord ideaofthe politicaland religious hysteria generated bythe discoveryofthe so-called plot. Edmund Berry Godfrey, themagistratebeforewhom Oateshadmadehis depositions, wasmurdered. Though the Catholics blamed Oates for the murder, the Protenstants regarded the murder as the prelude to widespread disturbances and uprising planned bythe Catholics. There was widespread panic, manycitizens went about armed, while Godfrey's death as treated was a tragic reminder of Catholic designs. Catholics were excluded from sitting in Parliament and officially ordered not to come within ten miles of London. Hundreds were arrested on Oates's false evidence. The Whigs exploited the newly intensified anti-Catholic mood, while Charles II shrewdly remarked that Shaftesburyand his party had "set on Oates, and instructed him".

The Whigs could exploit the anti-Catholic sentiment for political purposes because ofthe fact that the man who was to succeed Charles II as monarchof England was a Catholic. This man was James, Duke of York, who was legally Charles's heir to the throne. Charles, notorious for his promiscuity, had a number of illegitimatechildren, but no legitimate issue. Thelawof England wouldnotallowabastardto inherit his father's title orproperty. The most famousofthese illegitimate childrenwas the Duke of Monmouth, who was also the King's favourite and whose attractive appearance and manners had already made him a popular figure. He hadalso gainedaconsiderablereputation as asoldier. The Whigsspreadrumours that Charles had actually married Monmouth's mother, Lucy Walter. But Charles stubbornly denied suchrumours and was moreover adamant that Monmouth, on whom he conferred several honours, could not be the next King of England. The Whigs chose Monmouth as their leader not onlybecause of his popularitybut also because ofthe act that the Catholic James's legitimate heir, his daughter Mary, had married William of Orange. This meant that in the event of James's death, aforeign monarchwouldeffectivelyrule England. Shaftesburyalsotook into account the fact that Monmouth's disputed claim to the throne of England would make the young man dependent on his political support and would also effectively weaken the monarchy. Charles was requested to declare that Lucy Walter was his legallywedded wife, a request which he flatly turned down. So far as the succession issue was concerned, therefore, England had to choose

The Whigs chose the Duke of Monmouth, Charles II's illegitimate son as their leader not only because of his popularity but also because of the fact that the catholic James' legitimate heir had married William of Orange, a foreigner.

Page 8, a - Charles refused to yield the ground on the succession issue of Monmouth, since he himself harboured Catholic belief, but only to strengthen the Whig cause. The Whigs, enjoying a huge majority in Parliament, introduced the Exclusion Bill in No. 79. But the passage of the Bill was prevented by Charles's dissolution of Parliament.

betweenthe Catholic James andthe illegitimate Monmouth. Charles's sympathies were whollywith his brother, because Charles himself harboured Catholic beliefs. He was in fact secretly negotiating a treaty with the French Emperor, Louis XIV, by which he would join Louis in destroying the Protestant stronghold of Holland, declare his conversion to Catholicism, overthrow Protestantism in England and make it a Catholic country. To achieve these aims, Louis would assist Charles with Frenchtroops and a huge annualgrant. Charles, therefore, refused to yield ground onthe succession issue and in the process only strengthened the Whig cause. The Whigs claimed that they were protecting the King against Catholic conspiracies and Monmouthassertedthat it was his love for his father whichpromptedhim to opposehis uncle. The Whigs, enjoying a huge majority in Parliament, introducedthe Exclusions Bill in 1679. As its veryname indicates, the Bill sought to exclude James fromkingship. Butthepassageofthe Billwas prevented by Charles's dissolutionof Parliament. The second Whig Parliament, elected in September, 1679, was prorogued by Charles. When Parliament reassembed in November, the Exclusion Billwas passedthroughthe Commons, but its passage was blocked in the Lords mainly because of the determined opposition of the East of Halifax, who had beena supporter of Shaftesburybut whose belief in the principle of hereditarysuccessionaccording to English law led him to oppose the Whigs. Parliament was again dissolved, but once again the Whigs were elected with a large majority and were this time more determined to turn the Bill into Law. They thought that Charles would capitulate because the Exchequer was exhausted and the King needed parliamentary approval for his budget. But Charles, shrewd as ever, summoned Parliament at Oxford, away from the stronghold of Whig power and popularity, the city of London. He then dissolved Parliament instead of submitting to Whig demands and could afford to do so because Louis XIV had secretly promised to pay him an enormous amount of money. Defeated in their constitutional battle, the Whigs began to adopt militant postures, but the King and his followers mobilisedpublic opinionagainst the Whigs by arousingfearsofcivilwar. The suspicionofa Catholic conspiracy also receded gradually and manyof those who had earlier tried to implicate prominent Catholics in various plots began to confess that they had been instigated by their employers to give false evidence. Though Shaftesbury was acquitted by a jury of his own sympattizers in 1681, the political tide turned withthe election of Torysheriffs in London in 1682.

Shaftesbury went into exile in Holland in 1683 and died soon afterwards. Monmouth was arrested in 1682, later released on bail and went to live in Holland. But at the beginning of James's reign he led a rebellion against the king and was defeated and executed. Titus Oates was arrestedon the charge of perjury and sentenced to imprisonment and torture. But he was released a few years later and after the Revolution of 1688, was even given a pension. Dryden's poem however, is not concerned withthe ultimate fate ofthe principal figures; its main focus is the civil-war-like situation building in Charles II's Englandandtheprominent personalities involved inthepoliticalconflict.

Summing Up

Absalom and Achitophel must be placed first in its specific historical context. The central issues in the poemare the Popishplot, in which Catholics were widelythought to be implicated, and the question ofsuccessionto the English throne. The Whigs exploited the so-called Popish plot to create an anti-Catholic mood among the people. Led by Shaftesbury, the Whigs also sought to ensure, throughthe Exclusion Bill, that King Charles II's Catholic brother, James, would not succeed his brother as King of England. Charles's illegitimate son, the handsome and popular Monmouth, was projected as the next King by the Whigs.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Write a note onthe historical background of Dryden's poem "Absalom and Achitophel".

Unit 1 (b) : CHARLES'S PROMISCUITY

Charles II's licentiousness aggravated the political conflict. The King's promiscuity was an important issue in contemporarypoliticsand Dryden'spoemopenswiththepoet'sownwittyversion of Charles's sex life; it was also an important issue in the Bible storyused by Dryden. Charles was widely regarded as an adulterer who would have to pay for his sexual excesses. Aschoolmate of Dryden's, Creighton, in fact went to the lengthofholding Charles's lecheryresponsible for thenaval disasters suffered by England in a war with the Dutch in 1667. Creighton was a clergyman and based his sermon against the King on the verychapters of II Samuel which provided Dryden with the Biblical parallel for his narrative. Several other contemporaries of Dryden advanced political arguments in support of the prevalent view about the need to separate the King as man from the King as King. The chief political argument was that the King was a "public person" who could, in "his private capacity", only eat anddrink, andperform"someother actsofnature". For anychampion of the King, therefore, the most embarrassing and awkward aspect of Charles's character was his unbridled sexuality. But instead of brushing this fact aside, Dryden faces the issue squarely in the opening lines of the poem. First, he compares Charles's adultery with that of the Biblical David, therebyplacing it in the context of "pious times". Secondly, he suggests that polygamy beganto be consideredsinfulonlyafter "priestcraft" disapprovedofit. Drydenattackstheclergybecausedevout Churchmenconsistentlycriticised Charles'sunconcealedwomanising. Thirdly, Drydencleverlyequates Charles's sexual vigour with his authority as a King, implying that the way Charles scattered "his Maker'simage"(10) throughoutthelandwasa definingpartofhiskingship. Finally, the lineseulogizing Charles's manlyvirgour so skilfullyusethepoetic resourcesofalliteration, stress, rhythmandword order that poetic fecundity becomes the equivalent of Charles's capacity to multiply. We shall see, however, that Dryden'spraiseof Charles is notwithoutahintofmockerydirectedagainst Charles'sn excesses.

Unit 1 (c): THE BIBLICAL SOURCE: *ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL* AS AN ALLEGORY

The standard justification of the use of allegory in a political composition is, as Ian Jack points out, to be found in the French author Barclay's Argenis, which was known to Dryden. Barclay declares in his Argenis : " I will compile some stately fable, in manner of a history." The fashion for allegory became so widespread in France in the seventeenth century that a political significance was sought in every work of fiction. The use of political allegory become common in England too after the Civil War (1642-1646) and the political controversies generated by it. Charles II and his courtiers also brought from France a taste for this kind of writing. Jack mentions two allegorical ems in English which exerted some influence on Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel.

One of these poems was Naboth's Vinyard; or, the Innocent Traytor. This poem was produced anonymously, but attributed to a rather obscure writer called John Caryll. Like Dryden's poem, Naboth's Vinyard is written in heroic couplets and describes contemporary events in terms of an Old Testament allegory. Another poem, whose relevance to Absalom and Achitophel is less often recognized, is *The Progress of Honesty* by D'Urfey. The political conflict described in this poem is the same one that Dryden allegorises - that between the King and his supporters, on the one hand and the Whigs led by Shaftesbury on the other. While the loyal followers of Charles II are given classical or Italianate names several followers of Shaftesbury are givenmanes fromthe Old Testament. Shaftesbury is evencalledAchitopheland "chief Advocatefor Hell" in that poem. Scholars have shown that sermons written as early as 1627 present Achitophel as the type ofa wicked politician and that the names of David, Absalom and Achitophelwere often used allegorically in a contemporary context concerning disloyal advisor. In her easy, "*Absalom and Achitophel*", Ruth Nevo points out that biblical analogy became more and more prevalent, largely in the hands of republicans and Whigs, as the shadow of the accession crisis darkened. In 1680 the Duke of Monmouth was finally identified as Absalom and Shaftesbury as Achitophel in *Absalom's conspiracy*, or *The Tragedy of Treason*.

Biblical allegorizing thus was frequent at the time ofthe Popish plot, though it was not steadily pursued. Dryden's distinction lay in the fact that in his hands the allegory was total, not merely confined to giving biblical names to one or two contemporarypolitical figures. The parallel between seventeenth century England and pre-Christion Israel is sustained by Dryden throughout the poem. This parallel is indeed "the very root and heart of Absalom's success"; moreover "Dryden has chosen to pay the enemy in his very own coin" (Nevo). Biblical parallels were mostly cited by Puritans, most of whomwere republicans as well, while the court culture displayed "classicizing, strongly Epicureantendencies". Drydenthus adopts the strategyof subverting the positionof the

republicans in terms of the very text which they considered sacred. Moreover, since reading the Bible was a much more widespread practice then than it is today, Dryden had the further advantage of conducting a political debate in a language available to all. But before considering the various advantages derived by Dryden fromthe biblical allegory, we must know what the Old Testament story is.

The storyofAbsalom's rebellion had already been applied to the Duke of Monmouth. At first sight the dangers ofthe storymust have appeared to Dryden more considerable than its advantages.

In II SamueloFthe Old Testament we find a storyofsexualexcess and the rebellion it leads to. Awriter supporting the King had to recognize the fact that the parallel between Charles and David works both ways : on the one hand , it confers on Charles a godlike, prophet-like stature; on the other hand, the parallel makes explicit Charles's resemblance with David in respect of sexual licence. As we saw, Drydenuses all the resources of his wit and poetic powers to overcome this potential weakness in the political cause he supports. In II Samuel, David, King of Israel, commits adultery with thebeautiful Bathsheba and has her husband killed. As a direct consequence of these two acts of adultery and murder, David has a confrontation with his rebellious son Absalom, who compels his father to leave the capitalcityand treats his father's concubines as his own "in the sight of all Israel". But the emergence of Absalom as David's sexual rival, so crucial an issue in the Bible story, is of no importance in Dryden's retelling ofthetale. Amoreproblematic aspect ofthe Bible story for Dryden was the fact that the David–Absalom conflict ended in tragedy. In II Samuel, the loyal Israelites flock to David and Absalom runs away from the battlefield. Despite David's strict instruction that nobody should hurt his favourite son, an over-enthusiastic soldier, Joab, pursues Absalom to the point where the latter's long hair is caught in the branches of an oak tree. Absalom is immediately killed by Joab and when the news reaches David, he is overwhelmed with grief for his son. David's lament for his son was frequently sung in English cathedrals. Dryden's preface to the poem unequivocallydeclares that he has omitted the tragic ending of the Bible story. It is clear fromboth preface and poemthat Absalom should be treated with kindness and generosity. Dryden explains that he did not pursue the story to its tragic and "because, I could not obtain from myself, to show Absalom unfortunate". The frame of the picture therefore had to be cut not. Not all the names in Dryden's poemaretakenfrom II Samuel; some ofthe more prominent political figures ofthe period are givennames fromother partsofthe Bible. The Duke of Buckingham is called Zimri and Dryden probablyhad in mind two biblical Zimris : one waskilled for adultery(Numbers XXV) andtheother

A writer supporting the King had to recognize the fact that the parallel between Charles and David works both ways : on the one hand, it confers on Charlesa god like, prophet-like stature ; on the other, the parallel makes explicit Charles's resemblance with David in respect of sexual licence. But the emergence of Absalom as David's sexual rival is of no importance in Dryden's retelling of the tale. A more problematic aspect of the biblical story for Dryden was the fact that the David — Absalom conflict ended in tragedy.

killed King Elah, after making himself drunk, reigned for seven days and then committed suicide (1 Kings XVI). Slingsby Bethel, elected sheriff of London in 1680, is unflatteringly equated with Shimei, who cursed David and who does feature in II Samuel, as does Achitophel; but Corah, a figure with whom the disreputable Titus Oates is identified, is to be found as Korah in Numbers XVI. As for the other main biblical parallels, England is "Israel, London Jerusalem, Hebron Scotland, and France Egypt. The Protestants are referred to as Jews, the Roman Catholics as Jebusites and the Anglican clergy are called Jewish Rabbins. But it is not the particular places or individuals which make the allegory so effective; the power of the allegory derives mostly from the total, detailed and consistent analogy between England and Israel.

Summing Up

The idea of a political allegory on the contemporary political conflict between King Charles II and the Republicans or Whigs did not originate with Dryden; nor was Dryden the first writer to cast this allegory in the form of the biblical story of David, Absalom and Achlitophel. What distinguishes Dryden, however, is the fact that his allegory is more consistent, more sustained and much more detailed than that of any other writer of the time.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider "Absalom and Achitophel" as an allegory.

Unit 1 (d) : THE ADVANTAGES OF USING THE BIBLICAL STORY

It should be clear by now that by using the biblical parallel Dryden gives a mythic quality to the political conflict which his poem narrates. We may in fact identify several major ways in which Dryden uses the Bible story to extend the appeal and significance of his narrative. Of course, we must always bear in mind the fact that for Dryden's original readership, the Old Testament story was well known. First, the Bible story gives him some archetypes which he can use selectively and manipulate for his own purposes. In other words, the story gives him a useful technical licence. Secondly by using the Old Testament story Dryden has been able to gain objectivity, or rather an illusion of objectivity, because he admits his own partisanship in his address 'To the Reader': "he who draws his pen for one party, must expect to make enemies of the other" (3-4). But he also believes that "if a poem have a genius, it will force its own reception in the world" (13-14). Absalom and Achitaphel has forced its own reception by projecting a partisan political account as a neutral set of circumstances. The result is that his readers do not always feel deeply involved in the fates of the characters or in their political views. They may enjoy the story and the characters as fictional, as a fable, or as a drama that belongs to a remote past at the same time as it casts a great deal of light

onthe present. Thirdlythe Biblical names by themselves were capable ofsuggesting manypersonal moraland political traits to Dryden's readersmostofwhomwerethoroughlyversed in the Bible and for most of whomthe characters had become types - Achitophelthe type of the crooked counsellor, Zinnithetype ofthe fickle politician, Davidthe all-powerfulking rather too fondofwomen, Absalom the ambitions and vulnerable young man, liable to be tempted. Contemporary figures were then made to fit these types manyof whomare seen to recur through history : for example, Achitophel is "A name to all succeeding ages curst" (151). Even before the readers find it appropriate that Shaftesbury is in fact like Achitophel they will concede that to Christians at least Achitophel is an already established type of evil counsellor. When the two-way process is complete, when in other words, Achitophel is recognized both as a biblical type and as a particular individual, the reader will still wonder howthe historical individualcould be visualised by Dryden as a name cursed to all later ages. It is as if the poet-narrator is guaranteeing a sort of immortalityto a contemporarypolitician. Drydenreinforcesthis effect of immortality by achievinganother effect, whichhas beencalled three-dimensional. This effect occurs becausethe narrative, by constantly switching back and forth between the mythic past and the actual present, suggests that all this happened before, is happening now and may happenagain. Finally Dryden also uses throughout the poem Biblical metaphors which have great suggestive power, metaphors like a "second Moses", a "cloudy pillar" and a "guardian fire". Well-known biblical phrases and sentences and ideas are comically distorted to emphasize the meanness and corruptionofcontemporarypoliticians : Shimei"never brokethe Sabbathbut for gain (588)"; he "loved his wicked neighbour as himself" (600).

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What advantages did Drydenenjoybyusing the biblical story in his poem ?

Unit 2 (a) : DRYDEN'S VIEWS ON SATIRE

Dryden is notonlyknownprimarily as a satirist, as "the father ofAugustansatire", but also as a shrewd commentator on the history and art of satire. His long essay on satire, "A Discourses concerning the Original and Progress of Satire", is usually regarded as the best essay in English on the nature of satire. Dryden says in his "Discourse" that the English word "satire" derives from the Greek word satyra and the Latin satura. The first is undoubtedlyassociatedwiththesatyrs, creatures inGreek mythology, whoaremainlyofhumanformbutwithsomebestial aspect, such as a horse's tail or the legs of a goat. This association suggests that originally in ancient Greek literature satire was a crude form of curse directed at evils like drought, worms, parasites and the forces of sterility; the curse was balanced, however, with praise of the sun and the rain, and the forces of fertility. Drydenconsiders the Latinetymologyfromsatura as the more appropriate. The Latinword means "filled withfood" or "sated", andrecallssaturalanx, a festivalplatter filled tooverflowingwith finely chopped meats. Dryden refers to the Roman rhetorician Quintilian's comment that satire is wholly Roman. Drydenadmires most the Roman satirists Horace and Juvenalwhose satires were mixturesofvarioussubjectsandexamples, usuallyboundtogether bya singleunifyingtheme. Dryden's Discourse was in fact the preface for his translation of the satires of Juvenal and another Roman satirist, Persius. Dryden's comparison of Horace and Dryden never wrote the primitive *satyra* based on the curse and the medical and penal metaphors of cure and punishment, scourging and pillorying- the satire practised by Oldham in his Juvenal in the Discourse shows his admiration for both, but also makes it clear that Horatiansatire comes closer to his idealofsatiric art. Indeed, the most famous passage of the "Discourse" conveys the essence of the satiric art of Horace, who "writ according to the politeness of Rome, under thereignofAugustus Caesar". Drydenobserves, "Howeasy it is to callrogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any ofthoseopprobriousterms ! .there is still a vast difference betwixt theslovenly butcheringofa man, and the fineness of a strokethat separates the head fromthe body, and leaves it standing in its place. A man may be capable, as Jack Ketch's wife said of his servant, of a plain piece of work, a bare hanging; but to makea malefactor diesweetly, wasonlybelongingto her husband". Jack Ketchwas an executioner, and we may apply the difference drawn between Ketch and his assistant to the difference between Drydenandsomeofhispredecessors: an earlier satirist like John Oldham is the

Dryden considers Latin etymology of 'satire' from 'satura', which means "filled with food" or "sated" as the most appropriate. His comparison of Horace and Juvenal in the "Discourse" shows his admiration for both, but also makes it clear that Horatian satire comes closure to his ideal of satiric art.

Dryden builds all his satires and panegyrics on the basic unit of the portrait or "character". Dryden bases many of his satirical portraits on the epic catalogues of heroes and on Milton's parody of these in his portraits of the rebel angels in Book I of "Paradise Lost".

slovenly butcher, while Dryden is the expert executioner. "I wish I could apply it to myself", says Dryden, thinking of "the fineness of a stroke" that beheads, and yet leaves the head standing onthe shoulders. DrydenthencitestheportraitofZimri(theDukeofBuckingham) inAbsalomandAchitophel : it is "worth the whole poem; 'tis not bloody, but 'tis ridiculous enough. And he for whom it was intended was too wittyto resent it as an injury". Here is Dryden's ideal : it is "fine raillery", so well executed that it appears almost tobe a backhanded compliment to the victim.

Satires upon the Jesuits, which appeared in 1680, shortly before *Absalom and Achitophel*. By using the example ofthe executioner Jack Ketch, Drydensuggeststhepunishment metaphor, but the beheading is done so sweetlythatthe victim is not immediatelyawarethat he has beenbeheaded. This would also imply that Dryden prefers the politeness, the moderation and "the golden mean" which avoids extremes of everykind-qualities that characterize Horation satire. Moreover, Dryden began as a poet of praise, whether of Oliver Cromwell or of Charles II. It had been argued earlier by William Davenant (in the 1650s) that the panegyric was a hallmark ofthe greatest ofgenres, the epic. While Dryden deliberately employs some epic devices in *Absalom and Achitophel*, as we shall see, the panegyric gives him scope in the poem for contrasting portraits, such as those of David, Barzillai and the other "loyalists" set against the malcontentsAchitophel, Zimri, Corah and their followers. Dryden builds all his satires and panegyrics onthe basic unit ofthe portrait or "character". The ancient Greek philosopher and writer, Theophrastus, was the first to introducethetypeofwriting known as "character" which offers a succinct summing up ofa personality. Theophrastus's *Characters* was a collectionofthirtydescriptive sketchesof varioustypesofcharacter. Eachillustrates some deviation fromthe proper normof behaviour, exhibiting some failing, followed by examples of this failing. Dryden's contemporaries like Halifax, Burnet and Clarendon followed Theophrastus's characters as well as the portraits of historical personalities drawn by Plutarch, Greek philosopher, historian and biographer (c. AD 46 - c.120). InAbsalom and Achitophel the satirical portraits are to some extent like these "characters", but Dryden bases manyofthese portraitsonthe epic catalogues of heroes and on Milton's parody of these in his portraits of the rebel angels in Book I of Paradise Lost. Yet another epicqualityofAbsalomlies in its juxtaposition ofthepresent andthe past. Dryden learnt from Virgil's Aeneid how in an epic the past can be used as an analogue to the present, with the emphasis more onthe placing of contemporarysociety by the side of that of the past than onthe story. By using the biblical story of David and Absalom Dryden also elevates the contemporary event.

Dryden classifies his satire as varronian i.e. satirizing the follies of men in a serio-comic style, using a mixture of prose and verse. Though 'Absalom and Achitophel' does not mix prose and verse, it may be called varronian because of its use of a variety of narrative, satire, panegyric, epic and dramatic.

In the *Discourse* Drydenclassifies his ownsatires, *MacFlecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*, as Varronian. Varro (116-27 Bc) wrote satires on the model of the Greek writer Menippus of the

third century BC. Menippus satirized the follies of men in a serio-comic style, using a mixture of prose and verse. Varro's satires were also in a mixture of prose and verse, some of them using dialogue or a semi-dramatic form. They had a wide range of characters and scenes, which were described in a vigorous and earthy language. Neither *MacFlecknoe* nor *Absalom* mixes prose and verse, though *Absalom* has a wide range of characters. It may be called Varronian also because of its use of a variety of narrative, satire, panegyric, epic and dramatic. Another prominent characteristic of Varronian satire is imitation or parody- the juxtaposition of ancient and modern texts. Varro often quoted lines from Homer and the great Greek tragic playwrights, turning their serious meaning into something ludicrous. *Absalom* combines biblical parody with seventeenth century English history and juxtaposes different characters and voices. It also often alludes to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and sometimes adapts lines from that epic to a different context. *Absalom,* like Varronian satire, is not formally satiric; in fact, Dryden calls it "A Poem". As for the verse, Dryden thinks that the decasyllabic couplet is the most suitable for satire of an elevated kind. The decasyllabic couplet, introduced into English poetry by Chaucer, came to be called the "heroic couplet" in the seventeenth century because of the frequent use of such couplets in "heroic", that is, epic poems. This verse form consists of iambic pentameter lines which rhyme with each other. Dryden found this verse form. On the contrary he criticized Samuel Butler for having used in his *Hudibras* the octosyllabic couplet. According to Dryden, this kind of couplet often produces the effect of doggerel and "turns earnest too much to jest".

Summing Up

Dryden's own views on satire expressed in his *Discourse* throw a great deal of light on *Absalom and Achitophel*, especially on its Varronian features, its juxtaposition of the past and the present, its epic quality, its Horatian characteristics and its "fine raillery". Dryden also justifies the use of the heroic couplet as the most suitable verse form for a majestic kind of satire.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Discuss "Absalom and Achitophel" as a satire.

Unit 2 (b) : *ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL* AS A HEROIC POEM

And the turn of heroic poetry". Alexander Pope praised the "long majestic march, and energy divine" of Dryden's poetry, and the verse of *Absalom* for the most part has these qualities. Dryden himself considered the heroic couplet much more dignified than the octosyllabic couplet employed by satirists like Butler. Then again, Dryden chose his words for their music as well as their meaning. To increase the harmony of his verse he adopted from the classical languages words having a sonorous quality, often approaching the musical quality of Virgil's poetry. The result was a brilliant heroic

idiom illustrated by lines like the following : "Or that his conscious destiny made way/ By manly beauty to imperial sway (21-22)". The conscious heightening of style is most evident when the narrator introduces a speech, often in lines reminiscent of the classical poets and their modern followers, like Milton. As an example Jack cites the lines introducing Achitophel's first speech to Absalom : "Him he attempts with studied arts to please / And sheds his venom in suchwords as these(228-29)". The Miltonic echoes in manyof the lines, including inversions of the normal word-orderof English, also markthestyle as heroic. Yetanother heroic quality of the poetic style has been described by Ian Jack in Dryden'sownwords. Inthe preface to his longnarrative poem, *Annus Mirabilis* , Dryden says that the proper wit of a heroic poem lies in "some lively and apt description, dressed in such colours of speech, that it sets beforeyour eyes the absentobject, as perfectly, and more delightfullythan nature". *Absalom* contains relatively few similes and metaphors; but Drydenuses elaborateand striking images to "amplify" the poetic effect, as when he uses a long simile to emphasize the effects ofthe Popish plot (134-41).

Absalom and Achitophel possess a number of qualities that belong to a heroic poem — the aim is to present "Nature wrought up to a higher pitch." ; the verse is marked by "the smoothness, the numbers, and the turn of heroic poetry." ; presence of Miltonic echoes and so on.

The heroic character of *Absalom* is particularly evident in the poem's five speeches - two by Achitophel, two by Absalom and one by David. These speeches are modelled on the speeches in classical epic poetryand in Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Ruth Nevo points out the Virgilian allusions in thepanegyricpassageswhichevokethecharacteristics ofthe manofhonour - magnanimityandthe liberal profession of arts and arms. These qualities are most marked in the portrait of one of the King's followers, Barzillai (James Butler), whose wealth was large and heart larger (826-28). The elegyuponhis son(831-47) is "closely Virgilian and diametricallyopposed to anymoodof biblical elegiac in such a way as to place the maximum distance between the two ancient worlds so subtly employed by Dryden to focus and evaluate contemporaryaffairs".

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider "Absalom and Achitophel" as a heroic poem.

