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SEMESTER – I

COR – 104

Restoration to the Age of Sensibility (1660-1788) – Fiction and Non-fictional Prose

Self-Learning Material

DIRECTORATE OF OPEN & DISTANCE LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF KALYANI

KALYANI-741235, WEST BENGAL

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Director's Message

Satisfying the varied needs of distance learners, overcoming the obstacle of distance and reaching the unreached students are the threefold functions catered by Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems. The onus lies on writers, editors, production professionals and other personnel involved in the process to overcome the challenges inherent to curriculum design and production of relevant Self Learning Materials (SLMs). At the University of Kalyani, a dedicated team under the able guidance of the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor has invested its best efforts, professionally and in keeping with the demands of Post Graduate CBCS Programmes in Distance Mode to devise a self-sufficient curriculum for each course offered by the Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL), University of Kalyani. Development of printed SLMs for students admitted to the DODL within a limited time to cater to the academic requirements of the Course as per standards set by Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India under Open and Distance Mode UGC Regulations, 2021 had been our endeavour. We are happy to have achieved our goal. Utmost care and precision have been ensured in the development of the SLMs, making them useful to the learners, besides avoiding errors as far as practicable. Further suggestions from the stakeholders in this would be welcome. During the production-process of the SLMs, the team continuously received positive stimulations and feedback from Professor (Dr.) Manas Kumar Sanyal, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, University of Kalyani, who kindly accorded directions, encouragements and suggestions, offered constructive criticism to develop it within proper requirements. We, gracefully, acknowledge his inspiration and guidance. Sincere gratitude is due to the respective chairpersons as well as each and every member of PGBOS (DODL), University of Kalyani. Heartfelt gratitude is also due to the faculty members of the DODL, subject-experts serving at the University Post Graduate departments and also to the authors and academicians whose academic contributions have enriched the SLMs. We humbly acknowledge their valuable academic contributions. I would especially like to convey gratitude to all other University dignitaries and personnel involved either at the conceptual or operational level at the DODL, University of Kalyani. Their persistent and coordinated efforts have resulted in the compilation of comprehensive, learner-friendly, flexible texts that meet the curriculum requirements of the Post Graduate Programme through the Distance Mode.

Director

Directorate of Open and Distance Learning

University of Kalyani

COR - 104
Restoration to the Age of Sensibility (1660-1788): Fiction & Non-Fictional Prose

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Block I: *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe

Unit 1(a): Introduction-Daniel Defoe: Life and Times
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Unit 1(a): Introduction-Daniel Defoe: Life and Times

The world into which Daniel Defoe was born was one on a much smaller scale. It was a preindustrial world. There were no machines, no daily newspapers, and no rapid means of communication. It was a localized world, in which the dominant means of transport was horseback. It is, therefore, difficult for us to-day in this twenty-first century world, luring a sophisticated technology dominated age, to make the imaginative leap necessary to contemplate this localized world with its obvious limitations and a much slower pace.

Of course, it should not be concluded from this that the seventeenth century world was a static one. Strife was commonplace in England and on the continent of England. The period between 1642 and 1649, witnessed a civil war between Puritans (supporters of parliamentary government) and Royalists (supporters of the monarchy and the divine right of kings) in England. The two civil wars were followed by Cromwell's protectorate and long period of political instability. Rural parties and factions were engaged in fierce arguments, since the English were divided bitterly over a range of political and religious issues. Fundamental to these disagreements was the argument over what should be the relationship between the Crown and the Parliament. This debate was raging intermittently throughout Defoe's early life and was not resolved until the 'Glorious Revolution of 1688 when Defoe was 28. These decades of conflict in which England was divided against itself, help to explain the polemical nature of much of his early writing and the restlessness which is so characteristic of his work.

Daniel Defoe was born in London Probably in the autumn of 1660. His exact date of birth remains unknown since there is no written record of his birth or baptism. He was the son of James and Alice Foe of parish of St. Giles Cripplegate, lying just beyond the wall on the northern edge of the city of London. James Foe was a tallow chandler - a dealer in candles and soap - and later became a merchant of some substance, extending his activities into overseas trade. Little or nothing is known of Alice Foe - not even her maiden surname is recorded. There is no evidence of any literary or creative background in Defoe's ancestry, though the values inculcated in his childhood home were those he remembered all his life. Defoe had two older sisters, Mary (born in 1657) and Elizabeth (born in 1659), but the latter died in infancy. His boyhood home was situated in Swan Alley in the parish of St. Stephen, Coleman Street, within a walking distance of St. Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Exchange. The atmosphere of the house was quiet and respectable, but just beyond the courtyard lay the bustle of the city and the narrow festering alleys leading down to the Thames.

Defoe was brought up in a world in which the predominant values were orderliness discipline, self-sufficiency and respectability. To improve one's lot through one's own industry was the prevailingethic. As a boy, Defoe must have been familiar with such terms as 'merchant', 'trade' and 'commerce'. He must have been impressed by the knowledge that his father had attained a position of modest prosperity as a result of hard work and initiative. The earnestness of

his childhood background is reflected in his writing out in longhand the whole of the first five books of the Old Testament.

When Defoe was only a small boy, his life was torn violently by two events, which haunted his imagination in future : the Plague and the Fire of London. The Plague left the streets deserted - streets that had once been populous, of grass growing among the cobblestones, of the crying of the bereaved. The sight had deep impression on the tender mind of Daniel. He weaved his memory of the terrible epidemic into his masterly *Journal of the Plague Year* later. London had barely recovered from the plague, when it was gutted by the Great Fire, which raged for four days and nights, destroying St. Paul's and 87 parish churches, including St. Stephens, and 13,000 houses. Many of the familiar landmarks Defoe had seen as a boy were destroyed by the Fire. It included the Royal Exchange, the Customs House and the Guildhall. He never forgot the impression this disaster made upon him. Though the Foe household and shop escaped destruction in the fire, many of James Foe's friends and business associates were directly affected by it. Daniel could not forget the sight of the sky glowing at night, the smoking ruins of the city, and the homeless camping on the grass.

Defoe does not record any reminiscences of his school, though he retained affectionate memories of Dorking and its surrounding scenery. When he was 11, he was sent to a boarding school by his father. This school was at Dorking in Surrey. These were highly impressionable years when he took a lively interest in politics from an early age. He must have been aware of the national and international events that were happening around him and talked about at home and at school : the freezing of the assets of the Lombard Street banks by Charles II (which caused the ruin of many businessman), the uneasy truce between the crown and the Dissenters, the rise to fame of the young William of Orange. He stayed for five years at Dorking. The school was kept by the Reverend James Fisher, an elderly nonconformist clergyman and a former Cambridge scholar. Fisher instilled a passionate faith in the virtues of a classical education and a knowledge of Greek and Latin into his students' minds. In fact, Defoe's fondness for Latin books, (which were included in his library) had a great impact on his pamphlets and essays.

Soon after his sixteenth birthday in 1676, his father sent him to the dissenting academy kept by Reverend Charles Morton at Newington Green, Stoke Newington. James Foe wanted his son to be in the ministry and he therefore, thought a three-year training at Morton Academy would be very helpful for Daniel. Daniel received an excellent opportunity and guidance at Morton's Academy and studied Logic, Politics, English, Philosophy and Mathematics. He was indebted to Morton because under his supervision Defoe also read widely outside the curriculum, including travel, history, poetry (especially Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*) and devotional literature. He derived an inquiring attitude of mind for science and English language. Morton's influence helped him to develop an ability to write in a persuasive, flexible style that followed the natural rhythms of conservation. Though Morton Academy was a remarkable school, Defoe never entered the ministry, and therefore disappointed his father. He felt that he would be a misfit as a clergyman and hence tried for other means of livelihood. However, the training at Morton's helped Defoe in so many ways for becoming what he became in future.

Morton encouraged his pupils to think for themselves and indulge in individual reading and enquiry. Defoe, eagerly read Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* as soon as it was published in 1678. He also admired the poetry of Andrew Marvell, the Earl of Rochester and John Milton. Inspired by his readings Daniel tried his hand in composing a volume of poetry, *Meditations*, though the volume lacked literary promise.

The 1680's were a promising time for an energetic young man to establish himself as a

tradesman. Though it was still a pre-industrial society, the outline of the modern business world were already obvious. These years saw the advent of the penny post in 1680, and this made possible several postal deliveries in the London area each day. There was a rapid expansion in the number of joint stock companies, company promoters and dealers in stocks and shares. Banking and insurance systems were becoming well-established. There was considerable growth of overseas trade. It was a period of optimism and self-confidence for the youth of the country. Defoe engaged himself as a London merchant, trading in hosiery, wines and spirits, tobacco and other commodities. It was a conventional custom of that time that in order to establish one self as a businessman, one had to be apprenticed for seven years before setting up one's own. Defoe ignored this convention by establishing himself as a dealer and whole-seller at the age of twenty. He did this with the financial aid provided by his father. This probably created a resentment among his fellow businessmen, who had to establish themselves by learning 'the hard way'. Defoe had no doubt, great enthusiasm, though he lacked practical experience. His energy carried him forward for some years but his inexperience proved to be his undoing in the long run.

Defoe began to travel widely, in the course of his business, journeying on horse-back to many parts of England and Scotland, and developing a taste for solitary travel, which remained with him throughout his life. On January 1, 1684, he married Mary Tuffley, the only daughter of a rich merchant. She brought her a dowry of £ 3700, a very large sum for those days. She proved to be a loyal and patient wife, bearing him eight children (of whom two died in infancy) and holding the family together through all the odds and Defoe's frequent absence from home. Shortly after the marriage Defoe established himself in quite a high-class area in Freeman's Yard, on the north side of Cornhill, a locality which was newly rebuilt after the fire.

In 1688, an event of national importance occurred in England. On the 5th of November, the forces of William of Orange landed at Torbay. The invasion was promptly followed by the collapse of James II and his regime. This significant event is known in history as The Glorious Revolution' - the end of the divine rights of Kings and at the same time, the establishment, once and for all, of the supremacy of the Parliament. Defoe was a great supporter of the Revolution and all its ideals, the assertion of the fundamental rights of the Parliament; the limitation of the royal prerogative and legal toleration for protestant dissenters.

The English Revolution was not a social revolution like the French Revolution. It former was a political revolution since it inaugurated the sovereignty of the people and the permanence of the Parliament.

For a few years, Defoe really did well in his trade, applying all his energy and enthusiasm. He dealt with shipbuilding, marine insurance, land deals and civet cat, (bred for a secretion used in the making of perfume). A combination of over-confidence, inexperience and sheer bad luck ultimately led to this failure in his laboriously and enthusiastically built up empire of business. Later in his *The Complete English Tradesman*, he referred to the miserable, anxious and perplexed lifewhich the poor tradesman has to go through, before he is finally crushed; how harassed and oppressed he is for money, to what he is driven to for supporting himself.

Yet Defoe never lost his interest in trade. His experiences as a tradesman shaped him as a writer - with his store of knowledge of subjects and topics of varied fields and his extensive interest in human character. His fictional narratives have temporary setting instead of a fabulous past or a mythical past.

Towards the end of the century, he was referred to as 'Daniel de Foe,' and he started this

style while signing his name. Probably, the prefix 'De' sounded rather aristocratic to him. Anyway, it was possibly an easy transition from D(Daniel) Foe to 'Defoe' - his usual signature. He definitely liked the sound of the prefix, otherwise he would not have adopted it.

From the end of the century, he was gradually preoccupied with literary work in the form of pamphlets, broadsheets and essays. *An Essay upon Projects* was published in 1698. though out of print to-day, the *Essay upon Projects* is an important indication of the modernity of Defoe's thinking, his fascination with sociology and economics.

The late 17th century and the early 18th century was a period of partnership on social, political and religious issues and at the same, a period of acrimonious journalism. Newspapers and journals bristled with controversy on the leading issues of the day, conformity or dissent, Whig or Troy, Stuart or Hanover, isolation or involvement in Europe, toleration of minorities or persecution. Defoe could not resist himself from taking the opportunity of bursting into print on any one of these issues. In 1702, his taste for polemical argument landed him into hot water. In December, 1702, he published an anonymous pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. It was quite ironical in its expression, for his object was to expose the intolerance and bigotry of those favouring persecution, but the pamphlet misfired. The Fanatics applauded it for saying what they had long felt in private, whereas the dissenters condemned it for its outspokenness. When its true authorship was known, Defoe was arrested in May 1703, accused of having written and published a seditious libel. He was fined, condemned to stand in the pillong, and send to Newgate Prison 'during the Queen's pleasure'. When he was released in November 1703, he found that his factory had come to grief and he was bankrupt for a second time. Now at the age of 43, he had to start his life afresh.

At this point, he was approached by Robert Harley, the Speaker of the House of Commons and an influential figure in the Government. Unlike Defoe, he was a whig, but a man of moderation. He invited Defoe to serve as a confidential agent (as we refer to-day as a 'secret agent'. He was supposed to travel throughout the country and report to Harley, the political temper of the countries and help pave the way for the union between England and Scotland, which became a reality in 1707. Defoe served for this purpose from 1703 to 1714. he was temperamentally well-suited to this work and he performed his duties quite seriously. Many years later, he used his experiences for this period in his *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*.

The political scene was transformed in 1714, with the death of Queen Anne and the accession of George I. The Tory Government was replaced by the Whig government. Defoe adjusted himself to the new scenario and continued until 1730 to serve successive the Whigs through his journalistic activities. In addition to all these activities, he started writing a manual of moral and religious instruction, published in two volumes between 1715 and 1718, under the title *The Family Instructor*. In writing these two volumes, he gained a lot of experience in handling conversation and, since each dialogue is linked with passages of narrative and comment, he learned to master many techniques which would be of service to him as a novelist. He mastered the art of conversing with the reader in an intimate and familiar way, of creating credible characters, of writing sequences of convincing dialogue and argument, of writing stories designed with a didactic intention. The book earned a reputation for Defoe. At that time there was a demand for well-written criticism, history, travel and fact, presented in a lively and readable form. Defoe, with his background of journalism and experience, was ready to meet this demand.

In February, 1704, he published the first number of his periodical - *The Review* Theoretically, Defoe was its editor, but in practice, he was the sole contributor, writing commentary and discussion on various issues, - trade, religion, politics and international affairs. The periodical was a very important one in the sense, that the future author of ***ROBINSON CRUSOE*** became acquainted with writing scenes and conversations, in which he assumed an imaginary persona. *The Review* was the workshop in which he perfected his style as a man of reason with an ear for the speech of ordinary people.

In 1719, he published *Robinson Crusoe*, a book which has been described as the first long piece of prose fiction that had the primary purpose of giving the illusion of reality. Defoe did not have a background of literature, rather he did have a background of trade. Though he had had considerable writing experience, it was popular journalism and not literary writing. In this sense, he was the antithesis of Pope and Swift and was regarded by them with suspicion and disapproval. Though *Robinson Crusoe* was published at the price of five shillings, it sold very well. His writing reached a new reading public, eager to read his stories of travel and adventure, written in a fluent, conversational style. Though ignored by scholars and book collectors, it was widely read by newly literate artisans and workmen who were looking for convincingly written narratives. The growth of literacy, improvements in printing techniques and the increase of popular journalism, combined together to create a favourable atmosphere for the kind of narratives which Defoe was writing. The new readers could identify with the characters featured in these novels. All these factors helped to give birth to the modern novel.

After 1724, he stopped writing fiction. The reasons behind this decision is, of course, not very clear. Perhaps he felt that he had 'written himself out'. Perhaps he was tired of writing narratives of this kind and wished to return to non-fiction. For the rest of his life, he remained engaged in the composition of works of edification, a genre for which he had a great fascination. First came his massive work of topography, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, a summary of the impressions he had formed from many years of journeying through England, Scotland and Wales. He next published *The Complete English Tradesman*, an interesting handbook on the complexities of running a business ; *A System of Magic* and *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*, with its attention on the supernatural was a subject which held for him a lifelong fascination. In these writings, he showed his awareness of the popular interest in ghosts and demons. In 1728, when he was sixty eight, came his last major work on trade, *A Plan of the English Commerce*. Though he was now often in considerable pain from gout, he was still capable of writing fluently and lucidly. To the end, he continued to write manuals, pamphlets, essays and summaries revealing his gift for presenting large masses of information in an easily digestible form. The last years of his life were spent in writing and revising *The Complete English Gentleman* with anecdotes and homilies. This book intended to be a guide to a life of culture and respectability.

For some years he had been living quietly and comfortably at Stoke Newington, not far from his old school. Here he built a library of his own where he spent time in reading and writing. Inspite of his leading a life in genteel surroundings, death came to him on April 26, 1731, at a lodging house in Ropemakers Alley, London, where he had been, for some months, apparently absconding from one of his creditors. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, Finsbury, in the same cemetery as John Bunyan and William Blake. In 1870, the plain stone that marked his grave was replaced by a marble pillar erected from the subscription of 1700 children in gratitude to the author of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Had Defoe died before writing *Robinson Crusoe*, it is doubtful whether he would be remembered

to-day as a prominent name in the field of writing a novel - a novel that won the heart of both young and old. He was certainly not conscious at the time that in writing *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, he was creating the first novels in English and paving the way for a host of successors, including those of Samuel Richardson, Joseph Fielding and Jobias Smollett. The paradox is that, by writing these 'non-serious' works, he has earned for himself a permanent place in literary history.

The whole lot of immense output of essays, handbooks and pamphlets is completely forgotten today, but his novels are still alive and widely popular. These novels will continue to be read, enjoyed and appreciated and will carry his name into the future.

Unit 1(b) *Robinson Crusoe*: Source in Travel-Writing

The prototype of Robinson Crusoe was a stubborn sailor, Alexander Selkirk (1676 - 1721), who on a voyage with William Dampier, quarrelled with his captain and had himself put ashore in 1704 on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez off the east coast of south America. After some initial difficulties, Selkirk managed to survive on this island and live there for a little less than four and a half years. When he was rescued in January, 1709 by Captain Woodes Rogers, he was found to be in good health and quite satisfied with his island life. *Robinson Crusoe* like most of Defoe's later fiction, has a firm basis in actuality; while his fiction is basically fiction, it often starts from and sometimes stays very close to a fact, or a series of facts.

Defoe got the Selkirk story from several sources. Accounts of his life on the island was published in 1712 in Edward Roger's *Cruising Voyage Round the World* and by Edward Cooke's *A Voyage to the South Sea and Round the World* (1712). Moreover, on December 3, 1713, Richard Steele, the essayist devoted as whole issue of *The Englishman* to the Selkirk story. It is obvious that Defoe had read these accounts; and though he had not featured Selkirk in the pages of his own *Review* (1704 - 1713) there is every possibility of Defoe having sought out Selkirk to hear his story from his own lips.

There are some obvious similarities between Selkirk's experiences and those of Defoe's hero such as :

(a) the basic situation of the marooned mariner ;

(b) Selkirk, like Crusoe, had been invaded by cats and had tamed goats ;

(c) Selkirk had been supplied with bedding and provisions, while Defoe rescued his own from the shipwreck.

(d) *Crusoe*, like Selkirk had lived on turtles initially.

(e) Steele's interview with Selkirk also mentions that like Crusoe in the novel the former had gone through a period of deep depression. Then gradually, "by the force of reason and frequent reading of the scriptures, …… he grew thoroughly reconciled to his condition." Selkirk's development from dejection to reconciliation, is paralleled by that of Crusoe, but Defoe could have invented this without having known Selkirk's similar predicament.

(f) Apart from these few details, the rest of *Robinson Crusoe* is Defoe's own invention. For whereas Selkirk had spent only four-and-a-half years, *Robinson Crusoe* lived for twenty eight years on the island off the Eastern Coast of South America near the mouth of the river Orinooco.

Defoe, in fact, could have drawn these details from several accounts, real or fictitious, of shipwrecked sailors namely : William: Dampier's, *A New Voyage Round the World* (1703), Robert Knox's *Historical Relation of Ceylon* (1681) and Maxmillian Missions fictitious *Voyage of Francois Legaut* (1707). In his book Knox relates his twenty - year imprisonment in Ceylon

which is very different from *Crusoe's* shipwreck, in character and personality, Knox, rather than Selkirk, comes closer to Crusoe.

In spite of its close relation with historical facts, Defoe's story is entirely fiction. He had collated his details from various sources and also from his wide personal experience. Defoe was actively involved in trade and business throughout his life and through this was associated with later travel, stories of adventure and maritime gossip. He bought and sold ships and his brother was a shipbuilder and, therefore, he had a thorough knowledge of ships and navigation.

However, what is significant in this link between *Robinson Crusoe* and contemporary travel literature is the assumption that the novel is also a travel account or at least, belongs to the tradition of travel literature.

In the seventeenth century travel books, in spite of their sub-literary status, acquired a great deal of popularity. The reason for this was by growth of maritime exploration and the consequent increase and expansion of trade in which England and several European nations were involved during this time. This commercial and later colonial expansion gave rise to and later was supported by factual and fictitious accounts of travel and exploration such as those by Mission and other such writers.

These travel books had certain common characteristics :

(a) The basic formula was the chronological movement from place to place; there was much geographical detail about the place and its inhabitants ; thus, the emphasis was on information and factual details rather than events.

(b) The typical narrative begins with the author's credentials ; the nature and purpose of the current voyage; the details of the ship its size and number; important crew members are introduced; details of the log-book at sea; masses of nautical and navigational details (wind, currents, routes, detours); certain unusual events (storms, pirate encounters, crew changes) — though these are digressive and minor anecdotes — ; topical descriptions of places and people are given greater space; events are therefore, either ignored or subordinated to these topical details.

(c) Even when an unusual happening is related, the tone and style is calm and dispassionate ; a thorough "objectivity", characterizes the style of this type of writing.

(d) An important aspect of this objectivity is the total absence of a central theme or an informing idea which is used to link or structure the chronology of visits; at the most, chronology is sometimes replaced by topicality when the narrative is interrupted to give details about a particular place; yet, this is by
far, the only organizing principle - thematic considerations being foreign to this convention.

(e) Thus, what is obvious is that these travel books lack thematic unity or ideological focus by becoming more an enumeration of voyages and topical details.

(f) A.W. Seccord emphasises the links *Robinson Crusoe* has with the typical travel book and states that "*Robinson Crusoe*, finally, is not so much a fictitious autobiography, as it is a fictitious book of travel …… ". Seccord points out that *in this novel there are* "a series of things well known in the literature of travel " — storm, shipwreck, captivity, life on a desert island ; description of these events and the details of the sea journey (position at sea, winds, direction, speed) and of the island (flora, fauna, animals, climate,
sailing conditions around it). *Robinson Crusoe* also has that objective matter-of- fact style typical of this writing.

However, as J. Paul Hunter points out, in spite of these similarities "*Robinson Crusoe* makes no attempt to follow the conventional pattern of the travel tradition." The similarities, he

adds, are merely superficial; Defoe's emphasis is totally different or, at least, there is a different use of conventional material.

(a) In *Robinson Crusoe*, the facts about several places are never presented as mere information. Each fact emerges out of the experience of the hero and often funcitons as a narrative situation which contributes to the development of the hero's character or that of the novel. For, instance, Crusoe describes lions and leopords and, later, savage natives as possible dangers to himself and Xury. In another incident, he kills a leapord in return for the kindness of the natives.

(b) The description of the island is given as the narrative develops and this description is integral to Crusoe's experiences and the development of his character.

(c) There is no attempt to provide a list of topical details of the island. In fact, a complete description of the island is not given and neither is there any other detail regarding Brazil except those related to Crusoe's life in that country. Thus, information is subordinated to character and event.

(d) In *Robinson Crusoe* chronology is used as a conscious device to dramatize the growth and development of the hero. Therefore, the novel has a dramatic structure which uses events to suggest mental and emotional conditions of the protagonist.

(e) Chronology, therefore, is not simply a device used to give the novel a unity of structure but is also contributes a thematic focus involving the character of the hero. Each event thus marks a development of Crusoe's character from his rebellion against parental authority and rejection of their advice regarding his 'station' in life — his 'Original sin'. This leads to this shipwreck which he later sees as a punishment for this transgression. On the island he goes through a series of experiences which finally makes him accept responsibility for his sin and his appeal to God to redeem him and thereby reconcile him to Christian faith marks his achievement of a social and moral education which the novel tries to emphasize.

(f) *Robinson Crusoe*, therefore, has a specific thematic coherence and an ideological emphasis which distinguishes it from the typical travel book or, for that matter, the contemporary adventure tales, the picaresque and the romance.

Unit 2(a): *Robinson Crusoe* and the Theme of Economic Individualism

Realist fiction generally uses two basic narrative methods :-

The Historical - mimetic method and the autobiographical - memoir narrative method. The first generally corresponds to the method of omniscient third-person narration in which the novelist is outside the text relating the events and actions objectively. While the second method uses a first - person narrative technique where the narrator recounts his experiences.

Robinson Crusoe uses the autobiographical - memoir method. This is evident the formal structure of the plot in which there is, as Ian Watt points out, a total subordination of plot to the pattern of the memoir - (this is one important contrast to the structure of the travel book). There is, therefore, the obvious use of the simple journal or diary form. But this method is not consistently used throughout the novel - there are departures often into soliloquy and the dramatic method narration.

More important is the fact that the novel emphasises the "primacy of individual experience" (Watt). In of the novel there are, therefore, a variety of scenes and events of an exotic and spectacular nature but all these are subordinated to the character participating in these events. Thus, quite evidently these scenes and events are used to express or externalize character or personality.

For instance, when Crusoe makes his escape from the captivity of the moor it illustrates his practical sense in devising and executing the scheme- thus the manner in which he is able to manage events.

Then, while Crusoe and Xury travel along the African shore, exotic and spectacular and dangerous scenes are depicted. Crusoe's basic sense of self preservation is suggested in the way he deals with the native and returns the help he receives from them by saving them from ferocious beasts. What is significant is that he is now in a position to establish control over events. This pattern of managing events to controlling them is repeated during his exile on the island. Events, thus dramatize consciousness and become the index of character development.

By emphasizing the importance of the individual, *Robinson Crusoe* expresses one of the basic postulates of the novel, which as a new genre, represented truth as subjective, private and individualistic. Moreover, the realism which characterizes the novel is evident not simply because it depicts the details of contemporary life. This realism also lies in the fact that the novel involves a definition of the self as a medium for a representation of reality. This definition of the self involves social and ideological terms. Thus, the individuality of character is shaped by his society and its values.

Circumstantial realism is thus a basic aspect of the novel, which aspires to reflect the contemporary world. However, personal experience is the basic category, the ultimate material for this reflection of the world.

RC, therefore, begins with the usual sociological definition of Crusoe's character. He is the third son of an immigrant family, whose father, a merchant, has "got a good estate", but he has not been bred to any trade and thus has a propensity for "rambling thoughts". "Something fatal in that propension of nature" makes him

choose a life of sea adventure against his parents' advice to settle "to business." Thus the very first sociological details indicate the direction in which Crusoe's character and career is going to develop.

What is significant about *Crusoe*'s wanting to go to sea is his reluctance to remain fixed in the economic and social position defined by his father, "the middle state or what might be called the upperstation of low life". Thus, his "fatal propension of nature" is actually his desire for social and economic mobility, which he states categorically at the end of chapter one, where *Crusoe* calls it the "undigested notion of raising my fortune." This desire for social mobility is, according to Ian Watt, the very basis of the spirit of capitalism which was growing in the eighteenth century. Thus, Watt defines the novel as an illustration of the fundamental social and ideological impulse of the age - namely economic individualism. For Watt, all Defoe's heroes pursue money which, in his *Review* Defoe called "the general denominating article in the world". Crusoe's next voyage, the one he calls "the only voyage which I may say was successful" had a purely economic motive. In fact, he travels purely as a gentleman merchant on a trip to Guinea where he makes a significant fortune. Similarly, the voyage from Brazil had the specific motive of slave trade which was then the most lucrative.

A necessary corollary of this economic individualism is — the devaluation of traditional forms of group relationship such as the family, the village, nation and even comradeship. Crusoe thus sells Xury, who had helped him in his escape from the Moors, for sixty pieces of eight (though he acquires a promise that the boy would be released in ten years if he became a Christian) ; on the island, however, he severely regrets this but here too he thinks of Xury as a servant who could have assisted him in his labours on the island in his labour. Crusoe's relations with Friday is also seen in utilitarian terms.

