BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

SEMESTER-I

CORE – 2: BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA
[17TH AND 18TH CENTURY]

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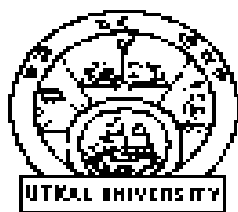
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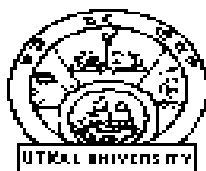
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CORE- 2: BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA[17TH AND 18TH CENTURY]
Brief Syllabi

Block No.	Block Name	Unit No.	Unit
1.	HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	1.	Period of English Revolution (1640-60)
		2.	Literary Forms and Techniques
		3.	18th Century: Puritanism and Restoration Era: The Beginning
		4.	Forms and Genres of the Age
		5.	The Age of Enlightenment and Rationalism

Block No.	Block Name	Unit No.	Unit
2.	POETS AND POEMS	6.	Early 17th Century Poetry: Milton and Andrew Marvell
		7.	Neo-Classicism and Alexander Pope
		8.	Aphra Behn and Poems
		9.	Robert Herrick and Poems
		10.	The Age and Poetry

Block No.	Block Name	Unit No.	Unit
3.	BEN JOHNSON	11.	Late 16th Century: Later Phases of Shakespearean Drama
		12.	Puritanism Drama and Ben Johnson
		13.	Volpone: The Puritan Drama
		14.	Volpone: Themes and Criticisms
		15.	Johnson and the Masque Tradition

Block No.	Block Name	Unit No.	Unit
4.	**JOHN DRYDEN**	16.	Later Puritanism and Restoration
		17.	John Dryden and Genre of the Age
		18.	All For Love: The Restoration Drama
		19.	All For Love: Themes and Criticisms
		20.	Dryden and Translation Works

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CORE- 2: BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA[17TH AND 18TH CENTURY]

Content

BLOCK-1: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

UNIT 1: Period of English Revolution (1640-60)
UNIT 2: Literary Forms and Techniques
UNIT 3: 18th Century: Puritanism and Restoration Era: The Beginning
UNIT 4: Forms and Genres of the Age
UNIT 5: The Age of Enlightenment and Rationalism

STRUCTURE

1.1 Objectives

The prime objective of the following Block is to brief the students and enhance their knowledge on 17th and 18th Century Literature. A lot of Political, Historical, Social and Economic changes have taken place during these two major centuries. It won't be wrong if we say that these two centuries were responsible for offering a myriad of Literary Gems to the world, be it Edmund Spenser Ben Jonson or William Shakespeare. A lot of renounced literary movements have also taken in between these two centuries. The Learners are also going to get an insight into the Art and Literature, Styles and evolution of each of the centuries. There is always a backdrop that catalyses the plays, poems and narrations written by the then writers of the 17th and 18th centuries.

1.2 Introduction

The period you're referring to is often known as the English Civil War or the English Revolution, which occurred from 1642 to 1651. This period was marked by a series of armed conflicts and political machinations between Parliamentarians ("Roundheads"), who supported Parliament and sought limited monarchy or a republic, and Royalists ("Cavaliers"), who supported King Charles I and absolute monarchy. The conflict ultimately resulted in the trial and execution of Charles I in 1649, the establishment of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, and the eventual restoration of the monarchy in 1660 with Charles II.

1.3 The Period and its Perspectives

The English Revolution or English Civil War, spanning roughly from 1640 to 1660, was a complex series of events that profoundly shaped English and later British history. Here are some key perspectives and aspects of this period:
1. **Political Conflict**: The primary conflict was between the forces loyal to King Charles I and those who supported Parliament. The Parliamentarians, led by figures like Oliver Cromwell, sought to limit the power of the monarchy and increase parliamentary authority. This struggle

escalated into armed conflict in 1642.

2. **Religious and Social Tensions**: The Civil War was also influenced by deep-seated religious and social divisions. Religious dissent and disagreements over the role of the Church of England exacerbated existing tensions between different groups within society.
3. **Constitutional Developments**: The English Revolution played a crucial role in the development of constitutional principles. The execution of Charles I in 1649 marked the first time a reigning English monarch was put on trial and executed by his own subjects. This event challenged the notion of divine right monarchy and contributed to the development of constitutional monarchy in Britain.
4. **Military Campaigns**: The Civil War itself consisted of several military campaigns across England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Parliamentarians generally had the advantage, due in part to the New Model Army led by Oliver Cromwell, which was highly disciplined and effective.
5. **Cultural and Intellectual Impact**: The period also witnessed significant cultural and intellectual developments. It saw the flourishing of pamphlets, debates on political theory, and the publication of influential works like John Milton's "Areopagitica," which argued for freedom of speech and expression.
6. **The Interregnum and Restoration**: After Charles I was executed in 1649, England experienced a period known as the Interregnum, during which England was a republic under the rule of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector. In 1660, after Cromwell's death, the monarchy was restored with the accession of Charles II, marking the end of the revolutionary period.
7. **Legacy**: The English Revolution left a lasting legacy in British history. It contributed to the development of constitutionalism, the idea of limited government, and the balance of power between monarch and parliament. It also set precedents for later political movements and revolutions, including the American Revolution.

Overall, the English Revolution was a transformative period that reshaped English political, social, and cultural life, setting the stage for the development of modern Britain.

1.4 Social Changes

The period from 1640 to 1660 in England, encompassing the English Civil War, the Interregnum, and the Restoration, was marked by significant social changes that reshaped English society in various ways:

1. **Political Transformation**: The execution of King Charles I in 1649 and the subsequent establishment of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell marked a radical departure from traditional monarchical rule. The period saw experiments with republican government and parliamentary sovereignty, challenging established norms of royal authority.
2. **Emergence of New Social Classes**: The Civil War and its aftermath saw shifts in social power dynamics. The rise of the gentry and new wealth through trade and commerce contributed to the emergence of a more diverse social hierarchy. This period also witnessed the increasing influence of the middle classes in political and economic spheres.
3. **Religious Pluralism and Toleration**: The Civil War was, in part, a conflict between different religious factions—Anglicans, Puritans, and other dissenting groups. The Interregnum saw attempts at religious toleration, albeit with varying degrees of success and controversy. This period laid the groundwork for later developments in religious freedom and pluralism.
4. **Women's Roles and Rights**: The Civil War and its aftermath brought changes in women's roles, although they were primarily defined by their familial and domestic responsibilities.

Women's participation in political and social activities increased to some extent, influenced by the turmoil and changes in societal norms.

5. **Urbanization and Economic Changes**: The period witnessed ongoing urbanization and growth of towns and cities. Economic changes, including the rise of trade, commerce, and capitalist enterprises, transformed the economic landscape. The increasing influence of urban centers contributed to social and cultural changes, including shifts in lifestyle and consumption patterns.

6. **Cultural and Intellectual Flourishing**: Despite the upheavals, the period saw a flourishing of cultural and intellectual activity. The establishment of coffeehouses as centers of intellectual exchange, the growth of printing and publishing, and the patronage of arts and literature by wealthy merchants and nobles contributed to a vibrant cultural scene.

7. **Impact on Rural Communities**: The Civil War and subsequent political changes had varying impacts on rural communities. While some regions experienced disruption and hardship due to military campaigns and requisitions, others benefited from new economic opportunities or suffered from economic decline and social dislocation.

Overall, the period from 1640 to 1660 was a time of profound social change in England, characterized by political turmoil, religious diversity, economic transformation, and evolving social norms. These changes set the stage for further developments in governance, society, and culture in the subsequent centuries.

1.5 Literary Characteristics

The period from 1640 to 1660 in England, encompassing the English Civil War and its aftermath, was a turbulent time politically, socially, and religiously. These upheavals significantly influenced the literary output of the era, giving rise to distinct literary characteristics:

1. **Polemical and Controversial Writing**: The political and religious conflicts of the time prompted a surge in polemical literature. Writers engaged in intense debates through pamphlets, tracts, and essays, advocating various political and religious positions. These writings often aimed to sway public opinion and garner support for one side or another in the Civil War.

2. **Religious and Political Allegory**: Many literary works of the period employed allegory to comment on contemporary political and religious issues in a veiled manner. Writers often used allegory to criticize or support political figures and movements, or to explore religious themes amid the turmoil of the Civil War and the Interregnum.

3. **Satire and Political Commentary**: Satirical writing flourished during this period as a means of critiquing political figures and institutions. Writers used satire to expose hypocrisy, corruption, and abuses of power, reflecting the political instability and uncertainty of the time.

4. **Miltonic Epic**: John Milton's works, particularly "Paradise Lost" (1667), exemplify the epic poetry of the period. Milton's epic reflects not only his profound religious beliefs but also engages with political and philosophical issues of the time, such as the nature of authority and rebellion.

5. **Metaphysical and Cavalier Poetry**: Despite the tumultuous political climate, the period also produced significant poetry characterized by metaphysical complexity and wit. Cavalier poets, such as Robert Herrick and Thomas Carew, celebrated an idealized pastoral world and courtly love, often in contrast to the harsh realities of war and political strife.

6. **Moral and Didactic Literature**: Reflecting the moral uncertainties of the period, didactic

literature became prominent. Writers sought to impart moral lessons and ethical guidance through prose and poetry, addressing issues of virtue, justice, and the role of the individual in a time of societal upheaval.

7. **Experimentation and Innovation**: The period saw literary experimentation and innovation, as writers grappled with new forms and styles to express the complexities of their changing world. This experimentation laid the groundwork for later literary developments in the Restoration period and beyond.

Overall, the literary characteristics of the period from 1640 to 1660 reflect the profound influence of political, religious, and social turmoil on writers and their works. The literature of this era serves as a rich testament to the complexities and contradictions of a society in upheaval.