Unit 2 (c): MILTONIC ECHOES: INTERTEXTUALITY IN *ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL*

To be evident fromthe moment he tries to seduce Monmouth "with studied arts", shedding his "venom" in appropriately chosen words. As David Hopkins has pointed out, here we are intended to remember Satan's temptation of Eve in Book IV of *Paradise Lost* : Satan squats "like a toad, close at the ear of Eve", "inspiring venom". We find a similar allusion in the unmistakably Miltonic flavour of the lines introducing Shaftesbury's second speech aimed at seducing Monmouth. The

latter has not beenentirely convinced bythe first speech, and has expressed his reluctance to rebel against his father. At this point the narrator observes, "Him staggering so when Hell's dire agent found, / While fainting virtue scarce maintain'd her ground,/He pours fresh forces in ...". The lines are Miltonic, first, because of the inversion which places the object rather than the subject at the beginning ofthe sentence, as Milton's "Latinisms" oftendo; secondly, because ofthe phrase "Hell's dire agent" which not only equates Shaftesbury with Satan but is also reminiscent of several very similar phrases used by Milton about Satan; and thirdly, because ofthe waythe narrator's comment guides our perceptionof Shaftesbury's truenatureand prevents us frombeing swayed by his speech, something that the narrative voice in *Paradise Lost* Book I does before each of Satan's powerful speeches begins. That Dryden conceived of Shaftesbury's influence on Monmouth in terms of the Miltonic theme of temptation and Fall is evident in the words used by him in his address "To the Reader"; " 'tis no more a wonder that he withstood not the temptation's ofAchitophel, than it was for Adam, not to have resisted the two devils, the Serpent, and the Woman". Another Miltonic analogy has been pointed out by Ronald Paulson. Describing Achitophel's conception of his son, which is like the conception of rebellion (71-72), the narrator alludes to Satan's "conception" of rebellionwhichshows himproducing his daughter, Sin. Achitophel is typologically Satanbecause he tempts Absalom by telling him that he is the "Son", Christ. (Typology is the doctrine or study of eventsand figures as types or prefigurative symbols, especially in the Bible; thus the Old Testament hero Samson is a "type" of Christ.) Paulson also suggests that the satiric fiction of *Absalom and Achitophel* derives from *Paradise Lost* : Achitophel is Satan, Absalom is Adam, and the crowd of unretiable Israelites or Englishmen are like the fallen angels. Indeed, the followers of Shaftesbury-Achitophel are explicitly compared with the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost* : "Some had in courts beengreat andthrownfromthence/Like Fiendswereharden'd in Impenitence(144-45)".As already noted, Dryden sees the political crisis as a storyof temptation and Fall, based on a lie, that is, the so-called Popishplot. Theresult ofall this is chaos, an image whichrecurs through *Absalom* and which is reminiscent of Milton's Chaos.

Thus *Absalom* frequently and deliberately alludes to Milton's *Paradise Lost,* widening the poem's heroic associations. The designofthe poem, as Dryden himself pointsout, follows to a large extent thetemptationtheme of *Paradise Lost,* while Shaftesbury-Achitophel is obviouslypresented as a Satanic figure.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. How does Drydenallude to Milton's "Paradise Lost" in his poemand for what purpose?

Unit 2 (d): DRYDEN'S USE OF THE HEROIC COUPLET

As we saw earlier, Dryden considered the decasyllabic or heroic couplet the most suitable poetic mediumfor majestic satire. One important reasonfor this was the fact that this kind ofcouplet was already associated with heroic or epic poetryand heroic tragedy, which Dryden considered a descendant of the epic. Besides, the couplet can achieve certain effects more easily than other verse-forms can. It can acquire a concentrationwhichmakes it apt for aphorisms, as in the following lines : "So easy still it proves in factioustimes,/Withpubliczealto cancelprivatecrimes (180-81)." Secondly, a couplet is perhaps the most suitable verse-formfor a forcefulantithesis. This antithesis can be found in the two halves of a single line of the couplet as here : "In friendship false, implacable in hate (173)."The entire couplet is often structured in the formof antithesis, as in these lines, each ofwhich is antithetical: "Stiff in opinions, always in thewrong; /Was everything by starts, and nothing long (547-48)." Antithesis becomes a subtle instrument in the confines of a couplet, as when it is used to expose Shimei's hypocrisy : "And never broke the Sabbath, but for gain(588)."Sometimes the antithesis lies in onlytwo words opposite in meaning : "He had his *jest*, and they had his *estate* (562)." More strikingly, the form of the couplet enables Dryden to use antithesis which combine all these characteristics : "Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;/Was everything by starts, and nothing long (547-48)."As these examples show, the couplet expresses a characteristic wayof thinking. W. Graham has shown that conciseness of the couplet accounts for three other features of Dryden's verse style in the poem. The first of these features is syllepsis, that is, the use of a word to govern two other words, one literally, the other figuratively : "As served it once for worship and for food (121)." Here the word "served" governs "worship" literally and "food" figuratively. The second feature is juxtaposition, or placing side by side words whosepositioning in thesentence creates an effect ofincongruity: "Waschemist, fiddle, statesman, and buffoon (550)." The same effect is achieved by Alexander Pope's more famous line in *The Rape of the Lock* : "Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux." The concise nature of the couplet also makes it hospitable to puns : "His neck was *loaded* with a chain of gold (596)." Finally, the couplet'sdiscipline and its demand for precision lead to some memorable combinationsofadjectives andnouns:"necessarygold", "wished occasion", "all-atoning name".

Dryden used heroic couplet for serving several purposes — it can acquire a concentration which makes it opt for aphorisms ; a couplet is the most suitable verse form for a forceful antithesis ; the conciseness of the couplet accounts for various features of Dryden's verse style like syllepsis, juxtaposition, puns and so on.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What advantages did Dryden enjoy byusing heroic couplet in his poem "Absalom and Achitophel" ?

Unit 2 (e): DRYDEN'S USE OF TRIPLETS

The heroic couplet is universally recognized as both Dryden's favoured verse-form and as eminentlycharacteristic of his poetic style. But his use of triplets has not been as often commented upon. As Christopher Ricks says in his brilliant essay, 'Dryden's Triplets', the "heroic triplet" is "neithera termthat is in usenor an accomplishmentthat is muchappreciated". Ricks, whosediscussion ofthetriplet we shallclosely follow now, refers to the definitionsofboth "couplet" and "triplet" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Acouplet is there defined as "A pair of successive lines of verse, esp. whenrhymingtogetherandofthesamelength";thismeaningwasalreadythere inthe Englishlanguage in 1580. The triplet is defined as "Three successive lines of verse, esp. when rhyming together and of the same length"; this meaning did not exist before 1656. Form this it is apparent that the development of the triplet marked another stage in the progress of poetry. An easlier critic Mark Van Doren, comparing Dryden's triplets with those of Pope, concluded that Dryden's were less organically related to the poems in whichtheyoccurredthat in fact theywere often"excrescences". But as we are going to see, this is a complete misreading ofthe triplets.

The first triplet in *Absalom and Achitophel* comes after seventy seven consecutive couplets and occurs in the portrait of Achitophel-Shaftesbury. Achitophel's boundless energy is contrasted with his frail, smallphysique : "Afiery soul, which working out its way, / Fretted the pigmy body to decay: /And o'er informedthe Tenement of Clay(156-58)". Just as the soulofAchitopheloverflows the limits of his body, so does this triplet overflow the bodyof thecouplet, over-informingthetenement (roomfor living in) that is the couplet-form itself. The triplet here, effecting an irruption or disruption, "is a powerfulreminder ofone formthat power may take". The narrator finds in Achitophel the power which can break the social bonds of tradition or convention, as well as the fierce energythat can overcomephysicalweakness. Achitophelis notbeingridiculedfor his"pigmybody"; thepoint is ratherthatthebodyis asmallthingcomparedwiththevastness of the soul. Like Milton's Satan, Achitophelcannot be slighted; he has to be resisted ; something that Absalomfails to do. Theover-informed verse-form, theeruptive triplet, is thusorganic. In fact, none of the eight triplets in *Absalom and Achitophel* is an exerescence; all of them are organic "in their relation both to the tissue of the verse and to the issue of the poem". Dryden's attack onAchitophel widens fromthe latter's body to the greater bodypolitic, larger than England. This will be clear if we examine another triplet, the one that refers to the Triple Alliance between England, Holland and Sweden against France in 1668. The triplet not only celebrates the Triple Alliance but blames Achitophelfor wrecking it.Achitophelwas "Resolved to ruinor to rule the State", and"To compass

Dryden's occasional use of the triplet is deliberate and part of his artistic design, for the triplets always serve an important purpose and are organically related to the poem. e.g. in line 156, 157 and 158, Achitophel's boundless energy is contrasted with his frail, small physique. Here the triplet, effecting an irruption or disruption, "is a powerful reminder of one form that power may take".

this the Triple Bond he broke; /The pillars ofthe public safety shook: /And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke (175-77)". "The triplet enacts the triplicity of which it speaks. It expands the lines' compass, being fitted to a different yoke fromthat ofthe couplet, a yoke foreign to the usualpublic safety...that is a covenanted verse-movement, the heroic couplet." At the same time this triplet is a tribute to a triple bond, rhyme being by its very nature a bond. Ricks then draws an illuminating comparison between the verse-formemployed by Milton in *Paradise Lost* and that used by Dryden in his most Miltonic poem, *Absalom and Achitophel*. For Miltonthe choiceofblank verse in his epic constituted a political and social achievement as well as an artistic one. As Milton himself says in "The Verse", a note before the beginning of *Paradise Lost* : "This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect though it mayseem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, ofancient libertyrecovered to heroic poemfromthetroublesomeand modern bondage of rhyming". For Dryden it was the heroic couplet that represented an ancient liberty recovered to the latest form which the heroic poem might take, the form of the mock-heroic. One otherexampleofthetripletwill be enoughforour purposeshere. Thistriplet occursduringAchitophel's first speechtoAbsalom, trying to persuadethe latter to rebel against the King. Oneofthe arguments used byAchitophel is that the King's popularityhas declined substantially. At the Restoration, which took place twenty years ago, the joyof the people of England at having a King, after an interval of almost twentyyears, knew no bounds. This overflowing joyapparentlycannot be conveyed through a couplet, and the verse-form is expanded into a triplet : "He is not now, as whenon Jordan's sand / The joyful people throng'd to see him land, / Cov'gring the beach, and black'ning all the strand (270-72)". "Over and above the call of duty had been the people's joy, and therefore over and above anything that the dutifulcouplet could accommodate. The 'full' in 'joyful' proceeds to fill the couplet so that it has to spillover". As thesethreeexamplesshow,thetriplet is morethana convenience for Dryden, more thana mechanical extensionofthe couplet by one line, and certainly more than a mere excrescence.

Thus Dryden employed the heroic couplet in *Absalom and Achitophel* because he considered it the most suitable verse-form for satire of an elevated kind. His occasional use of the triplet is deliberate and part of his artistic design, for the triplets always serve an important purpose and are organically related to the poem.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Cite some examples of Dryden's use oftriplets in the poem"Absalom and Achitophel". For what purpose have they been used ?

Unit 3 (a): *ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL:* ITS POLITICAL PURPOSE AND CREED

Absalomand Achitophel is oftendescribed as the greatest political satire in the English language. The adjective "political" is apt for severalreasons. First ofall, writing the satire was itself a political exercise, for far fromusing his satire as a means to correct the follies of individuals or his society, Dryden had a clearly polemical intention. Dryden's ostensible motive was to apply the sovereign remedy of reason to a "Hot distempsed State". But his more important intention was to denigrate the politicians who were locked with King Charles II in a fierce struggle for power. Secondly, Dryden does not even pretend to be objective or impartial. As he admits in his address 'To the Reader', "he who draws his pen for one party, must expect to make enemies of the other". Thirdly, as Winn has shown, Dryden's poem seeks to interpret the political drama in terms of a complex debate about justice and mercy, and the political wisdom and effectiveness of each of these two qualities. Finally, the poem upholds not only a particular political formation, but a political creed which is propounded as the unquestionablyright and rational view.

Unit 3 (b): THE POLITICAL INTENTION

Absalom and Achitophel is Dryden's contribution to the pamphlet war which accompanied the "Exclusion Crisis". The exclusionists came to be known as Whigs and we saw earlier how their political campaign received fresh impetus fromthe alleged discovery of the so-called Popish plot. The Exclusion Bill was passed twice by Parliament, in 1679 and 1680, but on both occasions the King dissolved Parliament. After calling time. The King sought to justify his action in a Declaration whichwasordered to be read fromallthepulpits in England. Whenthe Whigs sharplycriticized the Declaration Dryden defended the King's action in a prose pamphlet, His Majesty's Declaration Defended. In July 1681, Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of treason. There is reason to believe that Dryden was commissioned by King Charles himself to write the poem, though the intention definitely was not to influence Shaftesbury's trial. (We saw earlier why it could not have beenso.) Dryden'srealmotive was to contribute to thepropagandawar aboutthe Exclusionquestion. He wanted to emphasize Charles's justice, his compassion as well as his firmness during this political crisis. He also wished to underline the seditious and anarchic tendencies of Shaftesbury and his followers. Dryden presents the Whigs as pretenders to power. The succession issue was not, for Drydenand people of his political faith, simplya questionofone ruler being followed by another; it had much wider economic and political implications. In The Medall Dryden characterizes the succession issue as a conflict between "Property and Sovereign Sway". As Ruth Nevo shows, for Dryden the sway of property is anarchic and the Whigs represent the "Almighty crowd", to use a phrasefromThe Medall.A further significanceofthe Miltonicallusions inAbsalomandAchitophel

is political. Just as Milton's Satan is invested with royal splendour and presented as a royal tyrant whowants to wieldsovereignpower, Dryden's Satanicfigure,Achitophel, standsforrepublicanism. Thearguments he employs to InfluenceAbsalomarerepublican. Thus, thepoliticalconflict is presented by Dryden as a clash betweentwo ideologies — conservatism and republicanism. it in March 1681 at Oxford, Charles dissolved Parliament for the third and final

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What was Dryden's realpolitical motive behind the writing ofthe poem?

Unit 3 (c): THE ROYALIST BIAS: DRYDEN'S PARTISANSHIP

The Whigs published a number ofanswers to the *Declaration*, including *Aletterfrom a Person of Quality*, a pamphlet which reiterated the fears of Popish plots and the arguments for Exclusion. The Tories, determinedto put forwardtheir side ofthe argument, published an anonymouspamphlet, *His Majesty's Declaration Defended.* James Anderson Winn treats this pamphlet as the work of Dryden. In the pamphlet Dryden speaks of the "many examples of moderation" in Charles's reign and emphasizes the "temperate and wholesome Constitution" of the English monarchy." Any impartial observer of the English political scene of the time would find many of Charles's actions against his political opponents bitterly vindictive. In *Absalom and Achitophel* one of the main problems faced by Dryden is how to reconcile the politicalnecessityofvengeance withthe Christian ideal of moderation. The assumptions ofthe poem are almost as partisan as those ofthe pamphlet. Bothpamphlet andpoemalso stronglysuggest Dryden'spersonalidentificationwith King Charles, so that his defence of the king was a kind of self-defence too. Moreover, Dryden had oftenexercised the right to defend himself and even referred to himself in the Dicourse on satire as "naturally vindicative". He could therefore easily equate his manydefences ofhis literaryactionswith Charles's recent defence of his political actions. Dryden's identification with Charles also leads him to present the conflict between Charles and Monmouth as one between age and youth. When Achitophel interprets David's mercy as the lethargy of old age and exalts the youthful vigour of Absalom, Dryden expects his readers to recognize the appeal of the argument but to reject it as misleading. Again, like many Tories, Dryden believed that the whole system by which property was passed downfromgenerationto generation was threatened by the Exclusion Crisis.

As a firstborn son, he had very good reasons to want the system to prevail. Dryden perceived that the continuation of primogeniture, to which he owed his own privileges like the benefit of a University education, was inseparably linked with the laws of monarchical succession. Dryden's weakness for Absalom, leading himto present the young man as a victim of cunning manipulation, also derives from his identification with Charles, this time as father ; as he says in the preface to the

poem, "David himself could not be more tender of the young man's life, than I would be of his reputation." Finally, Dryden's partisanship is most evident in his treatment of the Whig leader, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Eart of Shaftesbury, the first English politician to realize that the basis of power in a democracy is political organization rather than factionalism and mob violence. The genuineness of his political beliefs is proved by his association with John Locke, who wrote the unfinished *Essay concerning Toleration* in close association with Ashley. Dryden, however, presents him as a crooked counsellor, a cunning manipulator and a Satanic tempter of youth. Though his accomplishments as a judge are magnificently praised, as a politician he is presented as unreliable, deceitful, ambitious, with anarchic tendencies.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Dryden's defence of the King was a kind of self-defence too. — Substantiate.

Unit 3 (d): THE DEBATE ABOUT JUSTICE AND MERCY

Dryden's partisan confidence in the royalist cause was based upon the increasing setbacks to the Whig position. Shaftesbury was imprisoned and possessed a document calling upon Protestants to take up arms to prevent a Catholic succession. But since the document was unsigned and not in Shaftesbury's handwriting, it could not be used against the Whig leader. Another prominent political figure of the opposition, Stephen College, was put on trial but acquitted by a London juryhandpicked by Whig sheriffs. But the King shifted the trial of College to Oxford, where a more cooperative jury sentenced College to death by hanging. Titus Oates, who testified on behalf of College, was thrown out of his comfortable house and his financial allowance was withdrawn. Charles was revealing his vindictive tendencies and Shaftesbury feared that he might be another victim of the King's political vengeance. But Dryden says in the preface that he deliberately omitted from his poem the tragic ending of the Bible story : "The conclusion of the story, I purposely forbore to prosecute ; because, i could not obtain from myself, to show Absalom unfortunate." Dryden had thus stopped short of the "conclusion" and his declaration to this effect must have attracted attention in the context of the relentless and successful prosecution of Stephen College, and immediately before the unsuccessful attempt to prosecute Shaftesbury. The poem has abundant evidence of Charles's fondness for Monmouth, and Dryden too appears as a father-figure reluctant to show Absalom "unfortunate". Again we perceive an analogy between the poet and his monarch, an analogy which raises questions about the wisdom of a policy of mercy. Winn has rightly found in the poem a complex internal debate on the respective merits of justice and mercy. In the third edition of *Absalom and Achitophel*, published by the end of December, Dryden added to David's final speech four extra lines expressing his readiness to

Dryden deliberately omitted the tragic ending of the Biblical story from his poem. since, he, like Charles himself had a fondness for Monmouth.

pardonAbsalom. Thiswasasurprisingaddition, because Monmouthhadmeanwhiledonesomething fresh to provoke Charles's anger— he had offered to stand bail for Shaftesbury. Dryden is aware that Charles was more vindictive thanhimand therefore says in the prefacethat the positionadopted by himwill not "please the violent, onbothsides", referring to his own mercy as a fault : "The fault, onthe right hand, is to extenuate, palliate, and indulge ; and, to confess freely, I have endeavoured to commit it."

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Justice and mercytopeverything inthepoem"AbsalomandAchitophel"— substantiate.

Unit 3 (e): DRYDEN'S POLITICAL CREED

In his *Life of Dryden*, Dr. Johnsonobserves that "If it [*Absalom and Achitophel*] be considered as a poem political and controversial it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible." Johnson's remark indicates how keenly the contemporary readers enjoyed Dryden's satire for its treatment of urgent matters and recognizable figures of topical relevance. Some more recent critics consider the poem's chief achievement to lie in its creation of a coherent andunified "conservative myth" : Drydenhasusedallthe resourcesofhis poetic art to convince the readeroftherightnessoftheroyalcause. But David Hopkinshaspointedouta fundamentalweakness in Dryden's presentation of the royalist position. Dryden's linking of contemporary and biblical events at times appears to be "more ingenious than inevitable." This is most evident in the portraits of the "short file" of King Charles's loyal supporters which precede Charles's final speech. The portraitof Barzillai, or James Butler, is flawed by a monotonyofmovement and inertnessofmetaphor. "A sceptical reader might feet that some of the allegorical parallelism which is so central to the poem's main design only has the desired effect if the allegory is being decoded by someone who alreadyfundamentallysharesthepoet's assumptions". Hopkins identifies another basic weakness in Dryden's poetic design as the vehicle of his political strategy. The assumptions and principles on which Dryden bases his allegory were not exclusive to the partyof which he was the spokesman. Essentiallythe same allegorical scheme and political arguments were employed in Elkanah Settle's Absalom Senior, a Whig reply to Dryden's poem. In Settle's poem it is the Tories who are seen as motivated by self-interest. The poem also presents parliament as a divinely appointed check on tyrannical kings - a point of view exactly the reverse of that of Dryden. Dryden is not of course advocatingabsolutepower for theking; but he is in favourofputtingtheking in overallcontrolofthe state. InAbsalom and Achitophel he applies a three-part scheme to political policy, when he offers thekinga thirdoptionfor dealingwithhisenemies. Sincelarge-scaleamnestywouldlead to weakness, and absolutist vengeance might provoke acivilwar, Drydenadvocates apolicyoffirmpunishment

for those who challenge such fundamental laws as the law of succession, but a general policy of moderation and tolerance, and a propaganda campaign to remove fears of absolutism and win support for Charles.

Dryden's exact political creed emerges when, in a sudden departure from the narrative of the progress ofAbsalom's conspiracy, he addresses England in a prophetic voice as "foolish Israel!" (753). He asserts that any interference withthe line of succession will leave the people vulnerable and exposed to the sword of every "arbitrary Lord". In 761-62 he offers a spirited refutation ofthe ideas of contractual monarchy then being developed by Shaftesbury's secretary, Locke. The whole speech (753-810) is in factagreatcontributiontothecontinuing politicalargument regardingthe king's rights. To expressthe view that innovation is "the blow of fate" Dryden uses an architectural metaphor. If and whenancient buildings become weak and endangered, the best course is not to change the foundations, but to strengthen thewallandpatchtheflaws. Thepoliticalinnovatorwhoattempts to change the foundations becomes a rebel. The full horror ofthe innovator's attempt is brought out by using the metaphor of the Ark. (The Ark of the Convenant was a chest or box representing the Deity, carried by the Israelites in their wanderings in the desert after the Exodus. The Ark was the holyof holies, symbolizing God's merciful promises to his people.) When the Ark was restored to Israel by a dancing David, a man who was trying to steady it in the oxcart was struck dead on the spot for touching it. That story, as Winn suggests, is intended by Dryden to provide a precise commentary on whig ideas about government. Uzzah, the man struck dead, intended no harm or sacrilege, and yet "God smote him for his error" (II Samuel). Dryden means that even those Whigs, who have no quarrelwiththe institutionof monarchy, become rebels whentheywishtotamper with the succession. On the other hand, Dryden believes that arbitrary power is as dangerous as "lawless anarchy" is, though it is withthe second danger that he is morefullyconcerned. In fact, the apparent impartiality of the lines on the dangers of absolute rule is offset by the poem's earlier assertion that David cannot be regarded as an arbitrary ruler. It is true that Laws are vain, by which we right enjoy/If kings unquestioned. Can those laws destroy(763-64)"; but the "laws" have already been identified with the king's cause and therefore it is clearly implied that the warning does not applyto Charles's rule. The argument is further weighted against republicanrule by the frequent association ofthe "public" with "lunacy" and by the reference to "Nature's state".

Dryden's exact political creed emerges when, he addresses England as "foolish Israel !" He uses an archetypal metaphor, i.e. that of the Ark. If and when ancient buildings become weak and endangered, the best course is not to change the foundations, but to strengthen the wall and patch the flaws.

This image is most lucidly explainedby D.R. Elloway. Drydenrefers first to theoriginalcontract by which people instituted government by giving awaytheir "native sway", a phrase which recalls Dryden's contemporary Thomas Hobbes's "Right of Nature" that had to be surrendered in the interest ofsettled rule. Drydenrecognizes the dangerthat it might lead to tyranny, but maintains, like

Hobbes, thatthecontract is bindingonsuccessivegenerations. Drydenalso maintainsthat theoriginal terms ofthe contract cannot be changed, though he makes it clear that he does not support absolute rule by monarchs. His justification of royal authority is based, not on theoretical principles, but on the danger posed by an unruly crowd and the necessity of a central power to protect individual rights. Dryden also uses Hobbes's argument, repeating the political theorist's verywords, that if the king's prerogative to rule is seized by the people, both kings and "Government itself" will fall to "Nature's state". If people usurp the king's power, total chaos will reign: "For whatsoev'r their sufferings were before,/That change theycovet makes themsuffer more (797-98)".

Summing Up

Absalom and Aclitophel is intensely political and makes no bones about its partisan views. It supports the king's cause as against that of the republican Whigs whose views are rejected and whose leaders are included. It is also political in the sense that it contains an internal debate about the politicalwisdomof justice and mercy. Since Drydentreats Monmouthwitha fatherly indulgence, morethanevenhisnaturalfatherdid, Monmouth'srebellion is presented as theresult | of Shaftesbury's instigation. Drydenshowsthat his poem, unlike one ofhis pamphlets which it strongly resembles, is not merelypolemicalbut results froma genuinelyheld and for himrationallyvalid political ideology-that ofconservatism.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. For what purpose does Dryden use the metaphor of the Ark in this poem ?

Unit 4 (a) DRYDEN'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION: THE PORTRAITS

We have alreadyseenthat Drydenwas to a large extent influenced by the type of writing known as "character" and that his satires are all built on the basic unit of the portrait or character. Since belief in Dryden's politicalcreed is limited and since interest in the particular case ofthe struggle for power which prompted the poem is not universal, it is possible to suggest that *Absalom and Achitophel* retains a constant readership because of the poem's artistic qualities. Chief among these qualities is its art of satirical portraiture. The historyof the critical reception of the poemshows that after its topical interest had worn off, Dryden's poem was usually remembered, not as a whole design, but for the excellence of its parts, especially its memorable portraits. Dryden himself seems to have thoughtthat the chiefappealofthe poemlay in its portraits, or at least one of its portraits. He said that "the character of Zimri in myAbsolam is, in my opinion, worththe whole poem". Theonly reason why we may not agree with his view is that there are other portraits in the poem which are equallybrilliant and memorable. We shall now look at some ofthese portraits.

Unit 4 (b): THE PORTRAIT OF DAVID-CHARLES

This is the shortest of the poem's many portraits, but may also be called the most lively. The poembegins with a wittydepiction ofthe king and his infamous lechery. We have alreadyseen that the creative fecunditydisplayed in drawing this portrait matches Charles-David's fertility. We shall now turn to some other aspects ofthe portrait. Traditionally a satirist hasbeenseen as ademolitionexpertsuccessfullycarrying outthemoralandpolemicalaimswithwhich he beginshiswork. By exposing the follies and vices of his victims, the satirist traditionally wins our assent to his own moral, political or aesthetic values. Suchatraditionalview ofthe satirist'sobjectives would lead us to expect that Dryden would justify the king's every action and seek to prove the divinely sanctioned role of the Stuart monarchs. The satirist would also be expected to spare no pains to convince his readers of the complete villainy of the king's political opponents. Some ofthe portraits in the poemfulfil such expectations. But the more complex of the portraits, such as David, Achitophel and Zimri, cannot be seen in such black-and-white colours. Some recent theorists ofsatire have questioned the traditional assumptions about the satirist's intentions and practice. They detect in much great satire two contradictory strains existing simultaneously. There are, onthe one hand, the satirist's corrective and reformist intentions; at the same time, often equally unmistakably, there is clear evidence that the victims partly arouse the satitist's sympathyand fascination. According to T.S. Eliot, both Drydenand Pope have the ability

Traditionally satirist, by exposing the follies and vices of his victims, wins our assent to his own moral, political, or aesthetic values. But all the portraitures of characters do not fulfil our expectation that Dryden would justify the king's every action.

to transformtheir real-life targets into fictive creations, so that the victims become merelythe pretext for the poetry. While satire is generallydestructive, Dryden's satire, says Eliot, creates the object it sets out to destroy. Dryden can do this because he has the supreme gift of "a certain divine levity". Dustin Griffin has shownthat the satirist can be bothrepelled and attracted by the world of folly. The satirist not only seeks to persuade us, or denounce his targets, but provokes us to raise and consider questions about the subjects of satire, questions which seem to challenge the tone of approval or disapproval that appears to be dominant.