Romantic love and sex, therefore, play little part in Crusoe's life or in the novel. On the island when his isolation plagues him, he desires a male slave and with Friday he settles into a life of joyous contentment. Women are, therefore, treated as economic commodities. On the island. In Part II, of the novel, the colonists draw lots to choose their wives. The first to choose gets the "homeliest and oldest," of the five women but Defoe writes, she "proved the best wife in the parcel." Thus, the language of commerce qualifies personal and the marital relationship. Similarly, Crusoe gets married only after being financially secure and marriage is described in one of the most impersonal phrases in all literature as an experience "not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction". And soon after his wife dies, he abandons his family for another voyage.

Crusoe's experiences on the desert island can be divided into two broad phases. The first phase deals with his efforts at instinctive self preservation and the second phase is the period when he has mastered his environment, established control over his circumstances, nature and established his supremacy as colonizer and even ruler. The two phases can be divided by the central climax involving his encounter with the savages and his rescue of Friday, thereby ending his physical and even spiritual isolation.

The first phase is dominated by the basic impulses of economic individualism. Crusoe's control over nature and his circumstances gives him the spiritual and moral justification for his role as colonizer in the second phase which extends this control in economic and political terms.

The basic existential drive that dominates Crusoe after the shipwreck and his marooning is his instinctive sense of self preservation. This impulse is determined by the forces of necessity. In his *General History of Trade*, Defoe re-phrased the common proverb as "Necessity, which is the Mother, and Convenience, which is the Handmaid of Invention, first directed Mankind ….. to contrive, supplies and support of life". In *Robinson Crusoe*, the initial attempts of the hero to acquire support, life is qualified by this phrase. Crusoe's return to the shipwreck, after his initial period of desperation and despondency, is influenced by the desire to find the necessities which would make life possible. Defoe's statement is actually an echo of similar statements made by contemporary thinkers like Locke, William Temple and John Asgil, who observed that inventions were increased by the force of necessity to secure a living. Thus Defoe in his *Essay upon Projects*, expanded this idea suggesting that necessity destroyed sloth and fostered society through the creation of labour.

However, Crusoe's work, like rescuing resources from the wreck, his building of his tent and cave, his making of pots, taming goats, growing corn and baking bread- are all determined by their obvious utility value. This emphasis on the utility value of things is illustrated best in Crusoe's ironic panygeric on the gold and money he finds in the wrecked ship. The same sentiment qualifies Crusoe's agricultural activities later and also in his later realization that by owning the island he had much much more than his needs. Maxmillian Novak thus points out that *Robinson Crusoe elaborates the utility theory of value* basic to capitalism as treated by several economists. Defoe, Novak admits, was influenced following by the contemporary philosopher Locke, whose *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, explored this idea.

Just as Crusoe's demands and his produce are proportionate to his necessity and utility, it naturally implies that his labour is also proportionate to his needs. This, in fact, makes the *novel also an elaboration of the capitalist theory of labour*. Again Defoe took these ideas from John Locke's *Two Treatises* where Locke pointed out that value was not inherent in nature, but was created by human labour. This idea as also basic to the Puritan ethic which dignified labour with

the implicit suggestion that honest labour in the pursuit of wealth was a form of the imitation of Christ.

Yet, what is significant about the first phase of Crusoe's life on the island is the fact that it presents the primal conditions of man's labour relations with his product. In other words, *Robinson Crusoe*, in spite of its elaboration of capitalism and the *implicit division of labour, presents a state* in which *man is in direct and proportionate relation with his labour and its produce*. This, in fact, made *Karl Marx use the novel* as an *Utopian example of the primary and natural conditions of man*. *Crusoe's labour* is thus *not differentiated* and *does not suffer the division of labour*, which characterizes the economic individualism or economic specialization of capitalism.

He *achieves a sense of completeness* by the very needs of his natural circumstances which *forces him to make his own baskets and pots and also bake his own bread*. It is in these two aspects that *Robinson Crusoe* acquires an ambiguous implication. Thus, while elaborating the tenets of capitalism in its theory of utility and theory of labour, it simultaneously opposes and transcends these impulses by presenting a primary, natural and autonomous condition of man. Thus, in spite of the historical determination evident in Crusoe's novel, Defoe at the same time, presents Crusoe as a freer individual, who can transcend these tendencies in a pattern of action, which gives him absolute economic, social and intellectual freedom. It is in this significant sense, that acquires the characteristics of myth. He exemplifies the bourgeois myth of individualism and at the same time, becomes a symbol of natural man, Adam.

Unit 2(b): *Robinson Crusoe*: Spiritual Autobiography

The narrative structure of *Robinson Crusoe* can be divided into two broad strands of experience:-

(a) Crusoe's economic aspiration: his experiences on the island begin with his instinctual will to survive and ultimately lead to the accomplishment of mastery over nature, and the establishment of power and control over his circumstances.

(b) Complementing this development is Crusoe's religious conversion; this is a simultaneous process involving an acknowledgement of sin, repentance and acceptance of God's control and grace ; this constitutes his renewal into faith and acceptance of God's will and a divine pattern.

These two aspects are complementary parts of the controlling reality which is presented through the narrative. Both express dominant ideological impulses : the first, the ideology of growing capitalism, the second, the ideology of Puritanism. John Richetti describes Crusoe as a converter, turning an ideology to the uses of survival and autonomy by using what it gives and neutralizing its possessive effects.

What Defoe does in *Robinson Crusoe*, is to create situations and contexts in which the hero's experiences dramatise the basic ideological impulses of the age. In reality, what the narrative establishes is a situation in which Crusoe first survives disaster by sheer practical sense and a will to control and then to escape the destructive effects of isolation, that is for psychological survival he recognizes that he is part of a providential design and accepts divine control.

The autobiographical memoir narrative technique is historically suited to record this process

of spiritual conflict and renewal. The autobiographical mode not only records the objective, socio - historical and personal experiences of a protagonist but is also a record of his psychological, emotional and spiritual growth and development. From St. Augustine's *Confessions* through Rousseau's *Confessions* and Pascal's Pensee's to modern-day diaries and

autobiographies this is the general concern and focus. Defoe's memoir-narrative falls into the tradition of the confessional tradition which records therefore, Crusoe's psychological and spiritual conflicts and ends in the resolution of these conflicts.

The first significant illustration of the confessional nature of Defoe's memoir technique is seen when Crusoe tries to take stock of his condition after his marooning on the island. (It has to be noted that this comes after he has made initial arrangements for his security and survival). Thus, using the typical convention of economic individualism, he draws up in a book-keeping fashion, the exact nature of his situation on the island :

I new began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstance I was reduced to, and I drew up the state of Affairs in writing, not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few Heirs, as to deliver my thought's from daily pouring upon them, and afflicting my mind; and as my Reason began now to master my Despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the Evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse, and I stated it very impartially, like Debtor and Creditor, the comforts I enjoy'd and the miseries I suffer'd, Thus, this stock-taking thus dramatizes Crusoe's total and desperate isolation. This, in fact, becomes a metaphor for his desperate emotional and psychologically insecurity and helplessness. Implicitly, therefore, Crusoe's turning towards God is a result of his solitary state.

The first significant event which seems to determine Crusoe's conversion comes early in his journal when he discovers ten or twelve ears of barley growing beside his cave and takes this to be a miracle. "..... that God had miraculously caused this grain to grow without any help of seed sown, and that it was directed purely for my sustenance on that wild miserable place." Later, however, this initial grateful

euphoria is reduced when Crusoe remembers that he had shaken a bag of chicken feed - "this was nothing but what was common." The mature Crusoe is still able to acknowledge the "work of Providence" and thank God that these "grains of corn" had remained "unspoiled" and also "that I should throw it out in that particular place, where, it being in the shade of a high rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas, if I had thrown it any where else at that time, it had been burnt up and destroyed.

"Thus just as Crusoe survives physically by a pragmatic co-operation with natural forces he survives on the psycho-spiritual level by learning to see God's presence in material and physical events and details. This event seems to mark the beginning for his active search for faith in a superior power. This marks a transition both in the narrative and the character, from a life of action to one of contemplation. Defoe, however, brings about Crusoe's conversion a little later when he is severely sick. This conversion is preceded by a nightmare.

The nightmare, however, does not precipitate Crusoe's religious crisis - in fact, it is simply a symptom of his bodily and spiritual confusion Crusoe himself admits that he is unable to understand the meaning of this dream. This naivete is a condition of autobiographical narrative where the hero is unlike the cunning and mature picaro. This is a necessary precondition for spiritual conflict and regeneration. The dream enables Crusoe to objectively by study his actions from his first transgression of parental advice and the series of later deviations which at least brings him to acknowledge guilt and, therefore, see his isolation as retribution. This is the second precondition of spiritual regeneration.

The event, which actually brings about the conversion is Defoe's search for tobacco and, thereby, finding the Bible (pgs. - 93 - 94) In this section of the novel, Crusoe's sickness is used functionally and dramatically for his achievement of self-knowledge.

Sickness, therefore, becomes a means for distancing himself from his physical and psychological self. Thus, by seeing himself as a character who has participated in a chain of events and circumstances, he is able to define his status and function in this chain. In other words, Crusoe, who had before been living an entirely self - contained existence is able to find a pattern and continuity in his experiences from his first act of "Original Sin" and thereby see himself as fulfilling a divine plan : (see pp - 92 - 94). Thus, while reading the Bible, the next day, he submits himself to God. Crusoe is thus converted to a petitioner. Thus, from an enterprising, pragmatic engineer of his circumstances, he becomes a supplicant.

What is significant is that it is only after his conversion that Crusoe is able to achieve a greater degree of control and a sense of completeness. It is after this that Crusoe turns from mere survival toward exploring and domesticating the island - converting it from a prison into a garden. (see pp. 100 - 102; 152, 153)

He discovers the more pastoral and luxuriant side of the island - his Garden of Eden. This, in fact, becomes a symbol of his new condition. This new condition is characterized by a synthesis of activity and passivity. He builds a villa in his garden to balance his fortress. He tames wild things, he controls his agricultural activity and devotes time to Bible reading and contemplation. Thus, having reconciled contradictions in himself, he sets about resolving contradictions thereby converting chaos into cosmos, establishing God in his creation.

This sense of completeness is also reflected in the formal aspects of the narrative:

(a) the journal/diary peters out and is finally abandoned for a more coherent narrative style. Previously, he had only secured fragmentary flashes of his past, regretting this or that. Now he is able to review his life, explain the causes of his wandering and fit his experiences into a pattern of repentance and renewal through God's mercy. Thus, his new psycho-spiritual control gives him an access to the Puritan world view with its allegorical symbols, emblems and metaphors (see pp - 132 - 133).

(b) Even the style and rhetoric becomes relaxed and leisurely. The description of his family of animals, his basket and pot-making of bread is noteworthy. There is a direct relationship between Crusoe's thoughts and actions ; Defoe uses a objective narrative method which comes close to the epic narrative style.

(c) The discovery of the footprint initially subverts Crusoe's equanimity and control. He reverts to the conditions of fear and siege. Gradually, however, he is able to adopt a more objective state of mind and recognize the irony of the situation. (see pp. - 156) It is to be noted, that just after the incident, Crusoe discovers the dead body of a boy from a shipwreck and laments grievously for his lack of human company and his isolation. Crusoe's final decision is to do nothing to leave it all to God, to obey the impulse and logic of circumstances, in his own words, to follow, "a secret hint …… a strange impression upon the mind, from we know not what springs."

The other incident which helps in this process is another dream (pp. 198 - 199). The dream expresses Crusoe's deepest desires - namely, freedom from his circumstances. (This he dramatized consciously earlier in his attempts at making a boat and his undertaking an unsuccessful trip around island. The dream also dramatizes his understanding that he has a divine purpose, namely to rescue a savage and thereby end his isolation.

(d) The actual rescue of Friday does not equal Crusoe's dream but the experience shows the synthesis of action and circumstances, which is the guiding pattern of the narrative of the novel. In the moment of Friday's deliverance, Crusoe is like the deity who delivered him : suddenly visible and mysteriously powerful. Moreover, he acquires at this moment a sense of divine purpose. Thus, in Friday's subsequent conversion to Christiarity he re-enacts his own conversion

and with Friday's help, acquires real political power by defeating the cannibals rescuing the Spaniards and later saving the English Captain and achieving the means of freedom from the island after establishing a colony on the island.

Robinson Crusoe is, thus, an allegorical reworking of the Christian myth of sin, repentance and renewal. Through this theme, Defoe dramatizes the Puritan metaphysics of damnation and election. The enduring power of the narrative lies in the fact that this religious ideological impulse is grounded in the specific circumstances and events which the protagonist experiences. Moreover, through his experiences, Crusoe is able to adapt the religious elements to achieve a certain autonomy of action that gives his story the universal significance of myth.

Unit 3(a): *Robinson Crusoe* as Allegory

An ALLEGORY is a narrative in which ideas such as patience, purity and truth are symbolized by persons who are characters in the story. Neville Coghill says that allegory has an elaborate technique of interpretation and can be compared to a musical composition in which one or more themes are introduced by the different voices in turn and then repeated in a complex design. The theme pursued, simultaneously, on several levels of meaning:

(a) *the literal sense of the story* - the theme is part of a narrative of incidents and experiences.

(b) *Allegorical sense* - the theme is seen as a transference of our own lives and situations and passions in personified or typical terms.

(c) *Moral sense* - the theme is illustrated in maxims of conduct illustrated by the narrative and relevant to our lives.

Robinson Crusoe follows the allegorical mode almost exactly:

(a) There is the literal level of the story involving Crusoe's adventures, defeats and recoveries.

(b) There is the allegorical meaning which involves his recognition of sin his repentance and redemption.

(c) There is the moral statement illustrated not only Crusoe's career but also directly through Biblical references and moral observations.

Allegorically, the novel can be seen as a version of the parable of the Prodigal son, references to which are clearly stated or implied in the text : (pp. - 9, 11, 23). Crusoe here is the prodigal, who ignores his father's advice and leaves home ; ruins himself not by wild living but by a "fatal propension" to roam; he faces disaster and apparent desolation; repents and returns to his father (now in the form of God); is forgiven and rewarded - God kills the fatted calf blessing him with the abundance of the island and restores him to favour and lordship.

Most appropriately, the novel can be described in the more abstract theological scheme. Crusoe is Everyman incriminated by the Original Sin; thereby committing folly and crime and condemned into further sin through ignoring the repeated opportunities for correction granted by God; yet, he is one of the Elect, chosen by God to be finally saved through his acknowledgement of guilt therefore, and repentance, becoming an illustration of the ways of God to men.

In Robinson Crusoe, the allegorical mode is used to define Crusoe's character:-

Crusoe epitomizes the dual tendencies of the Puritan character - the adventurous and the domestic ; In the beginning, Crusoe is dominated by the first impulse – the adventurous; however, as soon as this phase ends in disaster, the second tendency (domestic) is adopted - Crusoe's energies are directed towards making a home.

The irony is in the fact that - Crusoe chooses adventure when it is easy for him to be domestic and he is domestic when it would be normal for him to seek the help of chance and adventure.

The enduring richness of the novel is in Defoe's combining this opposition in the single character of Crusoe. It gives the novel its multiple perspectives – adventure and domesticity ; action and contemplation; material and abstract; primitive and civilized.

This multiplicity explains its modern appeal. Moreover, these multiple perspectives, help Crusoe achieve a transcendence from the effects of any one influence; thus, he acquires an autonomy of action - and emerges as a type of mythical hero having universal significance.

Unit 3(b): *Robinson Crusoe* and the theme of Colonialism

One of the central and most significant paradoxes of *Robinson Crusoe* is in the incident dealing with Crusoe's discovery of the footprint. (see pp - 153 - 54) (a) The central irony of the novel is immediately evident if these lines are placed with the earlier list of Evil and Good (pp. 65-67), that marks Crusoe's stock-taking of his initial condition on the island. The dominant situation emphasized in the column of evils is *solitude*; here Crusoe is terror-stricken by the first opportunity of resolving this evil; in fact, what is signified as evil in the stock-taking here becomes good and vice-versa. This paradox gives us the first textual situation for an exploration of the colonialist aspect of the novel.

Thus, Crusoe whose character is dominated by the controlling impulse of individualism, sees the footprint as an aggression against his self-contained personality : The footprint represents the metaphoric image of the 'other' and is seen a possible subversion of his inviolate self.

As we have observed, one of the basic characteristics of economic individualism is its reduction and even negation of personal and social ties: quite evident in the beginning and throughout the last section; this is the fundamental aspect which makes solitude the condition humane of the bourgeois capitalism.

Defoe himself was aware of solitude as the universal condition of man: in *Serious Reflections of RC* (1720), the first essay is called "On solitude" – this suggests Defoe's view as to the meaning of Crusoe's experiences.

(e) The problems of solitude seems to have been a personal reality and concern for Defoe he had very few friends, and hardly had any contact with contemporary literary figures. In 1706, Defoe complained in a pamphlet of "how I stand alone in the world, abandoned by those very people that own I have done them service; … how with …. no helps but my own industry, I have forced misfortune, and reduced them ….. how, in goals, in retreats, in all manner of extremities, I have supported myself without assistance of friends or relations." Defoe sees in *Robinson Crusoe* a similar meaning; in the Preface to the novel he summarizes the themes as "Here is invincible patience recommended under the worst of misery, indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances."

The central irony in *Robinson Crusoe* lies in the fact that what was considered as an evil in the beginning of the novel is seen later as a threat which makes solitude itself a metaphor of utopian idealism and the image of the inviolate individualism. Crusoe's reaction to the footprint dramatizes this instinctual rejection of an intervention into his inviolate utopia of solitude; he sees the footprint as an aggression and subversion of his individualist utopia, which is a major symbol of his will to control his will to power; the footprint, therefore, implies a threat to his power on the island. Thus, Crusoe's first reaction is to retreat into the symbol of his power and

security his fortress and cave. He takes up and embattled position of constant surveillance; even regrets not having produced extra corn for this crisis (note the utopian ideal of production according to necessity is immediately rejected); even this religious and spiritual balance is disturbed when his power is in possible danger (pp - 169 - 172). The footprint thus becomes a metaphor which constitutes a criticism of the associate and a historical nature of Crusoe's Island.

Unit 4: Textual Analysis

In what is considered to be the first important study of the colonial encounter, O Mannoni in his book *Prospero and Caliban*, calls *Robinson Crusoe* the first The Psychology of Colonization model of the colonial encounter. Referring to this paradox of solitude in the novel, Mannoni says that Crusoe's pathological terror expresses the "massive misanthropic neurosis", which characterizes the European mind and more specifically the colonialist attitude in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. According to Mannoni, "the personality of the colonial is made up, not of characteristics acquired during and through experience of the colonies but of traits …. already in existence in a latent and repressed form in the European psyche, - traits which the colonial experience has simply brought to the surface and made manifest".

Edward Said also confirms this. He points out that concept of the Orient is a European construct; that this is based on a whole tradition of literature dealing with the Orient including romance and fiction, history and scientific research and finally, the travelogue and, tourist literature which Said says has been "producing" the Orient. This production of the East, Said says, operates on two major impulses: (a) representing the Orient in order to confirm and justify Western superiority and progress and (b) therefore, to structured the orient within Western ideas and tendencies of power and control which is, in turn, justified by the ideology that European imperialism is ultimately a benefaction on the inferior colonised state. The colony, thus becomes "the white man's burden", where the white man performs his moral responsibilities with control and power, ultimately turning the colony into another version of the West.

Robinson Crusoe has most of the features of this colonial model. As we first pointed out, *Robinson Crusoe* does not belong to the tradition of travel literature which often is a sociological and demographic work on the colonies; in fact, the realism of the novel argues against its consideration as travelogue; there is very little information about the island or its inhabitants. Colonial literature does not give information about this. In reality, what the novel turns out to be - is an autobiographical record of the white man's existential and spiritual experiences. This, in turn, is a dramatization and re-enactment of the main ideological impulses of Europe : growing capitalism supplemented by the Protestant ethic ; in other words, as Mannoni says, Crusoe's island actually becomes a microcosm of Europe in the eighteenth century. The central metaphor of this economic and Puritan ideology is solitude - what Watt calls the "monitary image" of man. This is basic to economic individualism which is marked by an extreme solipsism - a pathological condition of being imprisoned within the self. Crusoe turns to God to escape this bondage within the self, but the controlling irony of his spiritual conversion lies in the fact that now Crusoe uses religion, to justify his self-containment, his solitude. Solitude, therefore, becomes the metaphoric condition suggesting self knowledge, self-control and thus an assertion of power. Thus, in actuality, what *Robinson Crusoe* explores are class and power relations. Crusoe's 'original sin' of running away which is past of the economic individualism, is actually his rejection of hierarchical class restrictions of Europe- considered limitations of the self. He also embodies the economic and social ambitions of the middle class. Defoe, therefore, is actually creating on the island a fictional space for the enactment of the basic facts of bourgeois

ideology and consequently re-stating the doctrines of control and power which is integral to it; thus, inspite of the utopian conditions of the island, the latent contradictions of this situation are dramatically foregrounded with the discovery of the footprint and with the introduction of Friday, the utopia dissolves into the typicality of the colonial, power situation of the master and the slave. The conversion of Crusoe from the dominated to one who dominates, is complete.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe dramatizes the colonial mind through the very psychological metaphors which are emphasized in the narrative. Thus, the dream in which Crusoe sees himself resulting a native typifies the basic colonialist attitude towards the native.

a) the dream radically situates the native in the position of the dominated by placing him in the context of danger. This, not only reduces the native to the stature of the inferior/rescued but emphatically ratifies the domination of the white man/Crusoe.

b) What is significant about this dream is the wish-fulfillment that it unconsciously dramatizes - that the native would be his "servant" and, therefore, act as his "pilot" to "venture to the mainland".

c) This unconscious desire is ratified in Crusoe's conscious "conclusion" where he actually determines to "get a savage in my *possession*". Human company which Crusoe so desperately desired to resolve his solitary confinement, is therefore, reduced to its utilitarian denomination like the other objects of Crusoe's castle by this term of conspicuous consumption and his desire that this "possession" be acquired in a context of "blackmail" - "and, if possible, it should be one of their prisoners whom they had condemned to be eaten and should bring hither to kill ….". This is the classic typology of power that is basic to the colonial situation.

d) With minor deviations, the dream is actuated in the real circumstances of Friday's rescue, but what is important is the divine justification that Crusoe adds to this. Thus, what Crusoe had earlier seen in utilitarian terms, is redefined in terms of Christian benevolence and altruism, - the savage, therefore, becomes the white man's burden, his moral responsibility : "It came now very warmly upon my thoughts, and indeed, irresistibly, that now was my time to get a servant, and perhaps a companion, or assistant, and that I was called plainly by Providence, to save this poor creature's life." This redefinition of the premises, which characterizes the native, - is basic to the colonialist discourse which Said says, involves a constant production of knowledge of the colonized for a "western style of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient."

e) This is further illustrated in Crusoe's description of Friday, which clearly has racist implications. Thus, Friday is given features which separates him from the other savages : "he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance …. his hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large, and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skik was not quite black, but very tawny, and yet not of an ugly yellow nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are but of a bright kind dunolive colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe." (pp. - 205 - 206).

f) What this description actually marks is a specific representation of the native in agreeable terms. In other words, it involves a deliberate restructuring of the native by the simple use of a contrast. Thus, Friday is distinctive in the sense that though he is a native, his features denote that he is not the typical savage. And it he is not this type, he is nearer to the European. The contrast, therefore, yields a redefinition, - but this redefinition is encoded within the values and beliefs of Europe. Friday is thus produced as a Western version of the native. This representation marks an important colonialist intervention in the novel. By distinguishing Friday from the other natives what Defoe does is to categorize the native into the typical colonialist structures of the

cannibal/savage and the slave. This is fundamental to the literary tropes of colonial literature and has its beginnings in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in the characters of Caliban and Ariel and features regularly in later colonialist writing, particularly in Rudyard Kipling, who also categorizes the native into the "half devil, half child."

g) The logical conclusion of this strategy, therefore, is to convert the native to the values and beliefs of the European colonizer. Thus, Friday, whose name is arbitrarily imposed on him and who is taught the language of servitude – 'Yes Master, No Master' is made to engage himself in a Christian discourse with Crusoe, in a remarkably short time. (pp. 216-218). Friday's conversion to Christianity (which Crusoe obviously interprets as part of his divine purpose) thus, characteristically begins with a rejection and subversion of Friday's native religion:

"I endeavoured to clear up this fraud to my man Friday, and told him, that the pretence of their old men going up to the mountains to say 'O!' to their God Benamucke, was a cheat; and their bringing word from thence what he said, was much more so, that if they met with an answer, or spoke with anyone there, it must be with an evil spirit; and then I entered into a long discourse with him about the devil, the original of him, his rebellion against God, his enmity to man, the reason for it, his setting himself up in the dark parts of the world to be worshipped instead of God …. " (pp. - 217) The reason for quoting this passage is to show certain syntactical and *verbal connections*. Not only is Friday's God dismissed as a cheat, but he is also defined categorically as an evil spirit and finally equated with the devil. Edward Said says that this is typical of Western colonial subversion in which alien religions are not only characterized as Pagan, but also as versions of anti-Christ. This creation of the antithesis is a deliberate assertion of power which is encoded within the discourse of religion. Friday's conversion, therefore, is not simply a reenactment of Crusoe's own conversion earlier, but (a) reinstatement of Western ideas of psychic and civil order; (b) an affirmation of the superiority and civility of the colonizer and (c) the primary strategy for establishing control and power over the native.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, in the true tradition of colonial discourse, Friday is totally assimilated into the European model of civility and culture. This in reality, becomes a total *negation of his identity*, which is completely subsumed within the codes and values of Europe. Friday, therefore, becomes a "major symbol announcing the victory of the colonialist project and he is a production of Crusoe's civilized self, as a text, which reaffirms European superiority and order."

h) The irony, however, is in the fact, that it is not Friday, or the savages who constitute the real threat in Defoe's novel but the white man who is reduced to behaving like the savage. It is in the incident of the mutiny on the British ship that the novel is radically problematized as illustrated in the conversation between Friday and Crusoe when they observe the mutineers. "I was perfectly confounded at the sight, and knew not what the meaning of it should be; Friday called out to me, in English, as well as he could, 'Oh, Master ! you see English mans eat prisoners as well as savage mans.' "Why", said I, "Friday do you think they are going to eat them.?" "Yes" says Friday, "they will eat them." "No, no", said I, "Friday, I am afraid they will murder them indeed; but you may be sure they will not eat them." (pp. – 271 – 272).

i) Crusoe's rout of the mutineers and his rescue of the English captain is conducted on the dual strategies of observation and secret supervisions. Like Prospero in *The Tempest*, he projects himself as having magical powers, almost a deux ex 23achine, who ultimately reveals himself as the governor of the island.

j) This is symbolic in one sense of Crusoe's assumption of formal political power.

Crusoe's Eden, his capitalist utopia is thus politicized with all the formal hierarchies and contradictions of a European state. For, with the coming of the mutineers and later in The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, with the arrival of the Spaniards, Crusoe's island acquires the character of a regular colonial settlement whose colonists owe him allegiance and whose laws and holdings he formulates and divides.

The colonialist analysis of Robinson Crusoe therefore, gives us a comprehensive reading of the novel for it dramatizes the economic and religious beliefs of Europe in the eighteenth century; that these actually dramatize the colonialist attitude and encounter by specifying certain precise representations of the colonizer and colonized in relationships of power, that this involves the central theme and purpose of the novel representation, therefore, is European ideas and values, which aggressively reaffirms European superiority and justifies colonialism.