1.6 Major Works

The period from 1640 to 1660 in England, encompassing the English Civil War, the Interregnum, and the early years of the Restoration, produced a range of significant literary, philosophical, and political works. Here are some major works from this period:

1. **John Milton**:
   - **"Paradise Lost" (1667)**: Milton's epic poem, considered one of the greatest works in the English language, explores themes of human disobedience, divine justice, and redemption. It reflects Milton's deep theological and political convictions, shaped by the tumultuous events of the Civil War and Interregnum.
2. **Thomas Hobbes**:
   - **"Leviathan" (1651)**: Hobbes's seminal work on political philosophy, "Leviathan," argues for the necessity of a strong central authority to prevent the "war of all against all." It reflects his response to the political chaos of the Civil War and advocates for absolute sovereignty to maintain social order.
3. **Andrew Marvell**:
   - **"To His Coy Mistress" (c. 1650)**: Marvell's famous metaphysical poem addresses themes of love, mortality, and the passage of time. It exemplifies the wit and intellectual depth characteristic of metaphysical poetry during this period.
4. **John Bunyan**:
   - **"The Pilgrim's Progress" (1678)**: Although published just after the period in question, Bunyan's allegorical work was deeply influenced by the religious fervor and dissent of the mid-17th century. It became one of the most widely read and influential works of English literature, illustrating Christian allegory through the journey of the protagonist, Christian.
5. **Richard Baxter**:
   - **"The Saints' Everlasting Rest" (1650)**: Baxter's influential theological work explores the concept of heaven and the afterlife, offering spiritual guidance and comfort during a period of religious upheaval.
6. **Lucy Hutchinson**:
   - **"Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson" (posthumously published in 1806)**: Written by Lucy Hutchinson, the wife of Colonel John Hutchinson, this biography provides a firsthand account of the Civil War and Interregnum period. It offers insights into the political and personal struggles of the time from a Puritan perspective.
7. **Robert Herrick** and **Thomas Carew**:

o **Poetry**: Herrick and Carew were prominent Cavalier poets whose works celebrated love, beauty, and the pleasures of life amidst the political turmoil of the Civil War. Herrick's collection "Hesperides" (1648) and Carew's poems exemplify the elegance and lyricism of Cavalier poetry.

1.7 Summary

The period from 1640 to 1660 in England was a time of profound political, social, religious, and cultural upheaval. It encompassed the English Civil War, the Interregnum under Oliver Cromwell, and the early years of the Restoration with the return of Charles II to the throne. Overall, the period from 1640 to 1660 was a time of profound transformation in England, marked by revolution, experimentation, conflict, and eventual restoration. It shaped the trajectory of English politics, society, and culture, leaving a complex legacy that continues to be studied and debated today.

1.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Political Turmoil and Civil War**: The period began with escalating tensions between King Charles I and Parliament over issues of taxation, religious freedom, and royal prerogative. This culminated in armed conflict in 1642, known as the English Civil War. The war saw the Parliamentarians (Roundheads) under Oliver Cromwell challenging the Royalists (Cavaliers) loyal to the king. It resulted in the trial and execution of Charles I in 1649, marking the first time a reigning English monarch was deposed and executed by his subjects.

☐ **Establishment of the Commonwealth**: After Charles I's execution, England entered a republican phase known as the Commonwealth (1649-1653) and later the Protectorate (1653-1659), led by Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector. This period witnessed attempts at religious and political reform, including religious tolerance to some extent, but also authoritarian rule under Cromwell's military-backed government.

☐ **Cultural and Intellectual Flourishing**: Despite the political turmoil, the period saw a vibrant cultural and intellectual scene. Writers and thinkers engaged in intense debates on political philosophy, religious doctrine, and social justice. John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost" and Thomas Hobbes's political treatise "Leviathan" are among the enduring literary and philosophical works from this era.

☐ **Religious Diversity and Conflict**: The Civil War was also a conflict over religious authority, with Puritans and other dissenting groups challenging the Anglican establishment. The period witnessed varying degrees of religious tolerance and persecution, reflecting the complex religious landscape of the time.

☐ **Restoration of the Monarchy**: The restoration of Charles II in 1660 marked the end of the republican experiment and the return to monarchy. This period saw efforts to reconcile the Crown and Parliament, as well as the re-establishment of Anglican dominance, though with continued tensions over religious and political rights.

☐ **Legacy**: The period from 1640 to 1660 left a lasting legacy on English and British history. It contributed to the development of constitutionalism, the idea of limited government, and the balance of power between monarchy and parliament. It also set precedents for religious tolerance and freedom of thought, influencing subsequent political developments in Britain and beyond.

1.9 Review Questions

1. How did the execution of King Charles I impact English political development?
2. How did religious dissent and diversity contribute to the political turmoil of the period?
3. How did John Milton's "Paradise Lost" reflect the political and religious climate of the period?
4. Compare and contrast the literary and artistic achievements of the Interregnum with those of the Restoration period.
5. Analyze the role of propaganda and print culture in shaping public opinion during the Civil War and Interregnum.

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UNIT 2: LITERARY FORMS AND TECHNIQUES

STRUCTURE

2.1 Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 Metaphysical Poetry
2.4 Polemic and Pamphlet
2.5 Drama – Tragedy and Comedy
2.6 Religious Allegory and Devotional Writing
2.7 Summary
2.8 Key Takeaways
2.9 Review Questions
2.10 References

2.1 Objectives

The prime objective of the following Block is to brief the students and enhance their knowledge on 17th and 18th Century Literature. A lot of Political, Historical, Social and Economic changes have taken place during these two major centuries. It wonřt be wrong if we say that these two centuries were responsible in offering a myriad of Literary Gems to the world, be it Edmund Spenser or Ben Jonson or William Shakespeare. A lot of renounced literary movements have also taken in between these two centuries. The Learners are also going to get an insight on the Art and Literature, Styles and Evolvement of each of the centuries. There is always a backdrop that acts as a catalyst to the plays, poems and narrations written by the then writers of the 17th and 18th centuries.

2.2 Introduction

The literary forms of the period from 1640 to 1660 in England were shaped by the tumultuous political, social, and religious upheavals of the time, particularly the English Civil War, the Interregnum, and the early years of the Restoration. This era witnessed a diverse range of literary expressions that reflected the uncertainties, conflicts, and intellectual ferment of the period. These literary forms of the period from 1640 to 1660 illustrate the diverse responses of writers and thinkers to the challenges and opportunities presented by a society in flux. They remain pivotal in understanding the cultural and intellectual landscape of early modern England and continue to inspire scholarly inquiry and literary appreciation today.

2.3 Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry emerged in the early 17th century in England, particularly associated with a group of poets including John Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughan. This poetic movement is characterized by its intellectual complexity, unconventional use of metaphors (known as

conceits), and exploration of abstract themes such as love, religion, and the nature of existence. Here are some key aspects of metaphysical poetry:

1. **Intellectual Complexity:** Metaphysical poetry is known for its intricate reasoning and exploration of profound philosophical and theological questions. Poets often employed wit and intellectual wordplay to engage readers in complex arguments and observations.

2. **Conceits:** One of the defining features of metaphysical poetry is the use of elaborate conceits—extended metaphors that draw unlikely comparisons between dissimilar objects or ideas. These conceits often challenge the reader to think deeply about the connections being made.

3. **Exploration of Love and Relationships:** Metaphysical poets often explored love in unconventional ways, moving beyond conventional expressions of romance to delve into the complexities of desire, physicality, and spiritual longing. They used metaphysical conceits to depict the intensity and contradictions of emotional experience.

4. **Religious and Spiritual Themes:** Many metaphysical poets were deeply religious, and their works often reflect a profound engagement with theological questions. They explored themes such as faith, sin, redemption, and the relationship between humanity and the divine using elaborate metaphors and paradoxes.

5. **Innovative Language and Style:** Metaphysical poetry challenged traditional poetic conventions with its innovative language and style. Poets experimented with verse forms, rhythm, and meter to create a distinctive poetic voice that combined intellectual rigor with emotional depth.

6. **Personal and Emotional Intensity:** Despite its intellectual nature, metaphysical poetry often conveyed intense personal emotions and reflections. Poets used their own experiences and observations to explore universal themes, offering insights into human nature and existence.

7. **Legacy and Influence:** The influence of metaphysical poetry extended beyond the 17th century, impacting later poets such as John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and T.S. Eliot. Its emphasis on intellectual exploration, inventive language, and profound thematic concerns continues to inspire poets and scholars to this day.

Examples of metaphysical poems include John Donne's "The Flea," where the speaker uses a flea as a metaphor for the union of lovers; George Herbert's "The Collar," which explores spiritual crisis and obedience to God; Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," a witty exploration of time and mortality; and Henry Vaughan's "The Retreat," reflecting on the quest for spiritual renewal in nature. Metaphysical poetry remains a significant and influential movement in English literature, valued for its intellectual depth, linguistic inventiveness, and profound exploration of timeless themes.

2.4 Polemic and Pamphlet

During the period from 1640 to 1660 in England, polemic and pamphlet writing played crucial roles in shaping public opinion, disseminating political arguments, and advancing religious and ideological

agendas amidst the turbulence of the English Civil War, the Interregnum, and the early Restoration. Here's an exploration of polemic and pamphlet literature during this period:

Polemic and Pamphlet Writing
1. Context and Purpose:
- **Political and Religious Conflicts:** The period was marked by intense political and religious divisions between Parliamentarians (Roundheads) and Royalists (Cavaliers), as well as between various religious factions such as Puritans, Anglicans, and dissenting groups.

- **Propaganda and Persuasion:** Polemical writings, often in the form of pamphlets, were used as powerful tools for propaganda, aiming to sway public opinion, garner support for specific factions or causes, and justify political actions.

2. Characteristics:
- **Direct and Persuasive:** Polemical writing was characterized by its direct and impassioned rhetoric, aiming to convince readers of the righteousness of one's cause or the errors of opposing viewpoints.

- **Use of Biblical and Historical References:** Writers frequently drew on biblical passages, historical precedents, and classical allusions to lend authority and legitimacy to their arguments.