Some consider that by using ironies, Dryden is at theverybeginninggettingoutofthe wayofthe matters of Charles's lecheryand Monmouth's illegitimacy, so that he canconcentrate onthe more important political issues in the rest of the poem. Others think that Dryden, in this way, sought to emulatehis king by having at least one actress-mistress of his own.Our interpretation of the David-Charles portrait is to a very large extent determined by the ironies operating in the relevant lines (1 - 16), ironieswhich continuallyraisedoubtsaboutthenarrator'sattitude. Thosewho read the lines as a clear indication of the narrator's approval of theking'spolygamypoint outthat by adopting this clever strategy Dryden is at the very beginning getting out of the way the inconvenient mattersof Charle's lecheryand Monmouth's illegitimacy, so that he can concentrateon the more important political issues in the rest of the poem. Some others have suggested that the opening lines of the poem express the narrator's unmistakable approval of Charles's conduct and containa plea for understanding. Those who endorsethis interpretation point out how monogamy is disparaged in a cynical, man-of-the-world spirit, especially in the line : "E'r one to one was, cursedly, confined(4)". In this connection it is sometimes mentionedthat Drydenhimselfsoughttoemulatehis king by having at least one actress-mistress of his own. Another approach to the portrait is through the traditional belief according to whichthe king had two bodies, the one public, sacred and eternal, the other private, frail and mortal; the second is foregrounded in the opening lines, while the first occupies the centre-stage in the poem's action, especially its conclusion. This reading of the lines insists that Dryden is presenting Charles's promiscuity at the verybeginning as an attractively virile sexuality, that the manifestly ironical tone of some ofthe lines does not have the effect of damaging Charle'sauthorityandcredibility, andthattheunderlyingsuggestion is that if, like thebiblicalDavid, Charles is susceptible to excessive sexuality, like the biblical prototype again, he is also God's representative on earth, as can be seen at the end when Charles's voice is reinforced by divine intervention: "He said. The'Almighty, nodding, gave consent (1026)". But one cannot ignore the manyquestions which the opening passage raises. Is the narrator seriously endorsing the notion of an ideal paradise in which unchecked sexuality was the rule rather than an exception? Does the

The confusion regarding the question of polygamy is the inevitable result of the inconsistency between the flippant opening lines about Charles's lechery and the solemn closing elevating Charles to a godlike stature. But some other critics think that the unity of "Absalom and Achitophel" lies in its acceptance of disunity.

word "priestcraft" in the opening line suggest that priests are the villains ofthe piece because they put an end to polygamyand that the narrator reveals here an anticlericalismwhichdistinguished the Whig politicians? (The word "priesteraft" suggests "deceitful priestly cunning".) Does the narrator seriously believe that Charles's promiscuity is "after Heaven's own heart"? What would such a belief indicate about the nature of the Christian God? (Jeremy Collier asked the same question and cametotheconclusionthat Drydenwasbeing blasphemous.As he wrote in 1698 : "This is downright defiance ofthe Living God. Here you have the veryessence and spirit ofblasphemy "). Since the narratorrefers to a time when polygamywas not a sin, does it follow that like Milton, Dryden had no inherent objectionto thepracticeofpolygamy?Thereare alsosomepotentiallysubversivesuggestions in the passage:that thedivine right enjoyed by the king is the right to be lecherous; that sexualactivity unsupported by law and morality is "natural"; that priestshave nothing to do withpiety; andthat the confinement imposed by monogamy is a curse. Insteadoftaking these suggestions as teasing hints, somecriticsseethemas unmistakablesignsofideologicalconfusiononthepoet'spart.Theconfusion is the inevitable result, according to such critics, of the inconsistency between the flippant opening lines about Charles's lecheryand the solemn closing lines elevating Charles to a godlike stature, an inconsistency due to the contradiction between a secular view of nature and society and a belief in the outmoded notion of a sacred monarchical order. But there are also critics not at all troubled by the poem's transition from subversive humour at Charles's expense to a solemn assertion of his divine authority. The unityof *Absalom and Achitophel*, according to this view, lies in its acceptance ofdisunity.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment onthe portraiture of David.

Unit 4 (c): THE PORTRAIT OF ACHITOPHEL-SHAFTESBURY

We findthesamekindofcomplexityandambivalence inthe portrait ofShaftesbury-Achitophel, though here the tone is never flippant or even humorous. For Ian Jack, the description ofAchitophel is a reminder that satire can exist without humourandwithout ridicule. But just as in the portrait of Charles-David a tone of approval is often overlaid by ironicalquestioning, Achitophel is not presented simply as a villain. With some of the king's enemies Dryden displays a tendency to paint them in the blackest colours; their motives areuniformlydespicableandtheyaretreatedwithcontempt or scorn. But in drawing the portrait ofAchitophel Drydenoften suggests a tone of genuine wonder,

The description of Achitophel is a reminder that satire can exist without humour and without ridicule. Dryden often suggests in describing him a tone of genuine wonder caused by the man's boundless energy and ambition which almost overwhelm his pigmy body. Here dislike or distrust is modified by a recognition of true wit.

The wonder is caused by the man's boundless energy and ambition which almost overwhelm his pigmybody.Achitophel is a phenomenonwho promptsthesatirist to raise somefundamentalquestions about a type of human personality (165-68). As the questions indicate, Achitophel's restlessness is almost inexplicable in termsofcommonlyperceived motives such as malice, hatred, self-interest or envy. The motives which drive him arise from deeper "psycho-somatic regions". Shaftbury had undergone an operationona cyst ofthe liver, but the wound had not completely.

We saw in the portrait of Charles that approval is oftenmodified, or evenoffset, by critical hints. In the portrait of Shaftesbury we see the reverse of this satiric strategy: here dislike or distrust is modified by a recognition of true merit. Shaftesbury's greatness as a judge dispensing justice without fear or favour is freely acknowledged, as are his zeal to redress the grievances of the poor, his speedyexecutionofhisduties, hisaccessibilityand incorruptibility. It is truethatAchitiphel is introduced as the leader of the king's enemies, the "Fiends" who are "harden'd in impenitence" because of "their Monarch's fatalmercy". Winnbelieves that the reference is to theAct of Oblivionof 1660, by which Charles forgave suchoffences as Shaftesbury's service on Cromwell's Privy Council. But the advocacy of vengeance is not the driving force behind the portrait. Like Milton's Satan, whose resemblance with Achitophel has been pointed out in detail earlier in the module, the King's chief adversary has fallen from greatness. He is "Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit" (153), "A fiery soul (154)", whose clean hands and discerning eyes are explicitly praised. Dryden even mentions the possibility that Shaftesbury's considerable talents might have been better employed. Thus in the portrait of Achitophel we detect a note of loss or regret caused by the recognition of exceptional talents dedicated to wrong ends.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment ontheportraitureofAchitophel.

Unit 4 (d): THE PORTRAIT OF ZIMRI-BUCKINGHAM

Dryden's characterization of Zimri, frequently referred to earlier in the module, is remarkable for other reasons, though here too we detect the curious mixture of fascination and condemnation that marksthe portraits of David and Achitophel. It is different fromtheAchitophelportrait in being general rather than particular, while Achitophel is primarily a picture of an individual. The Zimri portrait has beencalled by Ian Jack as first ofall "a humourous character ofthe Inconstant Man". It also differs fromthe satire on Shaftesbury in that it relies on humour and avoids the sombre tone of the Achitophelportrait. Dryden's reference in the *Dicourse* to the fact that the Dukeof Buckingham, the original of the portrait, was amused rather than offended by the portrait, shows that he did not wish to provoke the Duke. The enmity between Dryden and the Duke was literary as well as

political. In his *Rehearsal* (1671), aparodyof Restorationheroictragedy, Buckinghamhad ridiculed thetypical love-honour conflicts in Dryden's heroic plays. Buckingham in fact attacked Dryden for political as well as aesthetic reasons, provoking the latter to respond in kind. By presenting Zimri-Buckingham as a fickle person Dryden is suggesting that those who support the Whig cause are totally irresponsible. Since Buckinghamwas a much lesser politicalthreat than Shaftesbury, Dryden adopts a tone of light banter in the portrait. Apart from the Zimris in the Bible, another original for Dryden's Zimri can be found in classical poetry. In his Third Satire the Roman satirist draws the portrait ofa Greekwho is an opportunist to the core. Hopkins quotes from Dryden's owntranslation of Juvenal's lines to demonstrate the similarity. The striking similarity between some of the most brilliant lines in the Zimriportrait and Juvenal'slines as translated by Drydenwill be evident fromjust two examples from the latter : "Who bears a nation in a single man?" and "All things the hungry Greek exactlyknows". Similarly, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is "everything bystarts, and nothing long". He is chemist, fiddler, statesman, buffoon, womanizer, painter, poet and "ten thousand" otherthings. Dryden is ofcourseexaggerating, as the hyperbole ("tenthousand") shows; but historians have cited contemporaryaccounts of Buckingham's profligacy. In the Zimriportrait Dryden's principal satiric aim seems to be to single out the type of fickle and unscrupulous person who is a threat to thestabilityofa society. But as in the ambivalent portraitsof DavidandAchitophel, in the Zimri portrait too we find traits which cannot be taken as straightforward condemnation. Hopkins has found an unexpected resonance in two of the most celebrated lines in the portrait : "A man so various, that he seemed to be/Not one, but all mankind's epitome". Juvenal's Greek shyster contains in his single personality an entire nation, but Zimri's comprehensiveness is much more impressive : he is the epitome of all mankind. In his magnificent tribute to Shakespeare's genius Dryden says in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* that "he was the man who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, hadthe largest and most comprehensive soul". Thereseems to be onlya thin dividing-line betweenthe description of Zimri's comprehensiveness and the large and comprehensive soulof Shakespeare. Specialattention should be paid to the adjective "various" in the lines fromthe Zimri portrait: theadjectiveusuallyqualifiespluralnouns, but herea single man is said to be so variousthat he can be taken as all mankind in miniature. Another comment on Zimri similarlywavers between condemnationand something akin to approbation: "Blest madman, who could everyhour employ, / Withsomething newto wish, or to enjoy!(553-54)".As Hopkinssays, "it is difficult to be quite sure whether Dryden's tone is closer to condemnatoryscorn or delightedwonder". Thetoneofwavering, ofwonder, is nicelyconveyed by the jerkyantitheses in the portrait, for example : "Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;/Was everything by starts, and nothing long (547-48)". Zimrihas a chameleon-like personality, capable of assuming different characters in quick succession. As Dryden describes these different characters or shapes, the verse has a tumbling quality (550-51). Not only do such lines indicate the satirist's huge delight in contemplating this "blest madman", but they are also a

comment onthe"delightfulabsurdityofhumanperversenessratherthanapolemicaldenunciationof apoliticalenemy.Theyhavean imaginativefreedomthattranscendstheirstrategicpurpose(Hopkins)."

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Commentonthe portraitureof Zimri.

Unit 4 (e): THE PORTRAIT OF SHIMEI-BETHEL

The portraits ofthe two remaining figures ofthe politicalopposition, Shimeiand Corah, are very different in tone and strategy. For both, the satirist adopts an attitude of contemptuous scorn, more evident in the Corah portrait. Jack has also detected in these portraits an indirectness of approach involving somedegreeofhumour whichmakesthetoneverydifferent fromtheunsmilingindictment of Achitophel. Jack's explanation is that since commoners cannot be as dangerous politically as noblemen, Dryden can afford to treat Shimei and Corah with the kind of contemptuous humour which is totally absent from the Achitophel and Zimri portraits. Jack is right, since Dryden's class discrimination is evident in the way he ridicules Corahfor his "base" birth. The "character" of Shimei begins with lines which employ unambiguously pejorative words: "worse", "wretch". The contemporarypoliticianbehindthebiblicalname is SlingsbyBethel, whorepresents, inthewordsof D.R. Elloway,"that fusionofaustere PuritanNonconformityandtight-fistedcommercialindividualism that made the City an anti-Royalist stronghold... His name became proverbial for meanness". He was elected one of London's two Whig sheriffs in 1680. In II Samuel Shimei cursed David, a fact recalled in the portrait by Shimei's readiness to join any group "gathered to declaim/Against the Monarch of Jerusalem(601-02)." The biblical Shimei is the archetype of hypocrisy and disrespect to the divinity that is supposed to be embodied bythe king, and these are the keynotes of Dryden's portrait of Bethel. Bethel had written a book called The Interests of Princes and States in which he spokeabouttheidealconditionsfortrade. Theportrait therefore emphasizesthecrasscommercialism of the man, symbolized bythe facts that "His neck was loaded with a chain of gold (596)" and that all his energywas spent in "heaping wealth." His political bias was evident in the way he packed "a juryofdissenting Jews" whenever anyofhis "factiousfriends" wasontrial. Drydenmakestellinguse of anti-climaxes to expose the real nature of the man behind his public appearance. Thus Shimei showed earlypromise of"Zeal to God," but also of hatred to his king (from Dryden's royalist point ofviewthetwo are irreconcilable). Shimeinever "brokethe Sabbath", but if he ever did, it was only for personal gain. He respected Moses's Laws, but only because they were the product of long fastingwhichappealed to his miserlyhabits. Thusevenhisrefusaltoindulgehisappetites is presented as a flaw, an example ofhis parsimony. The devastating satire at the expense of Bethel is sometimes a result ofcleverlyplacing a single word, as in the line: "Yet loved his wicked neighbour as himself

(600)". Thenoblebiblicalidealoflovingone'sneighbour as oneself is grosslyparodied in thesingle adjective "wicked". In fact, the entire portrait is intended as a travestyofthe Christian ideal.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment onthe portraiture of Shimei.

Unit 4 (f): THE PORTRAIT OF CORAH-OATES

In the portrait of Shimei, but more so in that of Corah, we have come a long way fromthe fine raillery of the Zimri portrait or the ambivalence in the characterization ofAchitophel. The Corah portrait is denunciatorysatire at its sharpest. Dryden'sscornforthisshadyfigure is vividlyexpressed in the lines directly addressed to the man and in the employment of the derogatory"thou" (632-33). The original of the portrait was Titus Oates, who has been already described earlier in the module. Since Oates was the son of a weaver, Dryden mocks his low birth. Graham has pointed out the close similarity between Oates and the biblical figure of Korah in Numbers, xvi. Like Oates, Korah created an atmosphere of doubt and suspicion when he "rose up before Moses with certain of the children of Israel, two hundredand fiftyprinces ofthe assembly, famous in the congregation, menof renown : And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Yetake too muchuponyou, seeing allthecongregationareholy, everyone ofthem; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves before the congregation of the Lord?" Just as Oates's false evidence was responsible for a number of people dying, getting injured and losing their reputation, so innocent people "died about the matter of Korah". As in the portrait of Shimei, there is in the Corah portrait tooskilfuluseofbiblicalallusionsto denigratethe victim. The biblical Korahwasa Levite, a member ofthe tribe entrusted withthe care ofthe Tabernacle and therefore allowed some privileges. Dates also enjoyedprivileges fromthe Whigs because ofhis "discovery" ofthe Popishplot. There is more biblicalallusion in the lines : "ErectthyselfthouMonumentalBrass:/ High as the Serpentofthy Metal made (633-34)". Here the reference is to Moses's brazen serpent which saved the Israelites from the plague of fiery serpents. (Numbers, xxi). Oates likewise claimed that his testimonywould save the English from Catholic conspiracy. Kinsleyhas pointedoutthat Dryden mayalso be recalling the Old Testament application of "brass" to a people hardened bysin. That Oates completelydevalued the word "witness" is indicated by further biblicalallusions : to the false witness who testified against the martyr St. Stephen and to other false witnesses mentioned in the Gospelof Matthew. Thus by the time Dryden has finished with the word "witness", it is thoroughly discredited along with the perjurer Oates. Another distinctive aspect of the Corah portrait is its delineation of an upstart who threatensto assumetheproportionsofa great politicalplayer. Oate'slowbirth is said to be responsible for his desire to seek fame, or notoriety. Dryden scornfully dismisses the ambition of the "weaver's issue" to become a "Prince's son".

Ruth Nevo sees the portrait of Corah as the crowning achievement of *Absalom and Achitophel*. She finds in the poem "two great rival systems of evaluation", the classical and the biblical. (Zimri is both a biblical figure and modelled on one of Juvenal's satiric targets). These two rival strains are simultaneouslypresent in the exposureofthis arch-hypocrite. "Classical monumentalfame, Mosaic redemption, perjuryand prophecyallcombine to articulate the inimitable, denselypacked scorn" of the lines describing Corah-Oates.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment on the portraiture of Corah — Oates.

THE FOLLOWERS OF CHARLES

The portraits of the Royalists are of course not a part of Dryden's satiric design and it will be entirely wrong to expect in them the ironies, sarcasm, denunciation and even ambivalence which mark the characterization of the Whig politicians. For the loyalists Dryden uses panegyric. This panegyrical style is by no means undistinguished, however. In fact, Ruth Nevo has argued that the values against whichthe ironies in the satiricalportraits have beenset arealso invoked in the portraits of the Royalists. These valies can be generally labelled as Augustan and divided under the heads Church, King, and classicalculture. However, it is classicalculturewhich is most clearlywoven into the textureof the verse. "In the panegyric passages, though these are kept within the framework of biblicalreference, the Virgilianallusionsare most marked, andthe values evokedaresignificantlythe familiar attributes ofthe life ofthe manofhonour-magnanimityandthe liberalprofession ofarts and arms". These values are most strikingly present in the portrait of Barzillai. The biblical Barzillai sustained David during Absalom's rebellion; the contemporary figure behind the biblical name is James Butler who served Charles faithfully. Dryden takes special care to mention the fact that the king's supporters werefew; for himtheir real distinction lies in the smallness ofthe group, because already he has associatednumerical majoritywith madness. The contrast is emphasized by means of an antithesis : "Friends he has few, so high the madness grows;/Who dare be such, must be the people's foes (813-14)." The portrait of Barzillai's son emphasizes the latter's filial loyalty and reliability, and is thus a contrast to the portrait ofAbsalom. Zadoc, who was the highpriest of Israel during Absalom's rebellion, in II Samuel, is Dryden's name for William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury. Saganof Jerusalemwas the highpriest Zadoc'sdeputy in the Bible; behindthe allegorical name is Henry Compton, Bishop of London. Adriel, a name that has not been traced in the Bible, stands for John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave and "the author of much unreadable verse" (Elloway). These are the main figures in the group of Charles's loyal followers. It is undeniable that Dryden's presentation of this group lacks the liveliness and comprehensiveness of the portraits of the king's politicalopponents. Two explanationsofthisdifference have beensuggested. First, Drydenintends

a contrastbetweenthe Whigs' misuseoftheirowntalents in pursuingunworthyendsandthe Royalists' proper useoftheir abilities in the king's cause. As a result, the second groupof portraits depends for its effect on its relationship with the first. Secondly, Dryden wants to emphasize the connection betweennumericalsuperiorityand political irresponsibilityand therefore he can afford to name only a few ofthe loyalists to suggest their politicalworthand good sense.

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The author of the module gratefully acknowledges his substantial debt to the books and articles mentioned above.

ASSIGNMENTS

Short-answer type:

1. Whywas king Charles II's sexuality an issue in contemporarypolitics?
2. What wasthe British convention regarding succession to the throne?
3. Fromwhich book ofthe Bible is the storyof Dryden's poemderived?
4. Explain one advantage of using the Bible story in *Absalom and Achitophel*.
5. Who was Titus Oates? Whydid he become famous/notorious?

6. What is the Popish Plot? What was its political impact?
7. What is the Exclusion Crisis? Briefly comment on its political importance.
8. How would you define a couplet and a triplet?
9. What is Dryden's attitude to Absalom? Why did he adopt such an attitude?
10. Mention some of the real people and places as well as the biblical names given to them by Dryden.
11. Who is Barzillai? Why is he important?
12. Who is Adriel?

Broad Questions:

1. Explain the topical issues of history and politics that lie behind Absalom and Achitophel.
2. Comment on Dryden's use of the Bible for allegorical purposes in Absalom and Achitophel.
3. What are the advantages of using a biblical story in Absalom and Achitophel?
4. Examine Dryden's views on satire with special reference to Absalom and Achitophel.
5. Why is Absalom and Achitophel called a heroic poem? Substantiate your answer.
6. What do you mean by "intertextuality"? Discuss the intertextuality in Absalom and Achitophel.
7. Trace the Miltonic echoes in Absalom and Achitophel and comment on their significance.
8. Comment on Dryden's use of the heroic couplet. Why does he sometimes use triplets? Give suitable examples.
9. Why Absalom and Achitophel is called a political satire? What was its political objective?
10. Is Dryden objective or partisan in his treatment of political issues? Discuss with reference to the text.
11. Expound Dryden's own political creed as you find it in Absalom and Achitophel.
12. Why is there a debate on justice and mercy in Absalom and Achitophel? How is the debate conducted?
13. Comment on Dryden's art of satiric characterization with special reference to any one of the portraits.
14. Comment on the portraits of the following figures as they are presented in Absalom and Achitophel:
    (a) Charles-David
    (b) Achitophel-Shaftesbury
    (c) Zimri-Buckingham
    (d) Shimei-Bethel
    (e) Corah-Oates.

BLOCK-II

Alexander Pope: An *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*
Oliver Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village*

CONTENT STRUCTURE

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this block is first to give students an overview of Alexander Pope's life and literary works. Secondly, to initiate a detail discussion of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnut.* The entire block is a comprehensive student friendly analysis of the text *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnut* .Along withthe detail discussionof the text the block is focussing oncritical understandings ofthe text in order to give students a comprehensive understanding of the text *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnut*.

Unit 5(a): ALEXANDER POPE - A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Alexander Pope was born in May 1688 in London to an affluent linen trader and a Roman Catholic in religion. Duringthe accessionofWilliamand Maryto the Britishthrone, Roman Catholics were compelled to live outside London; several prohibitions were imposed upon them as a consequence of which the senior Pope had to leave London to settle in the tranquil environment of Windsor Forest. Being a Roman Catholic, Pope was deprived of an university education. Besides, a deadlytubercular disease in the spine made Pope a cripple. He was constantly in pain which he

refers to as "this long disease, my life" in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.* Thoughconfined to the bed, Popeacquired a great knowledge ofthe classics. By and large a self-educated person, Pope started showinghis literarytalent at averyearlyagewhich he mentions in the poem: "As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,/ I lisp'd in numbers, for thenumberscame"(ll. 128-129).And by the time Pope was twenty five, his name as a great poet was already established in the literaryworld. Hisacquaintancewiththe Greek and Latin literature produced his first published work *Pastorals* in 1709. Two years later he published *An Essay on Criticism* which is an attempt to develop an aesthetics of poetry and criticism. InthispoemPopehasusedthe heroiccoupletalmost to perfection. *Windsor Forest* extols the magnificent beautyofthe landscape ofthe royal forest and the poet's vision of a Utopian era of calm and peace. In 1714 Pope undertook an ambitious project of translating Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* The subscription of this project made Pope financially independent. In 1725 his publication of the edition of Shakespeare saw himquarrelling with Lewis Theobald just as his translation of Homer soured his relationship with JosephAddison.

Though confined to the bed, Pope acquired a great knowledge of the classics. By the time, Pope was twenty-five, his name as a great poet was already established in the literary world. His earlier works include "Pastorals", "An Essay on Criticism" etc. But his literary genius lay in satires and mock-epics like "The Rape of the Lock", "The Dunciad", "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" and so on.

But Pope's genius lay in satires and mock-epics, the two dominant genres that represented the prevalent literary taste of 18th century England. In 1714, the enlarged version of *The Rape of the Lock* was brought out and immediately acknowledged as a masterpiece of mock-epic poetry, a delightful satire on the world of fashionable men and women. In this year of success, Pope co-founded with Swift, Gay, Joseph Spence and Dr. Arbuthnot the 'Scriblerus Club' and established a lasting friendship with these men of letters. Its aim was to ridicule all literary pretension, bad taste and corruption rampant in social life. *The Dunciad* is another specimen of the mock-heroic with Lewis Theobald as its hero. The poem is an invective, amerciless sizing downof literarygiants into dwarfs or a bunch of 'dunces'. The poem is a war against pretentiousness and pseudo scholarship. *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, published in 1735, is again a disparaging campaign against false criticism, evils of patronage and poverty-stricken scribblers as well as a defence of himself, his parents and friends, and his poetic career. The didactic note continues in *An Essay on Man* and it is taken up earnestly in the *Moral Essays* and *Imitations of Horace* (published in 1738). The *Imitations* is a modern adaptationof the Latin poet to contemporary situation. Pope's poetic career came to a close with the publication of the revised version of *The Dunciad* in 1743 replacing Lewis Theobald with Colley Cibber as its hero. The satire reaches solemn heights and at times attains Miltonic grandeur. *The New Dunciad* was Pope's last completed work.

After the publication of *The New Dunciad* Pope's health deteriorated. The man who valued friendship more than anything else died surrounded by his ever-trusting friends on 30 May 1744, literallysumming up Macbeth'sdescriptionofdead Duncan: "After life's fiftul fever he sleepswell".

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Name some representative literary pieces of Pope.

Unit 5(b): ALEXANDER POPE AND HIS TIME

Alexander Pope'slife-spancoveredtwo different periodsof English Socialpoliticaland literary history, the end of the Restoration period and the beginning of the Augustan age. He was born in 1688, the year in which William of Orange and Maryacceeded to the throne of England after King James II, a Roman Catholic had to flee to France because of his religous beliefs. In religion, The countrywas widelydivided into two camps: Catholics and Protestants;Whigs and Tories in politics. The Parliament withroyalsupport passed the Bill of Rights that curbed the royalpower and barred Roman Catholics frombeing monarchs. The power ofthe monarch was no longer held to be sacred as divine power, The Toleration Act in 1689 made some provision for freedom of worship for Dissenters but the restrictions imposed onthe Catholics were not waived. Theywere forced to live ten miles away from London. University education was denied to the Catholics. They could not enjoycivicrights andchoosepublic offices. Pope andhis family, being Catholics, were subjected to these restrictions. Inspiteofthesesevererestrictions andminoritystatus, the Romancatholics formed a prosperous, rich section of the population.

In 1701 Queen Anne succeeded William III and Mary who died childess. The reign of Queen Annewas marked bypoliticalturmoil inside thecountryand foreign invasions. Butthereignofthree successive Hanoverian kings, George I, George II and George III was comparativelypeaceful. The two Jacobite uprisings in 1715 and 1745 were successfully thwarted by the protestant monarchyof England. Another important event of the period concerned Robert Walpole's rise to power in the Court of George I and George II.

The political condition of England, the rivalry between the Whigs and the Tories, the Jacobite uprising had a definite impact onthe literature of the period. Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele were directly or indirectly involved in politics, though Pope was never a political man like Dryden. His sympathies were evidentlywith the Tories while Addison and Steele championed the cause of the Whigs. Thougha Tory, Pope had manyfriends among the Whigs, a disposition he describes in 'The First Satire ofthe Second Bookof Horace Imitated': "While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory'(1.68). He could not conceal his dislike for Robert Walpole and his policies in An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot and The Imitations of Horace. Though not a member of the party, Pope registers his politicalantipathy for the monarchy supported by Whigs.