Suggested Reading

1. J. R. Moore, Daniel Defoe : *Citizen of the Modern World (1958).*
2. David Blewett, *Defoe's Art of Fiction (1979).*
3. Harold Bloom, *Daniel Defoe : Modern Critical Views (1987).*
4. A.W. Seccord. *Daniel Defoe, his Art and mind (1948).*
5. Maxmillian Novat, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe (1962).*
6. Maxmillian Novat, *Defoe and the Nature of Man (1963)*
7. John Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives (1975).*
8. John Richetti, *Daniel Defoe (1987).*
9. Max Byrd (ed) : Daniel Defoe : A Collection of Critical Essays (1976)
10. Frant H. Ellis (ed) *Twentieth Century Interpretation of Robinson Crusoe'. (1969)*
11. George A Starr, Defoe and spiritual Autobiography (1965).
12. Michael Shinagel (ed) *Robinson Crusoe. Norton Critical Edition (1975)* [All page references are given from the 1994 reprint of this edition].

Assignments

1. Write an essay on *Robinson Crusoe* as a travel book.
2. Discuss *Robinson Crusoe* as a reflection of the economic ideas of the eighteenth century.
3. Comment on *Robinson Crusoe* as a spiritual autobiography.
4. Analyse *Robinson Crusoe* as an allegory.
5. Examine *Robinson Crusoe* as a novel which justifies colonialism.

Block II: *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn

Unit 5(a): Life of Aphra Behn
Unit 5(b): Literary Career of Aphra Behn
Unit 6(a):
(i) Publication History
(ii) Historical background
Unit 6(b): Plot Analysis
Unit 7: Themes
(i)* Attitude to Slavery, Racism in *Oroonoko
(ii) Gender Issues
(iii) *Oroonoko* as Romance
Unit 8(a) Genre
Unit 8(b) (i) Narrative Style and Structure
(ii) Characters

Introduction

I will here be discussing about a seventeenth century novella titled *Oroonoko; or The Royal Slave* written by the first woman to earn her living by writing, Mrs Aphra Behn. For the sake of convenience and also because that is how she is popularly known, I will henceforth in the module be mentioning the author by her name without the 'Mrs'. Also the title of the work will be mentioned only as *Oroonoko* in place of the full title. Since not much information is available on the author's life as also critical analysis of the text, my discussion will necessarily deal more textual reading based on the available critical material here. The sources of the critical material that I have made use of, will be given at the end. However some material had been gathered in an unorganized manner and I do not have the proper sources recorded. For such sources only a good guess is all that I can offer. However it is to be noted that it is expected that all candidates have a copy of the text when consulting the discussion of the text in this module.

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* is said to have heralded many different trends in the novel tradition. It is credited with pioneering the anti-colonial theme and the realistic trend as also the use of minute details in narrative descriptions.

Unit 5(a): Life of Aphra Behn

Mrs Aphra Behn's (1640-1689) early life is shrouded in obscurity. It is assumed that she was probably born in 1640. It is also hypothesized that she was born to Bartholomew and Elizabeth Johnson of Kent. One of the most important figures of twentieth century literature, Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* (1929), acknowledges Aphra Behn as being the first woman to write professionally. Information regarding Behn's education or how she got introduced to literary and theatrical circles remain little-known. She is said to have visited Surinam, then a British colony, with her family between 1663 and 1664. On her return to England the following year she married Behn, a city merchant probably of Dutch descent, who died within two years. Charles II employed her in 1666 to work as a spy in Antwerp in the Dutch War. This scandalous woman writer of the seventeenth century and a well-known royalist was nevertheless buried in Westminister Abbey, on her death on 16 April 1689.

Unit 5(b): Literary Career of Aphra Behn

She is regarded to be the second most prolific and popular playwright of the seventeenth century, preceded by none other than the very popular Restoration dramatist John Dryden. Her first play *The Forced Marriage* was performed in 1670 by the Duke's Company. She went on to write at least eighteen plays, as well as several volumes of poetry and numerous works of fiction that were in vogue for decades after her death. Her most successful play, *The Rover* was produced in two parts in 1677 and in 1681. Her novella *Oroonoko; Or, The Royal Slave* (1688) is the work for which she is recognized internationally and which has made her name survive through centuries.

Unit 6(a): Publication History and Historical background to *Oroonoko*

(i) Publication History of *Oroonoko*

Oroonoko; Or, The Royal Slave, the work that has given Aphra Behn international recognition and fame, was published in 1688. This was the first literary work in English that grappled with the issue of the global interactions in the modern world. It is necessary here to discuss the historical context of this global interaction and slave trade that is at the centre of this work.

(ii) Historical Background to *Oroonoko*

While narrating Oroonoko's journey from West Africa to the Caribbean, Aphra Behn describes the hero's travel from Africa to Suriname, a place in the north of South America. This journey also represents the interactions between the three continents of Britain, Africa and America. There is supposed to have been an economic, political, and cultural interaction between these lands based on ''the triangular trade'' that is said to have existed amongst them. There already existed a long history of British colonization of America and also of Europeans trading in African slaves But what is interesting is that due to this ''triangular trade', there was forced transportation of a labour population from one continent namely, Africa, to facilitate industry in another continent, that is, America, and the produce of this industry was for the consumption of another continent, namely Europe. The start of this triangular trade and the increased exploitation of African slave labour in the Caribbean necessarily followed from a particular development. This was the discovery by the English colonizers in the Caribbean in the mid-1640s that sugarcane could be successfully grown and processed rather than the unsuccessful cultivation of cotton and tobacco. This shift to sugarcane farming led to a crisis in labour supply that led to more and more African slaves being brought in from Africa. It is interesting that during the 1660s, the years depicted in *Oroonoko*, the African population in these islands was roughly equal to the entire white population and by 1690, that is around the time when *Oroonoko* was published, blacks in fact outnumbered whites by an approximateration of three to one. This rampant increase in slavery was not so rapid in the North American colonies. This swift conversion to slave labour resulted in the Dutch take-over of Suriname, a colony on the coast of Guiana, and the place where the narrator meets Oroonoko when he lands there as a slave. This is the first work in English to depict this inter-continental trade and interaction that existed during this time and also to criticize the treatment of slaves in these lands. Further it needs to be noted that a woman writer achieved this and that too in the seventeenth century.

Unit 6(b): Plot Analysis

As the title of the novella suggests, the story is about an African prince named Oroonoko. The whole story is narrated in the form of a flashback. This is the story of Prince Oroonoko as told to the narrator who he met when he was a slave in Guiana. The old King of Coramantien, on the Gold Coast, had no son for all had died in the battlefield. The only surviving successor to this old King was a grandson, the son of one of the thirteen sons of the King. This old King had several black wives. However this sole surviving successor to the throne, Prince Oroonoko, was trained by one of the oldest generals of the King's army and by the time the Prince reached his seventeenth year, his name had spread far and wide ''as one of the most expert captains and bravest soldiers''. Very soon the Prince started to win battles for the King, with the old general by his side. On one such occasion, trying to save the Prince, the General is fatally wounded on the battlefield, and Prince Oroonoko is declared general in his place. On his return to his native land, Oroonoko decides to visit Imoinda, the only daughter of the slain general and his mentor. When ''this gallant Moor'' meets the ''fair Queen of Night'', Imoinda (this is how the author describes them both), they fall in love with each other and after several meetings both decide to take the other for a life partner, with the blessings of Prince Oroonoko's grandfather. On the other hand, having heard of this great beauty Imoinda, the old King who had many wives and many concubines in his *otan*, had his heart

set on this young beauty who had sparked a thousand tender thoughts in his old heart. Having received information of a probable relationship between this beauty and his own grandson, the King in a rage sends her the royal veil, that was an invitation that the King wanted her for his ‘‘use’’, and an order that no one dared disobey Imoinda, however, has to be forcibly brought to court where she cries and begs the King to set her free but to no avail. The King uses his powers over the pleading girl and when Oroonoko gets to hear what has happened on his return from his expeditions it is too late. After a long period of silent suffering in agony Oroonoko decides to take the help of one of the old Queens who was now in charge of Imoinda, Onahal, and meet Imoinda just once. His loyal follower Aboan and Onahal thus arrange for a meeting between the estranged lovers. The King however gets to know of this meeting and arrives there just after Oroonoko's friends forcibly makes him escape. As a punishment, the furious King orders that both Onahal and Imoinda be sold as slaves and sent to a different land. With the passage of time Oroonoko forgot exonerates the King for what he had done to Imoinda, and gradually gets back to his normal life. However he promises never to take a woman for his wife ever again. The captain of an English ship, arrives on the shores of Coramantien, who knew Oroonoko, on one of his visits and stays with Oroonoko and enjoys his hospitality. It was Oroonoko’s ability to converse in both French and English, due to his French tutor who had tutored Oroonoko not only in the languages but also the civilized ways of European life, that facilitated his friendships with such non-African people.

However, on the pretext of offering to return the hospitality shown to him, the captain of the English ship drugs Oroonoko and his men and then sails off to the far away lands on the coast of America with these youths bound in chains. All these young men are then sold off to various plantations as slaves. Oroonoko, the royal prince of an African land, is then sold off to a Cornish gentleman named Trefry, the overseer of the Parham plantation in Surinam. Once on the plantation, Oroonoko is given a new name - Caesar. Soon Oroonoko becomes friendly to Trefry and his ‘noble mien’ and ability to converse in English and French, results in him being treated differently from the other slaves. His friend Trefry once takes Oroonoko, now called Caesar, to meet a woman named Clemene, renowned for her beauty, who lived in absolute seclusion and was reputed to have rejected all men on the plantation. To Oroonoko’s utter amazement Clemene is none other than Imoinda. On listening to their story, Trefry and the narrator, impressed by this gallant and beautiful prince soon become his friends and arrange the marriage of Oroonoko and Imoinda. The lovers separated in their own land by their own people are finally united in captivity and by their white masters. It is when Imoinda is pregnant that Oroonoko realizes how desperately he needed his freedom. He did not want his children to be born as slaves and he requests his friends on the plantation, Mr Trefry and the narrator, to arrange for their freedom. In spite of repeated requests that it would be arranged once the Governor arrived, they fail to attain their freedom. This is when, having befriended other slaves Oroonoko decides to rebel against the slave masters. They first run away to the forest to fight from there. However, the other slaves return to captivity fearing the defeat of the rebellion, and Oroonoko is left alone feeling dejected and betrayed. In mortal fear yet refusing to let his wife and child spend the rest of their lives as slaves, Oroonoko first kills Imoinda and then mortally wounds himself. He is then captured and brutally murdered to teach the other slaves on the plantation never to rise in revolt against their masters.

Imoinda and Oroonoko, the ‘royal’ slaves, thus die in captivity. Oroonoko’s slaying his wife and unborn child is a way of protesting against the slave trade of the times.

Unit 7: Themes

(i) Attitude to Slavery, Racism in *Oroonoko*

Aphra Behn’s seventeenth-century tale of an African prince’s forced from a life of royalty to a life and his eventual death is, nevertheless, recognized of a slave as one of the earliest attempts in literature to comment against slavery. I will here first try to point out the various reasons for which this work might be cited as an anti-slavery document; for, in spite of such attempts to criticize the slave trade, Aphra Behn’s own racist attitudes tend to seep through.

This will be dealt with in the last segment of this sub-section.

The statements made in the text that would count as anti-slavery comments are:

(a) In *Oroonoko*, Aphra Behn seemingly possesses a conflicting attitude toward the institution of slavery and of racism stet. While trying to point to the negative aspects of slavery on the one hand, she also cites certain racist viewpoints, on the other. The author reveals her deeply rooted cultural bias and racism in

fictionalizing and romanticizing the lives of slaves on the plantations and displays a rather non-committal attitude towards slavery.
(b) In her unusual choice of an African Prince for a heroic romance, she tries to beautify and valorise the Africans. She constantly uses epithets like ‘‘gallant Moor’’ and ‘‘fair Queen of Night’’- when describing them, attempting to show that the ‘‘negroes’’, as she calls them in the text, could be just as noble, virtuous, passionate, heroic and just as worthy of literary praise and human compassion. It is important to note here that never before in English literature had any attempt been made to portray Africans in such a favourable light.
(c) In various ways the author points to the white man’s flaws whether it is in his cruelty towards the slaves or in the treacherous way in which Oroonoko and his men are taken slaves. In fact, the aurhor notes that according to come, the way in which the captain of the English ship drugs Oroonoko and his men on the pretext of extending hospitality, might be commended as an act of bravery. But the author strongly condemns it as an ignoble act of treachery and allows the reader to judge such an act. Through the sufferings of Oroonoko and Imoinda on the plantation in Surinam, Behn highlights the excessive cruelty of the colonial ruler while constantly referring to the sense of honour and the virtues' of the lovers. Through the character portrayals of Oroonoko and Imoinda depicted in all their honesty, loyalty, virtuosity and strength, Aphra Behn allots these ‘slaves’ an almost immortal status.
(d) Alongside the portrayal of such ‘noble’ slaves is the character portrayal of white Christian villains like the captain of the English ship, whose deeds have already been discussed. The other group of such villains comprises the white men on the plantation who torture and torment Oroonoko as he is a slave and has dark-coloured skin.
(e) The most scathing anti-slavery comment is made when Oroonoko speaks to the other natives on the plantation and tries to rouse them in a rebellion against slavery, in an attempt to break free from the shackles of bondage. Oroonoko questions his fellow slaves ‘‘Shall we render obedience to such a degenerate race who have no one human virtue left to distinguish them from the vilest creatures?’’ Aphra Behn could not have made a stronger statement than allowing her slave hero a voice to speak against the establishment.
Even after such commendable efforts of Aphra Behn to take a stand against slavery, she constantly exposes her racial bias when referring to the African characters as ‘‘negroes’’or as members of the ‘‘dark continent’’.
(a) While describing the African characters, especially their physical beauty, the author never forgets to mention that there was ‘‘nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable, and handsome’’ like these dark-skinned people except ‘‘their colour’’.
(b) Among the other blacks, Oroonoko is an exception. His looks are not like the usual looks of the negroes. The prince had been ‘‘civilized in the most refined schools of humanity and learning’’ by his French tutor. As the prince was trained in the European ways of life and language, hence his appearance is different and more engaging than that of his countrymen. Moreover, Oroonoko’s education in European manners also make him acceptable to the English people evident in the number of English friends which includes the narrator.
(c) When Oroonoko chooses to rebel against his slave masters, even the narrator who has all along represented herself as a confidant and friend of Oroonoko’s, is scared. She feels her life too might be in danger exposing her inherent mistrust of anyone black. At that point Oroonoko becomes one with the other members of his race and all good things that have been said about him are instantly forgotten.
(d) Behn tends to romanticize slavery and life on the plantation rather than choose to confront most of its harshness. The struggles of Oroonoko and Imoinda are made to seem heroic and beautiful instead of bring shown as the sorry plight of victims of a really harsh and cruel reality. Their valour and virtue are highlighted so that it helps in disguising not only the narrator’s prejudices but also the cruelties inflicted on the slaves.
(e) Such romanticizing serves Behn’s purpose which appears to entertain the Restoration aristocracy by rendering Oroonoko’s life the stature of tragedy and a heroic romance. The historical importance of the work lies in the fact that *Oroonoko* emphasizes those emotional experiences that were often suppressed or distorted in the historical descriptions, debates and documentary records of the period. Aphra Behn on the other hand exposes the conflicts and turmoil that other records buried.
(f) Behn the colonizer indirectly accuses the African King and Oroonoko’s own people for causing the separation of the lovers. The lovers, Oroonoko and Imoinda, are reunited on the plantation where both

are slaves, thus hinting that while their own people had separated them, the colonial rulers brought them together.
(g) The narrator also tries to justify slavery on the ground that it is an economic requirement. Neither is there any criticism of the way in which the slaves are treated nor is there any direct attack on the institution of slavery itself.
(h) Oroonoko, who as a character is supposed to act as the mouthpiece against slavery, is himself shown to be trading in slaves. When the slaves who had fled from the plantation with Oroonoko betray him and return to captivity, Oroonoko mentions that they were ''by nature slaves...[who were] fit to be used as Christians' tools''. Nevertheless, Behn's *Oroonoko* is an early attempt at exposing the evils of slavery whether through the criticism of Western civilization or through the ennobling and humanizing of an African. And this brave endeavour by a woman writer in the seventeenth century is no mean effort and should be accorded its due commendation.

(ii) **Gender Issues in *Oroonoko***

Oroonoko is the story of the royal slave from the point of view of the middle-class mistress of a colonial power. Interestingly, the black, male protagonist can only find a voice through the white, female narrator. In the text women, both blacks and whites, have less power than the men. However the black female slaves have the least power of all. These women are never consulted but expected to do whatever their men-folk ask them to do or go wherever they are asked to go. Even the white women represented by the narrator, her mother and sister have some influence, but when important decisions are taken they are not consulted. For example we might cite the instance when the decision to punish Oroonoko is taken, the narrator is not only not consulted she is not even informed of the decision and the punishment is executed while she is away. The way in which Africans used women as commodities is highlighted by the number of Queens and concubines that the old King is said to have and also the way in which they are discarded once they grow old. The way in which Imoinda is forced to accept the old King's proposal and entertain the King also throws light on this aspect. While pointing to this negative aspect in African culture, the author refrains from highlighting the almost similar treatment of women in her culture. In fact we hardly get to see too many of the women of the ruling class. Again the 'beauty' of the dark-skinned women is often contrasted with the beauty of the women of the European races.

(iii) ***Oroonoko* as a Romance**

The second important theme in this novella is that of romance. Oroonoko is portrayed as a hero who is adept in the art of warfare, is often referred to as the ''gallant Moor'', is honest, loyal, faithful. In fact not a single flaw in his nature is mentioned ''except the color''. He is the perfect hero. The story is focussed on the love story between Oroonoko and Imoinda. At their first meeting after the death of Oroonoko's mentor the old general who was also Imoinda's father, both fall in love with each other. Though they decide to get married they wait to get the permission from the old King who is Oroonoko's grandfather. During this period Imoinda, despite her protests and tears is forcibly taken away by the King to satisfy his lust. The love between the hero Oroonoko and the heroine Imoinda is put to test here. Whereas the furious Oroonoko would have rebelled against the King for his deed, his respect towards his grandfather and the monarch of the land stops him from taking any drastic step. But the love story has to reach its climax. So Oroonoko goes to meet Imoinda in the palace, spends the night with her, the knowledge of which enrages the King who then punishes Imoinda by ordering her sale as a slave carried to some fat off land. To this same far off land, Surinam, Oroonoko is also brought as slave and the two lovers finally meet after years of separation and a lot of pain. It is probably hinted that actually the sympathetic colonial rulers and slave masters bring the two lovers together and get them married, while their own people had separated them. To make the love story a tragedy and thus immortalise it, both the lovers are killed. Even their killing is pathetically rendered. Thus the novella is given the status of a heroic romance as well as a tragedy.

Unit 8(a): Genre and Structure

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* is a 'novella' which is a work of fiction that is shorter than a novel but longer than a short story. Certain critics claim the text to be a memoir and a travel narrative, since it is based on Aphra Behn's resit to the colony of Surinam, later known as Dutch Guiana. It is also sometimes said to belong to the genre of a 'biography' since it is said that it is the biography of Oroonoko as told to the narrator, whom he met on the plantation where he spent the last few years of his life as a slave.

Unit 8(b): Narrative Style, Technique and Characters

Oroonoko has no chapter divisions. The text is in the form of an oral tale being told by the narrator therefore it is in a single framework. I will discuss here the narrative style and technique used in this novella.

Narrative Style and Technique

(a) In her search for a prose form appropriate to stories with contemporary rather than purely heroic settings and themes, Behn wrote her fictional works in a conversational tone. *Oroonoko* is thus strewn with personal references like ‘‘I have already said’’or ‘‘I forgot to ask how’’, making the narrative resemble an ongoing conversation with her readers. This also lends her tales an ordinary tone than the formal tone that is usually evident in earlier prose forms.

(b) In order to lend authenticity to the work, the narrator is made the witness and interpreter mof the events in the story, thus also making her a part of the narrative as one of the ‘characters’. At the start itself the narrator mentions, I was myself an eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down; and what I could not be witness of, I received from the mouth of the chief actor in this history, the hero himself, who gave us the whole transactions of his youth. While such authentication adds to the interest of the story, the role of the narrator as interpreter allows her to add the colonial aspect. The colonial attitudes to race could not have been those of Oroonoko or, for that matter, the black hero’s version, these were the narrator’s opinions and therefore the ‘authenticity’ of the hero’s version of the tale is anyway discredited. Also the various ways in which Behn tries to make her narrative authoritative is to credit her work with literary merit even though it comes from a ‘‘female-pen’’, which was a major hurdle for this seventeenth-century woman writer.

(c) Such authoritative presence of the narrator precedes the figure of the omniscient narrator in the fiction to follow like those of Henry Fielding, Jane Austen and George Eliot.

(d) *Oroonoko* is regarded as one of the first realistic prose narratives in English literature. It contains a number of elements that are new: the conversational narrative style, the narrative authority who is recognizably female, and a plot that focusses on the love story of two black slaves. There is a shift in locale to the New World, and an analysis of slave trade in the British colony of Surinam.

(e) By choosing a female narrator to narrate the story of the educated black African prince, Behn’s narrative privileges the authority of Western written discourse over African oral discourse.

(f) Some critics point to the commodification of the Royal Slave’s story through Behn’s narrative, by the authoritative female narrator’s rendering of the story.

(g) It is the narrative that exposes the Eurocentric bias, as discussed in the ‘theme’ section.

(h) The authoritative narrative was necessary due to the patriarchal culture that Behn was forced to contend with in which female authorship was viewed as suspect. Therefore Behn’s narrative had to demonstrate complete command of the novel’s subject matter — Oroonoko and Imoinda and their lives.

(i) Behn’s narrative strategies are representative of the ways in which the British imagined and represented the New World during the Restoration and early eighteenth century. The British were struggling to strengthen their presence in America during these years and simultaneously trying to make meaning of their experiences there. This results in the confused attitude as evident in the text--- the constant reinforcement of authority through the narrative, the imposition of colonial power over the black slaves which is nevertheless sympathetic and ‘friendly’.

Characters

The various characters in the story are:

i) The first-person narrator who is the daughter of the Lieutenant-General of Surinam, who also would have been honoured with the responsibility of an additional thirty-six islands had he not died at sea. This narrator is the self-confessed author/narrator of the story.

(ii) Prince Oroonoko is the hero of this tragedy, and also the one who apparently has supplied the narrator with the details of the story. Oroonoko is renamed as Caesar when he is a slave on the plantation.

(iii) The King of Coramantien, the old King who is also Oroonoko’s grandfather.

(iv) Imoinda is Oroonoko's, beloved, a noble beauty and daughter of the old general who was Oroonoko’s mentor. Imoinda is renamed as Clemene on the plantation where she too is a slave.

(v) Oroonoko’s followers include Aboan, Jamoan.

(vi) Onahal is the old discarded Queen of the King of Coramantien, in whose charge Imoinda is put, and who helps Oroonoko and Imoinda to meet in the palace as a punishment for which she is sold off as a slave.
(vii) Trefry is the friendly plantation overseer of the Parham plantation where Oroonoko arrives as a slave.

Suggested Reading

1. Aphra Behn *Oroonoko; Or The Royal Slave*
2. Janet Todd (ed.) *Aphra Behn.*
3. Dale Spender *Mothers of the Novel. 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen*.
4. Angeline Goreau *Reconstructing Aphra. A Social Biography of Aphra Behn*.

Assignments

Essay Type Questions

1. Describe Aphra Behn's attitudes to race and slavery as expressed in her novella *Oroonoko*.
2. What role does race and gender play in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*?
3. Would you regard *Oroonoko* as an anti-slavery novel? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Comment on the importance of *Oroonoko* in the history of English literataure.
5. Discuss the narrative style of *Oroonoko*.
6. Discuss *Oroonoko* as a romance.
7. Discuss the historical background against which *Oroonoko* was written.

SHORT TYPES

1. Who is the author who credited Aphra Behn for being the first professional woman writer?
2. Where did Virginia Woolf applaud Aphra Behn for being the first professional woman writer?
3. Give the new names that Oroonoko and Imoinda received on the plantation?
4. Name any two other famous works of Aphra Behn?
5. Who were the two characters who helped Oroonoko to meet Imoinda in the palace?
6. How and for what 'crime' were Imoinda and Onahal punished?
7. How was Oroonoko taken as a slave?
8. Where was he sold off as slave and to whom?

Block III: Eighteenth Century Periodical Literature

Unit 9: Growth and Development of Periodical Literature in Early 18th Century Britain
Unit 10 (a): Introduction to *The Spectator*
Unit 10(b): *The Spectator* No 2
Unit 10 (c): *The Spectator* No 10
Unit 11: Introduction to Samuel Johnson and *The Rambler* essays
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Unit 9: Growth and Development of Periodical Literature in Early 18th Century Britain

In London between 1709 and 1714, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele published a series of fashionable and influential periodical papers, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. The earlier paper, *The Tatler*, was edited, and largely written, by Richard Steele, but included contributions from other authors, especially Addison, as well as correspondence from readers. *The Tatler* appeared on April 12, 1709. The first few numbers were distributed free of charge; after that, each issue cost one penny. Steele continued publishing *The Tatler* three times a week until Tuesday, January 2, 1711, when the last number appeared.

Printed in double columns on folio half-sheets of foolscap, with advertisements at the end, *The Tatler* took the standard form of the periodicals of the day. It stated as its explicit purpose the reformation of manners and morals. Steele outlines the goals of the paper in his dedication to Arthur Maynwaring, an important figure in the Whig political party, with whom both Steele and Addison were allied: "The general Purpose of this Paper, is to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity, and Affectation, and to recommend a general Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse, and our Behaviour". And while, especially in its earlier numbers, *The Tatler* also includes more strictly news-oriented articles on current political, military, and financial events, the ethical and social focus of the paper is prominent from the start.

Although the last number of *The Tatler* appeared in January 1711, probably as a result of political pressures on Steele, this by no means marked the end of his — or Addison's — career in journalism. On March 1, 1711, the first number of *The Spectator* appeared. Whereas the editing and writing of *The Tatler* was done primarily by Steele, the production of *The Spectator* was more evenly split between the two men; this was to be a collaborative venture. Because of Addison's greater involvement, *The Spectator* came out six times a week, twice as often as *The Tatler*. The first series of *The Spectator* ran from March 1711 until December 1712 (Nos. 1-555). From June to December 1714, Addison, together with Eustace Budgell and Thomas Tickell, edited a second series, which appeared three times a week (Nos. 556-635).

Dropping those reports of current political, military, and financial news that had played a part, if an ever-diminishing one, in *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, largely consists of a series of self-contained, thematically unified essays. This format allows *The Spectator* more scope for the sociocultural and ethical criticism that proved the great strength and irresistible draw of *The Tatler*. The papers address a primarily urban audience made up of men and women in those midlevel economic and social positions that have come to be grouped under the rubric "the

middle class." Taking as their subject the polite conduct of life in all its arenas, public and private, domestic and professional, social and familial, these periodicals were crucial agents in the definition of the cultural, social, and ethical ideals of that class.

The task the papers set themselves is to reform the sensibilities — aesthetic, sartorial, social, and sexual — of each man and woman in the reading audience so that he or she, guided by the principles of good sense, decorum, and benevolence, would then do, say, like, and buy the right thing. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* wanted to enter into the daily lives of their readers and reshape them. Revealing a very modern concern with how people spend their money and their leisure time, they do not preach against consumption and pleasure per se; rather, they seek to manage these human desires in ways they consider rational, progressive, and useful, both to the individual and to the society at large. At once educational and recreational, the papers are the precursors to today's life-style magazines. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* serve as guides, leading readers through the vast array of moral, cultural, consumer, and social choices that accompanied their relationships with one another and themselves, with the financial and commercial markets of their day, and with contemporary entertainments and pastimes. Mediating between the day-to-day social and material lives of their readers and the more universal and permanent values of good sense, honesty, modesty, decorum, and good taste, the papers attempt to secure a fixed significance for the everyday.

The success of the project depended on making the papers attractive to readers and available to the largest possible audience. These criteria are at once satisfied and complicated by the papers' status as popular, prestigious, indeed, even fashionable commodities in the market of public opinion. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* exist within modern conditions of commodification and commercialization, which not only mark their content (the Royal Exchange, lotteries, fashions, commercial entertainments) but define their nature and shape their approach. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* ultimately seek to manage the world from a perspective at once in and out of the world. And to be sure, the papers, like Mr. Spectator himself, exist both inside and outside the world of commerce.