- **Satire and Ridicule:** Polemicists often employed satire and ridicule to lampoon opponents, undermine their credibility, and highlight perceived flaws in their arguments or actions.

- **Anonymity and Pseudonymity:** Due to the contentious nature of the topics discussed and the potential legal repercussions, many pamphlets were published anonymously or under pseudonyms to protect the identities of their authors.

3. Themes and Subjects:
- **Political Theory and Governance:** Pamphlets debated various forms of government, theories of sovereignty, and the rights and responsibilities of rulers and subjects.

- **Religious Doctrine and Practice:** Religious pamphlets addressed theological disputes, ecclesiastical reform, and the role of the church in society.

- **Social Issues:** Some pamphlets tackled broader social issues such as poverty, education, and morality, often in the context of religious or political reform.
-
4. Key Figures and Works:

- **John Milton:** Known for his impassioned defense of freedom of speech in "Areopagitica" (1644), Milton argued against government censorship and emphasized the importance of open debate in a democratic society.

- **Thomas Hobbes:** In works like "Leviathan" (1651), Hobbes presented a compelling case for absolute monarchy as a means to prevent civil strife and maintain social order.

- **Presbyterian and Independent Writers:** Representatives of different religious factions, including Presbyterian and Independent writers, engaged in heated debates over church governance, religious tolerance, and theological doctrine.

5. Impact and Legacy:
- **Shaping Public Opinion:** Pamphlets played a significant role in shaping public opinion during a period of political upheaval, influencing the course of the English Civil War and the subsequent establishment of the Commonwealth.

- **Literary and Political Innovation:** The period saw the flourishing of pamphlet literature as a medium for political and ideological expression, contributing to the development of modern political discourse and journalism.

- **Legal and Cultural Influence:** The debates and controversies stirred by polemical pamphlets contributed to evolving attitudes toward freedom of speech, press freedoms, and the role of dissent in a democratic society.

In summary, polemic and pamphlet writing during the period from 1640 to 1660 was a dynamic and influential form of literature that engaged with pressing political, religious, and social issues of the time. It reflected and shaped the intense ideological conflicts and debates that defined this transformative era in English history.

2.5 Drama – Tragedy and Comedy

Characteristics: Despite the challenges faced by drama during the Interregnum, tragic and comedic forms continued to develop. Tragedies explored themes of political ambition, moral dilemmas, and the consequences of power, while comedies offered witty social critiques and romantic escapism. Dramatic works often reflected contemporary anxieties and aspirations.

Examples: John Milton's closet drama "Samson Agonistes" (1671), influenced by classical tragedy, and William Davenant's "The Siege of Rhodes" (1656), an early example of English opera with elements of tragedy and spectacle.

These literary forms of the period from 1640 to 1660 illustrate the diverse responses of writers and thinkers to the challenges and opportunities presented by a society in flux. They remain pivotal in understanding the cultural and intellectual landscape of early modern England and continue to inspire scholarly inquiry and literary appreciation today.

2.6 Religious Allegory and Devotional Writing

Characteristics: Religious fervor and sectarian strife during the period fostered the production of allegorical and devotional works. These writings used symbolic narratives to convey religious truths, moral lessons, and theological arguments. They often drew upon biblical imagery and allegory to explore themes of sin, redemption, and divine providence.

Examples: John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" (1678), though published slightly after the period, exemplifies the allegorical tradition with its depiction of Christian's journey toward salvation.

2.7 Summary

These literary forms of the period from 1640 to 1660 illustrate the diverse responses of writers and thinkers to the challenges and opportunities presented by a society in flux. They remain pivotal in understanding the cultural and intellectual landscape of early modern England and continue to inspire scholarly inquiry and literary appreciation today.

2.8 Key Takeaways

□ The English Civil War (1642-1651) was a watershed moment that pitted King Charles I and his supporters (Royalists) against Parliament and its supporters (Parliamentarians or Roundheads).
□ The execution of King Charles I in 1649 marked the first time in English history that a reigning monarch was deposed and executed by his subjects.
□ The Civil War was fundamentally a struggle over political authority, religious freedom, and the rights of Parliament versus the powers of the monarchy.
□ Following Charles I's execution, England experienced a period of republican rule known as the Commonwealth (1649-1653) and later the Protectorate (1653-1659) under Oliver Cromwell.
□ Cromwell, as Lord Protector, wielded significant political and military power, attempting to stabilize and govern England amidst internal and external challenges.
□ The Commonwealth and Protectorate experimented with religious tolerance, promoted Puritan moral reforms, and undertook administrative and legal reforms.

2.9 Review Questions

1. What were the main causes of the English Civil War (1642-1651)? How did these causes reflect broader political and social tensions in England at the time?
2. Discuss the significance of the execution of King Charles I in 1649. What were the immediate and long-term consequences of this event?
3. How did religious diversity and conflicts shape social dynamics during the period from 1640 to 1660? Give examples of key religious sects and their beliefs.
4. Compare and contrast the political theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Milton. How did their respective works, such as "Leviathan" and "Areopagitica," contribute to contemporary debates on governance, liberty, and authority?
5. Assess the long-term impact of the English Civil War and Interregnum on English political institutions and constitutional development. How did these events shape the future trajectory of monarchy, Parliament, and governance in England?

2.10 References

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UNIT 3: 18TH CENTURY: PURITANISM AND RESTORATION ERA: THE BEGINNING

STRUCTURE

3.1 Objectives
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Age of Satire
3.4 The Enlightenment
3.5 Puritanism
3.6 Restoration
3.7 Summary
3.8 Key Terms
3.9 Review Questions
3.10 References

3.1 Objectives

The prime objective of the following Block is to brief the students and enhance their knowledge on 17th and 18th Century Literature. A lot of Political, Historical, Social and Economic changes have taken place during these two major centuries. It wonřt be wrong if we say that these two centuries were responsible in offering a myriad of Literary Gems to the world, be it Edmund Spenser or Ben Jonson or William Shakespeare. A lot of renounced literary movements have also taken in between these two centuries. The Learners are also going to get an insight on the Art and Literature, Styles and Evolvement of each of the centuries. There is always a backdrop that acts as a catalyst to the plays, poems and narrations written by the then writers of the 17th and 18th centuries.

3.2 Introduction

The Restoration refers to the restoration of the monarchy when Charles II was restored to the throne of England following an eleven-year Commonwealth period during which the country was governed by Parliament under the direction of the Puritan General Oliver Cromwell. This political event coincides with (and to some extent is responsible for) changes in the literary, scientific, and cultural life of Britain. During this time, a premium was placed on the importance of human reason and on an empirical philosophy that held that knowledge about the world was through the senses and by applying reason to what we take in through our senses. Reason was an unchanging, uniquely human characteristic that served as a guide for man. Thus this time is often also called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. Characteristics of this period included observing human nature and nature itself which were considered unchanging and constant.

The age is also known as the Neoclassical period. Writers of the time placed great emphasis on the original writings produced by classical Greek and Roman literature. The literature of this period imitated that of the age of Caesar Augustus, writers such as Horace and Virgil, with classical influences

appearing prevalent in poetry with the use of rhyming, and in prose with its satirical form. The Augustans deemed classical literature as natural, that these works were the idealized models for writing. The Neoclassical Ṛideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, Řcorrectness,ř decorum,. . . would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures or themes of Greek or Roman originalsṛ (Victorian Web). Alexander Pope furthers this idea as he says ṚLearn hence for ancient rules a just esteem; To copy Nature is to copy themṛ (Essay on Criticism). The way to study nature is to study the ancients; the styles and rules of classical literature. Closely allied with the emphasis placed on the classics and the unchanging rules of nature was the belief that reason was an unchanging and unique human quality that served as a guide for man.

3.3 Age of Satire

The "Age of Satire" typically refers to a period in literary history when satire flourished as a prominent and influential genre. In English literature, this period is often associated with the early 18th century, particularly during the Augustan Age (roughly from the late 17th to mid-18th centuries), which saw the rise of satire as a powerful tool for social critique, political commentary, and moral reflection. Here's an overview of the Age of Satire:

Characteristics of the Age of Satire

1. **Social Critique and Moral Reform:**
   o Satire during this period aimed to expose and criticize societal vices, corruption, hypocrisy, and moral decadence.
   o Writers used satire to highlight the shortcomings of individuals, institutions, and societal norms, often employing humor, irony, and exaggeration to provoke reflection and change.
2. **Political Commentary:**
   o Satirists directed their wit and criticism towards political figures, policies, and events of the time.
   o Satirical works often engaged with contemporary political debates, critiquing abuses of power, political incompetence, and the manipulation of public opinion.
3. **Literary Forms and Techniques:**
   o Satire was expressed through various literary forms, including poetry, prose, drama, and even visual arts such as caricature.
   o Common techniques included irony, parody, sarcasm, exaggeration (hyperbole), and the use of mock-heroic style to undercut traditional heroic ideals.
4. **Key Satirists and Works:**
   o Jonathan Swift: Known for his biting satires such as "A Modest Proposal" (1729), which satirizes British attitudes towards the Irish poor, and "Gulliver's Travels" (1726), a satirical exploration of human nature and society through fantastical adventures.
   o Alexander Pope: Noted for his satirical poems, including "The Rape of the Lock" (1712), which satirizes the triviality of aristocratic society and the vanity of young women.
   o John Dryden: His works, such as "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681), were political satires that allegorically commented on the Exclusion Crisis in England.
5. **Cultural and Intellectual Context:**
   o The Age of Satire coincided with the Enlightenment, a period of intellectual and philosophical exploration that valued reason, skepticism towards authority, and the pursuit of knowledge.

- o Satire was a means of challenging traditional beliefs, exposing irrationality, and promoting critical thinking.