Alexander Pope represents the ideals and literary principles of the English Augustan age also called the Age of Englightenment. The Neo-classical principles of 'correctness', perfection and

decorum were the 'rules' of literary composition. The Age of Englightenment strives to identify man'sproper place in the schemeoftheuniverse, hisrelationship with Godand thenatureofthings. Man is essentially an imperfect being created by Godand placed in thecentreofthe 'Great Chainof being'. He is superior to birds and beasts, the vegetable world and the geologicalworld by virtue of his rationality. Man may be the supreme creationofthe Universe, but he is givento "chaosofthought andpassion, allconfused"(Epistle II,An Essayon Man).Thepoetryof Popeendorsesandembodies allthe intellectualand ideologicaldevelopmentsoftheage. The insistence onrefinement in style, on 'correctness' as advocated by the Neoclassical period is registered by Pope in his *An Essay on Criticism, An Essay on Man, Moral Essays and Imitations of Horace.*

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What wasthe politicalcondition of England like during Pope'stime ?
2. What are the salient features of Pope's poetry ?

Unit 5(c): A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is Pope's *Apologia pro sua satura,* a defence of his satires against the malicious attacks of his detractors. The poem a mosaic of several verses written on several occasions, may be divided into three sections. Lines 1-124 give an account of the poet's disgust withthe vain literaryaspirants and hack writerswho pester him onalloccasions and at every place seeking his favour. The poemhas an abrupt, dramatic beginningwiththe poet-speaker ordering John Serle, his manservant, to shut the door to save him fromthese men. He is not spared even on Sundays or at church or at dinner time.

Muses from Parnassus have been let loose to "rave, recite, and madden round the world" (L.4).

Poetryand insanityare brilliantly justaposed in the reference to 'Sirius', the Dog-star, 'Bedlam, and 'Parnassus. Sirius appears in late summer, the oppressive heat of which is supposed to cause insanityand again, the seasonwas sacredtothe Romansofancient times for poetryreading session. Whereas for Pope poetry is "a sane diversion", for the poetasters it is "a mad obsession". The favour-seekersincludea parson, amaudlinpoetess, arhyming peer, aclerk, allpretenders to poetry.

The poet wonders why he is held responsible for every offence committed by others. If a person like James Moore Smythe is found guiltyofviolating the laws ofthe countryor if a frantic wife like Lady Walpole deserts her husband, the reason is attributed to Pope : "And curses Wit, and poetryand Pope" (L. 26). Exasperated withall this, Pope seeks some remedy from Dr. Arbuthnot, though he knows it is absolutelyimpossibleto destroythe"flimsylines" ofthe"cobweb" spun bythe

scribblers. The comparsion between poetasters and spiders is workedout brilliantly in lines 89-94. Popestates his personalopinionclearly: he is innocent and guiltless, frank andfriendly, morea victim than an aggressor, never willing to hurt anyone. Yet, when Arbuthnot tries to dissuade him from naming anyone richand famous, the exhortation seems to fa

Writing poetrywas quite naturalto himand it gave himpleasure to sustain him "thro'this long disease, my life," a tender reference to his life long disease, that made hima cripple. "But whythen publish?" He promptly answers that he published his works because of the support and encouragement of his friends like Granville, William Walsh, Samuel Garth, William Congreve, Swift, Rochester, Henry St. John, Talbot, Somers, Sheffield and Bolingbroke. When he had so many friends at his side, he did not care for the "Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks" :

"Happy my studies, when by these approv'd Happier their author, when by these belov'd Fromthese the world will judge of menand books" (143-145)Anycritic who has "spirit, taste and sense" need not be afraid of his "modest satire;" it onlyaims at the dull, textual critics who are moreconcernedwith"commasandpoints", spelling andmeterrathersthanwiththespirit ofawork.

The aggressiveonslaught oncritics and plagiarists culminates in theAtticusand Sporuspassage. While acknowledging the genius ofAddison, Pope accuses himof jealousy and rivalry and likens himto a Turk who cannot bear anyrival. The portrait of Bufo is a scathing-satire on self-flattering patrons. The poet refuses to depend on any patron for favours. He is happy to pursue his poetic vocation. This is followed by a searing portrayal of Sporus, namely, Lord Hervey. The ferocity changes into a tone of tenderness in lines 381-419.

In these lines Pope pays a touching tribute to his parents and Dr. Arbuthnot. Pope presents his father as an honest, wise and balanced person. A stranger to hypocrisy, he never "dar'd an oath, nor hazarded a lye" in order to enter public life. He was by no means a craftyperson :

In the Atticus and Sporus passage, The aggressive onslaught On critics and plagiarists culminates. But at the end with the blessing of a son and of a friend, the vexed and savage tone of the satirist merges into a note of exquisite tenderness not expressed elsewhere in Pope's poetry.

"Unlearn'd, knew no schoolman's subtle art/No Language, but the Language ofthe Heart" (II. 398-399). Pope also paints a happy picture of domestic bliss of his parents. The rest of the poemseespope in arole-reversalsituation: he bestowsblessings onhis dying mother an dying friend. Imaginatively he becomes a caring parent to his ailing mother. A mother is supposed to rock the cradle of her baby.

Here the role is reversed – the son wishes to "rock the cradle of reposing age". Imaginatively Popereplaces himselfwith Dr.Arbuthnotwhotreatedhimand longs to "preservehimsocial, cheerful and serene." Withthis blessing of a son and a friend, the vexed and savage toneof the satirist merges into a note of exquisite tenderness not expressed elesewhere in Pope's poetry, a restoration of calm of mind, all passions spent.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Attempt a critical analysis of the poem"An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot".

Unit 6 (a): Analysis of Different Character Portraits

6(a) i: THE CHARACTER OF ATTICUS

An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is celebrated for its verse portraits, notably those of Atticus, Sporus and Bufo. Lines 193-214 contain the portrait of Joseph Addison as Atticus. This passage was written in 1715 and published in 1722. Later on it was incorporated into the Epistle after some alterations. Once friends, Pope and Addison soon turned into rivals over the latter's preference for Tickell's version of Homer to Pope's. This was enough to enrage Pope and his wounded pride finds an outlet in the Atticus passage. The Atticus passage begins witha praise ofthe 'EnglishAtticus'. The originalAtticus was born a Roman, but he was called "Atticus" because of his long stay in Athens and his profound knowledge in the Greek language and its literature. He was a close friend of Cicero withwhom he exchanged many letters. But soonthe panegyric moves into a sharp attack. Addison cannot tolerate any literaryrival, a usualcharacteristic ofa Turkish Sultanwho hates to see a kinrise in power. The startling paradox"Damnwith faint praise, assent withcivil leer" wittilypointsto his failing as a critic. He cannever praise a rival'sworkwholeheartedly; it is clear that hiscivility is a cover for hisenvious displeasure. Though he is never contemptuous, he encouragesothers to sneer. Though he is willing to wound, he lacks the moral courage to openlystrike an opponent. He is extremelycautious in his condemnation. For Pope, it is reallyunworthyofa man like Addisonto be fearful evenof fools and be surrounded by flatterers. He pretends to be obliging without ever obliging anyone. The portrait in this waybristles withextensiveuse ofanalogiesand antithesis that addsa sharpnessto the portraiture. The comparison with Cato is sarcastic and witty. Addison is shown to preside over a smallgroup of sycophants, his 'little senate'. After making him an object ofridicule Pope asks,

The Atticus passage contain satirical treatment of Addison. He wittily points to Addison's hating of a literary rival and to his fall as a critic. This passage is a masterly work of portraiture which strikes a perfect balance between appreciation and condemnation.

"Who but must laugh, if such a man there be? Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?" [213-214]

Thus, when If a personlike Atticus stoops to folly, it is not simplyunfortunate but tragic.

The Atticus passage is a masterly work of portraiture. It strikes a perfect balance between appreciation and condemnation. However, one may ask if Addison deserves such an attack from Pope. For it wasAddisonwho first appreciated Pope's literarygifts. The latter also genuinelyadmired

Addison. Buttherift betweenthetwowasmoreliterarythanpersonal. Consideredfromanobjective

point of view, the portrait remains a witty piece of work, an argument against hypocrisy and a vindicationofimpartiality in criticism.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment onthe portraiture ofAtticus.

Unit 6(a) ii: THE CHARACTER OF SPORUS

Lord Herveyand Lady Mary Wortley Montagu conspired jointly to publish *Verses Address'd to the Imitator of the First satire of the Second Book of Horace* in which they mercilessly attacked Pope's physical deformity and obscure birth. Pope retaliated with a fury and savagery quite absent in the Atticus passage.Arbuthnottries to restrainhimas Sporus is avile, filthy, contemptible creature, athing ofsilk, a white curdofass's milk, a butterfly and, therefore, Pope ought not waste his time on suchathing. But his friend's advice serves to intensifyhis anger. To him Lord Hervey is a gilded bug that stinks and stings, a well-trained spaniel that lacks the courage to bite its prey, an uglytoad and a serpent. Through a quick succession of animal imagery Pope savagely hits at Lord Hervey's effeminate features, his bisexuality and manner of speech. Sporus was a favourite eunuch of Emperor Nero of Rome whom he later married in a lavish ceremony. Like Satan, the tempter of Eve, Sporus is a mainpulator. Asycophant in the court of Queen Caroline and a spokesperson of Robert Walpole, Lord Herveyspews venom in the earsof Queen Caroline. He is 'one vileAntithesis' ofwhat is honest and graceful, an 'Amphibious thing' who acts in different roles : "Sporus is puppet and puppeteer, controlled and controller, deceived and deceiver" :

In this passage, Pope retaliated against Lord Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who mercilessly attacked Pope's physical deformity and obscure birth, with fury and savagery quite absent in the atticus passage. This portraiture is the most derisive of all Pope's character sketches.

His wit all see – saw between that and this,

Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss.

Fop at the Toilet, Flatt'rer at the Board.

Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord" (II. 323-325) these lines present Sporus in the most reviling colour. In his case face is not the index of mind. Externally, Sporus may have, a "Cherub's face", but the rest of his body is that of a serpent. The final blow is dealt in the expression 'pride that licks the dust'.

The portrait of Lord Hervey as Sporus is the most derisive ofall Pope's character sketches. Dr. Johnson concludes : "The meanest passage is the satire on Sporus". The devastating condemnation of Lord Herveydone througha series ofsuccessive animal images mayraise the questionwhether

Pope was entirely fair in his depiction. But we need not go beyond what the text tells us. Personal animus mayhave motivatedthe Portrait of Lord Hervey as Sporus. But it is lessaboutacontemporary than about an enemywith whom the satirist is always at war. The Sporus lines sum up, in the words of Maynard Mack, "in an *exemplum* the fundamentalattributes of the invader in every garden : his specious attractiveness – as a butterfuly, a painted child, a dimpling stream; his nastiness – as a bug, a creature generated in dirt, a thing that stinks and stings, a toad spitting froth and venom; his essential impotence – as a numbling spaniel, a shallow stream, a puppet, a hermaphrodite; and yet his perpetual menace as the tempter, powerless himself but always Lurking 'at the ear of Eve', as Pope puts it, to usurp the powers of good and pervert them". It is a war involving "the strong antipathyof Good to Bad". Sporushasbecomeaclassic exemplar, aprototypeofcringingobedience and vulgar sycophancy. Pope has "given Herveya kind of immortality he never dreamt of".

Unit 6(c) iii: THE CHARACTER OF BUFO

The portrait of Bufo is not as destructive as that of Sporus. 'Bufo' in Latin means 'Toad'. In the *Epistle* he stands for a proud literarypatronwho bestows his charity to unworthyand undistinguished poets. Bufo is a blend of Charles Montagu, Earlof Halifax and George Bubb Dodington, a Whig politician. Pope describes him as a pretender with claimsto taste and learning. He is as proud as Apollo to whom the poets in ancient time used to dedicate their poems. Similarly, his modern counterpart is "fed with soft dedication all day long". His library is stuffed with busts and books of dead poets which he has hardly ever read. Astranger to literary acumen, Bufo doles out his charity among flatterers and pretenders to knowlege. But at times he can be miserly. Dryden was allowed to die in poverty, but he wasgivena lavish funeral, thanks to Bufo's so-called generosity. Thepoet's hatred for such an undiscerningpatronculminates in thebrilliant antithesis: "Hehelp'dto burywhom he help'd to starve" [L. 248]. Popethanks himself for not having such a patron. He is happyto have John Gay, his friend and inspirer. Bufo or the Earl of Halifax thus becomes an archehetype of pretenders to poetry and taste, of flattery and partisanship.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment onthe portraiture of Sporus and of Bufo.

Unit 6(b): *AN EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT* AS AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Alexander Pope was born in an age in which the literary atmosphere was vitiated by battles waged between writers. The life of an author or a political person was no longer a private affair; publiccuriositywoulddig up everysecretoftheir personallife. Dryden, Swift, Gayand Popehad to

put up with such public intrusions, blatant lies and distortion of facts regarding their careers end relationships. Pope felt compelled at a certain point of his career to replyto allthe allegations and present himself in a favourable light. *Imitations of Horace* gave himthe much– requiredmediumofself-expression.The *Satires* and *Epistles* are largely autobiographical : "The whole man pulsates in them – his intense nervous responses to nature and to man, hisexquisite sensibilityand lovelyfecling forthemusic of the word and phrase, his generosity, his implacable enmity, hishumour, hishatred, hiswarmfriendship, andhisdeeplystirred patriotism." An *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is the most his of all hispoems, an*apologia* for hispersonallife, literarycareer, friendsandparents. Theyareacomposite self-portrait of the man : George Fraser has observes that Pope is "always warm where he speaks with moralapprovalor gratitude; bitterlyand excessivelysharp to his foes when he thinks them, like Lord Hervey and Lady Mary, malignant; blandly severe, but balanced and just to a dead man like Addison, who was not a true friend or an open enemy, but whose gifts as well as his faults deseved recognition".

> ***"The whole man pulsates in them— his intense nervous responses to nature and to man, his exquisite sensibility and lovely feeling for the music of the word and phrase, his generosity, his implaccable enmity, his humour, his hatred, his warm friendship, and his deeply stirred patriotism."***

The Advertisement franktly admits that the poet intends to launch a counterattack on those "Persons of Rank and Fortune' who had reviled his 'person, Morals and Family'. He has clearly mentioned the names of these 'persons of Rank and fortune' Lord Hervey, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and a host of others. Throughout the poem, Pope places himself in a lofty position from which he throwshisshaftsagainst hisantagonists. Theabruptopeningofthepoemwith an exhortation to his own manservant, John Serle, establishes the personality of a vexed autobiographical narrator desperately in need ofrelief fromthe pestering hack writersand flatterers. Thepersonalnotebcomes allthe more prominent from line 125 whichestablishes him as a paragonof virtue :

Why did I write? What sin to me unknown

Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came. (125-128)

He claims to have been "lisping in numbers" since his childhood for poetry came to him spontaneously. He served poetrynot to please anywomanbutto please himself, to help him "through this long disease, my life." Poetic vocation was a great diversion in his miserable life. No poet, perhaps, has ever so poignantly expressed the storyof a life dwarfed by an incurable disease of the spine within so few words. The question "But why then publish" is followed by a list of Pope's lifelong friends whom he recalls affectionatelyand gratefully. Theyreceive the new poet with'open arms', inspire and encourage him; it is for themthat world is a glorious place to live in :

"Happy studies, when by these approv'd!

Happier their author, when by these belov'd."

The portraits of Atticus, Sporus and Bufo are evidently motivated by deep personal rancour.

The autobiographical part of the poem takes away the spleen and spite of these passages. It demonstrates a compliment to his own virtues as contrasted with the vices of his enemies.

The poet's righteous indignation against Addison, Lord Hervey and Earl of Halifax resonates through lines 193-248 and again in lines 305-333. The intervening lines are a projection of the self: "Poor guiltless I!" The autobiographical part of the poem takes away the spleen and spite of these passages. It demonstrates a compliment to his own virtues as contrasted with the vices of his enemies. He pictures himself as a man of humble desires :

"Oh let me live my own! and die so too!

("To live and die is all I have to do")

Maintain a poet's Dignity and Ease" (U. 261-263)

Preoccupied, thus, with books and friends and humble affairs of life the poet is least interested in the great affairs of public life. Power does not attract him : "I was not born for courts", he declares. He pays his debts regularly, says his prayers like any devout Christian and sleeps undisturbed never bothering about his next work or about critics like Dennis. The poem registers his unflinching devotion to his friends who are worthy and virtuous; but at the same time his poetry is like a scourge to those who pretend to be what they are not in reality :

A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,

But all such babbling blockheads in his stead. [303-304]

It is immediately followed by the severe 'lashing' (of Lord Hervey in the Sporus passage. The ferocity of the attack on Sporus subsides to a gentle tone in the subsequent stanza which describes the poet as a man of integrity and virtue in an age of intrigues and moral vices. This time the first person voice shifts into third person; the poet is "Not Fortune's Worshipper, nor Fashion's Fool. / Not Lucre's Madman, nor Ambition's Tool" (L. 335). He does not wander long in 'Fancy's Maze'. He 'Stoop'd to truth, and moralized his song." A tolerant man, Pope endures all abuses, libels against his name, his physical infirmities and his friends. He sufferes much but never deviates from the path of virtue for which he is ever ready to die: "For thee, Fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the last!" (359)

The intimate tone of an autobiographical speaker is unmistakable throughout the poem, but all his claims about and barbs at some persons are not justified. But it is important to recognize that it is a dramatic projection as much as a construct.

This moral part of the poem soon gives way to the most moving and tender passage recapitualting the virtues of his parents and the poet's filial devotion towards them. His father wise, honest, homely. He is a "stranger to Civil and Religious Rage". In other words, political and religious intrigues never interest him. A very

simple man, he knows no intricacies of the heart. He dies peacefully without any pain and the son prays "O grant me, thus to live, and thus to die". Ironically enough, the son lives a life ofprolonged suffering till death releases him in 1744. Pope protestshis love for his mother; he wants to take care ofher, to "smoothe the Bedof Death". Infact, she dies a few weeks after this poem is completed. The poemwhich begins with the voice of a vexed first person speaker rounds off with the same voice, but this time calm, restored to peace, witha finalwarmtribute to his dying friend, Dr. Arbuthnot.

The intimate tone of an autobiographical speaker is unmistakable throughout *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.* The-personaprojectshimself in apositionfar superior to corrupt scribblersand flatterers. However, in all fairness to Pope, it can be said that allhis claims about and barbs at some persons are not justified. Critics like Theobald, Bentley, Addison were scholars and worthy men. The Earlof Halifax was a generous patron. His contemptuous jibe at the poverty of some poet-aspirants is unfortunate. In *The Dunciad* too, Pope severely condemns hack writers and makes fun of their poverty. Pope does not believe that he is mockingthe ill-fortune ofthosewho doesnot havethe comfort and solvency of his own life. On the contrary, he considered himself a defender of cultural and literary values which he felt were onthe wane. To him, Swift, Gayand Arbuthnot were epitomes of literary as well as moral virtues. It is, however, important to remember that the poem must be read as it is andwhat it stands for. It upholdsthe virtuesofgenuinecriticism, need for privacy in personal life and above all, goodpoetry. In it Pope has wageda war against inferior criticism and the tendency to malign one's reputation. Thus I.R.F. Gordon concludes,

The ferocity of the attack on Sporus subsides to a gentle tone. Pope endures all abuses. He suffers much but never deviates from the path of virtue. This moral part soon gives way to the most moving and tender passage recapitulating the virtues of his parents and the poet's filial devotion towards them.

"The poem's most interesting dramatic creation, however, is that of Pope himself. The besieged poet who speaks in the poem, and vigorously defends his life and art, is clearly, on one level, the voice ofthe actual, living poet, Alexander Pope. But the poet speaker comes to us through a series of filters. He is after all, onlyone ofthe poem's voices. Pope, the author, embraces the 'Pope'who speaks in it, as well as the 'Dr. Arbuthnot'with whom he speaks. The Pope who speaks in the poem is Pope as he would like the public to think ofhim; Pope without warts... The voice ofthe poet who speaks in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* comes as close as any in Pope's poetry to being an authentically autobiographical one, but it is important to recognize that it is a dramatic projection; just as much a construct, in one way, as that of Dr. Arbuthnot is in another.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment onthe autobiographicalelement in the poem.

Unit 6(c): A NOTE ON SATIRE

The term 'satire' is derived from the Latin *satura*, meaning 'medley', a dish of mixed food items. Juvenalcalled it 'ollapodrida' meaning 'mish-mash', 'Satire' as apoetic genredeveloped, not in Greece but in Rome. Critics often confuse the Greek satyr plays with satires. It was in 1605 that the etymologicalconfusionwas cleared by the Frenchscholar Isaac Casuabon. Satire as the Romans understood it is an artistic composition to hold up human vices, follies, moral failings for ridicule therebystriving to correct andreformthem.According to Dryden, theaimofsatire is theamendemnt ofvices. Swiftclaimsthatsatire'isa sortofglasswhereinbeholders do generallydiscovereverybody's face but their own." For Alexander Pope, satire is "a sacred weapon", "sole dread of Folly. Vice, and Insolence" (*Epilogue to the Satires*). Satire, in the English literary context, owes its origin and inspiration to Horace and Juvenal who established the genre of formal verse satire. Their approach to the genre, however, was quite different. This led Dryden to identify the satires of Horace as 'comic' satire while those of Juvenal as 'tragic'. Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles have the design of a 'medley',* of *sermo* or conversation between persons covering a wide range of subjects. Pope foundhisaffinitymorewithHoracethanwith JuvenalHowever, whilehis *Moral Essays* and *Imitations of Horace* follow the Horatianexample, *The Dunciad* imbibes the spirit ofJuvenal.

An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is modelled on Horace's use of *sermo* or chat and poetic autobiography. Like Horace, Pope has given a dramatized account of his self as a man and as a poet. The poem dramatizes the tension the poet feels being "cabin'd and cribb'd" on all sides by scribblers, unjust critics and people like Lord Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in a conversation between Pope and Arbuthnot. It is notable for the dramatic cuts, swift surprises, interruptions andexclamations. The conversationaldesignofthe poemwhichbegins with an address to the servant allows space enough to another participant. Thus what appearars to be a dramatic monologue, a genre Browning would perfect later on, changes into a dialogue. The poem posits a thesis by launching an attackonvice and folly and an antithesis demonstratingthe value ofrationality and of the life of a good, well meaning human being, as it has been explained by Maynard Mack. The readers do not failto recognize the basically goodnatured, tolerant, friendlyman forced to write this *apologia* : "Difficile est saturamnonscribere: "It is difficult not to write satire."

CONCLUSION

An Epistle to *Dr. Arbuthnot* incorporates satire, biography a critique on the contemporary literary world, the evil influence of patronage and partisanship provoked by political differences. Pope is profoundly moraland didactic in this poem as he is in all his poems. But the poemdoes not read like a heavily-loaded didactic sermon because of its varying mood shifting from passionate

rage through a wistful and lingering gaze at the poet's past life to an affectionate musing on his parents and friends, the poem involves the use of precise and apt antithetical and epigrammatic verse, sharp and witty banter, and a pervasive use of animal imagery. As Jack Lynch observes *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* offers a study of Pope's "satirical principles – or, at least, how he'd like them to be interpreted".

ANNOTATIONS

Nequesermonibus Vulgidederis... tamen.

Taken from *De Republic,* VI, 23 by Cicero [Marcus Tullius Cicero, more popularly known as "Tully', and it means "Youwill not anylonger attend to the vulgar mob'sgossip nor put your trust in human rewards for your deeds; virtue, through her own charms, should lead you to true glory. Let what others sayabout you be their concern; whatever it is, they'll say it anyway."

ADVERTISEMENT

Persons of Rank and Fortune : Areference to Lord Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, friends-turned-foes, who jointly brought out the scurrilous *Verses to the Imitator or Horace.* Lord Hervey wrote *An Epistle to a Doctor of Divinity from a Nobleman at Hampton Court* to which Pope sharply reacted with his prose reply called *A Letter to a Noble Lord.*

The learned and candid 'Friend'to whom it is inscribed refers to John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), a Scottish mathematician, physician to Queen Anne; an author and a co-founder of the famous Scriblerus Club with Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift and John Gay. He was a friend of Pope to whom the poet dedicated the *Epistle.*

THE POEM

Good John: John Serle, Pope's manservant.

Knocker : The doorknocker was usually muffled if someone in the house was sick or haddied recently.

Dog-Star : Sirius, the dog-star, appears in late August. Its associations are with oppressiveheat ofthe late summer supposed to cause madness and poetry-reading sessions in ancient Rome.

Bedlam or Parnassus : 'Bedlam' is corrupted from Bethlehem. It was originally called the hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, located in Bishopgate, London. Later on it became an asylum for the lunatics. Parnassus is a mountain in Greece, sacred to Apollo, god of poetry and therefore sacred to the muses.

L.8 Grot : The underground grotto built by Pope in the garden of his villa at Twickenham. L.9 Charge : attack

L.10 Chariot : afour-wheeled horse drawn vehicle.

L.10 Barge : Pope's house at Twickenham was close to the River Thames and very often he would travel fromhere to London bywater.

Sabbath;Adayofreligiousobservanceandrest, kept bythe JewsonSaturdaysand Christianson Sundays.

Mint: Asanctuaryfor debtors. They were allowed to appear on Sundays without the threatof being arrested.

L.15 Parson : a pun on the name Laurence Eusden who became poet laureate in 1718 and held the laureateship until his death in 1730. He was an object of Pope's scurrilous attack.

bemus'd: Slighlypuzzled.

Maudlin: Sentimental, talking in self-pityingly manner especiallywhendrunk. L. 18 Engross: Prepare legal documents.

L. 21 TWI'NAM : Pope's home at Twickenham.

L. 23 Arthur : Author Moore was a businessman and an M.P. His son James Moore Smythe was a minor poet and dramatist. He inserted some verses of Pope in his comedy *The Rival Ladies* andwhenthelatter withdrewhis permission to include them, he refused to do so.

L. 25 Cornus : Derived from Latin *cornu.* meaning 'horn' the word refers to a cuckold. Cuckolds weretraditionally imagined to wear horns. This mayhavereference to LadyWalpole who left her husband in 1734.

L. 27 Friend to my life : John Arbuthnot, the poet's friend.

L. 29 Drop or Nostrum : medicines.

L. 40 "Keep your piece nine years" A reference to Horace's advice to aspiring poets in *Ars Poetica* to keeptheir manuscripts for nine years before publishing them.

L. 41 Drury Lane : The name of a theatre district in London; the surrounding area was a notorious haunt for prostitutes and people of doubtful character. The speaker dwells in a garret here. That thepoet lives in an attic withbrokenwindows is suggestiveofthe'high' life that he lives.

Lull'd by soft zephyr : Induced to sleep by soft, gentle breezes.

Termends : Alegal term meaning the regular sessions of law court which of ten coincideswith the publishing season.

L.49 Pitholeon : Pope's Note runs thus : "The name taken from a foolish poet of Rhodes, who pretended much to Greek." Pope may be referring both to Leonard Welsted, translator of the works of Longinus and to Thomas Cooke who translated several Greek poems. Both were Pope's bitter enemies.

Curll : Edmund Curll was a disreputable publisher guilty of publishing seditious and obscene literature. He was also accused of pirating Pope's works. He has been satirized in *The Dunciad.*

"He'll write a journal, or he'll turn Divine ": He will become a hackwriter in politics or religion. It may also allude to slanderous attacks on Pope in *The London Journal* and to Welsted's theologicaltreatises.

L.61 Lintot : Bernard Lintot; published manyof Pope's works.

L.65 go snacks : To share the profits.

L.69 Midas'ears : In ancient mythology, Midas, the kingof Phrygia, was givenass's ears byApollo after he awarded Pan the prize in a music competition between Apollo and Pan, thereby incurring thewrathofthe former. In shame, Midas hidthe earsunder a headdress. However, the secret was revealed by his minister, then by his barber and his queen who bursting with the secret, whispered it into a hole in the ground. Here Pope alluded to King George II, Queen Caroline and Robert Walpole.