Writing at a time when cultural standards and codes of conduct were the object of much public attention, *The Tatler* and then *The Spectator* formulated signature critical styles marked by light irony and playfulness. The criticisms and prescriptions Steele and Addison advanced in each were mediated by a fictional, gently satiric persona. In *The Tatler,* Steele and Addison speak through one Isaac Bickerstaff, while *The Spectator* takes its name from Mr. Spectator, its central spokesman. Both Bickerstaff and Mr, Spectator are somewhat eccentric, self-mocking characters; their temperately satiric irony sets the witty, urbane tone. This distinctive approach can be usefully compared to that exemplified by the Society for the Reformation of Manners and Morals, one of the most active institutions for the correction of morality at the time. The Society looked mostly to the lower classes and concentrated on sexual transgressions and drunkenness. Though no less devoted to standards of moderation and probity, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* detect vice and folly in a greater range of activities and across a different spectrum of social classes. The scope of their reform is consequently broader and their attitude more worldly and liberal than that of the Society.

AUDIENCE: NEW MANNERS FOR NEW CLASSES

The eighteenth century witnessed the rise of the middle class in England. Social historians differ in their estimates of the size and constituency of this emergent middle class and in their assessment of its relation to other contemporary classes (titled nobility, gentry, wage laborer) and to the twentieth-century middle class. In his study of the origins of the English novel, Michael McKeon emphasizes the contradictory and mutating qualities of middle-class ideology and consciousness. The history of the middle class, writes McKeon, is marked by the presence of a simultaneous impulse "to imitate and become absorbed within the aristocracy, and to criticize and supplant not only aristocracy but status orientation itself." With, in McKeon's words, the "hindsight of modern scholarship," what we can identify as a specific middle-class orientation did not emerge as a consciously held class identity but was the result of an earlier series of attempts to reform aristocratic elite culture. Kathryn Shevelow argues that "we can use the notion of 'middle class' to designate a particular representation of cultural values, beliefs, and practices that existed prior to, or simply apart from, their eventual conceptual coalescence into a social category". Nor was the ideological work that went into the formation of what we see as "middle-class consciousness" conducted only in relation to aristocratic elite culture. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue, the middle ground of bourgeois standards of taste and culture was often carved out through negotiation with "high" elite culture and "low" popular culture. In their work on eighteenth-century authorship, they show that in bourgeois discourse these "high" and "low" cultural forms are often identified with one another and the excesses of each rejected. biggest portion of their audience came from Britain's growing professional bureaucracy and its commercial and financial classes; however, there is also evidence of aristocratic, and even working-class readership. But it may be safely put that middling and professional classes — clerks, commissioners, tradesmen, bankers, stock company directors, insurance financiers — begin to assume a dominant role in the nation's socio-cultural as well as eco-political life.

Coming at this very juncture, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* are concerned, then, not simply with championing the commercial classes but with advocating a more liberal and even "noble" use of wealth than that pursued by the typical avaricious "Cit." They formulate an identity for the businessman that combines the best features of the commercial and the noble classes. This involves polishing and refining the conduct of the middle classes and purging the elites of the habits of vice and folly. In the literature of the time, the possession of wealth is not viewed as an evil in itself, but as an advantage easily corrupted if not properly employed. The "use of riches" theme becomes a standard topic in social satire. Many men and women were ready to take these lessons to heart. Climbing up the ladder of prestige on the rungs of commerce, finance and politics, they were eager to acquire the social prestige and cultural polish that had traditionally been the province of the aristocracy. Thus, in the decades surrounding the turn of the eighteenth century, status based social prestige is being challenged by class-based claims, when the progeny of wealthy traders demand cultural capital and urbanity becomes one of the characteristic features of truly cultured gentlemen.

But this glittering beau monde of fans and fancy dress, of card games, gossip, masquerades, duels, and sexual intrigue was also discredited by those, usually outside the elite, who felt that it was morally deficient and thus no model on which to base new standards both fashionable *and* decent. The set of follies castigated by the papers — ostentation, vanity, snobbery, self-interest, insincerity, moral laxity, slavish devotion to fashion and to the modish world's empty forms- is most immediately traceable to the libertine court society of Charles II (1660-88). Preserved in

the drama of the Restoration stage, with its ceaselessly witty, often ruthlessly self-serving libertine
heroes and heroines, this court culture set the standard for fashionable society in the last decades of the seventeenth century. But as envisioned by Addison and Steele, genteel culture is inextricable from the fairly prosaic standards of moral virtue: modesty, benevolence, temperance, honesty, chastity before and within marriage. A fashionable society must also be a decent society. Within the flamboyant, high-style, sexually libertine culture that had carried the standard of fashion since the Restoration, these mundane, bourgeois virtues were antithetical and irrelevant.

COFFEEHOUSES, PERIODICALS, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

There was at this period a growing (though still tiny) literate public with enough cation, money, leisure, and interest to make reading a part of their daily lives. The success of popular journals like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, at once "improving" and entertaining, bears testimony to a public who not only could read but chose to read in their free time. The growing role of literature as a popular pastime is reflected in the rise of the modern novel and the blossoming of the periodical press.

By the early eighteenth century the writing and printing of books and periodicals were a well-established business. The older system of literary patronage, in which aristocratic supporters provided authors with financial and social backing, was giving way to a more purely commercial mode of operation. Addison and Steele take their rightful places within the emerging profession of commercial writers. But the lucrative popular press provoked considerable reaction from those who saw it as an agent of cultural corruption. This reaction typically took the form of the 'Grub-Street hacks', desperate, unskilled men who wrote to earn enough money simply to scrape by, with no thought of the value or quality of their work. But at the same time, considerable counterclaims were being made for the high quality and respectability of the popular press. Through the commercial culture industry that developed during this time, writing and printing themselves assume the status of middle-class professions.

An institution central to the organization of public life in early eighteenth- century London, the coffeehouse is closely affiliated with the authors, audience, aims, and accomplishments of popular periodicals like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. In its initial number, *The Tatler* confirms this connection by announcing its various departments:

> "All Accounts of Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment, shall be under the Article of White's Chocolate-house; Poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-house; Learning, under the Title of Graecian; Foreign and Domestick News, you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I have to offer on any other Subject, shall be dated from my own Apartment."

The Tatler's relationship to the coffeehouse is double-faceted: not only was it generated from these public resorts of business and talk, it was also largely read there. Papers like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were written to be talked about. The essays enter a cultural debate that was highly oral and social rather than textual and academic, and coffeehouses were the chief sites of this debate. Some functioned as clearinghouses for the latest military, political, or economic news;

others, like Man's, were fashionable resorts where beaus met to pose and gossip; still others, like Will's, were oriented around literary culture and served as critical tribunals. Coffeehouses were crucial arenas for the formation and expression of public opinion about plays and poetry, politics and finance, dress and manners. An author's reception at Will's could make or break a reputation. The formulation of public opinion is the first object of the papers. So it is in the coffeehouse culture that *The Tatler* locates its origins, its aims, and its audience.

First established in London in the mid-seventeenth century, coffee-houses multiplied at a remarkable rate; by the end of the century there were more than two thousand of them in the city. The coffeehouse and the popular periodicals patrons read and discussed there are two institutions central to that arena of discourse and identification Jiirgen Habermas calls the "bourgeois public sphere." Habermas's bourgeois public sphere is at once a symbolic space and a literal space for the production of that set of ideological and social ideals we have come to identify with the polite middle class. It encompasses both the public discursive spheres of the newspaper and the coffeehouse and the set of normative principles defined in these arenas. Ideally an open forum of rational discussion, the bourgeois public sphere emerging in early eighteenth-century England served a number of significant functions: it was an arena of social identification for individuals; it provided standards for interaction and public discussion; it established rationales for ever more secularized and commercialized modes of cultural production; and it stood as a place outside official state power from which criticism "against the state could be launched.
Through the networks of institutions like the press and the coffeehouse a new notion of the "public" arose, one that was composed of private individuals who came together to debate and negotiate matters of public concern, to formulate "public opinion." Represented to itself through the press, this new "public of the now emerging *public sphere of civil society"* becomes aware of itself as a source of authority and validation separate from, and even opposed to, state authority. Operating "as a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion," the public sphere had political uses.

Public opinion also developed around ethical, social, and aesthetic-cultural issues. The public sphere is first and foremost a critical arena where individuals take part in a debate about the principles, interests, aims, and standards that ought to govern their political, social, ethical, and aesthetic-cultural lives. Largely through publications like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator,* the public sphere becomes the "place" where the cultural and social norms of bourgeois modernity are instituted. By identifying themselves with these sets of norms, and so internalizing them, the bourgeoisie establishes its own social identity.

SEXUAL DIFFERENCE, SOCIAL SPHERES, AND GENDERED IDENTITY

The Tatler and *The Spectator* are intent on cultivating an audience who will act in ways suitable to the genteel and rational exchange of the coffeehouse, but they are also concerned with conduct and employment in the more private sphere of the domestic household. Designed for consumption both in the male-oriented, public and social venues of the coffeehouse and club and at the tea tables presided over by the ladies of the house, these papers undertake the direction of both public and private life. As Shevelow explains, the popular periodical performed an important transaction between the public and private spheres In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the social geography was changing. As Ellen Pollak outlines in her

discussion of the eighteenth-century feminine ideal, upper- and middle-class women increasingly withdrew from the arenas of economic productivity into the domestic realm of consumption, partly in emulating their aristocratic superiors. Ensconced in the home, sequestered from the "corrupt" worlds of politics, finance, and commerce, women become "the embodiment of moral value" that infuses domestic space. Women star to take on the role of angels in the house, custodians of moral and spiritual life.

What emerges in the eighteenth century is an increasingly polarized separation of spheres: public/social/masculine versus private/ familiar/feminine. The way this separation is naturalized depends on an early modern shift in the understanding of sexual difference, on the notion that the masculine and the feminine are themselves polar opposites and-that this opposition is rooted in natural difference. Gender, the cultural marks of maleness and femaleness, is increasingly seen as biologically innate rather than socially secured.

Before the modern period, the dominant identity category was not gender but status. In the old aristocratic order, a person is first and foremost either a noble or a commoner. But as economic-oriented class differences begin to challenge the hold of status on social prestige, the system of cultural differences that define identity finds its fixed point in gender. This model of sexual difference, and its attendant anxieties and preoccupations, is fully at work in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Female readers are addressed first *"as women*, with class associations more vaguely assumed in the rhetoric directed toward them" (Shevelow). This is yet another way the popular periodicals reached an audience that cut across class and status lines: their address to the "ladies" speaks to women in the commercial and professional classes, the gentry, and the aristocracy. According to the ideology of gender at work in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator,* women form a distinct social category defined solely by their innate female nature. This inherent and inalterable feminine nature could find its proper expression and direction only within the domestic, private sphere. The good female characters are those who cheerfully confine themselves to the concerns of their families. Excessively worldly women whose interests and occupations range beyond the private household represent a kind of "bad femininity," which the papers do their best to discourage. These badly feminine women think more of card games and masquerades than of household tasks; they are preoccupied with public social display rather than the well-being of their family circle; immodest, even exhibitionist, they strive after social power and pose the threat of sexual autonomy.

If their natural frailty makes them more vulnerable to such misguided affections, women's nurture and upbringing also does little to strengthen their character. Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator object to conventional female education because, they claim, it promotes aspirations toward social status achieved through self-display. Advocates of female modesty and retirement from the public world, Addison and Steele promote a program of female education that cultivates attention to internal beauty and to a woman's strictly domestic, familial social obligations.

Female nature is innately frivolous and unstable. Since these qualities are understood as natural and inalterable, the schemes of female reform and education proposed in the papers encounter a problem. For even as they are being enlisted as symbols of the realm of domestic virtue, women are also understood to lack the native stability that would most effectively allow them to resist the sway of the world's temptations. Women seem naturally flawed in ways that threaten the

realization of what is being defined as their natural character. Jane Spencer remarks on this contradiction: "It seems that eighteenth century women needed a good deal of educating into their 'inborn,' 'natural' feminine qualities".

COMMERCE, TASTE, AND CULTURE

The critical stance of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* is largely determined by an increasingly commercialized British society. Colonial expansion, as well as financial, commercial, and technical innovation, was providing more things at better prices to greater numbers of people. The blueprint for the mass commercial exploitation and mass culture that were to develop more fully in the nineteenth century were laid down in the eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century cultural commentators remark again and again, with dismay, amusement, and scorn, on their contemporaries' obsession with getting and spending. *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* paint a picture of a society in which almost all social practices and institutions are colored and shaped by commercial, rather than more purely ethical, values. These papers are anxious to separate the faulty values that drive commerce — self-interest, novelty and impermanence, profit and loss — from their own stabilizing ethic of rational benevolence, community, and common sense. This ethic is promoted as an antidote to the selfishness, the superficiality, the ephemerality, the frippery, and the foolishness of modern life.

The Tatler and *The Spectator* are eager to establish a sphere of value and identification outside the commercial marketplace, where taste and culture are bought and sold with little regard to any standard higher than the latest fashion. As they conceptualize and represent this place, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* go far in articulating the modern realm of culture: an aesthetic and ethical arena for the improvement of human nature responsive to criteria other than status, wealth, and fashionability, which mark the commercial ethic. Leslie Stephen calls Addison the prophet of this what is now called Culture.

This promised land of "Culture" of which Addison is the "prophet" has most commonly been associated with his realm of the imagination. In *Spectator* Nos. 411-21 Addison provides a kind of blueprint for the operation of the mental and affective faculties associated with what we now call aesthetic pleasure (see pp. 387-96). These pleasures, like Mr. Spectator's own most characteristic faculty, are visual; the pleasures of the imagination are first the pleasures of looking, either literally or imaginatively. Addison's imaginative vision and its pleasures stand as a kind of superior alternative to the pleasures of material acquisition they so closely mirror. Thus, we can clearly see how the principles of access and privilege that govern the bourgeois public sphere overlap with those of the aesthetic realm of the imagination. Wealth and status are immaterial in truly rational and polite discourse. All one needs is a commitment to a shared standard of universal human reason. Similarly, the aesthetic pleasures are not only independent, they are superior to the satisfactions of material wealth and ownership.

The emergence of modern categories of culture and taste occurs alongside the commercial saturation of everyday London life. In relation to the development of ideas about the cultural aesthetic, the commercialization of literature (with its attendant commodification of knowledge) and of entertainment and leisure are the most relevant. The eighteenth-century man or woman about town could choose from a growing variety of public and commercial forms of entertainment and "culture": plays, operas, acrobatics, puppet shows, waxwork shows,

masquerades, pleasure gardens, collections of curious and novel things in museums, public houses, and retail shops. This is the age of the first great entrepreneurs of leisure. But if anything that sells gets published or staged, then how can a standard of taste be maintained? The answer lies in the power of choice exercised by those who buy. Clearly, this audience must be educated to choose what is tasteful and correct.

Unit 10 (a): Introduction to *The Spectator*

The Spectator was a periodical published in London by the essayists Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison from March 1, 1711, to Dec. 6, 1712 (appearing daily), and subsequently revived by Addison in 1714 (for 80 numbers). It succeeded *The Tatler*, which Steele had launched in 1709. In its aim to "enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality," *The Spectator* adopted a fictional method of presentation through a "Spectator Club," whose imaginary members extolled the authors' own ideas about society. These "members" included representatives of commerce, the army, the town (respectively, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry, and Will Honeycomb), and of the country gentry (Sir Roger de Coverley). The papers were ostensibly written by Mr. Spectator, an "observer" of the London scene. The conversations that *The Spectator* reported were often imagined to take place in coffeehouses, which was also where many copies of the publication were distributed and read.

Though Whiggish in tone, *The Spectator* generally avoided party-political controversy. An important aspect of its success was its notion that urbanity and taste were values that transcended political differences. Almost immediately it was hugely admired; Mr. Spectator had, observed the poet and dramatist John Gay, "come on like a Torrent and swept all before him."

Because of its fictional framework, *The Spectator* is sometimes said to have heralded the rise of the English novel in the 18th century. This is perhaps an overstatement, since the fictional framework, once adopted, ceased to be of primary importance and served instead as a social microcosm within which a tone at once grave, good-humoured, and flexible could be sounded. The real authors of the essays were free to consider whatever topics they pleased, with reference to the fictional framework (as in Steele's account of Sir Roger's views on marriage, which appeared in issue no. 113) or without it (as in Addison's critical papers on *Paradise Lost,* John Milton's epic poem, which appeared in issues no. 267, 273, and others).

Given the success of *The Spectator* in promoting an ideal of polite sociability, the correspondence of its supposed readers was an important feature of the publication. These letters may or may not, on occasion, have been composed by the editors.

In addition to Addison and Steele themselves, contributors included Alexander Pope, Thomas Tickell, and Ambrose Philips. Addison's reputation as an essayist has surpassed that of Steele, but their individual contributions to the success of *The Spectator* are less to the point than their collaborative efforts: Steele's friendly tone was a perfect balance and support for the more dispassionate style of Addison. Their joint achievement was to lift serious discussion from the realms of religious and political partisanship and to make it instead a normal pastime of the leisured class. Together they set the pattern and established the vogue for the periodical throughout the rest of the century and helped to create a receptive public for the novelists, ensuring that the new kind of prose writing—however entertaining—should be essentially serious.

Brief Biographical Details of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele

Joseph Addison was born at Milston, Wiltshire, England in 1672. At the age of 14 he began attending the renowned Charterhouse School, whose alumni included the renowned John Wesley and the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray. It was here at Charterhouse that Addison acquainted Steele. From here Addison went on to Oxford where he completed his M.A. In 1695 he composed *A Poem to His Majesty*, addressed to William III. This composition earned him the attention of influential politicians who saw much potential in this young scholar. He was granted a pension of 300 Pounds, enabling him to travel on the Continent. On his return to London Addison fell in with the Kit Kat Club, an association of political and literary figures whose members included Richard Steele, playwright William Congreve, architect Sir John Vanbrugh and future Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole.

In 1708 Addison was elected to the Parliament. The same year he became the equivalent of Secretary of State for Irish Affairs. While in Ireland he began contributing to Steele's paper *The Tatler*. The last *Tatler* appeared on 2 January 1711, by which time Addison had authored 40 out f 271 issues. Two months later he and Steele launched *The Spectator*. Addison continued to write poetry and plays (including an acclaimed tragedy *Cato*). After marrying well (to the Dowager Countess of Warwick), Addison died at the age of 48 on 17 June 1719. He is interred at Westminster Abbey.

Sir Richard Steele was born at Dublin, Ireland in 1672. His father, who had been an attorney by profession, died when Richard Steele was only five years old. His uncle paid for his education , sending him to Charterhouse. From there he went to Oxford, but left without attaining his degree, to start a career in the army. He attained the rank of a captain before leaving the army in 1705. Steele's personality can best be summarized by the phrase "Good Time Charlie". He was convivial, generous to a fault and a lover of food and drink. His dissolute lifestyle led him into debt on several occasions. Partly due to this reason he chose to marry a wealthy widow. In 1714 he was made Governor of the Drury Lane Theater. He obtained Knighthood in the year 1715. Steele's health deteriorated due to his intemperate habits and he passed away in the year 1729.

The Roger de Coverley Papers

The Sir Roger de Coverley papers are often said to be the precursor of the modern English novel. And in a very real sense they are. There are, to be sure, crude specimens of prose fiction in the preceding century that may perhaps dispute this title, though most of them, like the long-winded romances that found place in the library of Sir Roger's lady friend, were of French origin or pattern. But these romances, while they supply[Pg 30] the element of plot and adventure most liberally, were deficient in genuine characters. There are no real men and women in them. Moreover, they made no attempt to depict contemporary life as it was. But Sir Roger de Coverley is no personage of romance. He is a hearty, red-blooded, Tory gentleman who lives in Worcestershire. He has no adventure more striking than might naturally befall a country squire who comes up to London for the season once a year. There were scores of just such men in every shire in England. His speech, his habits, his prejudices are all shown us with simple truth. And yet this is done with so much art and humour that Sir Roger is one of the most living persons in our literature. He is as immortal as Hamlet or Julius Cæsar. We know him as well as we know our nearest neighbour; and we like him quite as well as we like most of our neighbours.

Now this was something new in English literature. Sir Roger is the earliest person in English imaginative prose that is really still alive. There are men and women in our poetry before his day—in the drama there is, of course, a great host of them; but in prose literature Sir Roger is the first. Furthermore, the men and women of the drama, even in that comedy of manners which professed to reflect most accurately contemporary society, were almost always drawn with some romantic or satiric exaggeration; but there is no exaggeration in the character of Sir Roger. Here was the beginning of a healthy realism. It was only necessary for Richardson and Fielding, thirty years later, to bring together several such genuine characters into a group, and to show how the incidents of their lives naturally ran into plot or story—and we have a novel.

The original suggestion for the character of Sir Roger seems to have come from Steele, who wrote that account of the Spectator Club (*Spectator*, No. 2) in which the knight first appears. But it is to Addison's keener perception and nicer art that we owe most of those subtle and humorous touches of characterization which make the portrait so real and so human. There is more of movement and incident in Steele's papers, and there is more of sentiment. It is Steele, for example, who tells the story of the Journey to London, and recounts the adventures of the Coverley ancestry; it is Steele, too, who has most to say of the widow. But in the best papers by Addison, like the Visit to the Abbey or the Evening at the Theater, there is hardly a line that does not reveal, in speech, or manner, or notion, some peculiarity of the kindly gentleman we know and love so well. If Steele outlined the portrait, it was left for Addison to elaborate it. Moreover, a careful reading of the papers will show that Steele's conception of the character was slightly different from Addison's. Steele's Sir Roger is whimsical and sentimental, but a man of good sense; not only beloved but respected. Addison dwells rather upon the old knight's rusticity, his old-fashioned, patriarchal notions of society, his ignorance of the town, his obsolete but kindly prejudices. The truth is that in Addison's portrait there is always a trace of covert satire upon the narrow conservatism of the Tory country gentleman of his day. Addison's Sir Roger is amiable and humorous; but he does not represent the party of intelligence and progress—he is not a Whig.

Yet there are no real inconsistencies in the character of Sir Roger. His whimsical humor, his sentiment, his credulity, his benevolence, his amiable though obstinate temper, are all combined in a personality so convincing that we must always think of him as an actual contemporary of the men who created him. He is the typical conservative English country gentleman of the Queen Anne time, not taking kindly to new ideas, but sturdy, honest, order-loving, of large heart and simple manners. To such men as he England owes the permanence of much that is best in her institutions and her national life. As one walks through Westminster Abbey to-day, listening to the same chattering verger that conducted Sir Roger—he has been going his rounds ever since—one almost expects to see again the knight sitting down in the coronation chair, or leaning on Edward Third's sword while he tells the discomfited guide the whole story of the Black Prince out of Baker's Chronicle. If, indeed, we try in any way to bring back to imagination the life of that bygone age, Sir Roger is sure to come to mind at once, at the assizes, at Vauxhall, or, best of all, at home in the country. He is part of that life; as real to our thought as Swift or Marlborough, or as Steele or Addison themselves.

Unit 10 (b): *The Spectator* No. 2

The second issue of *The Spectator* was published on Friday, March 2, 1711. This particular entry, like many others, begins with a quotation, originally written in Latin by Juvenal-"**Ast Alii sex/ Et plures uno conclamant ore**". Translated in English, it reads: "The other six, however, unanimously cry out to the mouth of one". This epigraph gives a hint of the subject matter to be broached in the essay. In this particular periodical essay by Richard Steele the members of the eponymous 'Spectator Club' are introduced to early 18th century readers. Notably, each of the characters represented a particular section of contemporary English society. But this introduction to the characters is not accomplished in a dramatic fashion. On the contrary, Steele gives a humorous description of each character revealing the quaintness of one or the idiosyncrasy of another. In this endeavour he makes use of the range and diversity of English rhetorical figures to the fullest.

The first in his list is Sir Roger de Coverley-a country gentleman of 'ancient descent'. He is well known to all the residents of Worcestershire. They know the qualities inherent in him thoroughly. His primary quality is that of gentility, which rouses among readers the expectation of adherence to a set code of behavior, sanctioned by tradition. But in the same breath, Steele refers to the presence of certain 'peculiarities' that Sir Roger is possessed of. Notwithstanding these peculiarities in his behavior, nobody considers them as serious drawbacks, since his virtues outdo the peculiarities. In fact, the essayist is of the opinion that the aforementioned "singularities" in the behavior of Sir Roger are nothing but manifestations of his "good sense". Sir Roger himself does not feel the urgency to rectify his behavior, since he considers the conventions of society, "the manner of the world" to be at fault. But whatever he does, is done with a purity of heart, unconfined by the conventions of the world. Therefore, his readiness to help fellow beings please all without exception. A country-gentleman, Sir Roger visits London from time to time, in keeping with the modes of 18th century life and manners. On these occasions, he takes up residence the fashionable Soho Square locality of London, which further proves his innate joviality of spirit. While the initial description of Sir Roger seems to be suffering from a hint of dullness, Steele enlivens his description by bringing in a purported history of failed romantic interest, in the past life of Sir Roger. Steele mentions that in his youth Sir Roger had been smitten by the beauty of a widow from a neighbouring county. But courting of the lady had come to naught. Steele claims with authority that it was this very incident which had shaken to the core the jovial young gentleman that Sir Roger in his youth had been, altering his habits and disposition forever. Steele recounts how the heartbreak took Sir Roger close to one and a half years to get over with. The permanent scar it left on his psyche manifests itself to this date in his curious sense of dress, as he continues to wear the outmoded coat-and-doublet which had been in fashion during the year he was wooing the aforementioned lady. While the readers are still in awe of Sir Roger's unwavering dedication, the narrator nonchalantly informs us that since the incident dented his confidence, Sir Roger's desires have become so much humbler that he often indulges in casual liaisons with beggars and gypsies. Such indiscriminate commingling with social inferiors is unexpected from a gentleman belonging to the stature and repute of Sir Roger. Moreover, in the rigid class hierarchy of England, such behavior would have been considered especially reprehensible as it attempts to unnaturally bridge the carefully-maintained gap between the gentry and the populace. Sir Roger, truthful as he is, makes no secret of the fact, but his virtues are so strong that his friends laugh them away. His amicability, humor and humility make him a favorite everywhere.

Steele then goes on to describe the second member of the Club citing his seniority as the rationale behind the order of arrangement. The epithets Steele employs to designate him are

worthy of attention-'esteem', 'authority', 'probity', 'wit' and 'understanding'. A careful analysis of the terminology reveals the fact that Steele continues with the characteristic of gentility which Sir Roger had also shared. This second member is a lawyer by profession and this obvious reason prevents Steele from revealing his name. This unnamed second member's character is another study in contradictions- he is an esteemed lawyer but his interests lie in Philosophy and drama. While those embroiled in the province of law are considered the epitome of worldliness, this second member of the Spectator Club represents a curious blend of worldliness and refinery, by cultivating philosophy and drama, sans profit motive. The legal experts from antiquity (such as Longinus and Aristotle) are well known to him, but he hardly ever discusses legal experts of renown (such as Littleton or Cooke). However, Steele cautiously reminds that his fascination for Philosophy and Drama does not, in any way, come in the way of his professional acumen, exemplified by his knowledge of the 'Orations of Demosthenes and Tully'. Society at large has no knowledge of his Wit, since he does not go about parading them. It is only the circle of his intimate friends that acknowledges the range and variety of his Wit. Commenting on his taste for books, Steele finds it "a little too just for the age", hinting at a level of frankness and virtuosity in this unnamed lawyer, which is rare in contemporary society. Moreover, his infallible punctuality (as testified by the regularity of his habits and haunts) makes him an oddly likeable character. He is also an impressive conversationalist, precisely because of the fact that his interests are not matters of business. Being highly placed and looked upon with respect, his presence in the theatre-house is noted by the actors on stage, who try to give their best and thus impress him.