Legacy and Influence
1. **Impact on Society and Literature:**
   - o Satire in the 18th century played a significant role in shaping public opinion, influencing political discourse, and advocating for social reform.
   - o It contributed to the development of a more critical and self-aware literary culture, where writers used humor and irony to engage with contemporary issues.
2. **Continued Relevance:**
   - o The themes and techniques of satire from the Age of Satire continue to resonate in modern literature, media, and political commentary.
   - o Satire remains a potent literary and cultural tool for critiquing contemporary society, addressing moral dilemmas, and challenging authority.

In conclusion, the Age of Satire in the early 18th century represents a period of literary innovation and social critique, where writers used wit and humor to interrogate and satirize the shortcomings of their society. It remains a pivotal era in the history of satire, influencing subsequent generations of writers and continuing to provoke thought and discussion on the nature of human behavior and societal norms.

3.4 The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was a philosophical, intellectual, and cultural movement that swept through Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. It is characterized by a commitment to reason, skepticism toward traditional authority, and a strong belief in progress through the advancement of knowledge and science. Here's an overview of the Enlightenment:

Key Characteristics of the Enlightenment

1. **Reason and Rationalism**:
   - o Enlightenment thinkers emphasized the power of reason and rational inquiry as the primary means to understand the world and solve human problems.
   - o They sought to apply scientific methods and principles to all aspects of life, including politics, religion, ethics, and social organization.
2. **Empiricism and Scientific Inquiry**:
   - o The Enlightenment placed a high value on empirical observation, experimentation, and the accumulation of empirical evidence as the foundation of knowledge.
   - o Influenced by figures like Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, Enlightenment thinkers sought to uncover natural laws governing the universe and human behavior.
3. **Individualism and Humanism**:
   - o Enlightenment thought emphasized the importance of individual rights, freedoms, and autonomy.
   - o Humanism, a central tenet of the Enlightenment, stressed the dignity and worth of each individual, advocating for liberty, equality, and justice.
4. **Secularism and Skepticism**:

- o Enlightenment thinkers were often critical of established religious doctrines and institutions, advocating for religious tolerance, freedom of thought, and separation of church and state.
- o They promoted a secular worldview based on reason and natural laws rather than religious dogma.

5. **Progress and Optimism**:
   - o The Enlightenment was characterized by a strong belief in human progress and the capacity of human reason to improve society.
   - o Optimistic about the potential for social and intellectual advancement, Enlightenment thinkers sought to reform society, challenge superstition, and promote education and scientific knowledge.

Key Figures of the Enlightenment

1. **John Locke**:
   - o Known for his theories on empiricism and the social contract, Locke's ideas on natural rights and government influenced the development of democratic principles and constitutional governance.
2. **Voltaire**:
   - o A prolific writer and philosopher, Voltaire championed freedom of speech, religious tolerance, and civil liberties through his essays, plays, and letters.
3. **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**:
   - o Rousseau's works, including "The Social Contract" and "Emile," explored ideas on democracy, education, and the relationship between individuals and society.
4. **Montesquieu**:
   - o Montesquieu's "The Spirit of the Laws" laid the groundwork for the separation of powers in government, influencing constitutional frameworks and checks and balances.
5. **Denis Diderot**:
   - o Diderot was the editor of the "Encyclopédie," a comprehensive compendium of knowledge that aimed to disseminate Enlightenment ideas on science, philosophy, and social issues.

Impact and Legacy

1. **Revolutionary Ideas**:
   - o The Enlightenment laid the intellectual groundwork for the American and French Revolutions, inspiring movements for political reform, constitutional governance, and human rights.
2. **Cultural and Artistic Change**:
   - o Enlightenment ideas influenced literature, art, music, and architecture, fostering a spirit of intellectual inquiry, creativity, and innovation.
3. **Scientific Advancement**:
   - o The emphasis on empirical research and scientific methods during the Enlightenment contributed to significant advances in fields such as physics, astronomy, medicine, and technology.
4. **Political and Social Reforms**:

- Enlightenment principles of equality, liberty, and justice influenced the abolitionist movement, campaigns for women's rights, and the development of democratic institutions.

In summary, the Enlightenment was a transformative period in European history that promoted reason, scientific inquiry, individual rights, and social reform. Its ideas continue to shape contemporary debates on governance, human rights, and the pursuit of knowledge, leaving a lasting legacy on modern thought and society.

3.5 Puritanism

Puritanism was a religious reform movement that emerged within the Church of England during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. It sought to purify the church of what Puritans viewed as Roman Catholic practices and return it to a simpler and more sincere form of worship based on the Bible. Here are the key aspects of Puritanism:

Beliefs and Principles

1. **Biblical Authority**: Puritans emphasized the authority of scripture as the sole source of religious truth. They sought to eliminate practices and doctrines they believed were not supported by the Bible.
2. **Predestination**: Puritans adhered to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which taught that God has already determined who will be saved (the elect) and who will be damned (the reprobate).
3. **Simplicity and Discipline**: Puritans advocated for simplicity in worship, rejecting elaborate rituals and ceremonies. They emphasized personal piety, moral purity, and disciplined living.
4. **Work Ethic**: The Puritan work ethic stressed the importance of hard work, diligence, and frugality as expressions of one's faith and commitment to God.
5. **Community and Education**: Puritans valued strong community ties and believed in the importance of education for all, promoting literacy and the study of scripture.

Historical Context and Influence

1. **Origins**: Puritanism emerged during the Protestant Reformation in England as a reaction against perceived corruption and ritualism within the Church of England.
2. **Role in English History**: Puritans played significant roles in the English Civil War (1642-1651), aligning with Parliamentarians against the Royalists. Their influence extended into the Interregnum period and the rule of Oliver Cromwell.
3. **New England Colonies**: Many Puritans immigrated to the New World (America) in the early 17th century, seeking religious freedom and establishing communities based on their religious principles. The Massachusetts Bay Colony, for instance, was founded by Puritans in 1630.

Legacy and Impact

1. **Literature and Culture**: Puritan writings, sermons, and theological treatises contributed to English literature and cultural discourse, influencing later writers and thinkers.
2. **Political and Social Values**: Puritan ideals of individual responsibility, moral accountability, and community solidarity helped shape early American political and social structures.
3. **Criticism and Opposition**: Puritanism faced criticism for its strict moral codes, intolerance of dissenting views, and perceived harshness. Over time, it evolved and diversified into various denominations within Protestantism.

In conclusion, Puritanism was a significant religious and cultural movement that left a lasting impact on both English and American history. Its emphasis on religious purity, moral discipline, and community solidarity shaped early modern societies and continues to influence religious thought and practice today.

3.6 Restoration

The Restoration refers to the period in English history from 1660 to 1688 when the Stuart monarchy was restored to the throne after the Interregnum, which followed the English Civil War and the execution of King Charles I. Here's an overview of the Restoration period:

Historical Context

1. **Return of the Monarchy**:
   - In 1660, Charles II, the son of Charles I, was invited by Parliament to return from exile in France and restore the Stuart monarchy.
   - The Restoration marked a return to traditional monarchical rule after the republican experiment of the Commonwealth and Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell.
2. **Political Settlement**:
   - The Restoration Settlement sought to reconcile the monarchy with Parliament and heal the divisions caused by the Civil War.
   - It included the Declaration of Breda (1660), which outlined Charles II's promises of amnesty, religious tolerance, and a general pardon for past political offenses.

Characteristics of the Restoration Period

1. **Cultural Renaissance**:
   - The Restoration era witnessed a flourishing of the arts, literature, and theater. It was characterized by a revival of courtly culture influenced by French and Continental trends.
   - The reopening of theaters, including the famous Drury Lane and Theatre Royal, and the emergence of Restoration comedy marked a lively cultural scene.
2. **Religious Settlement**:
   - The Church of England was reestablished as the official state church, but the Act of Uniformity (1662) and the Clarendon Code (1661-1665) imposed restrictions on dissenting Protestant groups.

o While Charles II proclaimed religious toleration in the Declaration of Breda, dissenters faced limitations on their civil rights and religious practices.
3. **Political Developments**:
   o Charles II sought to balance royal prerogative with parliamentary authority, leading to conflicts over issues such as taxation, foreign policy, and the power of the purse.
   o The Test Acts (1673-1678) required public officials to take Anglican communion and swear oaths of allegiance, restricting dissenters from holding office.
4. **Scientific and Philosophical Advances**:
   o The Restoration period saw significant scientific and intellectual advancements, with figures like Robert Boyle contributing to the development of experimental science.
   o Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke laid the groundwork for modern political thought, exploring ideas on government, individual rights, and social contract theory.

Legacy and Impact

1. **Constitutional Developments**:
   o The Restoration contributed to the evolution of constitutional monarchy in England, defining the relationship between the monarch, Parliament, and the people.
   o It set precedents for debates over religious tolerance, freedom of speech, and the limits of royal authority that would shape English political and legal institutions.
2. **Literary and Cultural Influence**:
   o Restoration literature, including the comedies of manners and satirical works, reflected the social and political tensions of the era.
   o Writers such as John Dryden and Aphra Behn contributed to the development of English literature, exploring themes of love, politics, and societal norms.
3. **Continued Political Instability**:
   o The Restoration period laid the groundwork for subsequent political turmoil, including the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which resulted in the overthrow of James II and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy.

3.7 Summary

In summary, the Restoration period was a time of cultural renaissance, political realignment, and intellectual ferment in England. It marked the return of the Stuart monarchy and set the stage for important developments in literature, science, philosophy, and constitutional governance that would shape British history in the centuries to come.

3.8 Key Takeaways

□ Puritanism emerged as a movement within the Church of England seeking to purify it from perceived Roman Catholic influences and restore simpler, more scriptural forms of worship.
□ Emphasized individual piety, moral discipline, and a strict interpretation of biblical teachings.

☐ Puritans played a crucial role in shaping early American society through their migration to the New World, where they established communities based on religious principles.

- Promoted education, literacy, and the study of scripture, contributing to the cultural and intellectual development of colonial America.