L.74 coxcomb : Avain and conceited person.

L.74 Perksthem: flauntsthemimpudently.

L.79 Dunciad : A mock-heroic-poem by Pope satirising 'dulness' in general, but particularly an attackon Lewis Theobald who had criticised Pope's edition of Shakespeare in *Shakespeare Restored* (1726)

L.85 Codrus : A conventional name for a bad poet mocked by Virgil and Juvenal. L.87 Pit, box, and gallery : Different partsof a theatre.

Colley : Colley Cibber, playwright and poet laureate. Pope savagely attacks him in the final version of *The Dunciad.*

Free-masons Moore : James Moore Smythe was a member ofthe societyof free Masions.

L.98 Bavius : Abad Roman Poet who attacked Horace and Virgil.

Bishop Philips : Ambrose Philips a pastoral poet, became secretary to the Bishop of Armagh. Pope and Ambrose Philips quarrelled over the relative merits of pastoral poetry. He was called "Namby-Pamby" by Pope, giving rise to the term.

Sappho : A seventh-century B.C. Poet from Lesbos in Greece. Here Sappho is the name of Lady Marry Wortley Montagu, once a friend of Pope, later a bitter enemy.

L.103 Twice as tall : Areference to Pope's short figure. He was ony 4'6" tall. L. 111 Grubstreet : The traditional haunt for hack writers.

L.113 My Letters: Edmund Curll brought out a pirated edition of Pope's letters. L.117 Ammon's great son : Alexander the great.

L.118 Ovid's nose : Ovid's name was Publius Ovidius Naso; "nose" is derived from Latin *naso.*

L.122 Maro : Publius Vergilius Maro, familiarly known as Virgil. He wrote *The Aeneid.*

L.124 Homer : The Greek blind poet, author of the two great epics. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey.*

L.128 Lisp'd in numbers : Pope claims that he has beenspeaking poetryfromchildhood.

L.132 This long disease : A reference to Pope's lifelong suffering from deformity caused by tuberculosis ofthe spine.

Granville : George Granville, Lord Landsowne, a friend of Pope. He dedicated his *Windsor Forest* to Granville.

Walsh: William Walsh, an early friend of Pope.

Garth: Sir Samuel Garth, a poet and physician. He was the author of *The Dispensary,* the earliest specimen of mock-heroic poetry.

Congreve : William Congreve, chief exponent ofthe Restorationcomedyof Manners.

Talbot : Charles Talbot, Dukeof Shrewsbury.

L.139 Somers : John, Baron, Somers, Whig statesman and Lord Treasurer. He inspired Pope to write his pastorals.

Sheffield : John Sheffield, poet and politician. He wasthe Earlof Mulgrave.

Rochester : Francis Atterbury (1662-1732), the Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster. He was a Jacobite and sent to exile in 1723.

St. John : Henry st. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, an important Tory statesman. As a friend, he was very close to Pope.

L.146 Burnets : Pope refers to them as "Authors of secret and scandalous History." All of them attacked Pope. Sir Thomas Burnet was a follower of Addison; he criticised Pope's on his translation of Homeric epics. John Oldmixon was a Whig politician and historian. He was accused of pirating Pope's poems in *Court Poems.* Thomas Cooke was a poet, translator and pamphleteer. He offended Pope and when he apologized, Pope refused to oblige.

L.149 Fanny: Lord Hervey, ridiculed as Sporus in the poem.

L.151 Gildon: Charles Gildona poet and critic who attacked Pope's useofsupernatural machinery in *The Rape of the Lock.*

L.153 Dennis : John Dennis, a Whig critic and dramatist. He felt humiliated by Pope's comment in his *An Essay on Criticism.* Dennis' response created a bitter feud between the two.

L.164 From slashing Bentley down to pidling Tibalds : Richard Bentley was a classical scholar an one of Pope's enemies. 'Tibald's refers to Lewis Theobald, an editor and critic, became the object of Pope's savage attack in *The Dunciad* for his criticism of Pope's edition of Shakespeare.

L.177 Casting-weight : Counterbalance.

The Bard :Ambrose Philips

Persian tale : Ambrose Philips, as Pope mentioned in his note, translated a book of Persian Tales for which he was given half-a-crown for each section; it also means the fee of a prostitute.

L.187 Fustian: ahigh-flown, inflated language.

L.190 Tate : Nahum Tate (1651-14715), a poet, dramatist and poet laureate. He produced *King Lear* withahappyending. He also translatedpsalms. Popehassatirised him in *The Dunciad.*

L.192 Addison : Joseph Addison, co-author of The Spectator, one of Pope's former friends, turned into an enemy for differences in literary and political issues. He has been satirised in the 'Atticus' passage of the poem.

L.198 Turk : Addisonaccused Pope of literary jealousy and compared himto an Eastern monarch who could not stand rivalry. Here Pope responds to Addison's comparison by likening him to a Turk.

L.209 Cato : The Roman Senator.Addisonwrote a tragedycalled *Cato* to which Pope, still a friend of Addison, contributed the verse prologue. Addison presided over a companyof admirers at Button's coffee-house.

L.211 Templars : Students of law at the Inner or Middle Temple.

L.215-216 Rubric and claps : Booksellers advertised the title pages of books by pasting them like posters, known as 'claps', 'Rubric' means 'in red', a colour veryoften used on title pages.

L. 222 Great George, a birth day song : George II, King of England. 'Birth day song' refers to the practice ofwriting poems in honour ofthe king's birthday. Popehere suggeststhat George II was contemptuousof such effusive odes.

L. 230Bufo : In Latin the word means a toad, here caricature of a literary patron. 'Bufo' is, modelled partlyon Charles Montagu, Earlof Halifaxand George Bubb Doddington.

L. 231 Forked hill : The twin peaks of Parnassus.

L. 236Pindar stood without a head : Pindar was a distinguished Greek poet of 5th century B.C., notable for his odes. Popehere mocks at the fashionofcollecting headlessantiquaries.

L. 245He help'd to bury whom he helpd' to starve : The meaning is that the patron hardly did anything for Dryden as long as he lived. But after his death, Earlof Halifaxproposed to build monument in his honour.

L.246 Bavius : name for a bad poet.

L.256-260 Gay : John Gay, a close friend of Pope, the author of *The Beggar's Opera.* He was a co-founder of Scriblerus Club. His patron was the Duke of Queensberry who paid for the constructionofhis monument in Westminster Abbey. Popewrotethe epitaph.

L.276 Balbus : The name of a Roman lawyer. Here it refers to George Hay, 7th Earl of Kinnoul, a former friend of Pope.

L.280 Sir Will or Bubo : 'Sir Will' is Sir William Yonge, a whig politician, supporter of Robert Walpole, hatedfor his corruptpractices. 'Bubo'refers to George Bubb Doddington, notorious for hisbadtaste. In Latin'Bubo' means 'owl' withasuggestionof'booby' meaningastupid, sillyperson. Boththese menwere Pope's political enemies.

L.299-300 Cannons : Areference to estate of Duke of Chandos. In his 'Epistle to Burlington' Pope has satirized 'Timon's villa for hitsostentatious looks and lack oftaste. 'Deanandsilver bell' refer to thechapel in the Timon's villa. Pope'sdetractors identified thisestatewith Cannons, the estate of the Duke of Chandos, one of Pope's well-wishers. Pope denied the charge.

Sporus : The name of a Roman eunuch, a victim of Emperor Nero's lust. Here 'sporus' refers to Lord Hervey, a political adversary of Pope, noted for his effeminate features. He was known to be a bisexual and to have a passionate relationship with Stephen Fox, the young Lord Ilchester. He was a confidant of Queen Caroline.

Ass's milk : It was used as a prescribed tonic for the frail and the delicate. Lord Hervey often drank it.

L.319 At the ear of Eve : In *Paradise Lost,* BK. IV Satan is described as squatting "like a toad, close at the ear of Eve". Here Eve stands for Queen Caroline.

Rabbins : Rabbis; Jewish priests.

Cherub's face : A reference to Hevrey's feminine appearance and to the portrayal of the serpent witha beautiful human face.

L.335 Lucre: money.

L.353 Pictur'd shape : Areference to the cartoons drawnon Pope's deformed body, showing him as a hunchbacked ape with a human face.

Japhet : Japhet Crook, a notorious forger. His ears were cut off as a punishment for his crime.

Hireling : One who serves for money.

Knight of the post : A person who is paid to give false evidence in court. L.369 Bit : duped or deceived.

L.371 Friend to his distress : Pope contributed to a benefit performance held in 1733 to aid John Dennis.

L.375 Welsted's lie : Leonard Welsted, a poet and translator. Welsted had hinted that Pope's poetry had caused the death of a lady and that he had libelled the Duke of Chandos.

L.378 Budgel : Eustace Budgell was a cousin of Joseph Addison and a minor writer. Budgell was accused of forging a will in his favour. He held Pope responsible for this revelation in Grub Street Journal.

L.380 Two Curlls : Edmund Currl, the publisher and Lord Hervey, the second Currl. Bothof them were Pope's long-standing enemies.

L.391 Bestia : Full name-Lucius Calpurnius Bestia, a corrupt Roman consul who took bribes to arrange a dishonourable peace treaty. Here Pope is perhaps referring to the Duke of Marlborough.

L.397 Nor dar'd an oath, nor hazarded a lie : Pope alludes to the restrictions imposed on the catholics during the 18th century. Pope was born of Roman catholic parents and it was a compulsion for the catholic parents and it was a compulsion for the catholics to take oaths before entering public life or profession. In order to enjoy the civil rights, many catholics took oaths and lied. Pope and his father never evaded the restrictions because of their honesty.

L.410 Mother's breath: Edith Pope, the poet's mother, died eighteen months before the *Epistle* was published.

L. 415-417 My friend... Queen : Dr. John Arbuthnot, Pope's friend and associate, to whom the poemwas dedicated. 'Queen'refers to QueenAnne whom he served as long as she lived as a court physician. After her death, however, Arbuthnot lost his position as he was a Tory. Nevertheless, his income from the court of king George who succeeded Queen Anne did not stop.

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Basil Willey, – **The Eighteenth Century Background,** Chatto & Windus.
2. Bonamy Dobree, **Alexander Pope,** Greenwood Press, New York.
3. Wain, John (ed.) – **Lives of the Poets**. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
4. Ian Jack, **Augustan Satire:** Intentionand Idiomin EnglishPoetry1660-1750, Oxford University Press.

5. Peter Dixon, **The World of Pope's Satires :** An Introduction to the Epistles and Imitations of Horace, Methuen.
6. I.R.F. Gordon, **APreface to Pope,** Longman.
7. Judith O'Neill(ed.), **Critics on Pope.**
8. Eighteenth Century Poetry. : An Annotated Anthology, ed. David Fairer and Christine Gerrard, Blackwell Annoatated Anthologies.
9. **An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,** ed. & annoated by Jack Lynch.
10. The Norton Anthology of Poetry, W.W. Norton Company. New York & London.

ASSIGNMENTS

11. Consider **An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** as Pope's **apologia**.
12. Analyse **An Epistle** as an autobiographical poem.
13. Comment on the portrait of Atticus. Do you think that Pope is absolutely fair in his portrayal of Athicus?
14. Critically evaluate the sporus passage.
15. Assess **An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** as a Horatian satire.
16. How far can **An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot** be read as a critique of contemporary literary scene.

BLOCK-II

Oliver Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village*

CONTENT STRUCTURE

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this block is to access the contribution of Oliver Goldsmith in the temporal spanofeighteenthcentury. Besides, this block is focussingonthe historicalbackgroundofeighteenth centuryagainst the backdropof which Goldsmith's text The Deserted Village is based on. Besides this block concentrates onthe minute discussion ofthe text The Deserted Village. The text has been analyazed critically in order to make the discussionofthe text student friendly.

Unit 7(a): LIFE AND WORKS

Oliver Goldsmith was born on 10 November 1728, either at Pallas, County Longford, or Elphin, Roscommon, in lreland, in a familyofclergyman-farmers, His father, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, was a clergyman of the Established Church. He had five sons and three daughters, of whomOliver wasthe fifthchild. In 1730, the familymoved to ahamlet named Lissoy, in thecounty of Westmeath, where Oliver spent muchof his childhood.

Goldsmith'seducationwasvaried. His first teacher wasarelativecalled Elizabeth Dewlap, who as followed by the village schoolmaster, Thomas Byrne, who had earlier beena soldier and fought

against Spain. He was then admitted to school at Elphin, then to Althone and finally to Edgsworthstown. But schoollife for him was uncongenial, as his face was deeply scarred from an attack of small-pox at the age of eight, which made himenormously self-conscious, and gave rise to the misconception that he was stupid, so that his companions at schoolharassed himunbearably.

School life for Goldsmith was uncongenial, as his face was deeply scarred from an attack of small pox. When he joined Trinity College, Dublin, he was obliged to perform menial tasks in order to avail of his expensive education. In February, 1749, he received the B.A. degree. His desperate endeavour to obtain a profession was varied and chequered. His first poem was "The Traveller". Other works include "An Enquiry into the Present State of Learning in Europe", periodical essays like "The Bee", "The Citizen of the World".

At the age ofseventeen, he joined Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar or pocholar, where again he was made conspicuous by the special dress he was obliged to wear as well as the menial tasks he had to perform in order to avail of his expensive education. His tutor, Dr. Theaker Wilder, protracted his humiliation and distress. When, in May 1747, his father died, leavingapittance, his circumstancesbecame further straitened. In February 1749, he received the B.A. degree and left the university.

Goldsmith now tried desperatelyto obtain a profession, but was repeatedly unsuccessful. His variousattempts at acareer in thechurch, themedicalprofessionandthelaw, or his idea ofemigrating to America, did not materialize. On one occasion he gambled away his money, on another, he rambled through Germany, Switzerland and Italy, playing on the flute to substantiate his income. Eachtime the funds provided by his considerate uncle Contarine saw himthrough, During this time, he sent his brother in Ireland a rough draft of *The Traveller,* the first poem he would write.

Among his other temporary pursuits, he now began a career as reader and corrector of the press to the famous novelist, Samuel Richardson, and also served as an usher at Peckham's Academy. Here he came under theobservationofa bookseller, Griffiths, the proprietorofthe *Monthly Review,* who invited himtotryhis hand at criticism. Eventhis, however, lasted amere five months.

It was probably in 1759 that Goldsmith wrote his first important work, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Learning in Europe,* which increased his reputation, though not his financial circumstances. He was still a Grub Street hack, eking out a meagre living and staying a lodgings at 12 Green Arbor Court, Old Bailey. At this time he wrote his periodical essays, entitled *The Bee,* and was commissioned by Smollett to contribute to his new serial *The British Magazine* as well as by John Newberry for *The Public Ledger,* where he wrote the essays that constitute *The Citizen of the* World. This helped to relieve his economic problems to a great extent, and enabled himto shift his accommodation to Fleet Street, where Dr. Johnson visited him and became one of his closest friends.

Goldsmithnowengagedhimselfin writing furtherworks, as widelyranging as history, biography, novel, poetry, essaysandreviews andevennaturalhistory, whichkept himoccupied throughout his

life. *The History of Mecklenburg*, Plutarch's *Lives* (abridged), *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *History of England, History of the Earth & Animated Nature*, biographies of Parnell and Bolingbroke, *The Good-Natured Man, The Traveller*-all these works, and others, followed in quick succession. His finances constantly vacillated, as he was inclined to spend the large sums of money he received for his writing in investing in newer and more lavishly decorated residences. But despite the financial problems constantly besettinghim, which he wardedoff byfurther writing, he enjoyed life, partied and junketed at the clubs he now frequented, and also attended literarygatherings.

The writing of periodical essays in different magazines relieved Goldsmith's economic problems to a great extent. He then engaged himself in writing further works ranging as history, biography, novel, poetry, essays, reviews and even natural history

— "The History of Mecklenburg", Pluturch's "Lives", "The Vicar of Wakefield", "The Good-Natured Man" and so on.

In 1768, thedeathofhis brother Henryreawakened in himnostalgic memoriesofhis childhood, and inspired the poignant reminiscence of *The Deserted Village.* He dedicated it to his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was the President of the RoyalAcademy. It was published on 26 May 1770 and proved an unqualified success.

In 1772 Goldsmith wrote his last work, *She Stoops of Conquer*, or *The Mistakes of a Night* which time has proved to have beenone ofthe most hilarious and popular plays ever staged.

In March 1774, the constant toil and stress of his work-laden life took its toll upon him, and brought ona nervous fever, ofwhich he died on 4 April. He was only 46.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Name some of Goldsmith's periodicalessays.
2. NamesomeofGoldsmith'sworksranging as history, biography, novel, poetryandessays.

Unit 7(b): HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Oliver Goldsmith lived at a time when Augustan poetry had almost exhausted its possibilities, and Romanticism was yet to be born. He, together with other such poets such as Gray, Collins, Thomson, Smart and Cowper have been termed the Pre-Romantic poets, because their poetry, though influenced by the prevailing neo-classical spirit, bears distinctive marks of breaking away from themand exploring other themes, using language more imaginatively, manifesting a sense of wonder at the creative and prophetic powers of the poet, and introducing a love of nature and religious fervour andahumanitarianconsciousnessthatexistedmuchbeforethe French Revolution-features that wereto be the hallmarks of Romantic poetry.

Augustanfeatures can yet be traced in Goldsmith'spoetry, in theepicsimiles, character-sketches, the use of the pastoral form, which is a classical convention, as well as the use of rhymed couplets, but Romantic traits are also subtlyprefigured.

In *The Deserted Village,* Goldsmith speaks out against the injustice meted out to the peasants, as Grayretaliates against the tyrannical monarch in *The Bard,* Crabbe against the despotic methods of those in power, and Blake in *Songs of Innocence & Experience* distinguishes between these binaryoppositions. Goldsmith's intrusion into the poem at the end to mournthe departureof Poetry equates poetrywith liberty. The poemalso prefigures the type of poetry, like Wordsworth's that is rooted in ruralvalues whicha commercialsocietyrenders vulnerable.

In the prefatorydedication, Goldsmith refers to "the poet's imagination," a concept that was to become the dominating concern of Romantic Poetry.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment onthehistoricalbackgroundof Goldsmith's poetry.

Unit 7(c): *THE DESERTED VILLAGE* BACKGROUND OF THE POEM

The poemarticulates a serious concernwiththe after-effects ofthe Industrial Revolution, and, in particular, with the Enclosure Acts, which had been implemented in order to "enclose" or take awayarable land fromthe hands ofsmallproprietors and sanctionthe formationofextensive private parksor vast farmlands. This occasionedthe displacement or evacuationof large numbersof yeoman-farmers or cottiers, who had been employed on this common land for generations. Their only alternative was to seek employment in the city or else emigrate to the distant, unknown territory of America.

The village of Lissoy, where Goldsmith had spent the happy years of his childhood, had been purchased by General Napper (or Napier or Naper), thuscompelling the familieswhichhad so long dwelt there to seek rehabilitation elsewhere.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What do you know about the background of poem "The Deserted Village" ?

Unit 7(d): DEDICATION TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

"I knowyouwillobject (and indeedseveralofour best and wisest friendsconcur in theopinion) that the depopulation it deplores is nowhere to be seen, and the disorders it laments are onlyto be

found in the poet's imagination. Tothis I can scarcelymake anyother answerthan I sincerelybelieve what I have written; that l have taken all possible pains, in my countryexcursions, for these four or five years past, to be certain of what I allege, and that all my views and enquiries have led me to believe those miseries real, which I have attempted to display".

Unit 8(a): THEME OF THE POEM

The Deserted Village depicts the picturesque and idealized life that existed in Auburn (the name by which Goldsmithrefers to Lissoy) in theyears preceding the EnclosureActs, and compares it with the barren and unkempt condition of the village when the poet revisits it, as well as the imagined tragic and exacting conditions in which the villagers exist at present. The pastoral, idyllic beauty of the village is encapsulated in the first 34 lines, before it is brought to an abrupt halt. Thereafter, the poem vacillates between both extremes, expatiating on the charms ofAuburn-its natural beauty and prosperity, the simplicity and artlessness of its inhabitants, with their innocent diversions and enduring human values, and singles out two characters-the schoolmaster and priest-for detailed illustration. The poet deplores the change and inveighs against the *degenerate times* with its attendant pursuit of luxuryand commercial enterprise. He gives a graphic portrayalof the fears and constraints that nowoverwhelmthe displaced villagers, and apostrophizes Poetry, which, like the rural virtues symbolized by the erstwhile populace, is leaving, as it is unable to withstandthe indifference towards it that theremaining population manifests.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What is the keynote of the poem ?

Unit 8(b): THE PASTORAL

The pastoral(derived fromthe Latinword pastoralmeaning "concerning shepherds") is a genre that was introduced in the 3rd century B.C. by Theocritus (316-260 B.C.), a native of Syracuse in Sicily,in his ldyls (in Greek, a little figure or picture), poems which described incidents in the lives of shepherds and shepherdesses, such as rural activities and contests, and their loves and sorrows. His poem on the death of a shepherd called Daphnis provided the prototype for a variation of the pastoral, called the pastoral elegy. He was succeeded, after his death, by Bion (c. 100 B.C.) and Moschus (C. 150 B.C.) and subsequently, by the Roman poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.) who used these features in his Eclogues (a collection of pastoral poems) as an artificial convention to evoke a prelapsarian golden age. In the late Middle Ages, the impact of Christianity laid its impress on the genre, with its equation of pastor with shepherd, and the concept of Christ as the shepherd looking after his flock, as exemplified in the 23rd psalm, The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want.

The Italian renaissance, with its renewed interest in the classics, evinced a flowering of the pastoral, diversifying its range and scope and producing hybrid genes such as the prose pastoral, as for instance, in Boccaccio's *Ameto,* which inspired Sannazaro, the creator ofthe modern pastoral, to write *Arcadia,* a pastoral romance. There was also pastoral drama such as Tasso's *Aminta* (1581) and Guarini's *II Pastor Fido* (1585). The pastoral traits were extended to include satire and personalcomment, as in Petrarch's *Eclogues* and Mantuan's Latin pastorals.

In England, thechiefexponentsofthepastoralwere Sidney, *(Arcadia),* Spenser (*The Shepherd's Calendar*) and Milton, who blended this genre with the ode *(L'allegro & II Penseroso*), the drama (*Comus*), and the elegy *(Lycidas)*. Inthe 18th century, it was popular as a beginner's feat in classical imitation, as in Pope's *Pastorals* or as burlesque "town-eclogues" as in Gayand Swift. By the 19th century, it was no longer a traditional form ofpoetry, and its range had reduced to include a handful of poems, such as Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and *Michael,* Thomson's *The Seasons,* Shelley's *Adonais* and Arnold's *Thyrsis.* The 20th century witnessed a further decline, but there were some notable poems by Pound, Auden, MacNiece and in particular, R.S. Thomas.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What does "pastoral" mean ? Write a note onthe evolution of pastoral poetry ?

Unit 8(c): PASTORAL FEATURES IN *THE DESERTED VILLAGE*

Oliver Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village* has distinct pastoral features, in that it deals withthe idyllic life ofthe countryside, with its attendant joys and sorrows, its innocent and tranquil existence and its agriculturalprosperity.

The opening lines of the poemabound in myriad picturesque description. *Sweet Auburn* is the *loveliest village of the plain,* and consequently *smiling Spring* is reluctant to depart from it. Every charm is etched on the poet's memory:

The sheltered nook, the cultivated farm. The

never-failing brook, the busy busy mill,

The decent church that topped the neighbouring

hill, The hawthorn bush.

Theinnocenceandease that characterizes the simple villagers contributes to their life of *humble happiness,* where pleasures are shared; the elderly watch while the young participate in sports on holidays; on workdays, after their tasks are over, the men seek entertainment and companionship over glasses of ale at the inn. Romance blooms covertly despite the strict chaperones keeping

watch; couples dance beneath the *spreading tree* that encompasses them, and happy, spontaneous laughter reverberates all over the place.

Two characters subtly dominate the scene. It is the village schoolmaster who guides the mischievous boys in the academic path, impressing them with his towering knowledge and skills, whose stern exterior conceals a kind and concerned heart. But it is the village preacher whom they find more endearing and approachable, as persons ranging from vagrant beggars to disbanded soldiers, irreverent fools to dying men, are uniformly consoled by his words. He is their spiritual guide, reminiscent of Chaucer's Parson, who "watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all."

"The Deserted Village", though not a conventional pastoral, is a pastoral in its setting and character and concerns the trials and tribulations of rustic life. It blends romance with reality, idealization with blatant truth.

But The Deserted Village is a pastoral with a difference. It does not merely enumerate the pleasures of country life, it simultaneously recounts the tragedy of the villagers' later existence, and paints the desolation of Auburn in subsequent years. The tyrant's hand has effaced all the beauty and charm of Auburn, its people and sports, leaving the entire stretch desolate and barren.

The book, once never-failing and glassy, is now choked with sedge; instead of the carolling of the birds of spring, the bittern's ominous notes echo across the untenanted plain; the *footway* is *grass-grown* and difficult to traverse; the preacher's cottage is no longer identified as a place where the *garden smiled* but by the encompassing torn shrubs. There are *no cheerful murmurs* and *no busy steps* any longer; everything is bleak and sepulchral.

Those who have left for the city, hoping for a betterment of their position, have been faced with the glaring truth of the degradation which threatens to engulf them. They are soon reduced to penury, and starve at the gates of rich men who take advantage of their innocent and trustful natures. The plight of one such girl is described, a sweet and modest girl, who has been betrayed, and *with heavy heart deplores that luckless hour.* But those who have been exiled to *new-found worlds* have not fared any better. They have had to face *torrid tracts* and *blazing suns* and accost the *vengeful snake* and *crouching tiger* and numerous other unexpected hazards.

The Deserted Village is also not a conventional pastoral in the sense that it lacks some of the characteristics present, for instance, in Milton's *Lycidas* or Shelley's *Adonais.* The poet does not invoke the Muses at the beginning of the poem for inspiration. Nor are the nymphs or their equivalent, who are asked to account for their negligence. Nature does not mourn for the people concerned, nor is there a procession of mourners. Finally and most significantly, there is no abrupt change of tone towards the end of the poem, no transition from despair to hope.

And yet *The Deserted Village* is a pastoral in its setting and character, and concerns the trials and tribulations of rustic life. It blends romance with reality, idealization with blatant truth. The poet

is the solitary mourner, apart from the *wretched matron* who has no other recourse except to eke her solitaryexistence.

Goldsmith also introduces a characteristic of the later pastoral, namely, social criticism and personalcomment. The poem is replete withsuch instances. The most incisive criticism is brought out through the contrast between Auburn and the city, which is echoed in the binary opposition between natural/artificial. *Simplicity, innocence, charm, happiness,* and *joy* are pitted against *luxury, profusion, pomp. splendour, prosperity* against *plenty, nature* against *nurture.*

In the manner of Wordsworth's *Michael*, which it anticipates, Goldsmith's poem does not mourn a death per se, but the destruction of values.

The didactic nature of the later pastoral is also evident in the apostrophe to Poetry, which is personified as a *Dear, charming nymph,* who is *neglected anddecried* by the insensitive, mercenary, city-dwellers, and hence is faced with no other option but to exile herself from this uncongenial environment.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider *The Deserted Village* as a pastoral poem.