The third member of the Club is an illustrious merchant by the name of Sir Andrew Freeport, who is as opinionated as the previous two. However Steele characterizes him as an industrious, tireless and highly experienced individual. In short, he is the epitome of the British entrepreneur in the 18th century. Contemporary England thrived due to its scientific and technological innovations which resulted in quicker and greater production. The annexation of foreign lands under the British crown assisted this process. However, Steele opines against any attempt at territorial annexation through war and believes that it were more smoothly done through union of commercial interest. Subtly, Steele presents the English trader of the day as an exemplary, calm and composed individual who is not trigger-happy. On the contrary, he is a lover of peace who intends to untangle the knots of his life through common-sense and rationality. He prefers diligence to valour and his speech abounds in aphorisms of frugality. The narrator is all praise for Sir Freeport's strongly held convictions, his unaffected nature and his cool-headed practical approach to things in life. Besides, making acquaintance with him is a pleasing experience since

The person described next is Captain Sentry. Like the two earlier character sketches, Steele once again gives a summary of the chief characteristics of the person whose character sketch he is setting out to present. In the case of Captain Sentry the defining features that distinguish him from the rest are "bravery, perception and humility. His modesty overpowering as he attempts to evade public attention. Steele describes Captain Sentry as having been earlier employed in the army in a rank no less than that of Captain. During his years of service, Steele recounts, the Captain had given several proofs of his mettle However he willfully gave up the soldier's profession since he couldn't master the art of court intrigues so necessary for making progress in that field. Steele, on behalf of the Captain, laments that nothing in British society is obtained through honesty and perseverance. Presently he looks after his own small estate and he is also the next heir to Sir Roger. Though Captain Sentry hates exhibiting his good qualities, he believes in the maxim: "It is civil cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is

a military Fear to be slow in attacking when it is your Duty." The narrator exhorts this outspokenness in the manner of this ex-soldier.

While the characters described so far (notwithstanding their idiosyncrasies) are steadfast in one way or another, the next-an aged gentleman named Will Honeycomb, is the very embodiment of the fashionable rake. Steele humorously mentions this aspect when he says: "But that our Society may not appear a Set of Humourists unacquainted with the Gallantries and Pleasures of the Age, we have among us the gallant Will Honeycomb". Though belonging to the upper strata of society and most obviously a gentleman, the epithet "gallant" sticks to the person of Mr Honeycomb. Steele's penchant for naming characters broadly on the basis of their predominant humour is observable in this instance, too. An easy inheritor of wealth, Mr Honeycomb seems to have resisted the strains of ageing, as he continues to look handsome. Steele classifies Mr Honeycomb as a member of that group of gentlemen who command respect and popularity among the female coterie. As observable with old men and women worldwide, Mr Honeycomb can recount incidents and facts from his distant youth. Since he is a rake, Steele humorously posits, he can recount the origins of specific fashions. He is candid about his several affairs. While other old men of his age keep referring to politics, he keeps referring to fashions. The narrator comments with a sly innuendo: "…his Character, where Women are not concerned, he is an honest worthy Man." Whenever he participates in conversation, his manner of speaking and the subjects he brings up serve to enliven the conversation. His several anecdotes reveal how certain society ladies of his youth, now better-known as the "Mother of the lordsuch-a-one", etc, were smitten by the gallantry of some lord from his distant youth. Such conversations might prove to be extremely uncomfortable for ladies now commanding respect and in their maturity.

The last person named is a rare visitor and belongs to the clergy. He does not assert himself like the members described so far. On the contrary, he lends a keener ear to listen to what the others have to say. But once he gets his opportunity to speak, he speaks with authority and earnestness. His discourses mainly concern divinity, which is in sharp contrast to the other members who delight in worldly affairs.

Unit 10(c): *The Spectator* No 10

The 10th entry in the *Spectator* papers, composed by Joseph Addison, was published on Monday, 12th March, 1711. Like most of the other essays in *The Spectator*, this particular entry also commences with an epigraph-this time from Virgil: "Non aliter quàm qui adverso vix flumine lembum/ Remigiis subigit: si brachia fortè remisit" which when translated into simple English, reads-"Boat rowing against the stream with a different well as those who do not/ Oars: if the forces of chance".

This essay talks about the neoclassical idea of culture and the very aim with which *The Spectator* functions. Addison begins by giving a thorough estimate of the handsome sales figures of his newly begun periodical. Besides giving us a hint of *The Spectator*'s success soon after it was begun, this intial description also tells us a lot about the popularity of periodical publications among the general public in Addison's day. Grateful to all those who subscribe to his paper, he promises to make their reading a pleasurable experience. His vanity is to be seen in the manner in which he describes his readers as superior to "the thoughtless Herd of their ignorant and unattentive Brethren" .Addison suggests that while those who do not subscribe to his paper occupy their time with fruitless endeavours and thoughtless activities, those who do subscribe to

his paper substantially add to their store of 'cultural capital'. Explicitly Addison states that he aims to "enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality". Thus Addison can be seen here an interventionist, who attempts to engineer morality among the reader-cum-citizens of the day. But being a shrewd writer he understands that such an attempt must be made in a subtle way, since dry moralizings would never attain the desired object. Therefore, he must "enliven Morality with Wit", while avoiding the opposite extreme, as suggested by the rejoinder: "temper Wit with Morality". Lamenting the "vice and folly" which had engulfed many of his contemporaries, Addison promises to safeguard his readers from these. Alluding to Socrates' mythical act of bringing Philosophy to earth from Heaven, Addison pledges to bring through his periodical "Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges" into the public domain. Therefore Addison's intention is decidedly democratizing. In the late 17th and early 18th century, with the widespread availability of secular and rational education, judging who would be the arbiter of high culture had become a hotly debated topic. While social prestige and therefore ability had been traditionally accorded to the gentry-hereditary inheritors of property and prestige, the recipients of liberal and technical education had empowered the middle classes sufficiently to enable them to challenge the conventional superiority of the aristocracy. Addison's stated purpose of bringing philosophic discourse out of limited availability and into the domain of mass culture would further the democratic impulse further. Thus having determined to make the diversion of reading his paper a fruitful one for his readers, Addison also aims to dispel Vice and Folly from their minds (though he laments that these have come to characterize the Age he lives in).

Addison also hints at the beginning of the habit that we in modern times take for granted-reading the day's newspaper while sipping our morning tea. He looks to engage the minds of his readers early in the morning, even as they are sipping the beverage and biting into the first morsels of their breakfast. Manifesting his erudition, Addison next alludes to Sir Francis Bacon-who had likened a worthwhile book to the mythical serpent of Moses that engulfed the Egyptians. Addison says his endeavour is significantly humbler, since he neither wishes nor aims to make other prints extinct through the proliferation of his own. Even so, Joseph Addison berates the other publications of his day as merely presenting readers with fables of foreign lands, or serving to increase animosity about the other countries.

In the next paragraph, he ironically calls himself an idle observer and likens his lot to many in society who have considerable wealth but nothing worthwhile to do on a daily basis:

> "the Fraternity of Spectators who live in the World without having anything to do in it; and either by the Affluence of their Fortunes, or Laziness of their Dispositions, have no other Business with the rest of Mankind but to look upon them."

It is to be noted that Addison attempts to sharpen the critical faculties of that section of his readers which considers "the world as theatre" by infusing them with the right judgment. For people who are "altogether unfurnish'd with Ideas, till the Business and Conversation of the Day has supplied them" Addison claims his paper to be especially valuable. With its help they can stop relying on hearsay, rumours and illogical thought processes that obstruct the sharpening of critical faculties. This is Addison's euphemistic expression of confidence regarding the superiority of his publication.

Besides, Addison feels that his periodical would be of special service to the fair sex who (he feels) have nothing more than superficial chores to perform (mostly dressing, beautifying themselves, etc). Though Addison concedes that there are women who do perform more

momentous and worthwhile activities, one can sense Addison's misogyny coming to the fore here. For the rest, reading of this paper regularly would do immense good.
Last but not the least, Addison takes an ironic jibe at his 'friends and well-wishers' who doubt the longevity of Addison's successful running of this paper. For them, Addison makes the promise to stop publication as soon he fails to maintain adequate standards or realizes that his works are becoming dull.

Unit 11: Introduction to Samuel Johnson and *The Rambler* essays

Samuel Johnson: A Short Biographical Sketch

Samuel Johnson was the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller, and his wife, Sarah. From childhood he suffered from a number of physical afflictions. By his own account, he was born "almost dead," and he early contracted scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands). Because of a popular belief that the sovereign's touch was able to cure scrofula (which, for that reason, was also called the king's evil), he was taken to London at the age of 30 months and touched by the queen, whose gold "touch piece" he kept about him for the rest of his life. This was succeeded by various medical treatments that left him with disfiguring scars on his face and neck. He was nearly blind in his left eye and suffered from highly noticeable tics that may have been indications of Tourette syndrome. Johnson was also strong, vigorous, and, after a fashion, athletic. He liked to ride, walk, and swim, even in later life. He was tall and became huge.

In 1717 he entered grammar school in Lichfield. In 1726 Johnson visited his cousin, the urbane Reverend Cornelius Ford in Stourbridge, Worcestershire, who may have provided a model for him. In 1728 Johnson entered Pembroke College, Oxford. He stayed only 13 months, until December 1729, because he lacked the funds to continue. n the following year Johnson became undermaster at Market Bosworth grammar school, a position made untenable by the overbearing and boorish Sir Wolstan Dixie, who controlled appointments. With only £20 inheritance from his father, Johnson left his position with the feeling that he was escaping prison. After failing in his quest for another teaching position, he joined his friend Hector in Birmingham. In 1732 or 1733 he published some essays in *The Birmingham Journal*. Dictating to Hector, he translated into English Joachim Le Grand's translation of the Portuguese Jesuit Jerome Lobo's *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, an account of a Jesuit missionary expedition. Published in 1735, this work shows signs of the mature Johnson. In 1735 Johnson married Elizabeth Porter, a widow 20 years his senior. Convinced that his parents' marital unhappiness was caused by his mother's want of learning, he would not follow their example, choosing instead a woman whom he found both attractive and intelligent. His wife's marriage settlement enabled him to open a school in Edial, near Lichfield, the following year. While at Edial, Johnson began his historical tragedy *Irene*, which dramatizes the love of Sultan Mahomet (Mehmed II) for the lovely Irene, a Christian slave captured in Constantinople. The school soon proved a failure, and he left for London in 1737. In 1738 Johnson began his long association with *The Gentleman's Magazine*, often considered the first modern magazine. He soon contributed poetry and then prose, including panegyrics on Edward Cave, the magazine's proprietor, and another contributor, the learned Elizabeth Carter. In 1738 and 1739 he published a series of satiric works that attacked the government of Sir Robert Walpole and even the Hanoverian monarchy: *London* (his first major poem), *Marmor Norfolciense*, and *A Compleat Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage*. *London* is an "imitation" of the Roman satirist Juvenal's third satire. Thales, the poem's main speaker, bears some

resemblance to the poet Richard Savage, of whom Johnson knew and with whom he may have become friendly at this time. Before he leaves the corrupt metropolis for Wales, Thales rails against the pervasive deterioration of London (and English) life, evident in such ills as masquerades, atheism, the excise tax, and the ability of foreign nations to offend against "English honour" with impunity. The most famous line in the poem (and the only one in capitals) is: "SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESSED," which may be taken as Johnson's motto at this time. In 1739 Johnson published a translation and annotation of the Swiss philosopher Jean-Pierre de Crousaz's *Commentary* on Pope's philosophical poem *An Essay on Man*. About this time Johnson tried again to obtain a position as a schoolteacher. His translations and magazine writings barely supported him; a letter to Cave is signed "impransus," signifying that he had gone without dinner. Despite his claim that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money," he never made a hard bargain with a bookseller and often received relatively little payment, even for large projects. From 1741 to 1744 Johnson's most substantial contribution to *The Gentleman's Magazine* was a series of speeches purporting to represent the actual debates in the House of Commons.

In the early 1740s Johnson continued his strenuous work for *The Gentleman's Magazine*; collaborated with William Oldys, antiquary and editor, on a catalog of the great Harleian Library; helped Dr. Robert James, his Lichfield schoolfellow, with *A Medicinal Dictionary*; and issued proposals for an edition of Shakespeare. His *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth* (1745), intended as a preliminary sample of his work, was his first significant Shakespeare criticism. In 1746 he wrote *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* and signed a contract for *A Dictionary of the English Language*. His major publication of this period was *An Account of the Life of Mr. Richard Savage, Son of the Earl Rivers* (1744). In 1749 Johnson published *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, his most impressive poem as well as the first work published with his name. It is a panoramic survey of the futility of human pursuit of greatness and happiness. Like *London*, the poem is an imitation of one of Juvenal's satires, but it emphasizes the moral over the social and political themes of Juvenal. Some of the definitions Johnson later entered under "vanity" in his *Dictionary* suggest the range of meaning of his title, including "emptiness," "uncertainty," "fruitless desire, fruitless endeavour," "empty pleasure; vain pursuit; idle show; unsubstantial enjoyment; petty object of pride," and "arrogance." He portrays historical figures, mainly from England and continental Europe, alternating them with human types, to show that all are subject to the same disappointment of their desires. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is imbued with the Old Testament message of Ecclesiastes that "all is vanity" and replaces Juvenal's Stoic virtues with the Christian virtue of "patience." The poem surpasses any of Johnson's other poems in its richness of imagery and powerful conciseness. Johnson's connections to the theatre in these years included writing several prologues, one for Garrick's farce *Lethe* in 1740 and one for the opening of the Drury Lane Theatre. Garrick, now its manager, returned the favours. Early in 1749 Johnson's play *Irene* was at last performed. Thanks to Garrick's production, which included expensive costumes, an excellent cast (including Garrick himself), and highly popular afterpieces for the last three performances, the tragedy ran a respectable nine nights.

With *The Rambler* (1750–52), a twice-weekly periodical, Johnson entered upon the most successful decade of his career. He wrote over 200 numbers, and stories abound of his finishing an essay while the printer's boy waited at the door; in his last essay he confessed to "the anxious

employment of a periodical writer." The essays cover a wide range of subjects. A large number of them appropriately stress daily realities; others are devoted to literature, including criticism and the theme of authorship. Whatever their topic, Johnson intended his essays to "inculcate wisdom or piety" in conformity with Christianity. In tone these essays are far more serious than those of his most important predecessor, Joseph Addison, published in *The Spectator* (1711–12; 1714). Johnson himself ranked them highly among his achievements, commenting "My other works are wine and water; but my *Rambler* is pure wine." Johnson's wife Elizabeth was a great admirer of *The Rambler* essays and incidentally died just three days after the last issue of *The Rambler* was published.

A Dictionary of the English Language was published in two volumes in 1755, six years later than planned but remarkably quickly for so extensive an undertaking. The degree of master of arts, conferred on him by the University of Oxford for his Rambler essays and the Dictionary, was proudly noted on the title page. Johnson henceforth would be known in familiar 18th-century style as "Dictionary Johnson" or "The Rambler." There had been earlier English dictionaries, but none on the scale of Johnson's. In addition to giving etymologies, not the strong point of Johnson and his contemporaries, and definitions, in which he excelled, Johnson illustrated usage with quotations drawn almost entirely from writing from the Elizabethan period to his own time, though few living authors were quoted.

From 1756 onward Johnson wrote harsh criticism and satire of England's policy in the Seven Years' War (1756–63) fought against France (and others) in North America, Europe, and India. This work appeared initially in a new journal he was editing, *The Literary Magazine*, where he also published his biography of the Prussian king, Frederick II (the Great). He also contributed important book reviews when reviewing was still in its infancy. His bitingly sardonic dissection of a dilettantish and complacent study of the nature of evil and of human suffering, *A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, by the theological writer Soame Jenyns, may well be the best review in English during the 18th century. Johnson's busiest decade was concluded with yet another series of essays, called *The Idler*. Lighter in tone and style than those of *The Rambler*, its 104 essays appeared from 1758 to 1760 in a weekly newspaper, *The Universal Chronicle*. While not admired as greatly as *The Rambler*, Johnson's last essay series contained many impressive numbers.

Johnson's essays included numerous short fictions, but his only long fiction is *Rasselas* (originally published as *The Prince of Abissinia: A Tale*), which he wrote in 1759, during the evenings of a single week, in order to be able to pay for the funeral of his mother. This "Oriental tale," a popular form at the time, explores and exposes the futility of the pursuit of happiness, a theme that links it to *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Prince Rasselas, weary of life in the Happy Valley, where ironically all are dissatisfied, escapes with his sister and the widely traveled poet Imlac to experience the world and make a thoughtful "choice of life." Yet their journey is filled with disappointment and disillusionment. They examine the lives of men in a wide range of occupations and modes of life in both urban and rural settings—rulers and shepherds, philosophers, scholars, an astronomer, and a hermit. They discover that all occupations fail to bring satisfaction. Rulers are deposed. The shepherds exist in grubby ignorance, not pastoral ease. The Stoic's philosophy proves hollow when he experiences personal loss. The hermit, miserable in his solitude, leaves his cell for Cairo. In his "conclusion in which nothing is concluded," Johnson satirizes the wish-fulfilling daydreams in which all indulge. His major characters resolve to substitute the "choice of eternity" for the "choice of life," and to return to Abyssinia (but not the Happy Valley) on their circular journey.

Johnson never again had to write in order to raise funds. In 1762 he was awarded a pension of £300 a year, "not," as Lord Bute, the prime minister, told him, "given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done." This in all likelihood meant not only his literary accomplishments but also his opposition to the Seven Years' War, which the new king, George III, and his prime minister had also opposed.

In 1763 Johnson met the 22-year-old James Boswell, who would go on to make him the subject of the best-known and most highly regarded biography in English. The first meeting with this libertine son of a Scottish laird and judge was not auspicious, but Johnson quickly came to appreciate the ingratiating and impulsive young man. Boswell kept detailed journals, published only in the 20th century, which provided the basis for his biography of Johnson and also form his own autobiography.
Johnson participated actively in clubs. In 1764 he and his close friend Sir Joshua Reynolds founded The Club (later known as The Literary Club), which became famous for the distinction of its members. In 1765 Johnson established a friendship that soon enabled him to call another place "home." Henry Thrale, a wealthy brewer and member of Parliament for Southwark, and his lively and intelligent wife, Hester, opened their country house at Streatham to him and invited him on trips to Wales and, in 1775, to France, his only tour outside Great Britain. Their friendship and hospitality gave the 56-year-old Johnson a new interest in life. Following her husband's death in 1781 and her marriage to her children's music master, Gabriel Piozzi, Hester Thrale's and Johnson's close friendship came to an end. His letters to Mrs. Thrale, remarkable for their range and intimacy, helped make him one of the great English letter writers.

The pension Johnson had received in 1762 had freed him from the necessity of writing for a living, but it had not released him from his obligation to complete the Shakespeare edition, for which he had taken money from subscribers. Contemporary poet Charles Churchill satirized Johnson for the delay in bringing out the volume. The edition finally appeared in eight volumes in 1765. Johnson edited and annotated the text and wrote a preface, which is his greatest work of literary criticism. As editor and annotator he sought to establish the text, freed from later corruptions, and to explain diction that by then had become obsolete and obscure. Johnson's approach was to immerse himself in the books Shakespeare had read—his extensive reading for his *Dictionary* eased this task—and to examine the early editions as well as those of his 18th-century predecessors. His annotations are often shrewd, though his admiration reveals at times different concerns from those of some of his contemporaries and of later scholars.

In his "Preface" Johnson addressed several critical issues. For one, he vigorously defends Shakespeare against charges of failing to adhere to the Neoclassical doctrine of the dramatic unities of time, place, and action. Johnson alertly observes that time and place are subservient to the mind: since the audience does not confound stage action with reality, it has no trouble with a shift in scene from Rome to Alexandria. Some critics had made similar points before, but Johnson's defense was decisive. He also questions the need for purity of dramatic genre. In defending Shakespearian tragicomedy against detractors, he asserts that "there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature." Echoing Hamlet, Johnson claims that Shakespeare merits praise, above all, as "the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life." He goes on to say that "in the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual: in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species" and that "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men." These comments inveigh

against the rigid notions of decorum upheld by critics, such as Voltaire, who would not allow kings to be drunkards or senators to be buffoons. Johnson's concern for "general nature" means that he is not much interested in accidental traits of a character, such as the "Romanness" of Julius Caesar or Brutus, but in traits that are common to all humanity.

In 1765 Johnson received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Trinity College, Dublin, and 10 years later he was awarded the Doctor of Civil Laws from the University of Oxford. He never referred to himself as Dr. Johnson, though a number of his contemporaries did, and Boswell's consistent use of the title in *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* made it popular. The completion of the Shakespeare edition left Johnson free to write by choice, and one such choice was his secret collaboration with Robert Chambers, professor of English law at the University of Oxford from 1766 to 1773. While it is difficult to determine just how much of Chambers' lectures Johnson may have written, his help was clearly substantial, and the skilled editor was valued by the dilatory professor.

In the early 1770s Johnson wrote a series of political pamphlets supporting positions favourable to the government but in keeping with his own views. These have often appeared reactionary to posterity but are worth considering on their own terms. *The False Alarm* (1770) supported the resolution of the House of Commons not to readmit one of its members, the scandalous John Wilkes, who had been found guilty of libel. The pamphlet ridiculed those who thought the case precipitated a constitutional crisis. *Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland's Islands* (1771) argued against a war with Spain over who should become "the undisputed lords of tempest-beaten barrenness." This pamphlet, his most-admired and least-attacked, disputes the "feudal gabble" of the earl of Chatham and the complaints of the pseudonymous political controversialist who wrote the "Junius" letters.

The Patriot (1774) was designed to influence an upcoming election. Johnson had become disillusioned in the 1740s with those members of the political opposition who attacked the government on "patriotic" grounds only to behave similarly once in power. This essay examines expressions of false patriotism and includes in that category justifications of "the ridiculous claims of American usurpation," the subject of his longest tract, *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775). The title summarizes his position opposing the American Continental Congress, which in 1774 had passed resolutions against taxation by England, perceived as oppression, especially since the colonies had no representation in Parliament. Johnson argues that the colonists had not been denied representation but rather had willingly left the country where they had votes, that England had expended vast sums on the colonies, and that they were rightly required to support the home country. The tract became notorious in the colonies, contributing considerably to the caricature of Johnson the arch-Tory. Yet this view is too simplistic. His rhetorical question to the colonists "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of Negroes?" can be traced in large part to a principled and consistent stance against colonial oppression.

In 1773 Johnson set forth on a journey to the Hebrides. Given his age, ailments, and purported opinion of the Scots, Johnson may have seemed a highly unlikely traveler to this distant region, but in the opening pages of his *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*(1775) he confessed to a long-standing desire to make the trip and the inducement of having Boswell as his companion. He was propelled by a curiosity to see strange places and study modes of life unfamiliar to him. His book, a superb contribution to 18th-century travel literature, combines historical information with what would now be considered sociological and anthropological observations about the lives of common people.Johnson's last great work, *Prefaces,*

Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets was conceived modestly as short prefatory notices to an edition of English poetry. When Johnson was approached by some London booksellers in 1777 to write what he thought of as "little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of the English Poets," he readily agreed. He loved anecdote and "the biographical part" of literature best of all. The project, however, expanded in scope; Johnson's prefaces alone filled the first 10 volumes (1779–81), and the poetry grew to 56 volumes.
Throughout much of his adult life Johnson suffered from physical ailments as well as depression ("melancholy"). After the loss of two friends, Henry Thrale in 1781 and Robert Levett in 1782, and the conclusion of *The Lives of the Poets*, his health deteriorated. Above all, his chronic bronchitis and "dropsy" (edema), a swelling of his legs and feet, caused great discomfort. In 1783 he suffered a stroke. He died on December 13 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Though we know a great deal about Samuel Johnson the empiricist, the cultural anthropologist, the political skeptic, and the gloomy poet, little is known about his role as a moralist. Donald Greene's book *Samuel Johnson* (1970) discusses Johnson the political writer for more than forty pages, but discussion on the 337 essays by Johnson published in *The Rambler* (1750-1752), *The Adventurer* (1753-1754) and *The Idler* (1758-1760) occupy a mere 5 pages in Greene's book. However, in the 2nd half of the 20th century several writers, such as Walter Jackson Bates (in his 1955 book titled The Achievement of Samuel Johnson) have started paying greater critical attention to *The Rambler* in trying to assess Johnson's luminous intelligence more completely.

***The Rambler*: An Introduction**

The Rambler was published on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 1750 to 1752. It was Johnson's most consistent and sustained work in the English language. Though similar in name to preceding publications such as *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, Johnson made his periodical unique by using a style of prose which differed from that of the time period. The most popular publications of the day were written in the common or colloquial language of the people whereas *The Rambler* was written in elevated prose. As was then common for the type of publication, the subject matter was confined only to the imagination of the author (and the sale of the publication); typically, however, *The Rambler* discussed subjects such as morality, literature, society, politics, and religion. Johnson included quotes and ideas in his publication from Renaissance humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus and René Descartes. His writings in *The Rambler* are considered to be neoclassical.

Older studies of *The Rambler* treat the work as a convenient repository of Johnsonian dicta from which one can deduce "the cornerstones" of his morality. But more recent scholarship points out a cardinal flaw of the older approach, namely that it took no account of the author's apparent and (to some) alarming habit of vacillating, even on issues of great moment, and even within individual essays. Paul Fussell has argued that we can understand *The Rambler* only if we think of Johnson, "caught short at deadline time," "working things out ad hoc from page to page." "Where he cannot resolve inconsistencies, he ignores them," writes Fussell, "where he cannot ignore them, he embraces them. Leopold Damrosch, Jr. detects two "rhetorical modes" in the *Rambler* essays, the first of which is designed "to jolt our complacency by a series of reversals," and the second "to deepen our understanding by a steady progression of reflections which are held together by association more than by logic. Patrick O Flaherty in his essay 'Towards an

Understanding of Johnson's *Rambler*' comments that there are fallacies inherent in the approaches adopted both by Fussell and Damrosch. Flaherty in his essay intends to re-focus attention upon the weighty and complicated purpose behind Johnson's writing.

And Johnson's purpose is clearly visible in *Rambler* 208, where he states that his "principal design" was "to inculcate wisdom or piety. To Johnson it appeared that the knowledge he was leading men towards was the most important kind for them to acquire. He thought that men are placed on earth to learn to learn to do good and avoid evil. Repeatedly in *The Rambler* he advised readers to turn away from "remote and unnecessary subjects" to "moral enquiries" and "the various modes of virtue. In Essay No 320 of *The Rambler* Johnson tries to grapple as honestly as he knows with the problems inherent in leading a moral life in the world of men. This involves probing into the complexities of human motivation and "the labyrinth of complicated passions" (IV, 41) in order to detect and uncover the sources of human error. Johnson repeatedly says that he knows the difficulties of making such a scrutiny of the human heart. In essay after essay he tries to explore the configurations and ramifications of a difficult subject and, quite often, giving the impression of vacillating. He will also be conscious of what he wrote in preceding essays, and he may want to correct or modify views which seem to him in retrospect to have been stated with too much appearance of confidence. Though wealth and power may be possessed by others, only authors possess the power of conferring "the honours of a lasting name" upon their fellow men. Johnson emphasizes that the power brings with it a heavy responsibility, requiring of authors "the most vigilant caution and scrupulous justice."

To uncover some of the other potential sources of ambiguity and inconsistency in The Rambler, we need to look away from particular essays to the moral vision which pervades the work as a whole. Johnson's perception of man's moral life in these essays is generally of something threatened from within and without and maintained only by perpetual vigilance. The vast majority of men, he writes in No. 70, are in "a kind of equipoise between good and ill" and require only "a very small addition of weight" to be moved in one direction or the other. This sense of the precariousness of virtue is strikingly conveyed in The Rambler by a set of three recurring images, each of them commonplace in Christian writing but of interest here in the insistent reinforcement they provide to John- son's theme. The most conspicuous of these images is of the heart (or mind) as a fortress or city under siege. The fortress image occurs often, expressing poetically Johnson's vision of the embattled heart, preyed upon by its own longings and vanities. A similar recurring image is that of the wanderer, trying to walk "with circumspection and steadiness in the right path at an equal distance between the extremes of error, threatened by "snares", "ambush", "asperities" and deceptively comfortable groves that seem irresistibly pleasant. The third recurring image is that of human life as a ship lost on a stormy ocean, subject to the vicissitudes of wind and tide. The more deeply Johnson burrows into human motivations to expose for men the innumerable strategies and vanities which enable them to live with error, the keener this awareness becomes of the frailty of virtue and the closer he is drawn to an extreme fastidiousness. The reader can be forgiven if he thinks at certain points in *The Rambler* that leading a moral life is too risky and toilsome for mere humans.