☐ Despite this, Puritan ideals of individual responsibility, community solidarity, and ethical conduct continue to resonate in modern religious and ethical discourse.

3.9 Review Questions

1. Discuss the events leading to the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. What were the main factors contributing to the return of Charles II to the English throne?
2. Explore the cultural revival during the Restoration era. What were the main characteristics of Restoration drama, and how did it reflect the social and political climate of the time?
3. Describe the religious policies of the Restoration era, including the Clarendon Code and the Test Acts. What were their aims, and how did they impact religious dissenters and religious tolerance in England?
4. Explore the influence of Restoration-era ideas on Enlightenment thinking, particularly in terms of reason, empiricism, and the pursuit of knowledge.
5. How did Puritans influence the course of the English Civil War (1642-1651)? What were their objectives, and what roles did they play in the conflict between Parliamentarians and Royalists?

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STRUCTURE

4.1 Objectives

The prime objective of the following Block is to brief the students and enhance their knowledge on 17th and 18th Century Literature. A lot of Political, Historical, Social and Economic changes have taken place during these two major centuries. It wonřt be wrong if we say that these two centuries were responsible in offering a myriad of Literary Gems to the world, be it Edmund Spenser or Ben Jonson or William Shakespeare. A lot of renounced literary movements have also taken in between these two centuries. The Learners are also going to get an insight on the Art and Literature, Styles and Evolvement of each of the centuries. There is always a backdrop that acts as a catalyst to the plays, poems and narrations written by the then writers of the 17th and 18th centuries.

4.2 Introduction

The Restoration refers to the restoration of the monarchy when Charles II was restored to the throne of England following an eleven-year Commonwealth period during which the country was governed by Parliament under the direction of the Puritan General Oliver Cromwell. This political event coincides with (and to some extent is responsible for) changes in the literary, scientific, and cultural life of Britain. During this time, a premium was placed on the importance of human reason and on an empirical philosophy that held that knowledge about the world was through the senses and by applying reason to what we take in through our senses. Reason was an unchanging, uniquely human characteristic that served as a guide for man. Thus this time is often also called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. Characteristics of this period included observing human nature and nature itself which were considered unchanging and constant.

The age is also known as the Neoclassical period. Writers of the time placed great emphasis on the original writings produced by classical Greek and Roman literature. The literature of this period

imitated that of the age of Caesar Augustus, writers such as Horace and Virgil, with classical influences appearing prevalent in poetry with the use of rhyming, and in prose with its satirical form. The Augustans deemed classical literature as natural, that these works were the idealized models for writing. The Neoclassical Ṛideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, Řcorrectness,ř decorum,. . . would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures or themes of Greek or Roman originalsṛ (Victorian Web). Alexander Pope furthers this idea as he says ṚLearn hence for ancient rules a just esteem; To copy Nature is to copy themṛ (Essay on Criticism). The way to study nature is to study the ancients; the styles and rules of classical literature. Closely allied with the emphasis placed on the classics and the unchanging rules of nature was the belief that reason was an unchanging and unique human quality that served as a guide for man.

4.3 Puritan Age – Forms and Genres

Forms and Genres of the Puritan Age

1. **Sermons**:
   - **Description**: Central to Puritan religious life, sermons were preached to instruct, exhort, and edify congregations.
   - **Characteristics**: Direct, didactic, scripturally-based, often focusing on moral instruction, repentance, and salvation. Sermons were typically grounded in the Bible, with an emphasis on practical application to daily life.
2. **Religious Treatises and Polemics**:
   - **Description**: Theological writings that defended Puritan beliefs and critiqued perceived religious and social evils.
   - **Characteristics**: Rigorous theological arguments, biblical references, criticism of Anglican practices, and expositions of Puritan doctrine. These works engaged in debates over church governance, sacraments, and the proper conduct of religious life.
3. **Devotional Literature**:
   - **Description**: Personal spiritual writings, prayers, and meditations aimed at nurturing individual piety.
   - **Characteristics**: Introspective, contemplative, emphasizing personal relationship with God, often autobiographical in nature. Devotional literature encouraged introspection, spiritual growth, and adherence to Puritan moral standards.
4. **Allegorical Literature**:
   - **Description**: Works that use symbolic characters and events to convey moral or spiritual truths.
   - **Characteristics**: Allegorical narratives often depicted spiritual journeys or moral lessons, with characters representing virtues, vices, or theological concepts. John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" (1678) is a seminal example, illustrating the Christian journey from sin to redemption.
5. **Diaries and Spiritual Journals**:
   - **Description**: Personal writings that documented daily life, spiritual experiences, and reflections on faith.

- o **Characteristics**: Reflective, often expressing struggles with sin, doubts, and the quest for spiritual growth. These writings provide insights into the personal lives and religious fervor of Puritan individuals.
6. **Historical and Political Writings**:
   - o **Description**: Works that chronicled historical events, political debates, and social changes from a Puritan perspective.
   - o **Characteristics**: These writings included accounts of the English Civil War, treatises on government and liberty, and reflections on the providential role of God in history. They emphasized the Puritan commitment to moral governance and religious liberty.

4.4 Restoration Age

After the death of Oliver Cromwell, his son Richard Cromwell attempted to assume his fatherřs leadership position but soon proved unequal to the task. Negotiations began between the English Parliament and the son of the executed King Charles I. In 1660 the monarchy was restored, and Charles II became king. Having escaped to France following his fatherřs execution, Charles II had found refuge in the court of France, and when he returned to England brought with him a love of an extravagant, frivolous lifestyle that many, accustomed to the Puritan era, found offensive. Others delighted in the less repressive behaviours the new king encouraged. Only five years after the Restoration, the reestablishment of the monarch in England after the Puritan Revolution, England suffered an outbreak of plague. Modern estimates suggest that around 100,000 people died in London alone. Then in 1666, the Great Fire of London devastated the city, destroying over 13,000 houses, significant structures such as St. Paulřs Cathedral and the Royal Exchange, many warehouses full of goods, and businesses. The BBC History site allows viewers to see the same two engravings

4.5 Literary Genres of the Restoration Age

Comedy of Manners

- **Description**: The Comedy of Manners was a dominant genre that satirized the manners, affectations, and social behaviors of the aristocracy and upper classes.
- **Characteristics**:
   - o Witty dialogue and repartee.
   - o Intricate plots revolving around romantic entanglements, mistaken identities, and social intrigues.
   - o Exploration of themes such as love, marriage, and social status.
- **Prominent Playwrights**: William Wycherley ("The Country Wife"), George Etherege ("The Man of Mode"), and William Congreve ("The Way of the World").

Heroic Drama

- **Description**: Heroic Drama was a genre of dramatic works that emphasized heroic actions, moral dilemmas, and historical or legendary subjects.
- **Characteristics**:
   - o Use of elevated language and verse.

- Larger-than-life characters, often portraying kings, queens, warriors, and tragic heroes.
- Themes of honor, duty, and fate.
- **Prominent Works**: John Dryden's "The Conquest of Granada" and "Aureng-zebe" exemplify this genre.

Restoration Tragedy

- **Description**: Restoration Tragedy was characterized by its melodramatic plots, emotional intensity, and exploration of human passions and weaknesses.
- **Characteristics**:
    - Complex and morally ambiguous protagonists.
    - Themes of revenge, jealousy, ambition, and political intrigue.
    - Use of heightened language and rhetorical devices.
- **Prominent Works**: John Dryden's "All for Love" and Thomas Otway's "Venice Preserved" are notable examples.

Satirical Poetry and Prose

- **Description**: Satirical works in poetry and prose that critiqued social vices, political corruption, and moral decay.
- **Characteristics**:
    - Sharp wit, irony, and sarcasm.
    - Critique of contemporary manners, morals, and institutions.
- **Prominent Writers**: Samuel Butler's "Hudibras" (a satirical poem mocking Puritanism) and John Dryden's satirical essays.

Philosophical Prose

- **Description**: Non-fiction works that explored philosophical ideas, political theories, and scientific advancements.
- **Characteristics**:
    - Rationalist outlook, emphasizing reason and empirical observation.
    - Exploration of metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology.
- **Prominent Works**: Thomas Hobbes's "Leviathan" (1651) and John Locke's "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1690) laid the groundwork for modern political and philosophical thought.

Diary and Memoir Writing

- **Description**: Personal writings that documented daily life, political events, and social observations.
- **Characteristics**:
    - Introspective reflections on personal experiences and emotions.
    - Insights into contemporary social and political life.
- **Prominent Writers**: Samuel Pepys's "Diary" provides a vivid account of Restoration-era London, including the Great Fire of 1666.

4.6 Influence and Legacy

The literature of the Restoration Age reflected the cultural dynamism and intellectual ferment of the time, marked by its wit, sophistication, and engagement with contemporary social issues. It contributed to the development of English prose style, theatrical conventions, and philosophical discourse, laying the groundwork for subsequent literary movements and influencing later writers such as Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and the writers of the Augustan Age. The Restoration period remains a pivotal era in English literature, characterized by its exploration of human nature, satire, and the complexities of social hierarchy and morality.

4.7 Summary

The Restoration Age in English history and literature refers to the period from 1660 to 1688, marked by the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II after the Interregnum (1649-1660) following the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I. This period was characterized by significant cultural, political, and social developments, which greatly influenced the literature of the time.

4.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Restoration of the Monarchy**:

- **Key Event**: The return of Charles II to the English throne in 1660, marking the end of the Interregnum and the republican rule of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell.
- **Impact**: Restored the traditional monarchy and established a balance of power between the Crown and Parliament, shaping the foundation of constitutional monarchy in England.

☐ **Cultural Renaissance**:

- **Key Aspects**: The period saw a flourishing of arts, literature, and theater, influenced by continental trends from France and Italy.
- **Impact**: Revived public entertainments and cultural activities that had been suppressed during the Puritan Interregnum, contributing to a vibrant cultural scene in London and beyond.