Unit 8(d): CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The poembegins with an apostrophe to Auburn, the *loveliest village* the speaker has seen. He then proceeds to expatiate on her charms. Physical well-being and mental content, *(health and plenty)*keepthevillagerscheerfulandevenSpringand Summer show a definite predilection towards her, in the protraction of their stay. The speaker, whose youth has beenspent here, points out each sheltered nook *(bowers of innocence and ease)* and each landmark *(the cultivated farm, the busy mill, the decent church, the hawthorn bush)* which contributes to her charm. On Sundays the entire populace congregates around the *spreadingtree,* theyoung to participate andthe aged to leisurely observe their pursuits from the vantage point of their seats. Innocent activities, such as competitions and dances prevail, and young lovers take advantageofthe occasion to pursue their amorous dalliance. To them, eventheir daily labour is not a drudgery but a pleasant occupation.

The poem begins with an apostrophe to Auburn, the 'Loveliest village'. But the aftermath of the departure of villagers is portrayed with a suddenness that parallels the abruptness of the villagers' evaluation. His hope to return to the paradisiacal spot after all the tired and anguished experiences of his life is tinged with nostalgia.

With a suddenness that parallels the abruptness of the villagers'evacuation, the aftermath of their departure is portrayed. The *tyrant* has rendered the entire plain desolate. The speaker's grief compels himto insert a few personal observations here. *Princes and lords* and their successes are

but transitory, but such a *bold peasantry,* once evicted, can never be replaced. However, the growth of tradesmen has altered human perceptions on what the prosperity of a country entails. Opulent merchants, with their *unwieldy wealth* and *cumbrous pomp* have usurped the land from the *haplessswain,* not recognizing in their folly and ignorance, theenormityofthewrongtheyhave done.

As the speaker glances around the altered sights of Auburn, the *glades forlorn,* the *tangling walks* and *ruined grounds,* he recalls with nostalgia how he had hoped to return to this paradisiacal spot after all the tired and anguished experiences of his life. He had not only cherished it as a place of rest and solace, but also desired to regale the simple villagers with his experiences and impress themwith his erudition or *book-learned* skill. In a Homeric simile, he compares himself to a hare, pursued by hounds, whicheventuallyreturns to theplace fromwhere it beganits flight. Thespeaker had similarly wished to return home after his wanderings and die here. He believes that this would have given him a foretasteofheaven.

In the lonely, barren surroundings through which he now traverses, the speaker is reminded of the myriad sounds he had earlier heard here as evening drew to aclose. The mingled harmonyofthe maid'ssong, the lowing herd, the gaggle ofthe geese, the childrenwhooping with joy as schoolgave over, the baying of the watchdog. and the full-throated laughter of the happy villagers was wafted out to him in the intermittent pausesbetweenthe melodious notesofthe nightingale.

Thespeaker now givesdetailedportrayals oftwoofthemost remarkablecharacters inAuburn, in the manner of the classical character-portrayals of Theophrastus, which he has done in earlier works *(e.g. The Man in Black* and *Beau Tibbs* in *The Citizen of the World).* The first is that of the village preacher, whose character was eitherderived fromhisfather, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, his brother Henry or his uncle Contarine, or a fusion of these characters. Atrue preacher and an *honest rustic,* in the manner of Chaucer's Parson, he was loved and held in great esteem by his congregation, as he prioritized preaching and giving the villagers spiritual sustenance, and was indifferent equallyto ambition as to monetaryconcerns.

Goldsmith gives detailed portrayals of the village preacher and the village schoolmaster in the manner of the classical character portrayals of Theophrastus.

Those who gathered at his house included vagrants, beggars, *ruined spendthrifts* and battered soldiers, whom he would both chide and relieve of their problems, often talking late into the night, commiseratingwiththeir sorrowstosuch an extent that he wouldoftenforgettheir faults. Hisconcern extended to all his flock, to whom he would minister comfort and ease, particularly to those ontheir deathbed, whose *despair and anguish* he would do his best to alleviate.

At church, his sermons proved so sincere and affecting that even unbelievers were moved to pray, and after the service, the villagers would gather around him, their childrenplucking at his robe,

to show their affection and esteem. He was always ready with a smile, as he held their cares and griefs very close to his heart, although his serious thoughts were turned to heaven. In a Homeric simile, Goldsmith compares him to a *tall cliff* which is surrounded by storm-clouds at the centre, whereas its peak is open to the sunshine. These clouds embody his worldly worries, whereas the *eternal sunshine* signifies his sublime absorptionwiththe divine.

Theother character in the village whom Goldsmithsingles out for attention is the schoolmaster, who'soriginal is undoubtedlyThomas Byrne, who hadtaught him in his childhood. He had beenthe quartermaster in Queen Anne's wars at Spain, and often regaled his student with these adventures. Here he is portrayed as a man of stern appearance and strict behaviour, though this severity is attributed to his excessive love for learning. The students have learnt to fathom his mood from a scrutiny of his face, and affect a pleasure at his jokes which they do not feel, in order to keep him in a good mood, as his frowns forebode ill for them.

The village schoolmaster was an extremelyerudite man, and impressed the rustics withthe vast extent of his learning. Not onlycould he write and cipher, he could also measure lands and presage the times when rents were due and even calculate the fluid content of vessels. But what awed them most was his ability to argue, using *words of learned length and thundering sound* and continuing even after he had been overcome. It was incredible to them that *one small head could carry all he knew.*

The speaker now passes a hawthorntree, on whose branches hung a signpost, in happier times, bearing the name and picture ofthe village alehouse. Here *greybeard Mirth* once associated with *smiling Toil* anddiscussed village matters in serioustones. The speaker fondly recalls the interior of the alehouse, with its *sanded floor* and *whitewashed walls,* the *varnished clock* and chest of drawers, the pictures of the twelve good rules and the broken teacups placed over the chimney. He mourns, with theknell-like anaphoric iteration *No more,* thepassing awayof their simple pleasures, such as the farmer communicating the news of his harvest, the woodman singing a ballad, the smith listening to them in silence and the innkeeper busy keeping the ale in circulation, after it had first beenkissed bythe barmaid, as was the custom.

He gives graphic and romantic description of the Lawthorn tree, the village alehouse and so on. He justifies his preference for the simple pleasures and "spontaneous joys" over "all the gloss of art".

The speaker now justifies his preference for these simple pleasures and *spontaneous joys* over *all the gloss of art*. The villagers' *simple blessings* are prompted by nature and innocent ofevil, but the pleasures stimulated by art are showy and affected, like the *long pomp* and *midnight masquerades,* which are a blatant display of *wanton wealth,* and instead of making a person content, aggravates his desires further. Indeed, the speaker questions whether this emotion can truly be described as *joy*.

Agitated by the trend of his thoughts, the speaker nowaddresses the politicians, asking them to differentiate between a *splendid* and *a happy land.* He repeats an idea he has expressed in *The Citizen of the World,* that *"Too much commerce may injure a nation as well as too little.. and there is a widedifference between aconquering and a flourishing empire*." He feels that prosperity should not be exalted at the expense of the future of the poor peasants; one man should not enjoy a vast estate alone if it deprives so manyof their daily wages.

At this point the speaker indulges in another impassioned epic simile to drive home his point. The land, arrayed in *nature's simplest charms,* is compared to a young girl, who possesses a youth and naturalattractiveness that is becoming. Whenolder, she loses this beauty, and resorts to artificial aids to enhance her appeal. Similarly, the land, which does not need any artificial embellishment, appears garish when palaces and lofty towers are built upon it, and its pristine beauty is spoilt. Therefore, considering the prosperity of the country without reflecting upon the well-being of its peasantry is tantamount to making it *a garden, and agrave.*

The speaker next ponders onthe alternatives present to the villagers. Some opt for the city, but here they encounter a luxury from which they are exempted. The people who live here pamper themselves with profusion at the expense of these honest labourers. The contrast is glaring; the courtier *glitters in brocade* while the *pale artist plies his sickly trade;* and the ostentatious *long-drawnpomps* ofthewealthyare set against the formidable but familiar sight ofthegibbet, because for thepoor, thepenallaws are so stringent that manyoffences such as forgery, horse-theft and shop-lifting are punishable by death, and hence the gibbet is a familiar sight ofthe 18th centuryscene.

The land, arrayed in nature's simplest charms, is compared to a young girl, who possesses a natural attractive-ness that is becoming, and when older, she losses this beauty, and resorts to artificial aids to enhance her appeal. Then the speaker reverts to the day of their departure.

As he muses on the *richly decked* city dwellers in their chariots in the *blazing square,* the speaker comments, with scathing irony, *Sure, these denote one universal joy !*

The plight ofone suchmaiden is then highlighted : a sweet, modest village belle who has aspired for a better life in the city, and since duplicity is foreignto her, has not hesitated to put her trust in a city-dweller. He however, has exploited this implicit trust and betrayed her, compelling her to a life of starvation or beggary, or even prostitution. If these villagers have been reduced to penury or worse, those who have chosento emigrate have not fared much better.

The speaker imagines them venturing through *torrid tracts* under *blazing suns* with hesitant steps, as this is so different from the life to which they are accustomed. They pass through wild forests and *matted woods* which are frequented by snakes and tigers and also murderous savages; theyexperience tornados which turn the whole area into a *ravaged landscape.*

The speaker now reverts to the day of their departure. The *poor exiles* cast lingering looks at their cottages, hoping to resume their lives in a similar environment in the west, but loth to face the unknown country, theydissolve into tears. The *goodoldsire* eventually summons courage for the sakeof his family, and is the first to leave. His lovelydaughter accompanies him, leaving her lover to his destiny. Her mother is the last to depart, crying and kissing her babies as she too bids goodbye to this beloved home for ever.

At this point the speaker intrudes again, apostrophizing luxury, and cursing it as it contravenes the age-old doctrine ofplain living and highthinking. Kingdoms whichthrive on luxuryexpand to a *sickly greatness* and resemble a *bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe.* Their strength is finally sapped and destruction follows. As the speaker stands amidst the ruins ofAuburn, he can envisage *the rural virtues leave the land.* He pictures the *melancholy band* of villagers boarding the ship thatwilltransportthemawayfromtheir homelandforever, andwiththemallthevirtuestheyrepresent, *contented toil, hospitable care, kind, connubial tenderness,* and above all, the sterling qualities of piety, loyalty and love. Withthemdeparts Poetry, as she is not cherished in this land any more, and leaves in search of a more hospitable environment. Being a poet, the speaker pays tribute to her as she encourages the *nobler arts.* She is the *source of all my bliss and all my woe,* since society is generally indifferent to poetryand does not requite the poet properly for his efforts, so the pleasure ofcomposing poetry is its sole recompense. He bids Poetryfarewell and reminds her that she also has a didactic purpose, not only an aesthetic one. Wherever she goes, to *Torno's cliffs* in Sweden or to the other hemisphere, to *Pambamarca's side* in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, her voice should speak out against the wrongs that are perpetrated and *teach erring man* to prioritize human values and not wealth. The poemends withanother simile whichseeks to emphasize that an empire whichhas beenbuilt throughcommercialenterprise can one day be destroyed, just as the oceancan sweep awaya breakwater which has been constructed with great labour. But those who depend on their owntalent and ability can withstand the scourge of time, just as the rocks onthe seashore are powerfulenoughto resist the constant pounding ofthe waves.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Attempt a criticalanalysis ofthe poem"The Deserted Village".

Unit 8(e): CRITICISM

Lord Macaulay; "It is made up of incongruous parts. The village in its happy days is a true English village. The village in its decay is an Irishvillage.The felicityand the miserywhich Goldsmith has brought close together belong to two different countriesand to two different stages in the progress of society. He had assuredly never seen in his native island such a rural paradise, such a seat of

plenty, content andtranquillitysuch as his "Auburn." He had assuredlynever seen in England all the inhabitants ofsucha paradise turned outoftheir homes in one dayand forced to emigrate in a body to America. The hamlet he had probably seen in Kent, the ejectment he had probably seen in Munster, but by joining the two, he has produced something which never was and never will be seen in anyother part of the world."

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Basil Willey : *The Eighteenth Century Background*
2. Boris Ford : *Pelican Guide to English Literature Vol-4*
3. John Butt : *English Literature in the mid-Eighteenth Century*
4. G.S. Rousseau : *Goldsmith: The Critical Heritage*
5. J. R. Watson(ed. : *Pre-Romanticism in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century* (Casebook series)
6. James Sutherland : *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry*
7. R. Trickett : *The Honest Muse; A Study in Augustan Verse*
8. Raymond Williams : *The Country & the City*

ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is the role of Goldsmith's "poetic self" in his poem *The Deserted Village?* Does it addto the tragic effect?
2. Comment on the blend of lyrical and dramatic elements in Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village.*
3. Analyze *The Deserted Village* as a pastoralpoem with a difference.
4. Discuss the theme of "Dispossession and exile" in Goldsmith's poem*The Deserted Village.*
5. It hasbeenobservedthat Goldsmith'spoem*The Deserted Village* is "Classic in form, Romantic in content." Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Critically coment on Goldsmith's art ofcharacter-portrayal in *The Deserted Village*.
7. Discuss Goldsmith as Pre-Romantic poet with reference to *The Deserted Village*.

BLOCK-III

The Way of the World – William Congreve

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 9(a): INTRODUCTION

This module introduces you to *The Way of the World,* the finest speedmen of the Rectoration Comedy of Manners. Even after the passage of three centuries the appeal of the sparking wit, brilliant reparteeandelegant proseofthis comedy is undimmede. You needonlyto readthe play for yourselves to be awareofits enduring charm. This module will assume that you are acquainted with the text.

Unit 9(b): OBJECTIVES

After acquainting you with the main factsof William Congreve's life and giving you an idea of Congreve'suniquequalities as acomic playwright, themodule discussestheplay in detail. There is a synopsis ofthe plot, an account ofthe main characters and the way they are made memorable in one way or another, as well as, a detailed analysis of the play's most facous seene. The major aspects ofthe play such as the significance, ofthe little, its representation of Restoration manners, thenatureofitswit, anditscriticismofprevalent socialconventions, arecomprehensivelydiscussed. Youmust nowsupplementthe discussionwitha sensitive reading ofthetext.

Unit 9(c): WILLIAM CONGREVE: LIFE AND WORK

The greatest exponent of the Restoration comedyof manners, William Congreve was born at Bardsey, near Leeds, on 24 January 1670, but spent his youth in Ireland, where his father served as a liuntenant in the Englishgarrisons at Youghaland Carrickfergus. When Congreve wastwelve years old, his father was transferred to Kilkenny, where he joined the Duke of Ormond's regiment. In April1686 Congreveleft Kilkenny Collegewhichgave hima securegrounding in classicallanguages and literatures and went to Trinity College, Dublin, to continue his studies. Jonathan Swift was one ofhis fellow-students in Trinity College, which was then at the zenith of intellectual excellence, but because of the political turmoil of the day, consequent upon the accession to the throne of the Catholic King James II, the College closed for a span in 1689. Congreve probably arrived in London about the middle of the year and entered the Middle Temple as a law student in March 1691. He had, however, little or no interest in legal studies ; what he learned fromhis visits to Dublin's SmokeAlleyTheatre proved to be of greater interest than the dry-as-dust letters of the law. Enthusiastically interested in a literary career, he soon gained the attention of the sixty-year-old John Dryden, lately poet Laureate, who still championed the cause of the emancipated socio-culturalethos ofthe Restoration.

Enthusiastically interested in a Literary career, Congreve abondoned law and evinced a keen interest in two leading interest in two leading theatres—the theatre Royal and the Lincolin's Inn Fields Theatre. He took up writing before long and Published his four comedies within a period of only seven years. His works include 'Incognita', 'The Old Bachelor', 'The Double Dealer', 'Love for Love', 'The Mourning Bride', 'The Way of the World' and so on.

Congreve abandoned law for literature and evinced a keen interest in two leading theatres, the Theatre Royal and the Lincolin's Inn Fields Theatre. He took up writing before long and published his four comedies within a period of only seven years. In 1691 he published a short prose romance, *Incognita*, under the name of *Cleophil*, which he had written in Trinity College some two or three years ago. His first comedy, *The Old Bachelor*, was staged at the Theatre Royal in 1693 with brilliant success. The warm recommendations of Dryden and Southerne and the superb skills of Thomas Betterton and Anne Bracegirdle went a long wayto establish the young comedy-maker (who was then only twenty-three) as an irimitable masterofcomic dialogue, verbalwit, rhythmand movement oflimpid spontaneity. That he wasalso adeep-searchinganalyistoffemininepsychologywasprovedbeyond

any shadow of doubt. Congreve followed his first comedy in 1694 with another comedy, *The Double-Dealer*, and in 1695 with *Lovefor Love*, produced by andstarring again, Thomas Betterson andAnne Bracegierdle, whichimmediatelywonfor himthehighest accoladesofthe Englishtheatre - world. Twoyears later, he had an almost equalpopular success withhis versetragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, which was first performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields in February 1697. Unfortunately his next and best play, *The Way of the World* (1700), was not well received, partly because of the allegations ofimmoralityand licentiousness brought against Restorationcomedy by Jeremy Collier. Indeed, the best comedy proved to be the worst failure on the stage.

At theageofthirtyCongreveretired to live the life ofa non-political, non-interfering gentleman—a claimwhichirritated Voltaire when he visited him in 1726. His creative inspirationcertainlyflagged, but it did not altogether fail. Aside fromthe afore-mentioned works, Congreve wrote his masque, *The Judgment of Paris* (1701), his opera libretto, *Semele* (1710), his *Odes to St Cecilia's Day* (1701), his long poem, *Epistle to Lord Cobham* (written in 1728, but published posthomously), and his poetical tributes to the brother and father-in-law of Henerietta Godolphin, who had been his firm and sincere friend since the cessation of his attachment to Anne Bracegierdle around 1702 to 1703. Dubing the last few years of his life Congreve became financially and materially successful because of his association with the Kit- Cat Club at the house of the publisher, Jacob Tomson. He obtained a new political host with effect from 1705 when he became Commissioner for wines at an annualsalaryof£200. But Fortunereallysmiledonhimwiththeestablishmentofthe Whiggovernment following the accession of George I in 1714. He was made Secretaryto the Island of Jamaica at an annualsalaryof £700. His health was however, declining fast. Alonelymansuffering fromgout and cataract, he could onlyundertake asadtrip downthe memorylane, although Henrietta was withhim to the last. Congreve died at his Surrey street lodgings on 19 January 1729.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Name the chief works of Congreve.

Unit 10(a) CONGREVE - THE COMIC PLAYWRIGHT

When Congreve started writing his comedies in the last decade of the seventeenth century, during the reign of William III, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Bacchanalian orgythat brokeout withthe returning monarchy had already yielded place to weariness and even disillusion. Therewas hardlyanycomic playwright who could continuethetraditionofthe comedyofmanners with vigour and singleness of purpose ; Dryden's laurels were yet to be bequeathed. It was but naturalthat whenAnne Bracegierdle appearedbeforethe Drury Lane audience to speakthe Prologue to *The Old Bachelor* (1693), she actuallyheld a brief for the 'young author'whomshe described as

civilandbashful, entreating the favourofhis judges. Thejudgeswereall fascinatedbecausethenew venture brought the diverse elements of seventeenth - century Englishcomedyinto adelightfulunityand offered a banquet of delicious, oftenepigrammatic, wit, while unfolding thepageant ofa sophisticated society made ridiculous withthe flourish of modishaffectatious. Indeed, Congreve became the darling not merelyof the playgoers but also of Dryden who introduced his second comedy, *The Double Dealer* (1694), placing on record a tribute of eestatic fervour : 'Inhim all beauties, of this age we see'— Etherege's'courtship', Southerne'spurityand 'the satire, wit andstrengthofManlyWycherley.'

Congreve derived elements from various sources, both foreign and native, from Terence, Moliere, Jonson, Middleton, Martson, Fletcher and Beumont in particular, and forged a new comedic genre which would celebrate the grace and polish of an essentially urban civilisation. All that is best in the Restoration continuance of Elezabethan dramatic conventions may be illustrated in Congreve's plays.

Dryden was certainly right, but we should also add that Congreve's alliance was not with Restoration comedy alone ; that he derived from various sources, both foreign and native, from Tefence, Moliere, Jonson, Middleton, Marston, Fletcher and Brome in particular, and forged a new comedic genre which would celebrate the grace and polish of an essentially urban civilization. In complexromantic intriguesand subtleties ofdialogueand characterization he was indebted to Terence who reworked and developed the Grek comedy of Menander ; Moliere was another influence of great magnitude, as has been shown by Dudley Howe Miles in his *The Influence of Moliere on Restoration Comedy* ; and apropos of the influence of Jonson, or for that matter, of the whole of Elizabethan/ Jacobeancomictraditiononhiswork, we haveauthoritativecorroborationfromBonamy Dobree, Kathleen Lynchand Ian Donaldson. Lynchhas specificallyaverred that themost fundamental conspicuousinfluence in Congreve'scomedywasthe influenceofthe Elizabethantradition.According to her, mostwritersof Restorationcomedyfellback at times, witha senseofrelief, uponElizabethan plots and humours, but Congreve was, in this respect, the most conservative of them all. "All that is best in the Restoration continuance of Elizabethan dramatic conventions may be illustrated in Congreve's plays'. (*The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy*).

"Love for Love gave Congreve an opportunity to make a really impressive display of his gift for gay and witty comedy without rancour. Mild satire is sometimes perceptible in Congreve's routine hits at the usual and obvious targets, the pretending astrologer, the half-witted beau, the awkward country girl, but these hits are not sufficiently powerful to situate the play within the tradition of the realistic satirical in English comedy.

The Old Bachelor with the 'humorous' excesses of Heartwell, Fondlewife and Captain Bluffe proved aresounding success, but *The Double Dealer* failed probably because Congrevetried to register in it anewidiomofmoralseriousness and to satirize theshamelesshypocrisyofhisage in thepersons of LadyTouchwood Lady Frothand Lady Plyant who have no hesitation in cuckoldingtheir husbands without, of course, ruffling the placid appearances of social decorum. Maskwell in the play is a villain bent on destroying the happiness of Mellefont and Cynthia, and he has been depieted, not

comically, but as a manifestationofcalculating evil and a miracle ofatrocious ingratitude. He is, in some sense, a descendant of Moliere's Tartuffe, but his love intrigue with Lady Touchwood does not comparewiththatofTartuffe with Elmire : Lady Touchwoodlacks dignityand elegance, where Elmire has a fineness ofdisposition, a reticent composure and a prudent understanding ofthings as theyare. For once in his short dramatic career Congreve attempted a manifestly vigorous satire, but it was absolutely dissonant with the audience temper of his time. We must remember that Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* was stageed in 1696, just two years and a few months after the production of *The Double-Dealer*. Englishpeople werethirsting for their cups ofweeping comedy.

Congreve's third comedy, *Love for Love* (1695), however, hit the jackpot, so to speak. It was atriumphant success. It gave Congreve anopportunityto makeareallyimpressivedisplayofhisgift forgayandwittycomedywithoutrancourorrecrimination.There is not muchofMoliere'simfluence in Congreve'splotpatternor art of characterization; the romantic plot resembles that of Fletcher's **The Elder Brother** andthe 'humourous'characters, particularly those of Foresight and Ben have a direct ancestry in Jonson, while Valentine is a susprising variation on Shakespeare's Hamlet. Mild satire is sometimes perceptible in Congreve's routine hits at the usual and obvious targets, the pretending astrologer the half-witted beau, the awkward countrygirl but these hits are not sufficiently powerful to situate the playwithin the tradition of the realistic-satirical in English comedy. Some critics have, however, found in it elementsofsentimentalism, espectally in Valentine's self-fulfilment'that originates in his knowledge ofmoralgoodness and spiritual freedom. Norman Halland, for example, says, in **The First Modern Comedies,** that the action of **Love for love** perfectly exemplifies the last phase of restoration comedy. The hero who rehears fromthe social world of deception and illusion to a personal haven ofemotionalsecurity'discovers the heart behind the mask.'We wonder whether the popular appeal of the play resides in its interpretation as a comedy of almost transcendental affirmation or in its representation ofrollicking zest that enlivens a romantic plot.

In "The Way of the World", Congreve, while envisioning some of the basic qualities of Shakespeare, Jonson, Massingar, Fletcher, Dryden, and Etherege, made an electic impression, part romantic, part critical, but above all, marked by intellectual acuity and emotional depth.

Congreve's last and best comedy, *The Way of the World* (1700), written in the immediate aftermath of Jeremy Collier's searing criticism in *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), did not prove a success when it was first produced. It revealed his social realism and ethical consciousnes; it affirmed his intellectual resourcefulness and 'purity of style'; it reflected his ability to enrich the comedy of manners with a delicate poise and a creative idealism; and yet the theatre-audience found the play impossible to appreciate. The reasonperhaps was that Congreve tried a fresh comedic genre which, while envisioning some ofthe basic qualities of Shakespeare, Jonson, Massingar, Fletcher, Dryden and Etherege, made an eclectic impression, part romantic, part critical, but, above all, marked by intellectual acuityand emotional depth. *The*

Way of the World has often been regarded as a comedy of wit; and the whole of the proviso-scene in Act IV as the supreme triumph of Congreve's intellectual dexterity. It bears witness to Congreve's passion for falling upon fine phrases like a lover, his 'command of dancing words' and his power to regale us with his 'streams of conceited metaphors and the bewildering flights of his fancy' (Allardyce Nicoll). The play has also been considered as a comedy of social criticism in which attack has been made not only on affected forms of wit or artificial modes of politeness but also on the decadent social order, represented by Lady Wishfort suffering from an 'indigestion of widow-hood' that requires to be replaced by a new social order symbolized through the love of Mirabell and Millamant, the young, enlightened hero and heroine.

It is true that Congreve's power lay, not in the fashioning of dramatic incident, but in his mastery of intellect-dominated verbal wit and in his exploration/rendition of contemporary social ethos. Verbal wit and social realism are however, not the ultimate realities in Congreve's comedy which often draws on the intricate matrix of human experience. Sometimes like Bernard Shaw, Congreve gives vent to his suppressed emotions; sprightly wit and acute tragic sense enter into a curious artistic complex. Ann's cry for the father of the Superman and the litany at the end of *Saint Joan* produce a kind of music that palpitates into profound melancholy. Mrs Fainall, the cast mistress of Mirabell in *The Way of the World,* also leaves an impression of unmitigated pain. She has a passion for Mirabell, her former lover, and she is loyal to him in every possible way, but her heart aches at not being loved by her husband. On one occasion she says, 'He [Mr. Fainall] has a humour more prevailing than his curiosity, and will willingly dispense with the hearing of one scandalous story, to avoid an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife.' The affectation of lightness in the remark only deepens the anguish and bitterness the way of the world is strewn with.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider Congreve as a comic playright.

Unit 10(b): THE EPIGRAPH OF THE 1700 EDITION

The epigraph found on the title page of the 1700 edition of The Way of the World contains two Latin quotations from Horace's ***Satires***. In their wider contexts they read in English:

"It is worthwhile, for those of you who wish adulterers no success, to hear how much misfortune they suffer, and how often their pleasure is marred by pain and, though rarely achieved, even then fraught with danger."

"I have no fear in her company that a husband may rush back from the country, the door burst open, the dog bark, the house shake with the din, the woman, deathly pale, leap from her bed, her complicit maid shriek, she fearing for her limbs, her guilty mistress for her dowry and I for myself."The

quotationsoffer a fore-warning ofthe chaos to ensue fromboth infidelityand deception. According to Brian Gibbons, the centraltheme or didactic intent ofthe play is indicated bythe epigraph: the fate ofadulterers and the fears ofa guiltywoman for the loss of her reputation.