Thus he advises young people to enter the world with a policy of "prudent distrust," for the "dangers" to which the "converse of mankind" exposes them are "numerous," and "there is no ambition however petty, no wish however absurd, that by indulgence will not be enabled to

overpower the influence of virtue. Such stern morality, verging on over-scrupulousness, is characteristic of the *Rambler*, but it is only one of his two prevailing moods. Modifying and humanizing this severe attitude is another side of Johnson which is also expressed throughout the work. This is Johnson the compassionate and forgiving observer of men. It is this quality of mercy in him which emerges in No. 63 when, after having earlier repeatedly warned readers against the dangers of being dissatisfied and restless, he writes that it is natural for mankind to be restless and that this condition deserves "pity" and may even "admit some excuse". The strict moralist in him more than once warns against wasting time on trifles and ridicules collectors of useless oddities; and yet he also defends such collectors, since "he who does his best, is always to be distinguished from one who does nothing. Alongside warnings about the dangers inherent in deviating from the beaten track in even trivial ways, he can exclaim "what is there which may not be perverted?" and caution readers against "too much" refining their "delicacy". These two halves of Johnson's concerns jostle with one another throughout *The Rambler*.

Death is a subject to which he is obsessively drawn throughout *The Rambler*. According to Johnson every man should ideally begin his day "with a serious reflection that he is born to die." This will destroy "that vehemence of eagerness" after earthly possessions, make us moderate our desires, contract our designs, and at the same time urge us to do well what we know we are capable of doing (No 17).

What we see in *The Rambler* is a moralist who would have men be perfect in conflict with an onlooker who knew the extent of men's imperfection and felt pity for their suffering. Johnson recognized that many of the problems facing his readers were beyond his powers to solve: the heaviness of time, the secret mortifications of defeated hope, the limits placed for whatever reason on the extent of human knowledge. His pity, his habit of withdrawing from unequivocal moral stances within essays and from essay to essay, expresses his unwillingness to make heavier by chastisement the already burdensome life of men. But the habit also shows once again Johnson's recognition of life's irreducible complexity. Johnson looked abroad at the world and saw what any observer must see: that experience cannot be exhausted or explained by formulae; that hope is both therapeutic and deceptive; that prudence is some- times a wise policy, sometimes a foolish one; that suffering is both ennobling and degrading. As Imlac perceived in Rasselas, inconsistencies when imputed to man "may both be true". *The Rambler* mirrors, rather than resolves, this complexity. Johnson's reluctance to try to reduce life to a system also shows humility. To take a "distinct and comprehensive" view of "human life," he admitted candidly, "with all its intricacies of combination and varieties of connection, is beyond the power of mortal intelligence".

Johnson believed that the only cure for pain was palliative, not radical; he felt that life was every- where a state in which there was much to be endured and little to be enjoyed; he thought the desire for happiness in this world is vain, the only true happiness available to man being non-earthly; he believed that man's lot was to suffer. Parts of various Rambler essays can be found to support all of these grim dicta, but a reading of the whole work leaves one with a sense of the utter inadequacy of such phrases to contain the richness and variety of Johnson's commentary. On the whole, despite gloomy interludes, Johnson impresses one as less a despondent, down-at-the-mouth prophet of doom than a humanist thinker, interested in improving the lot of men and advancing civilization.

Unit 12 (a): *The Rambler* No. 4

The 4th number of *The Rambler* papers was published on Saturday, 31 March 1750. In characteristic Johnsonian fashion it begins with an epigraph, this time from Horace, where the Roman lyricist from the age of Augustus Caesar, in his book *Ars Poetica* advocates the fusion of "profit" and "delight".

Johnson begins the essay by looking at the genre of prose fiction, which was gaining popularity in eighteenth century England. Johnson points out that one of the reasons behind the popularity of this genre is the semblance of truth that it exudes, containing interesting accounts of accidents probable in the real world. Moreover the human characters that one encounters in these works of fiction are more or less in keeping with the real personages that surround us in human society.

However realistic these prose narratives may be, they do contain certain elements more properly associated with the genre of romance. The narrative strategy of novelists is such that they arouse and maintain a level of curiosity among the readers without dragging in fanciful elements commonly featured in the genre of romance. Strategies such as epic machinery or 'deus-ex-machina' are rarely, if ever, introduced to extricate heroes from danger. Neither giants, nor knights in shining armour, not even fanciful castles in never-never lands are staples of novels. At this point Johnson alludes to a remark by Scaliger (Italian scholar and physician who employed the techniques and discoveries of Renaissance humanism to defend Aristotelianism against the new learning) on Potanus (likely to be a poet referenced in Scaliger's *Seven Books about Poetry* or *Poetices Libri Septem* of 1591). Scaliger alleges that the poetry of Potanus is full of stock pastoral images featuring lilies, roses, dryads and satyrs. These recur in his poetry time and again, giving the semblance of beauty and artfulness to his works. But Scaliger debates that these are merely props that superficially exult his works without enhancing the core of literariness in them.

Johnson feels genuinely amazed to contemplate how such works featuring stock patterns and strategies could retain popular acclaim for such a long duration. However, the continued acceptability of such strategies among readers ensures writers' adherence to these tried and tested techniques. Quoting Horace once again, Johnson clarifies that readers' persistent acceptance places "a greater burden on the less of forgiveness". In fact readers have become so accustomed to these strategies that they can trace the slightest deviations from these norms, if and when writers introduce innovations. Referring to an incident in the life of ancient Greek painter Apelles, Johnson reminds how a shoemaker once censured the former for ill-executing a slipper in one of his paintings. Through this reference Johnson intends to emphasize upon the point that those who have come to recognize a particular form as the standard become highly sensitive to any deviations from the norm.

Returning to the topic of contemporary novelists, Johnson states that compliance to the tastes of readers is not the chief concern of writers. Novelists of Johnson's day pandered chiefly to the tastes of young impressionable readers who considered the novelistic discourse as predominantly moralistic. According to Johnson novelists take full advantage of this fact to impress upon the pliant minds of their readers "every false suggestion and partial account". One cannot help notice how Johnson carefully builds his argument, to subvert the authority novelists wield in the public sphere of Johnson's day.

Next Johnson reminds us by referring to an unnamed ancient authority on writers and their responsibilities, how every writer should be careful in presenting their material in the public

domain, especially when the readers concerned are young. This is because young readers being impressionable are susceptible to "unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images".

Romances, which predominated in an earlier era, featured incidents so distant from the intercourse of daily life that readers were safe from imbibing values from these texts and applying them in their personal and social lives. Readers were free to amuse themselves with the ups and downs in the fates of "heroes and …traitors, deliverers and persecutors" without running the risk of being influenced by them adversely. The characters of romance acted upon the basis of a value system intrinsic to the make-believe world of romance, lying outside the aegis of lived human reality. But even romances were read voraciously by the youth, whose impressionable minds were susceptible to look upon the heroes of romance as idols and the travails they faced and overcame heroically as admirable.

Given the immense power of example, which readers are likely to emulate, Johnson opines that they are more potent that dry instructions of morality or words of advice. Therefore, Johnson would have writers of fictional narratives choose incidents in such a manner that only the best and morally superior incidents be allowed to feature in their works. This would ensure that even if readers are swayed by their attractiveness and try to emulate such fantastic deeds, they would be emulating virtue rather than vice. Johnson sounds like an apostle of neoclassic decorum in these lines.

Next, Johnson points out how authors stand at an advantageous position since they are at liberty to pick and choose which incidents they would feature in their narratives and which ones they would omit. With regard to this he compares writers to a diamond; diamonds may be artfully polished and placed strategically in order to maximize their luster. Similarly authors may so choose material and arrange them that attention of the readers may be attracted and maintained suitably.

Johnson, following the neoclassic school, reminds that imitation of nature is the ultimate aim of art. But Johnson places a caveat on this dictum by claiming that only those parts of nature should be preferably imitated which bring about an affinity towards virtue in the minds of readers. Though representing life in general, art would be gainfully employed only if those sections of life are imitated which are neither "discoloured by passion", nor "deformed by wickedness". Johnson fails to discover any use in such descriptions of life which paint the world in profligate colours. Thus Johnson considers it unwise to portray the entirety of mankind as a mirror in art and literature.

Rather, while describing men and manners, such accounts should ideally be omitted, which would rather "make men cunning than good". However, even if such details must be provided in fictional accounts, proper care need be taken by the authors to portray them in a negative light, so that readers may learn to distinguish good from evil, the imitable from the disreputable. In other words, the purpose of literature would be truly served if the authors take proper care, thus infusing in readers the ability to identify and segregate that part of human behavior which must be shunned. Johnson the moralist predominates here once again.

Johnson says that there are several writers who so mingle the reprehensible and the imitable that good and evil lose their distinctive qualities. In such cases neither does vice remain abhorrent, nor does virtue retain its merit. Johnson here reminds us that in practical life we are likely to meet people who are "splendidly wicked", whose crimes are suitably hidden by the gloss of charisma. Johnson finds such people as agents of corruption in every age. However,

Johnson finds that such instances are exceptional and must be omitted from descriptions, as far as practicable.

Johnson in the concluding paragraph admits that certain virtues are inalienably connected to their corresponding faults and one cannot be mentioned without mentioning the other. In this regard Johnson quotes from an observation of Jonathan Swift, to conclude that men are "grateful in the same degree as they are resentful."

Unit 12 (b): *The Rambler* No. 60

The 60th essay of *The Rambler* papers was published on October 13, 1750. It begins with two epigraphs-one by Horace and the other by Francis. The one by Horace, if translated into plain English, reads: "what is fair, what is foul, what is helpful, what is not, more plainly and better than Chrysippus[1] or Crantor[2]?" The second one by Philip Francis exults the work of the Greek poet Homer, whose poetry, he claims, combines "the beautiful and the base", and assimilates vice and virtue more fruitfully than all the "sober sages of the schools".

Johnson begins his essay by emphasizing upon the role of the imagination in evoking empathy for the others. The power of the imagination is so great that it transports the reader momentarily from his present, real existence to the imagined locus of the person whose ecstasy or vicissitude he is reading about. This power of the imagination which thus transports lies nascent in the mind of the reader and may only be unlocked by a writer of supreme capability. When we read historical accounts featuring the rise of fall of empires, we are hardly ever led to empathize with the fate of their kings and emperors. Whatever little interest is evoked comes not because we empathize with the human actors on the stage of life, but because we are dazzled by their glamour and grandeur or appalled by their crookedness. On the contrary when one reads a tale of love, even the mind of one generally accustomed to worldly pursuits starts fluttering in hope. Therefore, Johnson comes to the decision that it is only the lives of individual beings that are successful in arousing genuine interest amongst readers. Thence, Johnson reaches the conclusion that the form of the biography is the only one "worthy of cultivation". The biography may be considered a particularized historical narrative chiefly focusing on the trajectory of a single person's fate, as opposed to generalized history; it is precisely because of this reason that the former attracts us irresistibly, while the effect of the latter remains inane. Historical narratives (other than biography) involve the fates of too many individuals and include too many incidents. Therefore the reader fails to draw any useful moral lesson applicable to his life as an individual. Moreover, quoting the Roman historian Pliny, Johnson shows us how the quotidian incidents in the lives of commoners differ from the momentous events described in the narratives of history. Johnson opines that the life of every human being, apart from the obvious similarities among them, contains something or the other that is unique-since every human being is different from the other. Therefore, there is always something to learn from the life of each individual. However, this individuality also contains a universality since despite dissimilarities, every human being is buoyed by hope, cribbed by fear and doubt, swayed by love and often trapped by desire and seduction.

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[1] Chrysippus of Soli was a Greek Stoic philosopher (and a student of the Stoic School of Cleanthes), who excelled in logic, the theory of knowledge, ethics, and physics. He created an original system of propositional logic in order to better understand the workings of the universe and role of humanity within it.

[2] Crantor was a Greek philosopher, of the Old Academy, probably born around the middle of the 4th century BC, at Soli in Cilicia.

Next Dr Johnson questions the validity of a widely-held belief among the mass of people, namely that the lives lived by the majority of people engaged in various professions, deemed unheroic, are futile, irrespective of the success they achieve in their respective lives. He questions the basis of such assumptions, stating that this "notion arises from false measures of excellence and dignity, and must be eradicated by considering that… what is of most use is of most value". While he is not against pomposity and grandeur, he denies the possibility of them becoming the sole criteria for adjudicating virtue or credit. According to Johnson, they are mere "appendages" which can heighten the sense of beauty and credit, rather than being the creator of the same. That attribute is reserved solely for such agencies as virtue and prudence. Quoting Thuanus (French historian, book collector and president of the Parlement de Paris) Johnson explicates how his frankness about his personal life revealed his earnestness and has endeared him to readers of posterity.

Johnson now moves towards a different line or argument, stating that personal anecdotes (whatever be the manner in which we read them) always carry with themselves a significance greater than public occurrences. Alluding to Salust (Roman historian cum politician of the first century BC) and his book *The Conspiracy of Catiline*, Johnson corroborates his argument by showing how the aforementioned work describes something as trivial and personal as the speed of one's walking as an important indicator of the functions of his brain. Next he alludes to the German Lutheran Reformer Philip Melanchthon and his extreme punctuality in every aspect of his life, a detail which has superseded every other regarding his life, activities and contribution since it was this excessive stress on punctuality that ruined his health and led to his premature demise.

However, the art of the biography, according to Johnson, often suffers due to the fact that the author allotted with the task of compiling the biography is technically or temperamentally unsuited to the task. Johnson differentiates between the mere chronicle representation of historical facts and timeline with respect to the lives of individuals and the biography proper. Those who present the former merely collect the dry facts without narrativizing the incidents properly. According to Johnson only proper narrativization results in a biography which rivets the attention of the reader and thus associates him with the glories and vicissitudes of the character whose life is described. Johnson focuses upon the importance of personal anecdotes in enlivening a biographical narrative. Though sometimes these biographers do add certain anecdotes from the lives of the characters described, these details are unimportant and skimmed carelessly, without careful reading or understanding, from the wealth of details available about the given person's life. For instance he refers to the Tickell's biography of Addison where the biographer has mentioned the irregular heart-beat of Addison. Johnson comments that even after several careful readings he has failed to understand the significance of this particular detail to the scheme of the biography.

In the final two paragraphs Johnson attempts to point out the reasons why most biographies fail to achieve their intended effect. The first of them is the time gap between the relevance of the personality (whose biography is to be composed) and the time when it is actually composed. If the composition of the same is begun after a substantial time has elapsed, the narrative would be free from bias and dispute, since the biographer, writing in retrospect, would be able to take better measure of the person in question and his contribution. But due to that very reason interest of the readers in the concerned person tends to decrease. Johnson explicitly states that "the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind", which tend to lose significance once the heat of the moment has cooled off. Here he is pointing at the

shortness of public memory. Besides, the person composing the biography at a later date is naturally prone to draw too many conclusions from the life and activities, especially with the passage of time in between.

But simultaneously, biographers who write before allowing passage of substantial amount of time run the risk of colouring the biography with their personal prejudices. Consequently, fidelity-a key feature of the art of biography, is sacrificed. In several cases, the biographer is so biased towards the personage whose biography he intends to compose, that he conceals the unpalatable details regarding the character whose biography he is composing. Certain biographers curiously feel it their duty to dissemble the shortcomings of their friends, even when the exposure of those would be innocuous. This fallacy leads to the writing of biographies where the protagonist is hardly delineated from the others, thereby diluting and defeating the intended result. In this context, Johnson quotes from Sir Matthew Hale (a pre eminent justice under both Cromwell and Charles II. His works on law and legal procedures became well known after his death) to show how this ideal judge, whenever he felt sympathetic towards a criminal, reminded himself that he needed to sympathize with the law (and by extension his country) in equal measure. Through the reference to Hale, Johnson drives home the point that biographers need to care not only for the historical personage (whom they are writing about), but also for the genre they are writing in-which has its own ethics and conventions.

Suggested Reading

1. *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*-edited by Erin Mackie
(Washington University)
2. *Telling People What to Think: Early Eighteenth Century Periodicals from The Review to The Rambler*-
Edited by J.A. Downie and Thomas N Corns (Routledge Publishing House)
3. *Urban Enlightenment and the Eighteenth Century Periodical Essay*: *Transatlantic Retrospects*-Richard
Squibbs (Palgrave Macmillan)
4. *The Rise of Literary Journalism in the Eighteenth Century: Anxious Employment*-Iona Italia
(Routledge)
5. An analysis of the styles of Addison and Steele in the *Spectator* papers-Zelma Inez Turner, Atlanta
University.
6. *In Mind of Johnson: A Study of Johnson's The Rambler*-Philip Davis (The Athlone Press)
7. 'Johnson and His 'Readers' in the Epistolary *Rambler* Essays'-Manushag N. Powell
8. 'Excellence in Biography: *Rambler* No. 60 and Johnson's Early Biographies'-John J. Burke Jr.

Assignment

1. How does Samuel Johnson characterize the ideal biographer in *Rambler* No 60?
2. Why does Johnson consider the biography as the only literary form worthy of cultivation?
What is Johnson's idea regarding the budding genre of the novel, in the 18th century? Howdoes he distinguish it from the form of the romance?
3. Comment on Johnson's moral intention behind the *Rambler* essays.

4. Discuss *Spectator* No 10 as an instance of attempted democratization of the sphere of literary and Philosophical discourse.
5. Discuss the art of characterization as evident in *Spectator* No 2.

Block IV: 18th Century Non-Fictional English Prose

Unit 13(a): The Discourse on Taste and the Development of Aesthetics
Unit 13(b): David Hume-A Brief Introduction
Unit 14:'Of The Standard of Taste'-David Hume
Unit 15(a): History of the Sublime
Unit 15(b): Edmund Burke-An Introduction
Unit 16(a): A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful
Unit 16(b): Edmund Burke's *The Sublime and the Beautiful*- Part V

Unit 13(a): The Discourse on Taste and the Development of Aesthetics

Today the term *aesthetics* refers to an identifiable sub-discipline of philosophy concerned with the nature and expression of beauty and the fine arts. The discipline covers a broad spectrum of issues, problems, and approaches, but students and practitioners generally agree that its origins can be traced unequivocally to eighteenth-century British philosophers working predominantly, though not exclusively, in England and Scotland. Many of these writers were based in and around the old universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, where (with the exception of David Hume who was denied a position twice on account of his religious views) they held chairs in philosophy and related disciplines; these thinkers were the intellectual force at the heart of what has come to be known as the Scottish Enlightenment. Other eighteenth-century writers, such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Addison, and Edmund Burke, were involved in politics or cut central figures in the polite society of English letters, or, like William Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds, were practicing artists. The earliest works in the tradition are Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks of Men, Manners Opinions, Times* (1711), and Addison's essays on the "Pleasures of the Imagination" in *The Spectator* (1712), with Francis

Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) often cited as the first systematic and self-conscious attempt to address questions that came to define a new area of philosophical inquiry, which, by the beginning of the twentieth century crystallized into the discipline complete, in its modern form, with all the attendant paraphernalia of academic respectability.

Although the intellectual roots of modern aesthetics are buried deep in British soil, the term *aesthetics* is of distinctly German stock. Its linguistic heritage lies in the Greek nominal 'aisthetikos'- sensitive or sentient,

derived in turn from the verb 'aisthenesthai', meaning to perceive, feel, or sense. Famously, Immanuel Kant used the term for that part of his *Critique of Pure Reason* concerned with the principles of "a priori sensibility" given in the "pure" intuitions of space and time. In doing so he was following the lead of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62), who had already coined the phrase 'episteme aisthetike' both to designate. Knowledge based on sense perception and name the faculty that makes it possible. In his lectures from 1742 onward – the basis for the two-volume *Aesthetica* (1750 and 1758) – Baumgarten subsequently extended the term to designate a "science of sensual cognition" more generally. By the middle of the 18th century the term was popular across philosophical debates in Germany. In 1781, Kant criticized some features of Baumgarten's work, but conceded the fact that "Germans are the only people who currently make use of the word 'aesthetic' in order to signify what others call the critique of taste".

In England and Scotland, "aesthetics" did not become common currency until well into the nineteenth century, and was long disparaged as an obscure German word of little critical import. On the contrary British writers used the term "taste" for the affective faculty and the species of knowledge derived from it, and assigned the term *criticism* to the inquiry that attempted to elucidate its principles. *Aesthetics* is absent from Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), and in 1798 William Taylor could still regard it coolly as part of the "dialect peculiar to Professor Kant.

Things developed apace over the next two decades, however, and by 1821 at least this element of the peculiar dialect had made sufficient inroads that Samuel Taylor Coleridge lamented the lack of a "more familiar word than æsthetic, for works of taste and criticism. By 1846 John Ruskin could report in *Modern Painters* II that "aesthetic" was "commonly employed" with reference to impressions of beauty, and in the 1883 edition of the work he inserted the word *now* before *commonly* and added that "It [aesthetic] was, of course, never so used by good or scholarly English writers, nor ever could be. Whether one focuses on the term or concept, however, it is clear that the first part of the eighteenth century saw the birth of a new and distinct discipline, which one might appropriately call "philosophical aesthetics".

Unit 13(b): David Hume-A Brief Introduction

Hume was born on 26 April 1711 in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father was Joseph Home (an advocate or barrister of Berwickshire, Scotland), and the aristocrat Katherine Lady Falconer. He changed his name to Hume in 1734 because the English had difficulty pronouncing "Home" in the Scottish manner.

He was well read, even as a child, and had a good grounding in Greek and Latin. He attended the University of Edinburgh at the unusually early age of twelve but soon gave up a prospective career in law in favor of philosophy and general learning. At the tender age of eighteen, he made a great "philosophical discovery" that led him to devote the next ten years of

his life to a concentrated period of study, reading and writing, almost to the verge of a nervous breakdown.

In order to earn a living, he took a position in a merchant's office in Bristol before moving to Anjou, France in 1734. It was there that he used up his savings to support himself while he wrote his masterwork, "A Treatise of Human Nature", which he completed in 1737.

After the publication of his "Essays Moral and Political" in 1744, Hume was refused a post at the University of Edinburgh after local ministers petitioned the town council not to appoint Hume due to his Atheism. For about a year he tutored the unstable Marquise of Annandale and became involved with the Canongate Theatre in Edinburgh, where he associated with some of the Scottish Enlightenment luminaries of the time.

From 1746, Hume served for three years as Secretary to a distant relative, Lieutenant-General St. Clair, including as an aide-de-camp on diplomatic missions in Austria and Northern Italy, and even at one point as a staff officer on an ill-fated military expedition as part of the War of the Austrian Succession. It was during this period that he wrote his "Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding", later published as "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding", which proved little more successful than the "Treatise". He was charged with heresy (although he was defended by his young clerical friends, who argued that, as an atheist, he was outside the Church's jurisdiction), and was again deliberately overlooked for the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

In 1752, the Faculty of Advocates employed him as their librarian, for which he received little or no emolument, but which gave him access to a large library, and which enabled him to continue historical research for his "History of Great Britain". This enormous work, begun in 1745 and not completed until 1760, ran to over a million words and traced events from the Saxon kingdoms to the Glorious Revolution. It was a best-seller in its day and became the standard work on English history for many years. Thus, it was as a historian that Hume finally achieved literary fame.

From 1763 to 1765, Hume was Secretary to Lord Hertford in Paris, where he was admired by Voltaire and was friends (briefly) with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For a year from 1767, he held the appointment of Under Secretary of State for the Northern Department in London, before retiring back to Edinburgh in 1768.

He died in Edinburgh on 25 August 1776, aged 65, probably as a result of a debilitating cancer he suffered from in his latter years, and was buried, as he requested, on Calton Hill, overlooking his home in the New Town of Edinburgh. He remained to the end positive and humane, well-loved by all who knew him, and he retained great equanimity in the face of his suffering and death.

Most of Hume’s early philosophical work stems from a mysterious intellectual revelation he appears to have experienced at the age of just eighteen. He spent most of the next ten years frantically trying to capture these thoughts on paper, resulting in "A Treatise of Human Nature"which he completed in 1737 at the age of just 26 (and published two years later). This book, which he subtitled "An Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects", is now considered to be Hume's most important work and one of the most important books in the whole of Western philosophy, despite its poor initial reception. He refined the "Treatise" in the later "Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding" (actually published as "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" in 1748), along with a companion volume "An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals"(1751), although these publications proved hardly more successful than the original "Treatise" on which they were based.

Hume was a thorough-going Empiricist, the last chronologically of the three great British Empiricists of the 18th Century (along with John Locke and Bishop George Berkeley), and the most extreme. He believed that, as he put it, "the science of manis the only solid foundation for the other sciences", that human experience is as close are we are ever going to get to the truth, and that experience and observationmust be the foundations of any logical argument. Anticipating the Logical Positivistmovement by almost two centuries, Hume was essentially attempting to demonstrate how ordinary propositions about objects, causal relations, the self, etc, are semantically equivalent to propositions about one's experiences.

He argued that all of human knowledge can be divided into two categories: relations of ideas (e.g. mathematical and logical propositions) and matters of fact(e.g. propositions involving some contingent observation of the world, such as "the sun rises in the East"), and that ideas are derived from our "impressions" or sensations. In the face of this, he argued, in sharp contradistinction to the French Rationalists, that even the most basic beliefs about the natural world, or even in the existence of the self, cannot be conclusively established by reason, but we accept them anyway because of their basis in instinct and custom, a hard-line Empiricist attitude verging on complete Skepticism.

But Hume's Empiricism and Skepticism was mainly concerned with Epistemology and with the limits of our ability to know things. Although he would almost certainly have believed that there was indeed an independently existing world of material objects, causally interacting with each other, which we perceive and represent to ourselves through our senses, his point was that none of this could be actually proved. He freely admitted that we can form beliefs about that which extends beyond any possible experience (through the operation of faculties such as custom and the imagination), but he was entirely skeptical about any claims to knowledge on this basis.

Central to grasping Hume's general philosophical system is the so-called “problem of induction”, and exactly how we are able to make inductive inferences (reasoning from the observed behavior of objects to their behavior when unobserved). He noted that humans tend to believe that things behave in a regular manner, and that patterns in the behavior of objects will persist into the future and throughout the unobserved present (an idea sometimes called the Principle of the Uniformity of Nature). Hume argued forcefully that such a belief cannot be justified, other than by the very sort of reasoning that is under question (induction), which would be circular reasoning. Hume's solution to this problem was to argue that it is natural instinct, rather than reason, that explains our ability to make inductive inferences, and many have seen this as a major contribution to Epistemology and the theory of knowledge.

Hume was a great believer in the scientific method championed by Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei (1564 - 1642) and Sir Isaac Newton (1643 - 1727). However, the application of the problem of induction to science suggests that all of science is actually based on a logical fallacy. The so-called induction fallacy states that, just because something has happened in the past, it cannot be assumed that it will happen again, no matter how often it seems to happen. However, this is exactly what the scientific method is built on, and Hume was forced to conclude, rather unsatisfactorily, that even though the fallacy applies, the scientific method appears to work.

Closely linked to the problem of induction is the notion of causality or causation. It is not always clear how we know that something is actually caused by another thing and, although day always follows night and night day, there is still no causal link between them. Hume concluded that it is the mental act of association that is the basis of our concept of causation (although different

commentators differ in their interpretation of Hume's words on the matter, varying from a logical positivistinterpretation to a skeptical realist or quasi-realist position).