☐ **Literary Developments**:

- **Key Genres**: The era is known for its distinctive literary genres such as Comedy of Manners, Heroic Drama, Restoration Tragedy, and Satirical Poetry.
- **Impact**: These genres reflected the wit, sophistication, and social commentary of the time, influencing subsequent developments in English drama, satire, and prose.

☐ **Scientific and Philosophical Advancements**:

- **Key Figures**: Intellectuals like Robert Boyle and Thomas Hobbes made significant contributions to science and philosophy.
- **Impact**: Advancements in scientific inquiry and philosophical thought laid the groundwork for Enlightenment ideals of reason, empiricism, and scepticism towards authority.

4.9 Review Questions

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1. Discuss the events leading to the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. What were the main factors contributing to Charles II's return to the English throne?
2. How did the Restoration Settlement attempt to reconcile royal authority with parliamentary governance? What were the main provisions of the Declaration of Breda (1660)?
3. Explore the contributions of John Dryden to Restoration literature. How did his works in heroic drama and tragedy reflect the political and social ideals of the time?
4. Examine the religious policies and debates during the Restoration period. How did issues of religious toleration and dissent shape political and social discourse?
5. Evaluate the political legacy of the Restoration period. How did the Glorious Revolution of 1688 build upon the constitutional developments of the Restoration era?

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UNIT 5: THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND RATIONALISM

STRUCTURE

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Historical and Intellectual Background

5.4 The Enlightenment's Influence on Politics and Society

5.5 Science, Progress, and Humanism

5.6 The Legacy of the Enlightenment

5.7 Summary

5.8 Key Takeaways

5.9 Review Questions

5.10 References

5.1 Objectives

1. Understand the historical, intellectual, and cultural context of the Age of Enlightenment.
2. Explore the key ideas of rationalism, humanism, and secularism that defined the era.
3. Analyze the contributions of prominent Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Locke, and Kant.
4. Examine the impact of the Enlightenment on politics, science, and philosophy.
5. Identify how Enlightenment ideas influenced literature, social reforms, and revolutionary movements, particularly the American and French Revolutions.

5.2 Introduction

The Age of Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. It marked a radical departure from traditional authority—whether religious or monarchical—emphasizing reason, individualism, and scepticism of established doctrines. Enlightenment thinkers sought to apply rational thought and scientific principles to all aspects of human life, including government, ethics, and education, aiming to improve society and enhance human happiness. This period laid the intellectual foundation for modern democratic states and influenced revolutionary movements that transformed the Western world.

Rationalism, a key concept of the Enlightenment, advocated for reason as the primary source of knowledge and truth, rejecting superstition and irrational beliefs. Philosophers such as René Descartes, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant pioneered new ideas about the mind, knowledge, and political systems. Their emphasis on reason and empirical evidence shifted the intellectual landscape, influencing not only philosophy and science but also literature, art, and politics.

5.3 Historical and Intellectual Background

The historical and intellectual background of the Enlightenment can also be seen as a response to the crisis of authority that emerged in the wake of religious conflict, political upheaval, and scientific advancement. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century had shattered the religious unity of Europe, creating divisions between Catholics and Protestants and fueling decades of wars, such as the French Wars of Religion and the English Civil War. These conflicts raised urgent questions about the role of religion in public life and the legitimacy of monarchies that claimed divine right to rule. Enlightenment thinkers, weary of the destructive consequences of religious and political absolutism, began advocating for religious tolerance, secular governance, and systems of checks and balances in government. They sought ways to build more stable and just societies by grounding authority in reason and consent, rather than tradition or divine will.

In addition to political and religious turmoil, the rapid growth of scientific knowledge during the Scientific Revolution fundamentally altered humanity's understanding of the universe. Isaac Newton's Principia Mathematica (1687) demonstrated that the natural world was governed by laws that could be understood through observation and mathematical reasoning. This discovery was transformative; if the universe itself operated according to rational laws, Enlightenment thinkers argued that human society could also be improved through the application of reason, logic, and empirical study. Francis Bacon's scientific method, based on observation, experimentation, and inductive reasoning, became a guiding principle for Enlightenment intellectuals who sought to apply these methods not only to science but also to economics, government, education, and morality.

Philosophers like René Descartes, with his famous assertion "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), emphasized the importance of doubt and individual reasoning in the quest for knowledge. His method of radical skepticism encouraged Enlightenment thinkers to challenge inherited ideas and to build knowledge from clear, rational principles. This intellectual shift promoted a more optimistic view of human potential, suggesting that through reason and education, individuals could achieve progress, autonomy, and enlightenment. The Enlightenment was thus deeply optimistic about the ability of humans to improve themselves and society, a sharp contrast to the medieval and religious belief in the inherent sinfulness or corruption of humanity.

Furthermore, the rise of print culture in the 17th and 18th centuries, spurred by the invention of the printing press, played a crucial role in spreading Enlightenment ideas. Books, pamphlets, newspapers, and journals allowed for the rapid dissemination of new thoughts and philosophies. Salons, coffeehouses, and literary societies became central hubs of discussion, where intellectuals, writers, and reformers debated ideas and shared their works. These venues enabled a more public and participatory form of intellectual exchange, democratizing knowledge and fostering a broader movement toward public discourse and civic engagement.

In conclusion, the historical and intellectual background of the Enlightenment was shaped by several key developments: the decline of religious and political absolutism, the rise of scientific reasoning, the flourishing of individualism and scepticism, and the democratization of knowledge through print

culture. These factors created an environment ripe for the revolutionary ideas that would characterize the Enlightenment, ideas that fundamentally reshaped European society and laid the foundation for modern democratic thought, scientific progress, and human rights.

5.4 The Enlightenment's Influence on Politics and Society

The Enlightenment's influence on politics and society was profound, as its intellectual principles of reason, liberty, and equality challenged the existing structures of monarchy, aristocracy, and the dominance of the Church. Enlightenment thinkers believed that rational thought could be applied to human institutions in the same way it had been applied to science, with the goal of improving governance and creating more just and equitable societies. As a result, many philosophers proposed radical new ideas about the nature of power, government, and the rights of individuals, laying the groundwork for modern political systems based on democracy and republicanism.

One of the most influential figures was John Locke, whose theories of government became a cornerstone of Enlightenment political thought. Locke argued in his Two Treatises of Government (1689) that governments should be based on a social contract, where authority is derived from the consent of the governed rather than from divine right or hereditary power. He advocated for the protection of natural rights, including life, liberty, and property, which governments must safeguard to maintain legitimacy. These ideas were revolutionary at a time when absolute monarchies dominated Europe, and they directly influenced the development of democratic principles in countries like the United States and France. Locke's work would resonate deeply with later revolutionary movements, particularly in the drafting of foundational documents like the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which enshrined the idea of government by consent and the protection of individual rights.

Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau expanded on these ideas by advocating for direct democracy and a more egalitarian society. In his work The Social Contract (1762), Rousseau argued that legitimate political authority comes not from kings or elites but from the collective will of the people. He introduced the concept of the "general will," where individuals come together to form a community that acts in the common interest. Rousseau's ideas, particularly his focus on popular sovereignty, had a major influence on the French Revolution (1789) and later democratic movements. The revolutionaries adopted his ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, leading to the overthrow of the French monarchy and the establishment of the First French Republic. Rousseau's vision of a society where all citizens participate equally in governance also influenced later socialist and communitarian movements.

In addition to Locke and Rousseau, Montesquieu played a significant role in shaping Enlightenment views on governance. In his seminal work The Spirit of the Laws (1748), Montesquieu advocated for the separation of powers within government, arguing that political authority should be divided among legislative, executive, and judicial branches to prevent any one group or individual from becoming too powerful. This concept of checks and balances became a foundational principle of modern democratic systems, particularly in the United States, where it was enshrined in the Constitution. Montesquieu's ideas were a direct response to the centralized, autocratic monarchies of his time, and they helped to establish a new vision of government as a system that could balance power and ensure liberty for its citizens.

The Enlightenment also had a significant influence on social reforms beyond the political sphere. Philosophers such as Voltaire criticized religious intolerance and championed freedom of speech, expression, and belief. Voltaire's writings, including his famous novel Candide (1759), satirized the abuses of both Church and State, calling for the separation of religion from government and for more secular, rational forms of governance. His advocacy for civil liberties influenced future debates on the freedom of the press and the role of religion in public life, helping to promote the secularization of Western societies in the centuries that followed.

In addition to political and religious reforms, Enlightenment ideas also sparked conversations about human rights and the rights of marginalized groups. While the period was primarily dominated by male thinkers, some Enlightenment figures, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, argued for the rights of women. In her landmark work A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), Wollstonecraft called for gender equality, advocating for women's access to education and their right to participate fully in society. Although her ideas were not widely adopted at the time, they laid the intellectual foundation for later feminist movements and debates about women's rights.

The American and French Revolutions were the most visible and direct outcomes of Enlightenment political thought. In America, the ideas of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau influenced the Founding Fathers as they sought to create a new nation based on democratic ideals and the rule of law. The Enlightenment emphasis on natural rights, individual liberty, and the social contract was clearly reflected in the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution (1787). Similarly, in France, Enlightenment ideas inspired revolutionaries to challenge the absolute monarchy of Louis XVI and demand a government based on the will of the people. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), adopted during the French Revolution, directly echoed Enlightenment principles by proclaiming that all men are born free and equal in rights.

In conclusion, the Enlightenment had a transformative impact on politics and society by challenging the traditional sources of authority and proposing new ways of organizing government and social life. Its influence extended across the Atlantic, shaping revolutionary movements that redefined the relationship between individuals and the state. The emphasis on reason, equality, and liberty that defined Enlightenment thought continues to be central to modern political and social systems, influencing contemporary debates about democracy, human rights, and justice.