Unit 10(c): RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TITLE

Like other comedies in the historyof world drama, The Wayof the World deals with the theme oflove, assimilating, in its fable-structure, an interplay oferotic instincts. There is muchofromance in the comedy, but this romance is controlled and rational rather than exuberant and disruptive of logical propriety. In the ultimate analysis, however, Congreve's comedy is not a romantic comedy, butacriticalcomedythat attests to Congreve'ssocialsolicitudeandethicalconsciousness. It belongs to the realistic-corrective tradition of English comedy and seeks to cure the existing societyof its oddities and flaws, excesses and affectations. Congreve makes a satirical exposition of the social manners of his day - the 'way' in the title of his play refers to contemporary manners, habits or modesofpatternedelegance, andthe'world' impliesthesocietywherethesemannersarerepresented or manipulated.

In choosing the title of his play, Congreve not merelypresents or analyses the societyof his age but also brings out the element of irony in this society's deceptive/affected codeof conduct. Towards the end of the play Mirabell uses the phrase 'the way of the world', while mocking at Fainall's 'confusion' as the latter reads the parchment with the inscription : 'A deed of conveyance of the wholeestaterealofArabella, Languish, widow, in trust to Edward Mirabell'. Mirabell, in fact, turns the tables against Fainall and saves Lady Wishfort's prestige and Mrs Fainall's property; the last laugh is his; and what he emphasizes by referring to 'the wayofthe world' is obviouslythe triumph of Mrs Fainall over her husband who has always tried to play her false. This is the 'most unkindest cut' of irony in a society that is doubtless patriarchal. ***The Way of the World*** is an ironic title, despite Brian Gibbons's view that 'Mirabell imposes on the cynically realistic wayof the world the more generous vision of the art of comedy.'

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. How far is the title of "The Wayofthe World" relevant and appropriate ?

Unit 11(a): *THE WAY OF THE WORLD*: PLOT SYNOPSIS

Act I is set in a chocolate house where Mirabelland Fainall have just finished playing cards. A footmancomesand tells Mirabellthat Waitwell(Mirabell'smale servant) and Foible(LadyWishfort's femaleservant) weremarriedthat morning. Mirabelltells Fainallabout his loveofMillamant and is

encouraged to marryher. Witwoud and Petulant appear and Mirabell is informed that should Lady Wishfort marry, he will lose £6000 of Millamant's inheritance. He willonlyget this money if he can make Lady Wishfort consent to his and Millamant's marriage.

Act II is set in St. James's Park. Mrs Fainall and Mrs Marwood are discussing their hatred of men. FainallappearsandaccusesMrs Marwood(withwhomhe is having an affair) ofloving Mirabell. Meanwhile, Mrs Fainall tells Mirabell that she hates her husband, and they begin to plot about tricking LadyWishfort to give her consent to themarriage. Millamant appears in the park, and angry aboutthe previous night (where Mirabellwas confronted by Lady Wishfort) she lets himknow her displeasure in Mirabell's plan, which she only has a vague idea about. After she leaves, the newly wed servants appear and Mirabellreminds themoftheir roles in the plan.

Act III, IV and V are all set in the home of Lady Wishfort. We are introduced to Lady Wishfort who is encouraged to marry'Sir Rowland'- Mirabell's supposed uncle - by Foible so that Mirabell will lose his inheritance. Sir Rowland is, however, Waitwell in disguise, the plan being to arrange a marriage with Lady Wishfort, whichcannot go ahead because it would be bigamy, and Mirabellwill offer to help her out ofthe embarrassing situation if she consents to her marriage. Later, Mrs Fainall discusses this plan with Foible, but this is overheard by Mrs Marwood. She later tells the plan to Fainall, who decides that he will take his wife's money and go awaywith Mrs Marwood.

Mirabell proposes to Millamant and with Mrs Fainall's encouragement, Millamant accepts. Mirabell leaves as Lady Wishfort arrives, and she lets it be knownthat she wants Millamantto marry her nephew, Sir Wilful, who has just arrived fromthe countryside. Lady Wishfort later gets a letter telling her about the Sir Rowland's plot. Sir Rowland takes the letter and blames Mirabell oftrying to sabotage their wedding. Lady Wishfort agrees to let Sir Rowland bring a marriage contract that night.

By Act V, Lady Wishfort has found out the plot, and Fainall has had Waitwell arrested. Mrs Fainall tells Foible that her previous affair with Mirabell is now public knowledge. Lady Wishfort appears with Mrs Marwood, whomshe's thanking for unveiling the plot. Fainall then appears and usesthe informationof Mrs Fainall'spreviousaffair with Mirabelland Millamant'scontract to marry himto blackmail Lady Wishfort, telling her that she should never marryandthat she is to transfer all the moneyover to him. LadyWishfort tells Mirabellthat she will offer consent to the marriage if he can save her fortune and honour. Mirabell calls on Waitwell who brings a contract from the time before the marriage of the Fainalls in which Mrs Fainall gives all her propertyto Millamant. This neutralises the blackmail attempts, after which Mirabell restores Mrs Fainall's property to her possessionand then is free to marry Millamant withthe full £6000 inheritance.

[Source : Wikipedia]

Unit 11(b): CONGREVE'S ART OF CHARACTER-DRAWING

The total impression that we receive from Congreve's world of comedy is one of a mingled patternwhereindividualeccentricitiesarecoupledwithfashionableaffectations. Thecomiccharacters he depicts are brought into a clear focus as aspects of a single humanityandsuggesttellingdimensions intheir associationwith, andabsorptioninto, thesocialethos.As Clifford Leechobserves in his essay 'Congreve and the Century's End' (in The Dramatist's Experience) :

Congreve's characters are individual eccentrics featuring fashionable affectations. They are brought into a clear focus as aspects of a single humanity and suggest telling dimensions in their association with, and absorption into, the social ethos. They belong mostly to the stock-types of the age—man and women amorously inclined despite their years, fops, would-be-wits and so on.

His characters belong for the most part to the stock-types of theage- menandwomenofwitandfashion;harmlesseccentrics likeForesightandHeartwell; menandwomenamorouslyinclined despitetheiryears, likeSir SampsonLegendandLadyWishfort; unpolished intruders into Londonsociety, like Benand Sir WilfullWitwoud; womenof light virtue; fops and would-be wits- but he so contrives his plays that the characters are not isolated targets but are seen in relation to one another and to their society as a whole.

It is by presenting his dramatis personae against the backdropofresplendent but artificial social conventions that Congreve lays outthe designofhis criticalcomedy.

The Way of the World accomodates, in its cast, an interesting variety of male characters - Witwoud (reminiscent of Jonson's Sir Politic Would-be), a would-be or would-have-been wit who, as Mirabellsays, 'so passionatelyaffectsthe reputation ofunderstandingraillery, that he will construe an affront into a jest; and call downright rudeness and ill language, satire and fire', Petulant, whose name is indicative of his temperament, a choleric man who professes perpetual animosityandturnsoutto be an indecentquareller, andSir Wilfull Witwoud, acountrybumpkinwithhis loam-footedhonestyand endearing warmth, who manages to disgrace himself by becoming embarrassinglydrunk. The hero of Congreve's play, Mirabell (whose name derives from the Latin *mirabilis* meaning 'wonderful'), is of course, the most important male character admired by all the ladies around him. Indeed, the most fullyworked out of all Congreve is male characters, Mirabell, though somewhat devious, manipulative, even amoral(having a prodigalpast) is capable ofbalancingout 'enlightened self-interest withconsiderationforothers'(David Thomas). The'admirer of female beauty' has been contrasted from the very beginning with Fainall (who feigns all), the villain, the shamelesslyself-seeking power-hungryfortune-hunter, whoonlyrepels or shocksus. An outsider in the true senseoftheword, who has no sense offamilyresponsibilityor socialobligation, Fainall embodies the odious crueltyof Hobbes's man in the raw state of nature.

Mirabell, the most fully worked out of all Congreve's male characters, though somewhat devious, manipulative, even amoral is capable of balancing out 'enlightened self-interest with consideration for others'.

Congreve excels in his delineation of female characters. The many-faceted Millamant (whose name derives fromthe Frenchmille [thousand]+amant [love]-surrounded by athousand lovers) apart, the other female characters are also, drawn no less insightfully. Bonamy Dobree regards Mrs Fainall as a figure of'intense realism' - her husband has married her only for her wealth, but he is in love with Mrs Marwood, and she has accepted her loss and defeat with quiet dignity. Moreover, she herself is a victimof an almost Chekhoviansense ofsadness (Cf The Seagull) because she still loves Mirabell, yet has to encourage Millamant and assume airs ofgenerous approbation of her match with him. Arguably the most poignant character in ***The Way of the World*** is Lady Wishfort who is constantly deceived, abused and exploited by all those around her. She is on the wrond side of fifty-precisely fifty-five-but she seems to experience the passions ofrobust sexuality. She is indeed a fort ofwish- ofcarnalappetite and in her conduct she is always dishonest. She may be styled a 'humorist', but her humour is notofone particular shade. She contains 'multitudes' in her humour: luxuriouslust (ofan Epicure Mammon), sullenanger(ofa Morose), vituperativemalevolence (of a Face) gross rancousness (of an Ursula) and, above all, the glaring pretension and hypocrisy, characteristic of all Restoration coquettes. Another female character is Mrs Marwood who is bend on marring the happiness of others. With her selfish lusting, after Mirabell-and her schemes and conspiracies-shechallengescomparisonwithFainall; botharemotivated byappetite, greedand envy.

Congreve excells in his delineation of female characters. Bonany Dobree regards Mrs. Fainall as a figure of intense realism. Lady Wishfort is indeed a fort of wish of carnal appetite.

Themostimportantfemalecharacter in theplay is doubtlessits heroine Millamant, whocombines wit and womanliness in equal proportion. From the very moment of her arrival in Act II, scene I - 'faith fullsail, withher fanspreadandher streamersout'- she is charmingand lovable, an embodiment of the freshness of spring, 'the incarnation of happiness or at least of the desire for it.' (Bonamy Dobree) Millamant is a young girlofchanging moods and fancies, sometimes a little impish, but she also upholds the principles ofdecorumand honour. She 'herselftends, a vestal virgin, the patrician flameof Caroline honour', and by winning Mirabellback to the ways of Caroline honour, 'she makes their love no mere excreseence ofwhimand chance, but the lasting affirmation of the traditional decencies; and the unionoftwo minds within a shared culture.'(Donald Brue, Topics of Restoration Comedy) She realizes the importance of controlled passion and organized logic in a man-woman relationship, as is evident in the proviso sceneoftheplay. She is worldly-wise, yet romantic; practicalyet passionate; far-sighted, yet emotional. She sets great store by the logicalities of life, but she possesses and dwells in a wonderland of airy vitality, hiding her feeling behind the only too necessary artifices of her sex. Once assured of her love, she divests herself of her armour and shows a perfect candour : 'If Mirabell does not make a good husband, I ama lost thing.'

Millamant combines wit and womanliness. She is world-wise, yet romantic ; practical yet passionate ; far-sighted, yet emotional.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment on Congreve's art of characterisation in the play "The Way of the World".

Unit 11(c):
THE WAY OF THE WORLD — AS A COMEDY OF MANNERS

The comedy of manners is the dominant and characteristic type of comedy in the history of world drama - fromAristophanes and Terence to Ibsen, Shaw and Brecht. It is the achievement of the sense of comedy of existence through a humour-slanted critical presentation of social life and patternsofhumanbehaviour, an intellectualand rationaldiscrimination ofvalues. But, asAllardyce Nicollrightly says in his Historyof English Drama (1660-1900) Vol. I, when we saythat Congreve's comedy is a comedyof manners we areusingthe word in its Congreviansense, betokeningsomething brilliant about a manor a woman, not ahumour, but a grace or a habit ofrefined culture, something that looks "a little je ne-scay-quaysh" (to borrow the phrase from Lady Froth's speech in Act II, scene I of The Double Dealer). The manners in Congreve's comedyare, by no means, the behaviour of humanity in general but the affectatious and cultured veneer of a highly developed and self-conscious group towards the close of the seventeenth century. The society it represents is artificial - a powdered and rouged society; it is indeed artificiality whichprovides the unityofatmosphere for a narrow, comic world where 'the true voice of feeling' (to use a Keatsian phrase in a different context) has been stifled in the bantering levity of fanciful and aristocratic high-ups - the beaux and belles who onlyassume affectations.

Congreve's comedyof manners presents a galleryofentertaining comic characters withsundry whims and fancies in the boudoirs and coffee-houses, in the Hyde Park, the Piazza, or the Mall, and these characters are made to spin, as it were, to a gay tune with all the formal discipline of a ballet choreography. The dancing figures of Edgar Degas seem to come out of the delicate haze of impressionismand breathe in the modish trivialities ofa highly sophisticated age. Congreve's comic characters owe their liveliness to the world of manners to which they belong, and sometimes we are made to see even the most fantastic excesses ofthe manners theyassume - the wayward flutter of a fan in the hand of a moody heroine (Millamant) or the riding dress of a much-travelled boor (Sir Wilfull Witwoud). In his delineation of manners, whether elegant or absurd, Congreve acknowledgesthe mingled patternofthe individualand the socialand seeks to continuethe tradition ofcriticalcomedy by exploiting its traditionalmaterial, theoddities andaffectationsofindividuals in society.

Congreve's comedy of manners presents a gallery of entertaining comic characters with sundry whims and fancies in the boudoirs and coffee-houses, in the Hyde Park, the Piazza, or the Mall, and these characters are made to spin, as it were, to gay tune with all the formal discipline of a ballet choreography.

The comedyof manners is also the comedyof wit; and it has been customaryto cite ***The Way of the World*** as an illustration ofthe brightest varietyof Congrevianwit. Comments like 'friendship without freedom is as dull as love without enjoyment, or wine without toasting', 'A wit should no more be sincere, thana womanconstant. One argues a decayofparts as t'other of beauty', and 'the falling out of wits is like the falling out of lovers - we agree in the main like treble and bass'(all made by Witwoud, thougha false wit) are too interesting to miss. Congreve's 'purity of style'and 'perfection of dialogue' certainly remind us of a Frenchman, not, however, of Moliere, but of Gustave Flaubert, author of Madame Bovary. The proviso-scene in where Mirabell and Milamant put forwardcertaintermsand conditions beforethey get marriedwitnesses to thecentralvaluesofurbancivilization. Congreve deals with the exuberance of youthful love, but his comic vision is such as to acknowledgeallthat is morallysignificant in its representation in an upper-classsociety. The norms of love and marriage that Congreve formulates in his comedyvindicatehis socio-ethical consciousness and attest to a lasting affirmation of the traditional decencies. Wit, the splendid gloryandgraceofurbancivilization, the rarequalityofmind that gives the right direction to a pragmatically free society, not onlypermeates the whole ofthe proviso-scene but also enriches the style of the whole play itself. Congreve's style is such as to solidify the dramatic structure and to distinguish between one character and another on the basis of rhetorical rhythms and dictional singularities. It ranges fromone peak to another fromthe stinging cynicism of Fainall to the dulcet melancholyof Mirabell, fromthediaphanouscharmof Millamant to theabusiverage(the Meredithian 'boudoir Billingstate') of LadyWishfort fromthe fashionables affectationofWitwoud to theraucous boorishness of Sir Wilfull Witwoud.

"The Way of the World" is an illustration of the brightest variety of Congrevian wit. Congreve's 'purity of style' and 'perfection of dialogue' certainly remind us of a Frenchman. Congreved deals with the exuberance of youthful love, but his comic vision is such as to acknowledge all that is morally significant in its representation in an upper-class society.

s, ofcourse, polite and amiable, immune fromrancour and indignation, andtherearereasons to subscribe to the view that he anticipates Sheridan whose *The School for Scandal* continues and embellishes the tradition ofthe comedy of manners and invites comparison with his *The Way of the World*. Like the poet of the "Rope of the Lock", he cannot be a devastating critic but he can think of certain values of traditional ethics which impose a pattern on the ridiculously absurd mode of living in the societyof his age that aspired to be civilized in every respect. Yet ever since the non-juryingAnglican priest, Jeremy Collier, flung his fulminationsintothestrongholdsof Englishdrama, it has been the habit to regatoration Comedy as licentious, immoral, obscene and dissolute. The violation of moral decorum in Restoration comedy certainly strikes the attention of even a casual reader and makes him reflect on what the real function or purpose of literature ought to be. It may however be noted that the comic playwrights of the Restoration period, were eager to draw the pictureofasocietyfree fromtheconventionsoffeudalismandchivalry. Theythoughtoflaunchinga

move togards greater justice between manand woman. While presenting their love-relationship in a dramatic form, they drew a line of demarcation between passion and affection. Nevertheless, we are shocked when Lady Wishfort shouts at Foible, her maid-servant, and uses a language of unmatched foulness, or when Waitwell playing the role of Sir Rowland engages in an amorous interview with Lady Wishfort and pays handsome, compliments to her 'adorable person'.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider "The Wayof the World" as a comedyof manners.

Unit 12 (a): *THE WAY OF THE WORLD* - AS A COMEDY OF WIT

Restoration comedy is primarily organized on the basis of wit, which is obviously its most outstanding feature. Almost all the characters in The Wayofthe World engage in an exercize of wit thustestifyingto thedazzlingbrillianceofcongreve'sintellectualdynamics, Dr Jonsonstyles Congreve's characters 'intellectual gladiator's who are made to produce an unceasing salvo of Verbal Wit. Leigh Hunt says that Congreve presents 'a set ofheartless fine ladies and gentlemen, coming in and goingout, saying wittythings at eachother and buzzing in some mazeof intrigue'. Hazlitt' describes how Restorationcomedy, the 'Corinthiancapital'ofpolished elegance spotlightsthe "conquest over dullness." Meredith expresses the view that Congreve 'hits the mean of a fine style and a natural in dialogue.' Dwellingonthe seminalqualiting of Restorationcomedy Whibleyobservesthat in point of concision Congreve's style is still unmatched in the literature of England. The Verbal style of The Wayof the World is obviouslycharacterized by intellect-dominated Wit, but we are also fascinated by the technique that Congreve adopts to draw a line of demarcation between true Wits and false Wits. Thomas Fujimura in The Restoration Comedyof Wit speaks of the characteristics that mark the truewitsoff fromthe false Wits. Thetruewitsaresensitive, imaginative anddecorous, while the false witsthrive onthe superficiesofurbancivilization. The former sharpentheir emotionsupontheir wits while the latter areaffected and pretentious and capitalize onelegant absurdities.

Integrity of feeling and stability of faith - the rich beauties of unalloyed human emotions have been denied Fainall. Brian Gibbons, in his introduction to The Way of the World, speaks of the differences of degree among the false wits in the play. He observes a strict hierarchy from Fainall to Witwoud and thence to Petulant, and arrives at the conclusion that this hierarchy of false wits is indicated 'bythe order in which characters appear inAct I, so that the audience has the opportunity to measureeach in turnagainst Mirabell, thetruewit, and to comparerelativedegreesoffolly.Witwoud and Pelulant are obviously false wits in the play. They are, in the words of Norman Holland in The First Modern Comedies, 'ridiculous, all manner and no substance, as empty as ballons, and blown bywhatever randomstimulicome their wayand suggest preposterousidosyncraces onthe plane of

socialexistence. Witwoudchurnsout fashionableandextranvagantsimilitudesand Mirabelldescribes him as 'a foolwith a good memory, and some fine scraps of other folk's wit'. Pelulant is nearly all vapour and tends as a consequence to be highly explosive, thus betraying his Elizabethan lineage. LadyWishfort who provides broadfunverging onthe farcical is another false wit. Mirabellsays that she 'publishes her detestation of mankind; and full of the vigour of, fifty-five, declares for a friend and *Ratafia*. What is however interesting to note is that some of the false wits sometimes make observationsorpassremarkswhicharetoofullofwit to escapeourattention. Witwoud, for example, says about Pelulant ononeoccasion, 'His want oflearning gives himthe moreopportunities to show his natural parts'. Even the maid-servant Foible is capable of resorting to wit. To Lady Wishfort she says, 'A little art once made your picture like you and now a little ofthe same art must make you like your picture. Your picture must sit for you madam.'

The best variety of Congrevian wit has however, been exemplified and illustrated in the wit-combats between Mirabell and Millamant, the true wits in the play. Mirabell's '... beauty is the lover's gift; 'tis he bestow your charms: your glass is all a cheat' is a comment which is not merely mellifluous in its sonictexturebut also poetic in its power ofevocation. Theproviso scene in theplay reveals the most scintillating aspects of Congrevian wit. Congreve's hero and heroine who are experts in the art of social survival desire a kind of marriage which must be compatible with the notionofwit andembodythe most cherished values ofurbancivilization, thoseoffinesse graceand decorum, which formthe nucleus ofaconsistentethicalcode in worldofappearances. In the proviso scenemarked by organizedreasonandcontrolledpassion, Mirabelland Millamantliberatethemselves from the follies and affectations of the society they live in and base their romantic priorities both soberlyand realisticallyuponthe logicalities oflife. John Barnard is perfectlyright when he says :The proviso scene is not negative; it enfranchises the lovers and is the essential preparative to giving themselves to one another whilereconcilingthe competingdemandsofwit (in the senseofjudgement, and love it is a worldlyattitude but neither despicable not unrealistic.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider 'The Way of the World' as a comedy of wit.

Unit 12(a): *THE WAY OF THE WORLD:* AS A COMEDY OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

'Documentary' critics of the Restoration comedy of manners express the view that comic playwrightslike Etherege, Wycherleyand Congrevepresent afaithfulpictureofcontemporarysocial ethos. Indeed, close fidelity to actual life has been observed in their comedies. In *The Way of the World* Congreve provides us with a vivid and dependable picture of the national metropolis that

brims with pastimes and follies at it Jame's Park, the New Exchange and the World's End. ConterporaryLondoncomesto life with Will's Coffee-house, Pall-Malland Covent Garden, Locket's Eating-house at the Charing Cross, Duke's Place, Rosamond's Pond, Bridewell, the house of Correction for vagabonds and loose women, and Ludgate, the debtors' prison, supposed to be crowded withthe starving and diseased (as imagined by W.H.Van Voris in *The Cultivated Stance*). Congreve's world is a great dealtoo real, and what Macaulay says about the realismof Restoration comedy in general holds good for Congreve's comedy in particular: 'Here the garb, the manners, the topics ofconversationare those ofthe realtownand ofthe passing day.'(Critical and Historical Essays, Vol II) What Macaulay does not consider is that the realism itself of Restoration comedy (or, for that matter of Congreve's comedy) is largelya compound ofart and artificiality and reveals a social structure which has no foundation in the authenticity and truthfulness of natural emotions. Congreve is deep-searching in the realm of refined intellect whose life becomes an art and art an aesthetic ofartficiality. He is a faithfultranscriber ofthe realismthat comes full circle and is complete by beingartificial. We maynot agreewith Charles Lambwhen, in his essayon'TheArtificial Comedy ofthe Last Century', he postulates withingenious sophistrythat the Fainalls and Mirabells and Lady Touchwoods - all creaturesofsportive fancy- figure in 'a speculative scene ofthings'and get but of 'the Christendom into the land... of cuckoldry- the Utopia of gallantry-where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom.' But there is no reason why we should not appreciatethe significance of the word 'artificial' he has used in the little of his esssay. The Restoration comedy of manners in indeed artificial in its avoidance of the promptings of nature and of the pressures of passion, but Congreve's comedy is artificial in the sense that it is a realistically vivid portrayal of an artificial societywhereonlythe aristocratic high-ups flaunt their intellectualresources, strike attitudes andvie withone another for posing in the social mirror. It is of this artficial societythat Scandalsays in Act III, scene III of Love for Love : 'I know no effective difference between continued affectation and reality.' In his Comic Characters in Shakespeare, John Palmer observes : 'In the comedies of Congreve ... we are no longer men; we are wits and a peruke. We are no longer women; we are ladies of the tea-table.' Palmer's observation is significant especially in the context of the social ethos, as portrayed in The Way of the World, where the surface is all suggesting the artificial/ assumed norms ofurban sophistication. It is only Mirabelland Millamant, the true wits in the play, who turnagainst the currentsofthetime and seekto controlthe societyaround them. Philip Roberts rightlysays that in the proviso scene Mirabelland Millamant relinquish their current socialpositions while giving up whatthefopswould givetheir all for. Indeed, they go a stagefurtherthanother comic centralfiguresand'in so doingtheyunavoidablybreakdownthe incredibilityessentialto theartifice.' Congreve has of course ridiculed the artificial social set-up of the Restoration period. But as K.M.P.Buston says in Restoration Literature, 'However much the individual dramatist protested in prologues and epilogues that he was castigating the vices and follies ofthe age there was a general

atmosphere of overlooking faults, and a confused moral atttitude governing the structure of the play.'Congreve wields his sword of common sense to prune off the excesses of affectation in contemporarysocialconduct but he is at best mildly critical in his aims and objectives.Congreve is by no means a satirist as stern and fierce as Jonson but he is capable of giving us something more than mere amusement. Ian Donaldson, in *The World Upside-Down*, speaks of the values embodied in ***The Way of the World*** and points out that the play 'moves firmlytoanendorsementofthe formsandconventionsofcivilized society.' He believes that its 'values are, in all senses of that word, those of *urbanity*.' Congreve examines the values of a town society, 'the London *beau monde*, artificial in character, yet celebrating the norms of practical wisdom and controlled logic and presents them in a subtle way by' means of his well-poised thematic explication. What is really interesting is that the 'affected' characters in his comedyhighlight the genuinessofthesevalues by turning them upside down or by exaggerating them to the point of the most fantastic kind of caricature. The courtship of Lady Wishfort and Waitwell masqucrading as Sir Rowland in Act IV, scene XII in *The Way of the World* is a laughing crusade against the absurdity and extravagance of a decadent social culture. Lady Wishfort's affectations, her use ofrhetorical language as she awaits or meets the disguised Waitwell when seen in a critical perspective,' may offer a clue to a saner humanrelationship andsuggest awayoutofthespurious mode ofliving. Congreve's purpose is not to flayvices or persecute follies, but his focus is ona socialethospurgedofallmanner of illogicaland ridicalous excesses.

Congreve is a stern and fierce satirist, but he is also capable of giving us something more than mere amusement. His play 'moves firmly to an endorsement of the forms and conventions of civilised society.'

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Consider "The Wayofthe World" as a comedyof social criticism.

Unit 12(c): SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROVISO SCENE

The proviso scene had been invented by Honore D'Arfe (*L'Astree*) and Congreve borrows verbally from Dryden's *Secret Love* for his own proviso scene in Act IV, scene I of *The Way of the World*. There are other echoesof Dryden's *Marriageà la Mode* and *The Wild Gallant*, and there is a general debt in structure and technique to Etherege's *The Man of Mode*. But Congreve's proviso scene attests to the rare acuity and strength of his critical perception. His satirical barbs are aimed at the absurd excesses of manners in contemporarysocietyand the ethical norms he envisions and formulates refer to the traditional

Congreve's proviso scene attests to the rare acuity and strength of his critical perception. His satirical barbs are aimed at the absurd excesses of manners and the ethical norms he envisions and formulates refer to the Traditional decencies associated with the ideal of love and marriage.

decencies associated with the ideal of love and marriage. Mirabell and Millamant seek to strike a bargain before their marriage, putting forward certain terms and conditions, because they want to extricate themselves fromthe follies and affectations of their societyand retain their composure and wit, their measure of control and sense of decorum. The diverse demands of logic and passion have beenreconciled in the view ofmarriage theypropose. Congreve seems to suggestthat in the cynical, profligate and deceitfulways of the world it is only love that can act as a saving grace, but this love, whichfinds fulfilment in marriage, must be perfect, integrated andprudent.