Hume's views on personal identity arose from a similar argument. For Hume, the features or properties of an object are all that really exist, and there is no actual object or substance of which they are the features. Thus, he argued, an apple, when stripped of all its properties (color, size, shape, smell, taste, etc), is impossible to conceive of and effectively ceases to exist. Hume believed that the same argument applied to people, and he held that the self was nothing but a bundle or collection of interconnected perceptions linked by the properties of constancy and coherence, a view sometimes known as "bundle theory", and one in direct opposition to Descartes's "I think therefore I am" assertion.

Hume's anti-Rationalism, however, was not confined to his theory of belief and knowledge, but also extended into other spheres, including Ethics. He asserted that "reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them". Thus, he severely circumscribedreason's role in the production of action, and stressed that desires are necessary for motivation, and this view on human motivation and action formed the cornerstone of his ethical theory. He conceived moral or ethical sentiments to be intrinsically motivating, and to be the providers of reasons for action. Thus, he argued, given that one cannot be motivated by reason alone (given that motivation requires the additional input of the passions), then reason cannot be behind morality. His theory of Ethics, sometimes described as sentimentalism, has helped to inspire various forms of non-cognitivist and moral nihilist ethical theories including emotivism, ethical expressivism, quasi-realism, error theory, etc.

In his "A Treatise of Human Nature", Hume definitively articulated the so-called "is-ought problem", which has since become so important in Meta-Ethics, noting that claims are often made about what ought to be on the basis of statements about what is. However, Hume pointed out, there are significant differences between descriptive statements (about what is) and prescriptive or normative statements (about what ought to be), and it is not at all obvious how we can get from making descriptive statements to prescriptive. In line with his ingrained Skepticism, he advised extreme caution against making such inferences, and this complete severing of "is" from "ought" is sometimes referred to as "Hume's Guillotine".

As an Empiricist, Hume was always concerned with going back to experience and observation, and this led him to touch on some difficult ideas in what would later become known as the Philosophy of Language. For instance, he was convinced that for a word to mean anything at all, it had to relate to a specific idea, and for an idea to have real content it had to be derived from real experience. If no such underlying experience can be found, therefore, the word effectively has no meaning. In fact, he drew a distinction between thinking (which concerns clear ideas which have a real source in experience) and just everyday talking (which often uses confused notions with no real foundation in experience).

This reasoning also led him to develop what has become known as "Hume's Fork". For any new idea or concept under consideration, he said, we should always ask whether it concerns either a matter of fact (in which case one should then ask whether it is based on observation and experience), or the relation between ideas(e.g. mathematics or Logic). If it is neither, then the idea has no value and no real meaning and should be discarded.

Like Thomas Hobbes before him, Hume sought to reconcile human freedom with the mechanist (or determinist) belief that human beings are part of a deterministic universe whose happenings are governed by the laws of physics. Hume's reconciliation of freedom and determinism (a

position known as compatibilism) involves a more precise definition of Liberty ("a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will") and Necessity ("the uniformity, observable in the operations of nature; where similar objects are constantly conjoined together"), and the argued conclusion that not only are the two compatible, but that Liberty actually requires Necessity. Furthermore, he argued that, in order to be held morally responsible, it is required that our behavior be caused or necessitated.

Hume wrote a great deal on religion, although, due to the rather repressive religious climate of the day, he deliberately constrained his words (as it was, the Church of Scotland seriously considered bringing charges of infidelity against him). He never openly declared himself to be an atheist, and did not acknowledge his authorship of many of his works in this area until close to his death (and some were not even published until afterward).

However, it is certainly true that, in works such as "An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding" (1748) and "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" (written between about 1750 and his death in 1776, and published posthumously in 1779), he attacked many of the basic assumptions of religion and Christian belief, and he found the idea of a God effectively nonsensical, because there was no way of arriving at the idea through sensory data. Some consider it his best work, and many of his arguments have become the foundation of much of the succeeding secular thinking about religion. Having said that, though, it is likely that Hume was, true to his most basic inclinations, skeptical both about religious belief (at least as demanded by the religious organizations of his time) and of the complete Atheism of such contemporaries as Baron d'Holbach (1723 - 1789), and his position may best be characterized by the term "irreligious".

Hume argued that it is impossible to deduce the existence of God from the existence of the world because causes cannot be determined from effects. Although he left open the theoretical possibility of miracles (which may be defined as singular events that differ from the established laws of Nature), he cautioned that they should only be believed if it were less likely that the testimony was false than that a miracle did in fact occur, and offered various arguments against this ever having actually happened in history.

He gave the classic criticism of the teleological argument for the existence of God (also known as the argument from design, that order and apparent purpose in the world bespeaks a divine origin - see the Arguments for the Existence of God section of the Philosophy of Religion page for more details), arguing that, for the design argument to be feasible, it must be true that order and purpose are observed onlywhen they result from design (whereas, on the contrary, we see order in presumably mindless processes like the generation of snowflakes and crystals). Furthermore, he argued that the design argument is based on an incomplete analogy (that of the universe to a designed machine), and that to deduce that our universe is designed, we would need to have an experience of a range of different universes. Even if the design argument were to be successful, he questioned why we should assume that the designer is God, and, if there is indeed a designer god, then who designed the designer? Also, he asked, if we could be happy with an inexplicably self-ordered divine mind, why should we not rest content with an inexplicably self-ordered natural world?

When faced with Leibniz's contention that the only answer to the question "why is there something rather than nothing?" was God, and that God was a necessary being with no need of explanation, Hume responded that there was no such thing as a necessary being, and that anything that could be conceived of as existent could just as easily be conceived of as non-existent. However, he was not willing to propose a convincing alternative answer to the riddle of

existence, taking refuge in the argument that any answer to such a question would be necessarily meaningless, as it could never be grounded in our experience.

Hume's Political Philosophy is difficult to pinpoint, as his work contains elements of both Conservatism and Liberalism, and he resisted aligning himself with either of Britain's two political parties, the Whigs and the Tories. His central concern was to show the importance of the rule of law, and stressed, in his "Essays Moral and Political" of 1742, the importance of moderation in politics (particularly within the turbulent historical context of 18th Century Scotland). In general, he thought that republics were more likely than monarchies to administer laws fairly, but the important point for Hume was that society be governed by a general and impartial system of laws, based principally on the "artifice" of contract (Contractarianism). He supported freedom of the press; he was sympathetic to elected representationand democracy (when suitably constrained); he believed that private property was not a natural right (as John Locke held), but that it was justified because resources are limited; he was optimistic about social progress arising from the economic development that comes with the expansion of trade; and he counseled strongly against revolution and resistance to governments except in cases of the most egregious tyranny.

Although best known today as a philosopher, Hume also developed many of the ideas that are still prevalent in the field of economics, and Adam Smith, among others, acknowledged Hume's influence on his own economics and Political Philosophy. Hume believed in the need for an unequal distribution of property, on the grounds that perfect equality would destroy the ideas of thrift and industry, and thus ultimately lead to impoverishment. He was among the first to develop the concept of automatic price-specie flow, and proposed a theory of beneficial inflation, which was later to be developed by John Maynard Keynes (1883 - 1946).

Hume was also famous as a prose stylist, and pioneered the essay as a literary genre, publicly engaging with contemporary intellectual luminaries such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, James Boswell (1740 - 1795), Joseph Butler(1692 - 1752) and Thomas Reid (1710 - 1796).

But it was as a historian that Hume finally achieved literary fame. His immense 6-volume "History of England" (subtitled "From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688"), written between 1745 and 1760, is a work of immense sweep, running to over a million words. It became a best-seller in its day and became the standard work on English history for many years.

Unit 14: 'Of the Standard of Taste'-David Hume

Hume's seminal essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' consists of four distinct sections:

In the first section Hume outlines the problem, showing how taste varies from person to person on account of its subjective nature. Hume proceeds from this fundamental problematic to closely examine the other aspects of the problem.

In the second section Hume, like a true empiricist, contemplates the possible rules governing the standard of taste.

In the third and probably most significant section, Hume delineates the qualities of a good critic. He states that in order to be labeled a good critic, one must be endowed with qualities like- a) Strong sense, b) intricate imagination, c) thorough practice, d) unbiased comparison and e) absence of prejudice.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned criteria, Hume considers two caveats that will affect every critic, namely: i) natural variations in people and ii) cultural conditioning.

Hume opens the first section by stating that people there exists a great variety of taste in art, even among people whose background and training are similar. Jonathan Bennett points out that Hume does not use the term 'taste' in a shallow sense, but in order to refer to 'every kind of aesthetic reaction to works of art'. However later in his essay Hume does clarify that the focus of his discussion is artistic creations:

> "The great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation. Men of the most confined knowledge are able to remark a difference of taste in the narrow circle of their acquaintance, even where the persons have been educated under the same government, and have early imbibed the same prejudices. But those, who can enlarge their view to contemplate distant nations and remote ages, are still more surprised at the great inconsistence and contrariety."

Hume assures us about the existence of beauty, although his business is not to define it. In this essay he focuses spotlight on discussions revolving the Standard of Taste. Hume reminds us that the variety that exists in judgement of taste is 'greater in reality than in appearance.' Although apparently everyone joins in praise of abstract qualities such as elegance, propriety, simplicity and spirit in condemning fustian, affectation, coldness and a false brilliance, people tend to disagree while discussing particular cases. As a result, unanimity vanishes.

This plainly shows a fundamental characteristic of the human mind-we agree in our judgement of artistic qualities in the abstract, but while addressing specific examples, we resort to subjective taste. Hume simultaneously points out the very different role played by subjectivity in scientific debates, where particular findings from different experiments are agreed upon while the general theoretical principles are hotly debated.

Making a comparison between ethics and the present problem of taste, Hume claims that morality is based upon sentiment (emotions) not reason. We agree on general moral qualities we consider good:

> "Writers of all nations and all ages concur in applauding justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, veracity; and in blaming the opposite qualities. Even poets and other authors, whose compositions are chiefly calculated to please the imagination, are yet found, from HOMER down to FENELON, to inculcate the same moral precepts, and to bestow their applause and blame on the same virtues and vices."

Everyone can agree that 'virtue' is good and 'vice' is bad – not to do so would mean perverting language. However, we surrender to subjective taste as soon as we discuss particular moral cases. Hume compares the ancient Greek poet Homer and the French writer Fénelon, author of the 1699 *novel Les Aventures de Télémaque*. Homer's Achilles and Ulysses are heroes, yet both have less admirable qualities too, whereas Fénelon's hero Telemachus is perfectly virtuous. The two writers have different opinions of what behaviour is appropriate in a heroic character.

Hume then makes a similar point with reference to the Qu'ran. Its followers insist upon its 'excellent moral precepts' and it uses the same positive language of justice, charity etc in Arabic that English does, yet it bestows praise on behaviour that would be unacceptable in 'civilised society'. (I would add that the Bible is just as bad, though Hume may, as a religious sceptic, have had the Bible quietly in mind.) Again, people agree about generalities and quarrel about particulars.

Moral and aesthetic agreement, then, is often based on a linguistic illusion: we agree on certain evaluative terms but not on what they mean.

He says there is therefore little point in making generalisations about ethics. By extension, there is perhaps little point in making them about aesthetics either.

To resolve such difficulties, Hume concludes:

> "It is natural for us to seek a Standard of Taste; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another."

The goal of Hume's essay is to establish a 'rule' for how we may settle disputes over taste by judging who is right and who is wrong. The sceptical, relativist position laid out in the opening paragraphs (including 7) is pessimistic about this possibility, but Hume does not agree with that position – as we go on, we find he agrees with some aspects of it, e.g. that beauty is subjective, but nonetheless thinks it is possible to establish a standard.

This paragraph is important. To the question 'is there a Standard of Taste?' Hume presents one possible answer: namely, 'no'. There is a species of philosophy [i.e. relativism], which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. He further outlines the relativist case, drawing the distinction between judgement and sentiment (emotion). All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Reason ('understanding') expects that something can be proved correct or incorrect by appeal to objective fact. By contrast, a sentiment cannot be judged correct or incorrect.

Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. If you feel something, the feeling is real, and no one can accuse you of being 'wrong' for feeling it. Following these observations, Hume argues that on this view, if taste is based upon feeling rather than objective reason, beauty must be subjective:

> "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty."

Morality and aesthetics are based upon feeling and are therefore subjective. You cannot pronounce any opinion about beauty correct or incorrect because all such opinions are sentiments. A Standard of Taste is impossible. Each of us may be confident in our opinion yet may make no claim to 'regulate those of others'. The same object may be thought to taste both sweet and bitter, and it is pointless to claim that one experience is more right than the other – we may extend this bodily example to our sentiments as well. Hume evokes (without actually naming it) the Latin proverb de gustibus non est disputandum: 'there is no disputing over taste', or in French chacun à son goût. This is a rare case, he says, of 'common sense' agreeing with philosophy.

But Hume immediately counters this with a contrary 'common sense' position. We behave as if there are objective standards. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY[3] and MILTON, or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an

[3] John Ogilby was a Scottish translator, impresario and cartographer. Best known for publishing the first British road atlas, he was also a successful translator. He was satirized by John Dryden in his satirical MacFlecknoe, and by Alexander Pope in The Dunciad.

extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE[4], or a pond as extensive as the ocean. We take it for granted that Milton is a better writer than John Ogilby, a Scottish poet now only remembered for being namedropped in Hume's famous essay. If there is no Standard of Taste, then an advertising jingle is as aesthetically valuable as Mozart's Requiem. There are always people who think otherwise, but we are comfortable dismissing such opinions as 'absurd and ridiculous'. We respect a plurality of views on taste when its objects seem broadly comparable, but when one work seems obviously better than another, the principle of de gustibus non est disputandum quickly breaks down. Things don't in themselves have good and bad, beauty and ugliness. These values come from people. But people can be right or wrong about at least some of them. This 'common sense' position that we may judge people's opinions is at least as valid as the other 'common sense' position that we can't.

Having established this background for the argument, Hume proceeds to defend the former common sense position against the latter by seeking grounds for a Standard of Taste.

9: Hume has already called the Standard of Taste a 'rule'. Here he refers to the 'rules of composition', by which he seems to mean the rules followed by artists when creating their works. Thus we have two sets of rules: those of taste or criticism, and those of composition, but Hume does not make a distinction between them. Presumably, the artist applies the rules of composition to their work, then the critic judges, with reference to those same rules, how well it has been done. The rules will be based upon 'a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind', or what Hume later calls 'the relation, which nature has placed between the form and the sentiment'. Hume's approach to the rules of composition is characteristically empiricist:

> "It is evident that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings a priori, or can be esteemed abstract conclusions of the understanding, from comparing those habitudes and relations of ideas, which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience."

The rules cannot be worked out a priori, that is, from reasoning alone, independent of sensory experience. Reason must be accompanied by facts, which in art is supplied by experience of what works: 'what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages'. Hume rightly observes that poetry does not depend for its effects on strict empirical fact:

> "Many of the beauties of poetry and even of eloquence are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning. To check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism; because it would produce a work, which, by universal experience, has been found the most insipid and disagreeable."

But though poetry does not have to accord with scientific fact, it 'must be confined by rules of art'. These rules are general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages... discovered to the author either by genius or observation. Living in the Neoclassical age, Hume has no problem with looking back to older cultural authorities, and admires Homer as a model for all ages. Here he holds up the Italian Renaissance poet Ludovico Ariosto, author of the vast epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (first version 1516), as an example of a second-rate writer whom we still enjoy reading. He wants to make the point that if weaker writers please us, it is because they have other merits that conform to the rules and lead us to forgive the flaws. If we take pleasure from features that criticism considers flaws, then

[4] An island in Spain

criticism needs to change. 'If they are found to please, they cannot be faults.' Thus Hume asserts that the rules of composition are based upon what pleases the audience, i.e. upon subjective feelings.

Hume concludes that all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature. But he notes that this reference point of common human experience and feelings is unstable, because, as we established earlier, feelings are variable. They don't always behave according to their own general principles and can be thrown out of kilter. To get the best and most representative judgement of taste, therefore, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. High standards of critical judgement depend upon concentrating upon the object, in the right state of mind. The rules, we have seen, are based upon 'the relation which nature has placed between the form and the sentiment.' We find its influence from the durable admiration, which attends those works, that have survived all the caprices of mode and fashion. It is from proven masterworks that we may find the rule of the Standard of Taste.

We are still no closer to what the rules actually are. Given that we need to iron out the flux of human feelings, Hume thinks the best way to identify them is to examine works that have been tried and tested over a long period of time. He points out:

> "The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and at London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory."

The passage of time reveals which are the exemplary works of art:

> "Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator, but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with."

The immediate pressures of envy, personal acquaintance and so on can cloud our judgement, but once these are removed and the work is judged only on its own merits, we can observe 'the beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments,' and these have long-standing authority.

This appeal to 'beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments' implies the rules are in fact not subjective but objective. Otherwise, where do they get their long-standing authority? Hume explains:

> "It appears then, that, amidst all the variety and caprice of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind. Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease."

Note the 'principles of approbation or blame' are not in the object but in the operation of the mind in its response to the object. Hume seems to be saying that yes, all taste is subjective, but there are tendencies in the human organism or constitution that make us more likely to value some beauties/rules over others. There are 'some particular forms or qualities' in the object that give us pleasure or displeasure. Hume clearly considers these properties reliable: they will

please us. If they do not, the blame lies in some defect in the human organism. In each creature, there is a sound and a defective state; and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true standard of a taste and sentiment. Just as a person with the flu can't be expected to judge the flavours in a meal because his or her sense of taste will be impaired, a person whose faculties are defective can't respond to art with the most appropriate pleasure and thus can't make the best judgements of it. In a community of healthy faculties Hume thinks that we may find our Standard of Taste:

> "If, in the sound state of the organ, there be an entire or considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in daylight, to the eye of a man in health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses."

Hume's analogy with colour is illuminating. The healthy organism perceives a 'true and real' colour even though colour is accepted as being a sensation created by the organism itself. By analogy, the healthy organism experiences a 'true and real' beauty even though we all agree beauty and taste are subjective. The beauty is 'true and real' because it is predicated upon a 'structure of the mind' that is broadly common to all human beings. However the general principles are affected by variations in 1) the structure of the mind and 2) the contexts in which objects are experienced, hence the variation in the pleasure felt.

Hume is saying that some objects or properties are 'naturally calculated' to please us via the structure of our minds. To return to colour: our experience or sensation of colour is created for us by the brain, but it is an interpretation based upon actual data, i.e. different colours represent different wavelengths of light that may be scientifically measured; similarly, beauty is a subjective feeling but that feeling has a causal relationship with specific objective properties.

An example of the variability across individuals is 'delicacy of imagination'. It is valued by all but exercised by fewer. To define what he means by 'delicacy', Hume takes an illustration from *Don Quixote*. The Don's squire Sancho Panza relates a story in which two of his relatives detected a taste of leather and iron in a glass of wine. They were ridiculed for this until a key and thong were discovered in the wine cask, revealing that his relatives' judgement was in fact acute. Sancho takes this as evidence that his own judgement of wine will also be acute, i.e. he assumes that the faculty runs in the family. This story is not the best example for what Hume is discussing, as Sancho's claim to good judgement in wine is based simply upon genetic inheritance, whereas Hume will later argue that good judgement comes through five criteria including things like practice. But he wants to make a particular point. He goes on:

> "Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings."

Certain qualities in objects are 'fitted by nature' to produce sentiments of beauty because of that 'structure of the mind' we have already discussed. Beauty is subjective but is prompted by objective properties towards which the human organism is biased. Again, there is a contradiction here that needs further explanation. How can beauty belong 'entirely' to sentiment when those sentiments are produced by fitting qualities in objects? Of course the experience varies across individuals.

Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste...In making

their delicate judgements of taste, the critic draws upon the general rules of beauty... being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases.

Here comes Hume's real point with the Sancho Panza story: he likens finding the rules of composition to finding the key at the bottom of the wine cask. Until the key was found, it was impossible to prove the quality of Sancho's relatives' judgement over that of their less delicate critics, but the key existed nonetheless. Once we have identified an 'avowed principle of art' – once we have produced that key from the cask – we can justify our judgement and prove to our opponent that they lack delicacy of imagination:

> "When we prove, that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive or feel its influence: He must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself."

Thus we can use the Standard of Taste to settle disputes about taste. This is quite a naive claim. Hume seems to take it for granted that the delicate person can convince the other person by force of reason.

Note that Hume refers in to 'sentiment, internal or external'. External sentiments are our sensations; internal sentiments are our feelings.

In the next few paragraphs Hume discusses what it takes to become a 'true judge' or what I will call an 'ideal critic'. He has already given us delicacy of imagination.

Hume makes a case for improving our critical faculties through practice. Delicate taste is desireable and everyone approves of it. The perfection of that faculty is to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation... the perfection of the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united. Natural ability varies, but nothing tends further to encrease and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. For an unpracticed person, the sentiments accompanying objects are 'obscure and confused' and our reason struggles to identify their merits and flaws. The best we can hope for is a general verdict. But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame.

Given that practice is so important, we should withhold judgement until we have experienced the object more than once, in different lights, each time giving it our undivided attention. To recall, this sharpening of the faculties applies both to criticism and composition:

> "The same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means, in the judging of it."

Hume continues by stressing the importance of comparison. It is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty, without being frequently obliged to form comparisons between the several species and degrees of excellence, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man, who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him. By comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each. Inferior works often have their attractions, but it takes someone 'familiarized to superior beauties' to see past them and make a mature, well-informed judgement with reference to the greatest works of human culture. One accustomed to see, and examine, and weigh the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can alone rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.

Attaining this breadth of reference requires the critic to free his mind of prejudice. Hume shows he is aware of the importance of cultural context: he notes that works of art often need to be experienced in a particular way, and the critic must try to put himself in the shoes of its intended audience. He uses the example of an orator who tailors his speech to a specific, even hostile, audience, but might not be properly understood by someone who reads the text within a different culture or era. Critics must try to forget their 'individual being and peculiar circumstances'. A critic who allows their judgement to be distorted by prejudice suffers the consequences:

> "By this means, his sentiments are perverted; nor have the same beauties and blemishes the same influence upon him, as if he had imposed a proper violence on his imagination, and had forgotten himself for a moment. So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority."

Note Hume contradicts himself. He says the critic must preserve his mind free from all prejudice, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination. But this goes against the application of practice and comparison, which require him to bring other artworks into his consideration as well as the one he's looking at.

Prejudice is 'destructive of sound judgment' and 'it belongs to good sense to check its influence.' Hume helpfully describes some of the properties of 'the nobler productions of genius'. We can detect the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* on his list:

> "A mutual relation and correspondence of parts.
> A certain end or purpose, for which it is calculated.
> A chain of propositions and reasonings."

The characters must be represented as reasoning, and thinking, and concluding, and acting, suitably to their character and circumstances. The purpose of poetry is to please by means of the passions and the imagination. This is as specific as Hume gets about any actual rules. But he is not trying here to describe the rules – he is describing some of the things that can be judged by good sense. The able critic must be aware of such considerations and be sufficiently 'capacious of thought' to judge how well they have been used. It seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty. Good sense is important for fighting prejudice but also for judging an artwork's structure, unity, purpose, and so on.

Hume believes that a critic capable of all these gifts – what he calls a 'true judge', or what we would today prefer to call a 'true critic' – is a rare character. Though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The natural faculties might be defective, or the critic lacks the range of necessary qualities. In a key sentence, Hume summarises the five criteria that he thinks characterize the ideal critic:

> "Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty."

Let's underline those five criteria:

1. Strong sense
2. Delicate sentiment
3. Practice
4. Comparison
5. Lack of prejudice

These are positive attributes in the critic, and conversely, the lack of them is a hindrance to good judgement. That 'joint verdict of true judges' is, for Hume, the answer to the puzzle of how we decide which subjective opinions are valuable. It is 'the true standard of taste and beauty', confirmed by the 'common sentiments of human nature'. The ideal critic is someone who can best perceive the 'beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments' because the various defects that impede our perception of those beauties are, in the ideal critic, absent or minimal.

This seems clear enough, but it presents Hume with a new problem. Who is to say whether a particular person is a ideal critic or not? This seems to return us to the problem of relativism with which we started.

Hume's response is to deny that identifying ideal critics is subjective. Taste is subjective, but whether one is a ideal critic or not is objective, a matter of fact. He believes he has proved that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others. Whether someone is an ideal critic or not will be a matter of dispute, but everyone agrees that such a person is valuable. Where the disputes occur, people must simply put forward their best arguments:

> "they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact; and they must have indulgence to such as differ from them in their appeals to this standard."

Hume seems to be suggesting that to decide who is an ideal critic, we make an appeal to empirical evidence. It is again a bit naive of him to assume this is a straightforward process.

To defend his position, Hume returns to the 'test of time' argument. But in reality the difficulty of finding, even in particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as it is represented. He claims that establishing truth in science is harder than in literature. Theories of philosophy and science come and go, but the appeal of great works like those of Terence and Virgil persists.

Hume retreads it because he thinks it can help us to identify 'men of delicate taste'. The 'ascendant' or prominence such persons acquire thanks to the quality of their judgements makes their opinion dominant and gives them lasting influence. He claims that it is easy to tell a true person of taste:

> "Though men of delicate taste be rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind."

People with superior faculties will produce superior judgements, which we may confirm by comparing them to tried and tested principles of art, and they rise to prominence on merit. These are the critics whose opinions we should consult to resolve disputes over taste. Disagreement about them must yield in the long run to 'the force of nature and just sentiment.' Hume wraps up by saying a civilised nation rarely fails to identify its favourite epic or tragic author, i.e. he is talking about artists as well as ideal critics. Note how in this paragraph Hume assigns to his ideal critics a social role:

> "The ascendant, which they acquire, gives a prevalence to that lively approbation, with which they receive any productions of genius, and renders it generally predominant. Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them. Every convert to the admiration of the real poet or orator is the cause of some new conversion.

> And though prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to the force of nature and just sentiment."
>
> The critic's excellence of judgement makes his or her opinion generally dominant; they can point out qualities in artworks to less perceptive people, who will inevitably defer to the better opinion. Through their verdicts the critics help to fix the taste of wider society.

In the final section, Hume identifies two causes of prejudice even for ideal critics. Despite our attempts at establishing the Standard of Taste, there are two unavoidable influences that will affect our judgements:

1. 'The different humours of particular men.'
2. 'The particular manners and opinions of our age and country.'

Where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable. In these cases 'we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments', i.e. Hume admits that sometimes the Standard of Taste will fail.

First he addresses point no 1. There will always be some diversity of opinion even among true artists and critics, thanks to the variability of human nature and culture. A young person tends to be more amorous, an older person more philosophical and moderate. We also tend to favour different artists at different ages. Broadly we naturally incline more towards artists who resemble ourselves in personality, national customs, etc. This is a defect in a critic, but it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided. In such cases, contending works and judgements are just different and cannot be pronounced right or wrong. Note the phrase: 'the general principles of taste are uniform in human nature'. Under ideal conditions, everyone responds to art in broadly the same way – with a bit of variation, as he is currently describing.

Hume now turns to point no 2. We tend to prefer 'pictures and characters' that resemble our own customs and culture. Unlike a 'common audience', a critic or artist makes allowances for such variations.

However, he then alludes to the so-called 'quarrel between the ancients and moderns' that was a running debate in the 18th century: had the modern era achieved superior learning to the ancients? We need not reject artists of previous ages because of their different customs:

> Must we throw aside the pictures of our ancestors, because of their ruffs and fardingales?

Hume has already made this point about throwing off prejudice towards other cultures. But he makes an unexpected move. Instead of taking his own advice and putting himself into the shoes of the ancient Greeks and Romans, he condemns ancient poets who depict 'vicious manners' without disapproval (he offers no specific examples). The want of humanity and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several of the ancient poets, even sometimes by Homer and the Greek tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble performances, and gives modern authors an advantage over them. Hume wants a stronger, more explicit morality than he finds in the ancient writers. When he says modern authors have an 'advantage' over ancient ones, he seems to be saying, on my reading, that modern morality is better than ancient morality, or at least that the morality of modern authors is better than the morality of ancient authors. The modern critic, it seems, need not forgive gross violations of our higher moral standards even in works from very different cultures. We moderns are better than that.