5.5 Science, Progress, and Humanism

The Enlightenment marked a significant turning point in the relationship between science, progress, and humanism, as intellectuals began to embrace empirical evidence and rational inquiry as the primary means of understanding the world. This shift was largely influenced by the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, which introduced rigorous methods of observation and experimentation. Thinkers such as Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton pioneered new ways of thinking about nature and the cosmos, emphasizing that the universe operates according to natural laws that can be understood through reason. Newton's Principia Mathematica (1687), for example, presented a mathematical framework for the laws of motion and gravitation, fundamentally altering humanity's

understanding of physics and astronomy. This scientific rigor instilled a sense of optimism and belief in progress, suggesting that human beings could improve their lives through knowledge and innovation.

As Enlightenment thinkers applied scientific principles to human society, the concept of progress became central to their philosophy. They believed that human beings could improve their circumstances and conditions through reason, education, and technology. The faith in progress was not only an intellectual stance but also a moral imperative; thinkers such as Voltaire and Diderot argued that knowledge should be used to challenge injustice and tyranny. This belief in progress also inspired advancements in various fields, including medicine, engineering, and agriculture, as Enlightenment thinkers sought to apply rational methods to improve everyday life. The development of new agricultural techniques, for instance, led to increased food production, which was vital for supporting growing populations and fostering economic development. Overall, the Enlightenment positioned science as a tool for social progress, promoting the idea that rational inquiry could lead to better governance, improved living conditions, and enhanced human flourishing.

The Enlightenment's emphasis on humanism further solidified the belief that human beings, equipped with reason and moral autonomy, could shape their destiny. Humanism, rooted in classical learning and the celebration of human potential, shifted the focus away from the divine and the supernatural toward the individual and the secular. Thinkers like Rousseau and Kant championed the idea of the autonomous individual, asserting that every person possesses inherent dignity and the capacity for moral reasoning. This philosophical shift was reflected in literature, art, and education, where the importance of the human experience took precedence over religious or dogmatic constraints. Education became a means of empowering individuals, enabling them to think critically and engage with the world around them. This perspective fostered a spirit of inquiry and creativity, leading to significant achievements in literature, philosophy, and the arts.

Furthermore, the interplay between science and humanism led to the rise of secular ethics, where moral principles were grounded in reason rather than religious doctrine. Enlightenment philosophers like David Hume and Immanuel Kant explored questions of ethics and morality through the lens of human experience, advocating for a rational basis for moral behavior. Kant's Critique of Practical Reason (1788) proposed that moral actions should be guided by universal principles that respect human dignity, encapsulated in his famous categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law." This ethical framework emphasized autonomy and responsibility, challenging traditional notions of morality rooted in religious authority and advocating for a rational and human-centered approach to ethical decision-making.

The Enlightenment's legacy in science, progress, and humanism paved the way for subsequent intellectual movements, including Romanticism and Modernism. While Romanticism reacted against the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason by emphasizing emotion and individual experience, it still drew on the humanist celebration of the individual. In contrast, Modernism would build upon Enlightenment ideals by exploring new forms of expression and understanding in a rapidly changing world. However, the core belief in the power of human reason, the potential for progress, and the importance of individual agency remained central to these movements.

In conclusion, the Enlightenment represented a critical juncture in human thought, intertwining science, progress, and humanism into a coherent worldview that emphasized rational inquiry,

individual autonomy, and the possibility of societal improvement. This period laid the intellectual foundation for modern scientific practices and social reforms, establishing a legacy that continues to influence contemporary debates about ethics, governance, and the role of science in society. As Enlightenment thinkers championed the use of reason and empirical evidence, they forged a path toward a more rational and humane understanding of the world, transforming the course of Western civilization.

5.6 The Legacy of the Enlightenment

The legacy of the Enlightenment is profound and far-reaching, fundamentally transforming various aspects of modern society, including politics, philosophy, science, and culture. One of the most significant contributions of the Enlightenment was the development of democratic ideals and human rights. Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu advocated for the principles of liberty, equality, and the social contract, which directly influenced the emergence of democratic governments. The American Revolution (1776) and the French Revolution (1789) were crucial manifestations of Enlightenment ideas, resulting in the establishment of political systems based on popular sovereignty and the rule of law. The ideals enshrined in foundational documents like the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen became cornerstones for modern democracies, emphasizing the importance of individual rights and civic participation.

In addition to political changes, the Enlightenment also left an indelible mark on the development of modern science and rational thought. The emphasis on empirical observation and the scientific method, championed by figures such as Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon, laid the groundwork for the scientific advancements that followed. This legacy of scientific inquiry fostered an environment in which reason and critical thinking became paramount, leading to innovations in various fields such as medicine, engineering, and the natural sciences. The Enlightenment's promotion of education and knowledge as vehicles for societal progress further encouraged the growth of institutions of higher learning, libraries, and public education systems, contributing to the spread of scientific literacy and intellectual curiosity.

The Enlightenment's impact extended to philosophy and ethics, profoundly influencing subsequent thinkers and movements. The emphasis on individual autonomy and rational moral reasoning introduced by philosophers like Immanuel Kant reshaped the discourse around ethics, challenging traditional moral frameworks rooted in religious authority. Kant's concept of the categorical imperative and his belief in universal moral principles informed later philosophical developments, including deontological ethics and secular humanism. The Enlightenment's legacy is evident in the continued exploration of human rights, social justice, and moral philosophy, as contemporary discussions about ethics often draw from Enlightenment principles of reason, equality, and individual dignity.

Moreover, the Enlightenment also laid the foundation for the arts and literature, promoting a shift toward realism and human experience. Writers and artists began to explore themes of individuality, nature, and society, moving away from the religious and allegorical motifs of the past. The period's emphasis on reason and human experience inspired literary figures such as Voltaire, Daniel Defoe, and Jane Austen, who engaged with social issues and the complexities of human relationships. This literary evolution paved the way for later movements, including Romanticism and Realism, which continued to explore the nuances of the human condition while building on Enlightenment ideals.

Despite its many achievements, the Enlightenment also faced critiques that would shape its legacy. Critics argued that its emphasis on reason and progress sometimes led to a disregard for emotion, tradition, and the complexities of human experience. The later development of Romanticism can be seen as a reaction against the perceived excesses of Enlightenment rationalism, emphasizing the importance of feelings, nature, and the sublime. Additionally, some Enlightenment thinkers were criticized for their Eurocentrism and limited perspectives on race, gender, and colonialism. While the Enlightenment promoted ideas of equality and individual rights, these principles were often not extended to marginalized groups, particularly women and non-European populations.

In contemporary society, the legacy of the Enlightenment remains evident in ongoing debates about democracy, human rights, and the role of reason in public discourse. The principles of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of knowledge continue to underpin modern democratic ideals and inform discussions on social justice and civil rights. The Enlightenment's emphasis on critical thinking and empirical evidence is increasingly relevant in an age marked by the spread of misinformation and the challenge of navigating complex societal issues. As we confront global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and technological advancements, the Enlightenment's call for reasoned dialogue and collective action provides a valuable framework for addressing these issues.

In conclusion, the legacy of the Enlightenment is multifaceted and enduring, shaping the political, scientific, philosophical, and cultural landscapes of the modern world. Its promotion of reason, individual rights, and the pursuit of knowledge laid the groundwork for contemporary democratic societies and continues to inspire movements for social progress and justice. While acknowledging the critiques and limitations of Enlightenment thought, its contributions remain central to our understanding of human rights, governance, and the importance of reasoned discourse in shaping a better future.

5.7 Summary

The Enlightenment was a transformative intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that emphasized reason, empirical evidence, and the potential for human progress. It challenged traditional authority, particularly in politics and religion, advocating for principles such as individual rights, democracy, and social contracts as seen in the works of thinkers like John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu. The movement fostered a spirit of inquiry that revolutionized science and laid the groundwork for modern scientific practices, emphasizing the importance of the scientific method and empirical observation. Additionally, the Enlightenment's focus on humanism shifted the cultural landscape, promoting the value of individual experience and autonomy while influencing literature and the arts. Although it faced critiques for its rationalism and limitations regarding race and gender, the Enlightenment's legacy endures in contemporary discussions on human rights, democracy, and the role of reason in public discourse, continuing to shape our understanding of society and governance today.

5.8 Key Takeaways

- **Emphasis on Reason:** The Enlightenment prioritized reason and rational thought as the primary means of understanding the world, leading to a rejection of superstition and uncritical acceptance of authority.
- **Foundations of Democracy:** Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau laid the groundwork for modern democratic ideals, advocating for individual rights, social contracts, and government by consent.
- **Scientific Revolution:** The movement was closely tied to the Scientific Revolution, promoting empirical observation and the scientific method, which transformed various fields such as physics, medicine, and engineering.
- **Humanism and Individualism:** Enlightenment humanism emphasized the value and dignity of the individual, fostering a belief in personal autonomy and moral responsibility based on rational principles rather than religious doctrine.
- **Cultural Impact:** The Enlightenment influenced literature and the arts, encouraging exploration of human experience and themes of individuality, thereby paving the way for later artistic movements such as Romanticism and Realism.
- **Legacy of Human Rights:** The principles established during the Enlightenment continue to underpin contemporary discussions about human rights, equality, and social justice, influencing movements for civil rights and democratic governance.
- **Critical Perspectives:** While the Enlightenment made significant contributions to modern thought, it also faced critiques regarding its Eurocentrism and the limited application of its ideals to marginalized groups, highlighting the need for ongoing reflection and expansion of its principles.
- **Relevance Today:** The Enlightenment's emphasis on reasoned dialogue and collective action remains crucial in addressing modern global challenges, including climate change, inequality, and the spread of misinformation.

5.9 Review Questions

1. What were the key principles of the Enlightenment, and how did they challenge traditional authority?
2. Discuss the contributions of John Locke to Enlightenment political thought. How did his ideas influence modern democracy?
3. How did the Enlightenment influence both the American and French Revolutions?
4. Explain the role of science during the Enlightenment and how it shaped the intellectual climate of the time.
5. What are some of the major criticisms of the Enlightenment? How did the movement's emphasis on reason face opposition in later periods?