The proviso scene begins as Mirabellcompletes the couplet from Edmund Waller's 'The Story of Phoebus and Daphne, Applied'. Millamart recitesthe first line ofthe couplet, 'Like Phoebus sung the no less am'rous' boy,' and Mirabell completes the couplet by reciting its second line 'Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy'. Mirabell desires that 'the chase must end, and my pursuit be crowned', but Millamant does not desire a state of inglorious ease, where she runs the risk of being 'freed fromthe agreeable fatigues ofsolicitation.' She hates the lover 'that can dare to think he draws a moment's air independent on the bountyof his mistress'. 'There is not so inpudent a thing in nature as the saucy look of an assured man, confident ofsuccess,' shesays. Theapprehensionofdisillusion after marriage is so pervasive in the prevalent social ethos that Millamant declares, 'I'll be solicited to the very last, nay, and afterwards', meaning that she must be wooed even after her marriage although she is deeply in love with Mirabell' Indeed Millamant in the proviso scene resembles Shakespeare's Rosalind whose affection 'hath an unknown bottom, like the Bayof Portugal'. (As you Like It, Act IV, scene I), but she indulges in a deliberate exaggeration of her caprices and declares her 'will and pleasure'. She cannot bid farewell to her 'dear liberty', 'faithful solitude' and 'darling contemplation'. She does not want to be called names like wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cart in which men and their wives are so fulsomelyfamiliar'. She tells Mirabell, 'Let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while and as well-bred as if we were not married at all.'

Congreve's hero and heroine who are experts in the art of social survival, 'manage to control the society around them'. The proviso scene reconciles the competing demands of wit and love and 'enfranchise's them, revealing the union of two minds in the sophisticated content of urban culture.

Tothis brilliant gambit Mirabellretortswitha number ofstipulations, showinghisconcernforhis reputation as a husband and for thehealth/figureofhis futureson. He will not allow Millamant to use masks and cosmetics (made of 'hogs' bones, hare's gall, pig-water, and the marrow of a roasted cat'), drink filthy, strong waters, toast follows, entertain bawds and courtesans, or to wear anytight-fitting garments at the time ofher pregnancy. The proviso scenecomesto an endwithacceptanceof the basis of social survival bythe gay couple, attesting, incidentally to an amalgam of passion and logic in their loving relationship. Indeed, Congreve's hero and heroine who are experts in the art of social survivial, 'manage to control the society around them' (Harriett Hawkins, *Likenesses of*

Truth in Elizabethan and Restoration Drama). The proviso scene reconciles the competing demands ofwit (in the sense of judgement) and love and 'enfranchises' them, revealing the unionof two minds in the sophisticated context ofurbanculture.As regards Mirabelland Millamant, Donald Brucesays,'Enlargedand Baroquetheycleavetheblueair side by side like immortalsona polychrome ceiling at Hampton Court, bound not for an illusory Cythera but for a skywhere Honour is the sun.' 'Baroque' cannnot be the most appropriate word to describe Mirabell and Millamant who are at oncerefined and sincere, inventive and practical. Throughoutthe playthey do not ignore goodsense or good manners; eachdiscovers the wayto a pragmatically free society.

Congreve in the proviso scene of *The Way of the World*, certainly breaks new ground by making Mirabelland Millamant, who areexquisitelywell matched, standona sure fooling ofequality in what still appears to be a largely patriarchal society. Bothof themhaveastuteforesight andareextremelyintelligent andwell-read. The hero is somewhat sententious, theheroine deliberately provocative but both are keen that they should obtain the remainder of Millamant's fortune in Lady Wishfort'spossession to ward off the financial hazards of city life. For Millamant, however, personallibertyis moreimportantthanfinancialsecurity withinaframeworkofmaritalcommitment, and Congreveseems to have envisaged a stable future life for the gay couple, disengaged fromthe moorings of feudal conservatism. David Thomas is guiltyof no exaggerationwhen he says, 'Inassenting to Millamant's provisos, Misrabell has actuallyagreed to renounce most of the accepted signs of patriarchal controlover his wife and has promised to allow her instead the considerable measure of freedom she demands to be herself within the confines of marriage.'

Mirabell and Millamant stand on a sure fooling of equality in what still appears to be a largely patriarchal society. 'In assenting to Millamant's provisos, Mirabell has actually agreed to renounce most of the accepted signs of patriarchal control over his wife. '

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Discuss the significance ofthe proviso scene.

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ASSIGNMENTS

13. Discuss *The Way of the World* as a perfect example of the Restoration comedy of manners.
14. Assess *The Way of the World* as a comedy of social criticism.
15. Write a critical note on *The Way of the World* as a comedy of wit.
16. Bring out the signifiance of the proviso scene in *The Way of the World*.
17. Comment on Congreve's presentation of Millamant in *The Way of the World*.
18. Examine Congreve's art of plot structure in *The Way of the World*.
19. Indicate the importance of *The Way of the World* in the historyof English comedy.
20. Show how Congreve makes a satiric expositionof ***'The Way of the World'*** in a morally looseandartificially fashionablesociety.
21. Compare and contrast the characters of Mirabell and Millamant in *The Way of the World.*
22. Comment on the appropriateness of the title of Congreve's play, *The Way of the World*.

Block – IV

The Misanthrope – Molière

CONTENT STRUCTURE

Unit 13(a): OBJECTIVE

In this module we shall study one of the best plays written by one the most celebrated French playwrights. We shall learn about the type of comedies written in France in the seventeenth century and about how this playwright managed to write a play that not only amused but also criticized contemporary French aristocracy. We shall try to understand why the playwright needed to write such a play and what this play means to us today. There will also be a list of books and websites you could consult to acquire more information about the playwright, his work, and his times. You could try answering some short and some essay-type questions to see if you have properly understood the play.

Unit 13(b): INTRODUCTION

Molière's *The Misanthrope* is one of the best plays written by the actor-playwright and is one of the most frequently performed. After its first performance on 4th June 1666 it became a big both

in the court and in literary circles success. European critics and writers of great importance, such as Boileau, Lessing and Goethe considered this play to be the best among Molière's which and his comedies are regarded as his highest achievement.

Unit 14(a): BRIEF NOTE ON THE PLAYWRIGHT

Molière (pronounced "Maw-li-air") was born Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (pronounced "Jon Bahpteest Poklan") on 15 January 1622. His father was one of eight men who were responsible for King Louis XIV's furniture and upholstery. So, young Jean-Baptiste had a very comfortable childhood. He was educated at Claremont College where he was taught the classics. This is where he became acquainted with classical theatre, that theatre on which Aristotle based the theory of his *Poetics*.

Jean — Baptiste, going against his family will, decided that theatre would be his livelihood and also decided to change his name to Molière, perhaps to spare his father of the embarrassment. He formed a theatre group "l' Illustre Théâtre" and started writing plays, opposed to the plays of Racine and Corneille.... they performed "The Love - Sick Doctor' in the royal court of king Louis XIV and it was a success. They were accepted by the court and were given their own theatre house.....

Moliere's plays include "The Pretentious Ladies", "The School for Husbands", "The School for Wives", "Tartuffe" etc. In 1660 the King gave Moliere the theatre of the Royal Palace.

However, his father had always meant for him to eventually join the business of upholstery and continue the family trade. The son, however, had already developed another interest - that of theatre! His father's shop was very close to two theatre halls and young Jean-Baptiste was often found at either of the two theatres watching plays. Although his father tried his best to get the young man to join the family business, Jean-Baptiste decided in 1643 that theatre would be his means of livelihood. His decision was due to the fact that he had fallen in love with an actress and had decided to form a theatre group with her and her brother, her sister and some others. He also decided to change his name to Molière, perhaps to spare his father the embarrassment of having a son who is an actor. He named the group l'Illustre Théâtre or The Illustrious Theatre. They hired a tennis court in Paris and converted it into a theatre. But their plays were not a success. So, the troupe decided to go on a tour of the provinces.

Molière started to write his own plays as opposed to the plays of such classical tragedians as Racine and Corneille which the troupe had been performing so long. In 1658, they learnt that the brother of King Louis XIV - Duc d'Anjou (or Duke of Anjou) - was looking for a theatre group to patronize. The members of the Illustrious Theatre tried their luck in the presence of the King on 24 October. They made the mistake of performing a poor tragedy by Corneille (*Nicomède*). The royal court was not impressed. Realizing their mistake they asked for permission to perform another play. They performed *The Love-Sick Doctor*. It was a success. They were accepted by the Court and given their own theatre house.

The first play Molière wrote, after getting his own theatre, was *The Pretentious Ladies* and it immediately plunged him into trouble. In the play he makes fun of one Madame de Rambouillet, a member of the royal court who had appointed herself as the final arbiter in matters of taste. But when the influential lady tried to make the young playwright leave the city, in 1660 the King gave Molière the theatre of the Royal Palace. His troubles continued. His 1662 play *The School for Wives* - written a year after he wrote *The School for Husbands* (which is referred to in *The Misanthrope*) - turned out to be controversial, with him being accused of impiety and incest! Two years later *Tartuffe* (one of his best known plays now) was banned and would not be performed till 5 February 1669. In 1665, his company was re-named "Troupe du Roy" (The King's Players). In 1666, Molière wrote *Le Misanthrope* amid failing health and difficulties in his marriage of four years to Armande. Their marriage ended two years later, but Armande continued to be a part of Molière's troupe. During the next few years although Molière continued to write plays, he was dogged by accusations of plagiarism and by scurrilous accounts of the reasons behind the failure of his marriage. As for the accusations of plagiarism, it needs to be mentioned that he did borrow plotlines from sources as diverse as Plautus and Boccaccio. He continued to invite animosity for his satires against particular sections of French society. There was hardly a section that escaped the barbs from his pen. Be it physicians, astrologers, pedants, or society ladies.

In 1665, Moliere renamed his company "Troupe du Roy" In his later life Moliere was dogged by accusations of playiarism. He borrowed plot liness from sources as diverse as Plantus and Boccacio. He suffered From the bereavements of his sister-in-law and of his own son. After his death, he was buried at the cemetery of St. Joseph on the 21st February of 1672.

On 10 February 1673 his new play *The Imaginary Invalid* was first performed. Molière was doing very poorly at the time. He had suffered two bereavements - one of his sister-in-law Madeleine in February 1672 and the other of his son in October. However, he continued to play the lead role in the new play, inspite of other members of the troupe begging him not to. On 17 February, after playing the part of someone who was pretending to be ill, Molière, who was severely ill, broke into a bad cough and burst a blood vessel. He died soon after. There was big controversy about what was to be done to his body because in those days actors were not regarded as respectable people and could not be given the dignity of a proper funeral or a marked grave. It was only after the King insisted that Molière's body was buried at the cemetery of St. Joseph on the 21st that same year.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Why did Moliere decide that theatre would be his means of livelihood ? What was the name of his theatre group ?
2. Name the plays written by Moliere.
3. Discuss how Moliere was accepted by the court of King Louis XIV ?
4. Why was Moliere accused of plagiarism ?

Unit 14(b): BRIEF NOTE ON THE PLAY

The Misanthrope was first licensed under the full name of *Le Misanthrope ou L'Atrabilaire Amoureux* (*The Misanthrope or The Angry Lover*). The play was performed not at the court but at the theatre of the Royal Palace on 4 June 1666 because the royal family was still mourning the death of the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria. Although the play was not a success with the public, it was a success with the critics. Some referred to it as "a new style of comedy." There are reasons why they would say so. Although it borrows from the traditional farce, from the Italian style of *commedia dell'arte* and from courtly life, it manages to transcend the narrow definition of a comedy and becomes something more serious and thought-provoking. It comes close to tragedy but is rescued from a tragic outcome at the very last moment. The audience reaction Molière clearly seeks is not one of loud laughter (though there are some moments that always make the audience guffaw) but what Donneau de Visé calls "rire dans l'âme" or rather "inner laughter." Nicholas Boileau (1636-1711), poet, dramatist and critic, who translated Longinus's "On the subline" and wrote *The Art of Poetry* in 1674 and who had great influence on Addison and Pope, thought the play to be among Molière's best. Unlike in comedies of that time and indeed comedy in general, the characters in this play are not all types or flat in nature. Some confront conflicts and experience a contain complexity which lifts the play above the level of mere farce. The laughter is sometimes so bitter that Robert J. Nelson calls the play, "Molière's supreme achievement in the satiric mode."

Unit 14(c): OUTLINE OF THE STORY

In Act One, Alceste (pronounced "Alsest"), a nobleman, is visiting the house of a young widow named Célimène (pronounced "Selimen") with whom he is in love. Alceste prides himself on his honesty and deplores the hypocrisy and dishonesty all around him. When the play begins he is upset with Philinte (pronounced "Philant"), who is his friend. He is upset because Philinte has just been very cordial to some gentleman, but cannot tell Alceste the gentleman's name when asked, because he hardly knew the man! Oronte (pronounced "O-ront"), a nobleman enters and after praising Alcestelavishly asks him to give his judgement on a poem the former has written. On hearing the poem, Alceste tries to be polite and criticises Oronte indirectly, talking about other people who write bad poetry, but when pressed, becomes blunt and angers the nobleman, who leaves.

In Act Two Alceste and Célimène meet and he expresses his displeasure at her indulgence towards all nobleman. When she tells him that she has to be nice to them because they can be of practical help to him, he protests. We see the entry of two noblemen, Clitandre (pronounced "Klee-tawndr") and Acaste (pronounced "Acast") who regularly supply Célimène with all the court gossip. In this Act, we also get to see Célimène's cousin Éliante (pronounced "Ay-lee-awnt"), who Philinte

thinks is a better match for Alceste than Célimène. The Act ends when Alceste is summoned to appear before the Marshals of France (the court of law) because Oronte has complained against Alceste because of the latter's blunt criticism of the former's poetry.

Act Three opens with Acaste and Clitandre alone, trying to find out an amicable way to solve the problem of their both courting the same woman - Célimène. They agree that if one of them can produce proof of her preference for him, the other will stop courting her. In this act we have the introduction of a new character: Arsinoé, a lady past her prime but without a lover and therefore envious of Célimène. She is visiting Célimène ostensibly to inform her about the criticism she has been hearing about the young widow. Célimène sees through her and replies that there are people doubting Arsinoé's piety, thinking her instead to be a prudish hypocrite. Before tempers rise any further, Célimène decides to go away to write some urgent letter, leaving Arsinoé in the company of Alceste who has just come in again. Finding him alone Arsinoé now tries to sow seeds of suspicion against Célimène in Alceste's heart by telling him that he is being cheated. He says that he will only believe this if he is given the proof which promises to provide.

In Act Four Philinte, who has secretly been in love with Éliante, declares his affections to her. When she says that she has decided to give her hand to Alceste if he is eventually rejected by Célimène, Philinte says he will wait for her to reciprocate his emotions should Alceste and Célimène decide to get married. Alceste storms into the stage, in his pocket a letter that supposedly proves that Célimène has indeed been disloyal to Alceste. In a fit of anger he proposes to Éliante, who advises calm and does not accept his proposal. At this moment Célimène walks in and Alceste unleashes his anger at her, calling her a traitress, even though the letter that he produces is unsigned. She threatens to be truly unfaithful and thus give him something real to complain about. The quarrel is abruptly stopped by Du Bois (pronounced "Doo Bwa"), Alceste's manservant, who asks his master to leave the place, because he is about to be arrested in connection with a lawsuit.

The Fifth and final act finds Alceste telling Philinte that he has decided to withdraw from all contact with society. We learn that his decision stems from the fact that a case he was fighting has now been decided against him. He has lost the case. When Philinte asks him to appeal against the judgement Alceste says that he accepts the verdict because the case will go down in history as proof of the wickedness of contemporary French society. While Philinte goes in search of Éliante, Célimène enters, followed by Oronte. The nobleman insists that she chooses between him and Alceste as her lover. Soon Clitandra, Acaste, Oronte and Arsinoé also gather there. Clitandre and Acaste each have a letter supposedly written to the other by Célimène. In the letters, she seems to ridicule all the men present on stage. Cornered thus, Célimène admits that the letters are indeed written by her. She turns to Alceste and says that he is fully justified in hating her. Alceste says he still loves her and asks her to cut off all contact with society and go away with him to a place far away from civilisation. She

refuses to, but offers her hand in marriage, which Alceste refuses. He now offers himself to Éliante again. She turns him down but instead offers her hand to Philinte, who gladly accepts. Alceste leaves the stage ready to go to a place where he can live in honour and honesty. Philinte runs after him, hoping to make him change his mind.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Narrate the story of 'Misanthrope' in brief.

Unit 15(a): CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

Alceste:

There is enough evidence to prove that Molière had written the part of Alceste for himself. Boileau is known to have often regaled his friends by showing how the actor-playwright used to enjoy playing Alceste particularly towards the end of Act Two of the play. The influence of the Italian style of theatre known as commedia dell'arte is evident in Alceste. His name, as pointed out by the critic Gustave Lanson, is conventional, abstract, moral. According to Lanson, Alceste is like a mask of humanity, like the masks that were used in the commedia dell'arte form. There is nothing particularized about the name and the type of character Alceste is in the play. But, as Alfred Simon notes, "Alceste has set out to tear off all the masks in the world, believing that everyone has chosen the mask which would permit him to dodge himself and others. He does not understand that in the end the face itself, assuming all the tics of the soul, stiffens, hardens, and becomes in turn a mask. Touching and ridiculous, his maniacal passion creates the mask of truth for him."

The influence of the Italian commedia dell' arte form is evident in Alceste. He has set out to tear off all the masks in the world not knowing that the face itself assuming all the tics of the soul, stiffens, hardens, and becomes in turn a mask. It is his seriousness and sincerity that makes his use of cliches comical. He is otherwise a tragic character, save that he never undergoes the Aristotelian process of 'anagnovisis'. He effectively condones hypocrisy and encourages Céliméne to put up an appearance of fidelity if not to be actually faithful. The parallels between Alceste and Moliére work at both levels : personal and professional.

Alceste means what he says. As Will G. Moore points out, when Alceste uses the clichés of his day, he does not use them for what they are. Instead he makes them actually meaningful. It is his seriousness and sincerity that makes his use of clichés comical, because everybody else uses them meaninglessly.

Although Molière gives Alceste some moments of comedy and plenty of scope to indulge in exaggerated physical gestures to provoke laughter in the audience, the fact remains that he could almost be a tragic character, particularly, in his isolation and in his loneliness. The reason why he does not become a tragic character is that he never undergoes the Aristotelian process of 'anagnorisis' or the recognition of the foolhardy nature of his rigidity. If he is rigid and stubborn in the beginning,

his rigidity intensifies, if anything, at the end. He becomes even more of a mask than he is when the play starts. According to Alfred Simon, "Alceste's misfortunes multiply to a tempo of burlesque that mocks his seriousness." His rigidity intensifies to the point of becoming ridiculous. Alfred Simon believes that Alceste's "inability to remain impassive and unconcerned is the root of his trouble." What however makes Alceste rise above the level of the usual mask-character is to the conflicts and complexity that the playwright puts into his character. Alceste is torn apart by his zeal for honesty and his love for Célimène. It is indeed even more interesting that his love is not selfless, but is there only because he thinks that it is reciprocated. Moreover, it should be noticed that he does not acknowledge the fact that Célimène is not a dishonest, hypocritical prude like Arsinoé and therefore is basically honest. And yet, Alceste breaks off his relationship with her. So, we may say that their relationship ends not because of anything she may have done but because her behaviour is an affront to Alceste's extremely sensitive ego. It is a problem that he pleads with Célimène to understand, "Try to appear faithful, and I will try to believe that you are." So, he effectively condones hypocrisy and encourages her to put up an appearance of fidelity if not to be actually faithful. Because he makes an exception, and that too for someone who he loves because he believes he is loved in return, Alceste's character becomes more complex than what one would expect from a mask character, which is what he was obviously conceived as.

There are a lot of reasons to suppose that Alceste may have been written to serve as the dramatist's mask. The parallels between Alceste and Moliére work at both levels: personal and professional. On the personal, the end of Alceste's relationship with Célimène may be seen as a reflection of the troubles the playwright himself was having in his own marriage with Armande. The way Alceste is plagued by a mysterious law suit, may be a composite of all the troubles Molière had with the various members of the royal court.

Inspite of the temptation to read Alceste as the mouthpiece of the dramatist, one should be cautious because there are enough reasons for us to say that Molière puts sufficient distance between himself and his character.

Philinte:

Philinte is a foil to Alceste. His "lucid acceptance of reality" (Alfred Simon) is meant to throw Alceste's attitude to reality into sharper focus. He accepts that fact that society's concern for appearances has falsified every word and gesture. Commenting on Philinte and Éliante, Robert J. Nelson says that they are "but relatively innocent, set apart by the 'virtue' of their tolerance from the rigid Alceste." The speeches of Philinte contrast to those of Alceste in that the former's words always advise moderation, calm and tact whereas the latter's speak of all that is contrary to moderation, calm and tact. While some critics argue that Philinte represents the ideal to which Molière aspired, he does not have sufficient complexity to ever emerge as a credible character, he also ultimately remains a type. Even for him, three words can suffice as a description: man of moderation.

Éliante:

Lionel Gossman cites her as an example of that kind of character that preserves their innocence "through an enigmatic absence or abnegation of desire which places them outside the world." She and Philinte occupy the calm centre of the play while all the other characters supply all the excitement and drama and, indeed, even the histrionics. Therefore, when the play ends with Éliante and Philinte becoming a couple, it looks like the conventional happy ending. However, it would be unwise to see Éliante's acceptance of Philinte's proposal as a happy ending, because as far as she is concerned Philinte will always be the second best, she had set her heart on Alceste.

Célimène:

About Célimène, Robert J. Nelson says, "She is an artificial character…she plays a role, but …she plays it everywhere." François Mauriac calls her the "brilliant insect that destroys a man's life." According to Alfred Simon, although she is bored and bewildered, signs of her inner vacuity, she, at least never pretends. "She is exactly what she appears to be. … She is devoid of fatuousness and has no illusions. The only one to fall into her trap is someone who willingly covers his eyes and plays blindman's buff." We also sympathise with her when she refuses to accompany Alceste into self-imposed exile by saying that solitude does not suit the soul of a twenty-year old. There will, however, always be those who will regard her as a thoughtless flirt and others who will regard her a wise young woman who knows that for her to function in society, without the support of a husband, requires her to indulge men so that her position of eminence remains intact and she can depend on the men to be of practical help to her when such a need arises, as with settling of legal disputes.

Les Fâcheux:

Les Fâcheux (pronounced "Lay Fah-sho") may be translated as "The Annoyances." In the play the annoyances are Oronte, Acaste, Clitandre and Arsinoé. They are so called because they provide the annoying element in the play. They are type characters, one virtually from the other. Each can be described in one or two words. They are either a failed poet, a gossip or an envious lady. Their presence in the play is crucial, however, because it is primarily through them that the playwright criticises contemporary French society.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. Comment on the characters of

(i) Alceste, (ii) Philinte, (iii) Célimène, (iv) Les Facheun

UNIT 16(a): THE PLAY AS COMEDY OF MANNERS

The Comedy of Manners is a style of comedy that developed in the latter half of the seventeenth century in Europe. Plays written as comedies of manners have some distinguishing features. They are mostly set in the town, in the city and never in the country. The plot consists mostly of romantic intrigue and petty conspiracies. The dialogue is marked by an abundance of wit and repartee. The characters tend to be uni-dimensional or flat, mask-like. The Comedy of Manners was being written in France at a time when theatre-going and amusements in general had achieved huge popularity and royal patronage. So, it was only to be expected that the nobility would want to see flattering reflections of itself on stage, and that if there is any criticism it would be palliated by the notion that the character in question is not representative of the nobility in general but is an anomaly, an exception, an oddity. That is how Alceste gets away with criticising the nobility. He is shown to be an oddity.

Let Us Check Our Progress

1. What do you know about the comedy of manners?Consider Moliere's 'The Misanthrope' as a comedy of manners.

UNIT 16(b): CONTEMPORARY FRENCH SOCIETY

Molière lived in France at time when the country was ruled by an absolute monarch - King Louis XIV. Not only was he the longest ruling European monarch of that time - seventy-two years - but he had more powers than any other monarch ruling in any other country at that time. He is famous for having once said, "L'état, c'est moi" or "I am the state." He was also known as Le Roi Soleil or the Sun King because he had once played the role of the sun in a court ballet. He came to the throne aged five in 1643, began to rule in his own right from the age of twenty-four and died in 1715. He ran a court of extreme splendour and was a great patron of the arts. He commissioned extravagant extensions to grand palaces such as the palace of Versailles (pronounced "Vairsaee"), bestowed his patronage on Jean-Baptiste Lully (pronounced "Loolee"), the great composer of Italian origin who, as court composer, also provided music for Moilere's plays and even composed an opera called *Alceste* (1674) although that was based on a play by Euripedes!

However, since the King was a generous patron of the arts, the members of his court started to appoint themselves as art critics as well. There was, for instance, the practice of some members f the nobility sitting on the stage itself, during a performance. Their laughter or jeers dictated the way the others in the audience below were to react. Molière was always annoyed by the fact that people who were sitting in judgement on his work had neither his education, nor his experience, nor his talent to do so. He uses Alceste to voice some of his complaints about the royal court, continuing an

exercise he started in *The Pretentious Ladies* where he notoriously aimed thinly disguised barbs of criticism towards Madame de Rambouillet. In *The Misanthrope* he creates characters such as Oronte to show that the nobility should not dabble in matters it does not have any knowledge of. It is a testimony of Molière's ability to walk the tightrope that the nobility enjoyed the play and found little to object in it.

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. *Le Misanthrope*, ed. Gustave Rudler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947)
2. *The Misanthrope*, trans. Richard Wilbur (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955)
3. *The Misanthrope and Other Plays*, trans. John Wood (Penguin Books, 1959)
4. *Men and Masks: A Study of Molière*, Lionel Gossman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1963)
5. *Molière and the Comedy of Intellect*, Judd D. Hubert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962)
6. *Molière*: *A New Criticism*, Will G. Moore (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949)
7. *Molière*: *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Jacques Guicharnaud (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964)
8. *From Gesture to Idea, Nathan Gross* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)
9. *The Happy End of Comedy:* Shakespeare, Jonson, Moliere, Zvi Jagendorf (Delaware: Univ of Delaware, 1984)
10. *Intruders in the Play World: The Dynamics of Gender in Molière's Comedies*, Roxanne Decker Lalande (Fairleigh Dickinson Univ P, 1996)
11. *Molière (Twayne's World Authors Series, No 176), Hallam Walker* (Twayne Pub: 1990)
12. *Molière and Plurality: Decomposition of the Classicist Self* (Sociocriticism: Literature, Society and History, Vol. 1), Larry W. Riggs (Peter Lang Publishing:1990)
13. *Molière (Modern Critical Views)*, ed. Harold Bloom (Chelsea House Pub, 2001)

In addition to books, there are many websites that you might want to go to for more information about Molière. Some of them are:

http://www.2020site.org/moliere/

http://www.bibliomania.com/0/6/4/frameset.html

http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc35.html

http://www.theatredatabase.com/17th_century/moliere_001.html

http://www.discoverfrance.net/France/Theatre/Moliere/moliere.shtml

http://www.theatrehistory.com/french/moliere003.html

http://www.theatrelinks.com/plays_playwrights/moliere.htm

http://www.boomerangtheatre.org/archives/misanthrope.html

http://honors.montana.edu/~oelks/TC/MoliereBio.html

ASSIGNMENTS

Essay-type

1. Discuss *The Misanthrope* as a Comedy of Manners.
2. Would you say that Alceste is the mouthpiece of Molière? Why?
3. How would you read the play as a critique of contemporary French society?
4. Discuss the character of Philinte.
5. Analyse the character of Célimène.

Short-Answer type

1. Why is Alceste angry at the beginning of the play?
2. What kind of gossip do the men and women coming to Célimène's house indulge in?
3. How do we know that Arsinoé is envious of Célimène?
4. What role do letters play in unmasking Célimène?
5. Why does Alceste refuse to appeal against the court's verdict?