Hume does not say we cannot excuse the ancient poet (he thus holds true to the criterion of prejudice), but he does say that moral flaws damage our aesthetic enjoyment. However I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners in his age, I never can relish the composition. Our moral displeasure makes it harder for us to enjoy the work:

> "Whatever indulgence we may give to the writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourselves to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters, which we plainly discover to be blamable."

Hume therefore makes an exception of morality when it comes to 'making allowances' about customs. He is asserting that moral values are relevant to the aesthetic value of a work of art (a position known as moderate moralism). A moral blemish is an aesthetic blemish.

Hume finishes his essay with a discussion of religion. He makes a distinction between moral principles on the one hand and 'speculative opinions' (ideologies, including religion) on the other. Unlike moral principles, speculative opinions are in 'continual flux and revolution', and mistakes in these matters are not serious blemishes on works of art. Whatever speculative errors may be found in the polite writings of any age or country, they detract but little from the value of those compositions. Adjusting ourselves to different morals however requires 'a very violent effort', and someone who is confident in the 'rectitude' of their moral standards will not make allowances. Hume does not explain why moral principles, which are based upon sentiment and vary across cultures, are not also in 'flux and revolution'

Writers may be excused for speculative errors on religious matters, as 'the same good sense, that directs men in the ordinary occurrences of life, is not harkened to in religious matters,' which lie outside human reason. Critics who wish to form good judgements of ancient literature must not be prejudiced by the writers' religion, which Hume calls 'the absurdities of the pagan system of theology'. You cannot expect good sense on such things, whether in life or in works of art.

Religious principles are only a problem when they are so strong as to become bigotry or superstition:

> "Where that happens, they confound the sentiments of morality, and alter the natural boundaries of vice and virtue. They are therefore eternal blemishes, according to the principle above mentioned; nor are the prejudices and false opinions of the age sufficient to justify them."

Just as we are right to condemn the worst violations of our moral standards, we are right to condemn the worst violations of our religious standards. In the final two paragraphs he addresses bigotry and superstition in turn.

On this basis he has a dig at Roman Catholicism, which by its nature inspires 'violent hatred of every other worship', and gives the examples of two plays – Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1642) and Racine's *Athalia* (1691) – that he thinks have been blemished by this sort of 'bigotry'. Hume describes a scene from *Athalia* where the Jewish priest Joad accuses a priest of Baal of 'poisoning the air' with his 'horrid presence', earning the applause of the Paris audience. This illustrates an 'intemperate zeal for particular modes of worship'. Hume also thinks:

> "Religious principles are also a blemish in any polite composition, when they rise up to superstition, and intrude themselves into every sentiment, however remote from any connection with religion."

Local customs are no excuse for the poet, and Hume cites two examples from Petrarch and Boccaccio. He therefore contends that certain violations of morality and religion are serious enough to overrule the critic's duty to approach other cultures without prejudice, and they ought to be condemned. And thus the essay comes abruptly to an end.

Suggested Reading

1. *The Century of Taste (The Philosophical Odyssey of Taste in the Eighteenth Century)*-George Dickie.
2. *The British Aesthetic Tradition (From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein)*-Timothy M. Costelloe.
3. *David Hume: Moral and Political Theorist*-Russell Hardin.
4. *The Pursuits of Philosophy (An Introduction to the Life and Thought of David Hume)*-Annette C. Baier.
5. *Hume's Aesthetic Theory*-Dabney Townsend
6. 'Rethinking Hume's Standard of Taste'-Theodore A. Gracyk
7. 'Hume's Standard of Taste'-Noel Carroll

Assignments

1. According to Hume what are the chief characteristics of a critic?
2. Is it possible to come to an objective definition of literary/artistic taste? Following Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste', write an analytical essay.
3. How does Hume define the standard of literary creation and the standard of literary criticism? Does Hume find any similarities between the two?
4. Would it be correct to call David Hume a neoclassical critic?
5. In reaching the definition of a Standard of Taste, Hume mentions encountering two unavoidable influences that affect our judgements. Name them and explain how they hinder reaching a Standard definition of Taste. According to Hume, how can this difficulty be surmounted?

***On the Beautiful and the Sublime*-Edmund Burke**

Unit 15 (a): History of the 'Sublime'

Longinus

Peri Hupsos or *On Sublimity*, by the Greek critic Dionysius Longinus, is widely acknowledged to be the first properly theoretical discussion of the sublime. It is primarily rhetorical, aiming to teach those oratorical devices that enable a speaker to move or persuade an audience. Longinus was a follower of Cicero. What distinguishes *On Sublimity* from its predecessors, however, is the stress its author places on a mode of speech that is indeterminate or without form, a quality that renders the pedagogical aspect of the work extremely problematic. Although standard rhetorical devices such as *inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria* and *actio* were amenable to teaching and infusion, the sublime seemed to elude definition. Reading *On Sublimity*, therefore, it is easy to conclude that the author secretly regards his subject as formally unteachable. Therefore the sublime is beyond definition. What strikes an audience with wonder (*ekplexis*) is more powerful than what merely persuades or pleases us. Unlike conventional public speech, therefore, the sublime is a discourse of domination; it seeks to ravish and intoxicate the audience so that a grand conception may be instilled in the mind.

Therefore the sublime according to Longinus is a product of nature rather than of art. All that remains essential to the sublime is a state of feeling, which may be loosely described as wonder, awe, rapture, astonishment, ecstasy, or elevation. Longinus differs significantly from

Horace since the latter in his work *Ars Poetica* had claimed that *ars* is a 'practiced mastery of craft, a systematic knowledge of theory and technique.

The Concept of Sublime in the 18th Century

Longinus' treatise came to the attention of a select number of English readers in the late seventeenth century via the influential French translation and commentary of Despréaux Boileau. Although the Latin text had been made available in 1554, the English translation in 1652, it was not until the mid 1740s that the concept of the sublime reached a wider public. Late seventeenth and early eighteenth century British theorization on the sublime was observable in the work of the following five theorists: Thomas Burnet, John Dennis, Joseph Addison, Anthony Ashley Cooper and John Baillie.

(i) Burnet-*Sacred Theory*: The desire to efface the material nature of human experience, in particular its dependence on the stuff of language, is thus key to our understanding of the sublime. For a better understanding one may look at Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (originally composed in Latin and later translated into English), which begins by revising conventional seventeenth-century attitudes to nature. A 17th century poet like Andrew Marvell had opined that mountains are 'unjust', 'hook-shouldered' excrescences, which threaten to 'deform' the balance of the earth. A smooth, well-ordered garden, offering ease and delight to the spectator, was preferable to the brooding intensity of the mountain crag.

But Burnet's response to a vision of the mountain is markedly different. He claims that mountains have something 'august and stately', filling the mind with 'great thoughts and passions', reminding us of the creative potential of the Supreme Maker. Burnet and his contemporaries, after all, conceived nature as a work of beauty, founded on principles of order, proportion, and restraint. The vast irregularity of mountain scenery offended this belief, yet it was the mountains that conveyed an image of the divine. Though the conceptual distinction between the sublime and the beautiful awaits the publication of Burke's *Enquiry*, the idea of the sublime as a mode of divine excess is already in place.

(ii) John Dennis: Like Burnet, Dennis was moved to express his delight in the 'extravagancies' of nature 'in a language of extravagance and hyperbole'. Dennis struggled to reconcile his aesthetic preference for the order and regularity of beauty with his newfound enthusiasm for the sublime. He attributed the beauty of the universe to its "Proportion, Situation, and (inter)Dependence". As a child of the Enlightenment, Dennis regarded nature as a rational system. Yet his enthusiasm for the vast and irregular militated against this regard. Thus, whilst the 'prospect of Hills or Valleys, or flowery Meads, and murmuring Streams' produced 'a delight consistent with Reason', it was the 'Extravagancies' of nature that provided an intimation of the divine.

(iii) Joseph Addison: In an issue of the *Spectator* magazine published on 21 June 1712, Addison claims that:

> "Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at anything that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them"

Besides describing the beautiful sights, Addison goes on to describe their origins. Like Burnet, Addison maintains that the underlying cause of greatness rests on the side of the naturally magnificent object. In a distinction derived from the empiricist philosopher John Locke (1632–

1704), Addison insists that the 'Primary Pleasures of the Imagination' are stimulated by the 'Sight' of such objects, and that the 'Secondary Pleasures of the Imagination flow from the Ideas of visible Objects'. Marjorie Nicholson comments that for Addison 'rhetorical ideas' were 'secondary' and they had a "great dependence" upon primary ideas coming to man direct from Nature'.

From the outset, however, it is made clear that since 'we know neither the Nature of an Idea, nor the Substance of a Human Soul', then it is impossible to 'trace out the several necessary and efficient Causes from whence the Pleasure or Displeasure arises'. The impetus by which an idea is produced cannot be established with any certainty; what Addison can be certain of, however, is why we should be so impelled. The ultimate cause is God. Man is created in God's image, therefore he is conditioned to delight in 'what is Great or Unlimited'.

(iv) Anthony Ashley Cooper: The Platonic displacement of the senses, the search for ideal objects over and above the fallen objects of this world, is crucial to the development of the sublime in the writings of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury's writing is notable for its 'enthusiasm'-which 'signifies divine presence, and was made use of by [Plato] to express whatever was sublime in human passions'. As Shaftesbury's prose sought to demonstrate the balancing of cosmic order and rhetorical *ekstasis*, so also it aimed to instill a sense of the ultimate goodness of the universe. Drawing again on Plato, Shaftesbury goes on to claim that the mind is in accord with itself and with the universe when it recognizes that 'what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true is, of consequence, agreeable and good'.

(v) John Baillie: The order that Shaftesbury perceives was undermined in the latter half of the eighteenth century by the spread of scientific materialism and philosophical skepticism. But the roots for an out-and-out decentring of the harmony between mind, beauty, virtue, and God were already implicit in the rhetorical concept of the sublime. For those writing after Longinus, in the discourse of the sublime, language works insidiously to transgress the boundaries between things, allowing properties to be transferred from one object to another, so that anything, even a dunghill, may be raised to a point of magnificence. John Baillie takes up this point in his *An Essay on the Sublime* (1747). After beginning conventionally enough with the claim that a sublime 'Disposition of Mind' is 'created by grand Objects, Baillie admits that some 'Objects … [that] are not great and immense, if long connected with such, will often produce an Exaltedness of Mind. In Shaftesbury's grand 'design', the relations between things are guaranteed by the presence of divine authority. God. Where Baillie departs from Shaftesbury is in his admission of the constructed nature of the sublime.

Unit 15(b): Edmund Burke-An Introduction

He was born in 1730, in Arran Quay, Dublin, and educated at the Quaker school in Ballitore and Trinity College Dublin. Obedient to his father's wish, he embarked on the formal study of law in the Middle Temple at the Inns of Court in London: a curriculum of professional training he would never complete. He published two early books, *A Vindication of Natural Society* in 1756 and *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757, which caught the eye of David Hume, Samuel Johnson, and other illustrious contemporaries and established him as an author. Burke had already shown an interest in politics, informed by copious knowledge; and in 1758 he contracted with the bookseller Dodsley to produce the

Annual Register and wrote the political history of the year for its first volume in 1759. The same year saw his appointment as private secretary to a member of Parliament, William Gerard Hamilton. In 1761, Hamilton was named chief secretary for Ireland, and Burke accompanied him to Dublin. A disagreement over the freedom that Burke was to be allowed for his own projects led in early 1765 to a falling- out with Hamilton; but a few months later, Burke found a new patron, the Marquess of Rockingham, the leader of a group of Whigs then pressing the House of Commons to assert its in de pen dence from the king. Rockingham made Burke his private secretary (a position he would hold for seventeen years), and through affiliation with the Rockingham party, Burke was returned as a member of Parliament for the pocket borough of Wendover. In January 1766, he gave his maiden speech, presenting a petition from Manchester merchants against restrictions on American trade. He went on to distinguish himself as a strategist for the Rockingham administration of 1765– 1766 and assisted in its major achievement, the repealof the stamp tax on the American colonies.

In 1769, Burke joined the parliamentary resistance to an effort by King George III and his parliamentary allies to prevent John Wilkes from taking his seat in the House of Commons. While the legal argument simmered, the Rockingham party began to concert a policy to check the increasing power of the king. Burke's view of the constitution at this crisis emerged in 1770, in his first political book, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents.* This was a practical manifesto for the Rockingham Whigs and also a theoretical defense of the idea of a political party. An organized opposition, Burke argued, was a necessary bulwark of liberty; and to warrant the formation of such a party, one reason would always suffice: "When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifi ce in a contemptible struggle." Whatever might alter in his subsequent stance, Burke would continue to speak for the good of "association" as a limit on the privilege and aggrandizement of court favorites.

Burke believed that the practice of politics could never be isolated from the ordinary work of moral judgment. Accordingly, he was skeptical of a priori theories of the social contract that codified the definitions of citizenship and state power. In the 1770s and 1780s, most of his energy was given to enlarging the liberty of the people by strengthening the protections against monarchical abuse of power. Yet he was never a believer in popular government: statesmanship always carried, for him, a sense of the dignity and ceremony that should accompany high enterprises, and the capacity to take long views without concern for popular support or mandates. Burke's exalted idea of political duty could not be fulfilled by a monarch. Its embodiment was the leader in a responsible assembly who, drawing on the skill and talents of others, labors to mold the sentiments of the people and to justify the policies and laws of a nation.

In 1774, Burke gained a chance to play such a part. A set of Whigs who admired his views on American aff airs invited him to stand for Parliament in Bristol. This was a contested election (rare then), in the second city of the kingdom, and Burke's victory gave him a platform from which he could directly engage the public issues of the time. In the parliamentary sessions of 1774 and 1775, he pleaded for a sympathetic reception of the American protests against taxation. His *Speech on Conciliation with America,* delivered in March 1775, urged a policy of concession to the point of disowning any further intention to tax. Th e three- hour speech, with its history of trade with the colonies, its bold sketch of American manners and morals, and its genealogy of the descent of British liberty, has been considered from that day to this among the greatest orations in the language: "An Englishman," Burke told his listeners, "is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery." The right use of the Americans, he concluded, was to

take them as equal partners in trade and as allies in time of war. “Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together.”

During his Bristol years, from 1774 to 1780, Burke stood out as a defender of free trade with Ireland, of liberalization of the laws controlling imprisonment for debt, and of repeal of the legal disabilities of Catholics— all unpopular positions in a Protestant and mercantile city. When threatened with loss of his constituency in 1780, he gave an unswerving defense of his actions in his *Speech at the Guildhall Previous to the Election*. Looking back on six years of service, Burke said to the voters of Bristol: “I did not obey your instructions: No. I conformed to the instructions of truth and nature, and maintained your interest, against your opinions, with a constancy that became me.”

With Britain still fighting the American war, Burke at this moment began to follow the trail of abuse of power from the western to the eastern empire. A powerful interest linking British policy in those two regions was the East India Company. By the time he re- entered the House of Commons in 1781 as representative for Malton, Burke had found the cause that would occupy the remainder of his parliamentary career: to expose the injustices of the Company in India, where its actions had the corrupt and despotic character of “a state in the disguise of a merchant”; and when the investigation pointed finally to a responsible party, to impeach the highest resident officer of the Company, the governor- general of Bengal, Warren Hastings.

In March 1782, Burke was appointed paymaster of forces in the second Rockingham ministry— a subcabinet position that was the highest he would ever hold— but the administration ended in July with the death of Lord Rockingham. In the running of the party, Burke nevertheless continued to be a central figure, now as an adviser to Charles Fox. Twenty years Burke’s junior, a popular leader and exuberant speaker with a genius for politics, Fox had begun his career as a Tory before acquiring a more generous understanding of constitutional liberty. As leader of the remnant of the Rockingham Whigs, he forged an improbable but politic alliance with Lord North, the minister who had presided over the American war; and from Burke and Fox together, in 1783 there issued a carefully drafted proposal on the governance of India. To rally support for the mea sure, Burke delivered his *Speech on Fox’s East India Bill,* which recounted in unsparing terms the history of British India and urged a systematic reform of the empire. Fox’s bill would have placed officers of the Company under parliamentary control; rejection of the plan by the House of Commons precipitated the fall of the Fox– North coalition. Burke’s response was to speak more pressingly for the impeachment of Hastings. He took his party with him— Fox, Sheridan, and others— and having secured the partial support of the prime minister, William Pitt, the House of Commons launched the trial of Hastings before the tribunal of the House of Lords. Meeting on the days Parliament could spare from other business, the process stretched from 1788 to 1795 and ended with the acquittal, on all counts, of Warren Hastings by the House of Lords. Burke would look back on this attempt at full- scale reform as his proudest achievement—“my monument.”

A surer fame in his lifetime came from his pamphlets of the 1790s against the French Revolution. The first and most influential of these was *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Published in November 1790, it would provoke, by the end of the decade, more than a hundred replies. Burke warned against a great change in the spirit of society from aristocratic to demo cratic manners, and from the authority of an ancient landed nobility to that of a mobile commercial class. He spoke as a believer in precedent and prescription and as a defender of natural feelings such as reverence for an established church and a hereditary nobility. Against the

promise of a society based on contract, he offered his vision of a society rooted in trust—"a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." Burke believed that the advent of democracy would destroy the very idea of a human partnership spread out over generations. He gave reasons to support his fear that democracy could never correct the errors that "the people" given unchecked power would commit on a new and terrifying scale. With its broad exposition of political principles and its dramatic narrative of crisis, the *Reflections* did more than any other book to create the French Revolution as a world- historical event for the mind of Europe.

Burke's attack on the revolutionists in France was also an attack on their allies in En gland. It split the Whig Party; and in 1791, after a bitter exchange with Fox in the House of Commons, Burke crossed the floor to the administration side. In 1794, he was awarded a pension by Pitt and George III, and retired to his estate in Beaconsfield. Two pamphlets of Burke's final years exhibit the continuity and the ambivalence of his political views. In 1792, *A Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe* made an impassioned plea for the rights of Catholics in Ireland. The *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, in 1796, sought to justify and instigate a counterrevolutionary war against France. He died in 1797, ending as he began, in isolation.

Unit 16(a): A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) is not only one of the major theories of the sublime; it is one of the foundational texts of modern aesthetics. The first treatise to systematically compare the sublime and the beautiful, it serves as a bridge between the empiricism of early eighteenth-century British criticism (Addison, Shaftsbury, Hutcheson) and the development of philosophical aesthetics in Germany in the latter half of the eighteenth century (Mendelssohn, Lessing, Kant). Although the treatise is perhaps best known for its promotion of an aesthetics of terror, this reputation tends to obscure Burke's multifaceted treatment of sublimity, namely his integration of theories of man and society with reflections on art and nature.

This unit endeavours to explore the wider contexts and implications of Burke's Enquiry, specifically how Burke, by integrating empiricist with literary-critical methods of analysis, seductively recalibrates the sublime for modernity. The first section argues that the narrowness of the term "aesthetic" – a concept that was not available to Burke – can lead to fundamental misunderstandings of Burke's project and that Longinus's treatise and rhetorical theory more generally play a greater role in Burke's conception of sublimity than is typically granted. The second section on Burke's empirical methodology, aims to dispel the common assumption that the pleasure in the sublime results from the "removal" of pain. However, according to Burke's own articulation, the sublime involves an irreducible virtuality that is somewhat at odds with Burke's presentation of elementary sensation. The third section explores Burke's opposition between the passion of self-perseveration (based on fear) and the social passions, an opposition that does not neatly map onto the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, as Burke initially implies; for the sublime also involves the social passions, namely sympathy and ambition, the former emphasizing the social bond (empathy for the other's pain) and the latter the individualistic impulse (the agonistic quality of sublimity observed in Longinus). The fourth section delves more deeply into Burke's association between bourgeois individualism and the sublime. Finally, the fifth section closely examines Burke's subsection devoted to "Power,"

which was added to the second edition of the Enquiry, showing how it reveals a continuity between a religious and an aesthetic understanding of transcendence in Burke's thought.

Unit 16(b): Edmund Burke's *The Sublime and the Beautiful*- Part V

Section I

The first section of Part V of Burke's *Sublime* begins with the assertion that physical objects of nature exert their respective influences on the human mind in keeping with their motions and configurations, ordered by Nature and supervised by the ever-vigilant Almighty. Though works of painting attract our minds in a similar fashion, they have the additional factor of imitation of life attached to them. The manner in which works of architecture entrance our minds depends on their being founded on the laws of nature and simultaneously the laws of reason. Here Burke reminds us that proportion is a key feature of beauty-whether something will or will not appear alluring depends ultimately on whether they possess proportion or not. But Burke finds that the mechanism by which words allure us differs from the above-mentioned forms of enchantment. Burke finds it essential to undertake a thorough study of the manner in which words appeal to our intellect.

Section II

We generally tend to think that poetry (as well as words in general) affects us by conjuring those ideas in front of our mind's eye which the words stand for. Burke classifies words into three types-

(i) aggregate words like man, horse, tree, castle, etc. They represent simple ideas united by nature to form a determinate composition.

(ii) abstract words like red, blue, round, square, etc. They stand for one simple idea.

(iii) compound abstract words formed by an arbitrary union, of the two previous types and of the various relations between them in greater or less degrees of complexity; as virtue, honour, persuasion, magistrate.

Burke is interested in a discussion of the third type of words-compound abstracts. He claims that they do appeal to us, but not by representing something they denote. Burke points that they do not constitute "real essences". As instance he points out that on hearing compound abstract words like virtue, liberty, or honour-one can't get any precise idea of the relations which these words stand for. Burke says that when we analyze these words we reduce them from one set of general words to another, and then into the simple abstracts and aggregates. Proceeding along this chain of explication, by the time we discover the original ideas the effect of the composition is totally lost. Therefore this sort of meaning-making is unsuited to general conversations. When we encounter such words in reality, we see them being applied to good or evil happening to someone. Thereafter, whenever we encounter such words we associate the sounds to their earlier context and deduce whether they represent good or evil. With time, we completely forget their

original context but only remember whether they point towards good or evil. This impression is consciously/unwittingly used by our minds as we attempt to read across texts in our lives.

Section III

Alluding to John Locke, Edmund Burke points out that even before the complete sense of a word is acquainted to a child, the positive or negative connotation of the word is taught. Later in life when the situations befitting these words arise, it often happens that those words referring to evil give pleasant sensations and vice versa. Burke calls it "a strange confusion of ideas and affections", resulting in contradiction between notions and actions. Burke opines that even people who sincerely love virtue and detest vice often act wickedly at times. On these occasions passions on the side of virtue were not aroused due to the contradiction between the particular occasion and the ideas with which the sounds have been generally associated. As instance Burke quotes words like "Wise, valiant, generous, good, and great" which generally affect us irrespective of occasion. Burke identifies such scenarios when words unbecoming of necessity are used, as instances of 'bombast'. He holds good sense and experience as caveats against the wayward power of language.

Section IV

Burke identifies the threefold effect of words on us-

(i) sound, (ii) manner, (iii) the affection of the soul produced by one or by both of the foregoing. Compounded abstract words produce the first and third named effects.

But Simple Abstract words like blue, green, hot, cold etc play all three of the purposes of words. But Burke feels that these words do not derive their power by forming pictures of the several things they would represent in the imagination. Though the simple abstracts may sometimes directly be associated with some particular idea or object, the compound abstracts never conjure any picture in the mind. On the contrary they refer to a train of associations. By quoting a passage describing the course of the river Danube, he explains how in real reading experiences words rapidly appear in clusters and thus forbid tracing the chain of association which they refer to. Therefore, he concludes that "it is impracticable to jump from sense to thought, from particulars to generals, from things to words, in such a manner as to answer the purposes of life; nor is it necessary that we should."

Section V

Burke says that he has often tried to convince people that their passions are aroused by words whose core ideas they don't know. Moreover, these people are never convinced when he tells them that in common conversation we do understand what others are saying even without delving into the train of associations conjured by the word. Burke proposes disinterested/unbiased analysis of words and mechanism of appeal on us.

Burke says that while composing this work he became aware of the possibility that one might hear/read words which appeal to him (without grasping the complete essence) and later be capable of using them to elicit the same or other appealing emotions in others. In this regard he mentions a blind poet Mr Blacklock who had no way of identifying or distinguishing among

colours. But in Mr Blacklock's description of colourful objects surpasses the propriety or justness with which people without visual deformities may describe those objects. Burke points out that Mr Blacklock is a living example of someone who cannot have a clear idea of colours, yet he has been so moved by their description that he can in turn describe them with vigour.

Section VI

In this Section Burke distinguishes between descriptive and dramatic types of poetry. Burke opines that dramatic poetry imitates the manners and passions of men following the dictum "animi motus effert interprete lingua" (meaning "of the emotional highlights of the tongue"). But descriptive poetry operates chiefly by substitution-it uses sounds (which refer to things or ideas) to give the effect of reality.

Section VII

Words can only represent but cannot conjure the real object which they name or describe and this may lead one to conjecture that the power of words would be trivial. But in reality, they exert profound impact on our minds. Burke accounts the source of this impact to three sources-

(i) Whenever we describe how someone is affected by something, our description is already coloured by the manner in which we are ourselves affected by that person's fate (sympathy/apathy/antipathy). Moreover, the way in which we are affected by the fate of others depends on our perspective, which in turn is built around what others have said/written on that subject. To speak/write, words are indispensable.

(ii) Abstract ideas often do not have material reality. But there are words representing abstract ideas. These words often wield substantial power over our passions and direct our actions.

(iii) Words give us the power to combine things we cannot otherwise combine as materials in reality. Moreover, description through words can impart "enlivening touches" which painting cannot hope to attain. Words connote more than they denote. Therefore they mean more than simply the materials denoted by the words. As an instance Burke quotes Milton in whose description the habitation of the fallen angels-"Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs and dens" is made more gloomy by linking it with "shades of death, /A universe of death." The geographical features listed as the abode of fallen angels could not be equated with suggestion of evil without the mechanism of words.

But once again Burke points out that words do not always "clearly" depict the things they represent. In such cases it is paradoxical that words can emote more effectively than the things represented. But Burke himself untangles this knotty paradox when he defines the nature of human mind as-" We yield to sympathy what we refuse to description".

Actually verbal description conveys a poor and insufficient idea of the thing described. Such "naked description" does not affect us. It requires careful handling of modes of speech to enliven the description so that the listener may be moved. Burke opines that "very polished languages" like the French language are characterized by "superior clearness and perspicuity" but they are deficient in strength. On the other hand Oriental languages are very powerful. He says:

"Uncultivated people are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them; but, for that reason, they admire more, and are more affected with what they see, and therefore express themselves in a warmer and more passionate manner."

Burke says that "affection" might often be well-conveyed without the idea being precisely presented. He concludes by stating that to understand how words affect us, it were best to enquire into the properties of such things in nature, as raise love and astonishment in us; and by showing us in what manner they operated to produce these effects."

Suggested Reading

1. *The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke: From the Sublime and Beautiful to American Independence*-David Bromwich
2. *The Theory of the Sublime: From Longinus to Kant*-Robert Doran
3. *The Sublime (The New Critical Idiom)*-Philip Shaw
4. *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question (SUNY Series: Philosophy and Critical Theory)*-Rodolphe Gasche and Mark C. Taylor (eds)
5. *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Theory* –Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla (eds)
6. 'Burke on the Sublime and the Beautiful'-Anthony Quinton
7. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*-Edmund Burke
8. 'Edmund Burke and the Emotions'-David Dwan.
9. 'A Short Guide to the History of the Sublime'-Kenneth Holmqvist and Jaroslaw Pluciennik

Assignment

1. By what mechanism do words exert their influence on the mind?
2. What is Burke's purpose behind introducing the anecdote of Mr Blacklock?
3. How does Burke characterize dramatic poetry? How can one differentiate it from descriptive poetry?
4. According to Burke, what causes "a strange confusion of ideas and affections"?
5. How far does Burke concur/differ from Longinus' account of the sublime? Discuss.
6. Present an analytical study of the concept of sublime, as handled by British philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.