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BLOCK-2: POETS AND POEMS

UNIT 6: Early 17th Century Poetry: Milton and Andrew Marvell
UNIT 7: Neo-Classicism and AlexanderPope
UNIT 8: Aphra Behn and Poems
UNIT 9: Robert Herrick and Poems
UNIT 10: The Age and Poetry

UNIT 6: EARLY 17TH CENTURY POETRY: MILTON AND ANDREW MARVELL

STRUCTURE

6.1 Objectives
6.2 Introduction
6.3 Milton's: Lycidas
6.4 Poem Interpretation
6.5 Marvell's: To His Coy Mistress
6.6 Poem Interpretation
6.7 Influence and Legacy
6.8 Summary
6.9 Key Takeaways
6.10 Review Questions
6.11 References

6.1 Objectives

Studying John Milton and Andrew Marvell, two influential poets of the 17th century, serves several important objectives that contribute to a deeper understanding of literature, history, and intellectual thought during their time:

☐ **Historical and Cultural Context**: Studying Milton and Marvell deepens understanding of 17th-century England, including its political upheavals, religious controversies, and intellectual currents.

☐ **Literary Analysis and Interpretation**: Analyzing their works fosters critical thinking skills in literary analysis, interpretation of poetic forms, and understanding of thematic concerns.

☐ **Relevance to Contemporary Issues**: Their writings continue to resonate with contemporary debates on topics such as freedom of speech, individual liberty, and the role of poetry in society.

6.2 Introduction

John Milton and Andrew Marvell are two prominent English poets who made significant contributions to literature during the 17th century. Each poet has left a lasting impact with their distinctive styles, themes, and philosophical insights, reflecting the tumultuous political, religious, and social changes of their era.

John Milton:

Background and Early Life: John Milton (1608-1674) was born in London and received a rigorous education, studying at St. Paul's School and later at Christ's College, Cambridge. He was fluent in multiple languages and well-versed in classical literature and philosophy.

Literary Career and Major Works: Milton is best known for his epic poem "Paradise Lost," published in 1667. This monumental work explores the biblical story of the Fall of Man, portraying Satan's rebellion and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Milton's poetic style in "Paradise Lost" is characterized by its grandeur, use of blank verse, and profound theological and philosophical themes.

Political and Religious Influence: In addition to his literary achievements, Milton was deeply engaged in political and religious controversies of his time. He wrote several prose works advocating for civil liberties, including "Areopagitica" (1644), a passionate defense of freedom of speech and the press.

Legacy and Influence: Milton's writings have had a profound influence on subsequent literature and intellectual thought. His exploration of themes such as free will, the nature of evil, and the human condition continues to resonate with readers and scholars alike.

Andrew Marvell:

Background and Early Life: Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) was born in Yorkshire and studied at Cambridge University. He served as a tutor and traveled extensively on the Continent before entering political service in England.

Literary Career and Major Works: Marvell's poetry is diverse in theme and style, ranging from lyric poetry celebrating nature and love ("The Garden," "To His Coy Mistress") to political satire and philosophical reflection. His poem "Upon Appleton House" showcases his skill in blending personal reflection with metaphysical themes.

Political Satire and Social Commentary: Marvell's political poetry, such as "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," reflects his views on political power and the complexities of governance during the Restoration period. His wit and sharp critique of political figures and events distinguish his satirical works.

Legacy and Influence: Marvell's poetry was not widely recognized during his lifetime but gained appreciation in the 20th century for its wit, lyricism, and intellectual depth. His mastery of metaphysical conceits and exploration of moral and political issues continue to inspire poets and critics.

6.3 Milton's: Lycidas

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude

Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his wat'ry bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

     Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse!
So may some gentle muse
With lucky words favour my destin'd urn,
And as he passes turn
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

     For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at ev'ning bright
Toward heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to th'oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel,
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damætas lov'd to hear our song.

     But O the heavy change now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.
The willows and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear
When first the white thorn blows:
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
Ay me! I fondly dream
Had ye bin there'—for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phoebus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears;
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to th'world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed."

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,
That came in Neptune's plea.
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
"What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?"
And question'd every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beaked promontory.

They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd;
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in th'eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

     Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:
"How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?
Of other care they little reck'ning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoll'n with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said,
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more".

     Return, Alpheus: the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flow'rets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamel'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers

And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well attir'd woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd;
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world,
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold:
Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth;
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

    Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor;
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high
Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves;
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more:
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

    Thus sang the uncouth swain to th'oaks and rills,

While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropp'd into the western bay;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

6.4 Poem Interpretation

"Lycidas" is a pastoral elegy written by John Milton, first published in 1637. It is one of Milton's early major works and is notable for its lyrical beauty, poetic complexity, and profound exploration of themes such as grief, mortality, and the nature of poetic vocation.

Background and Context:

1. **Occasion and Dedication**:
   o "Lycidas" was written in response to the drowning death of Milton's friend, Edward King, who was a fellow student at Cambridge University.
   o The poem is dedicated to King's memory and serves as both a personal lament and a poetic tribute.
2. **Structural Form**:
   o "Lycidas" is written in the form of a pastoral elegy, a genre that traditionally mourns the loss of a shepherd or friend within a rustic setting.
   o The poem consists of 193 lines, divided into 163 lines of verse followed by a concluding section in prose.
3. **Themes and Imagery**:
   o **Nature and Mythological Imagery**: Milton employs vivid natural imagery and references to classical mythology to convey the sorrow and beauty of King's death.
   o **Christian Allegory**: The poem incorporates Christian allegory, reflecting Milton's deeply religious worldview. It explores themes of redemption, divine providence, and the consolation of faith in the face of loss.
4. **Poetic Techniques**:
   o **Verse Form**: "Lycidas" is composed in elegiac meter, a form of verse that combines hexameter and pentameter lines. This meter lends a solemn and reflective tone to the poem.
   o **Allusion and Symbolism**: Milton makes use of allusions to classical literature and biblical passages to enrich the poem's meaning and deepen its resonance.

Major Themes in "Lycidas":

1. **Mortality and Transience**: The poem meditates on the fragility of life and the inevitability of death, exploring how humans grapple with loss and find solace in spiritual truths.
2. **The Role of the Poet**: "Lycidas" reflects on the responsibility and challenges faced by poets in commemorating the dead and inspiring others through their art.

3. **Nature and Harmony**: The pastoral setting and imagery in "Lycidas" underscore themes of harmony in nature and the contrast between the timeless beauty of the natural world and the ephemeral nature of human existence.

6.5 Marvell's: To His Coy Mistress

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
     But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
     Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour

Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

6.6 Poem Interpretation

Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" is a classic example of metaphysical poetry, characterized by its wit, intellectual playfulness, and exploration of complex themes such as love, time, and mortality. Let's delve into an analysis of this poem:

Structure and Form:

- **Meter and Rhyme Scheme**: The poem is written in iambic tetrameter, with a regular ABAB rhyme scheme in the first stanza, shifting to a more irregular rhyme scheme in subsequent stanzas. This shift mirrors the urgency and changing tone of the speaker's argument.
- **Three-part Structure**: The poem is divided into three sections or stanzas, each presenting a different argument or perspective on the theme of love and time. This tripartite structure enhances the poem's rhetorical effect and builds towards its conclusion.

Themes and Motifs:

1. **Carpe Diem**: The poem embraces the carpe diem ("seize the day") theme, urging the mistress to live in the present and seize the opportunity for love before it is too late.
2. **Time and Mortality**: Marvell explores the passage of time and the inevitability of death, contrasting the fleeting nature of human life with the eternal beauty of idealized love.
3. **Sexuality and Desire**: The poem boldly expresses the speaker's sexual desire and longing for physical intimacy with the mistress, using vivid imagery and passionate language.

Literary Techniques:

- **Imagery**: Marvell employs vivid and evocative imagery throughout the poem to paint pictures of love, time, and decay. Examples include references to exotic locales, the sun's motion, and the imagery of graves and worms.
- **Allusion**: The poem makes allusions to classical mythology (such as the flood of Noah's Ark) and philosophical concepts (such as the conversion of Jews to Christianity), enriching its intellectual depth and cultural resonance.
- **Irony and Wit**: The poem is characterized by its wit and intellectual playfulness, as the speaker uses clever arguments and rhetorical devices to persuade the coy mistress to yield to his advances.

Tone and Speaker:

- **Tone**: The tone of the poem shifts from playful and flirtatious in the first stanza to urgent and desperate in the second stanza, and finally to resigned acceptance in the concluding lines.
- **Speaker**: The speaker is a male suitor addressing his coy mistress. He employs flattery, logic, and emotional appeals to convince her to abandon her coyness and embrace physical intimacy.

Conclusion and Impact:

- **Impact**: "To His Coy Mistress" has been widely praised for its lyrical beauty, intellectual depth, and exploration of timeless themes. It remains a celebrated example of metaphysical poetry and continues to provoke discussion and analysis in literary circles.
- **Legacy**: The poem's exploration of love, time, and mortality has inspired countless interpretations and adaptations, making it a perennial favorite among readers and scholars interested in poetry and English literature.

In summary, Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" is a masterpiece of metaphysical poetry that combines passionate desire with intellectual inquiry, exploring profound themes through its use of wit, imagery, and rhetorical persuasion.

6.7 Influence and Legacy

☐ **Literary Impact**: "Lycidas" is considered one of the finest examples of the pastoral elegy in English literature. It influenced later poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, who admired Milton's lyrical style and use of imagery.

☐ **Religious and Philosophical Depth**: The poem reflects Milton's broader philosophical and religious concerns, laying the groundwork for his later epic works such as "Paradise Lost," where similar themes of loss, redemption, and divine providence are explored in greater depth.

☐ **Critical Reception**: "Lycidas" has been praised for its emotional depth, intellectual rigor, and poetic craftsmanship. Critics have analyzed its complex themes and imagery, highlighting its enduring significance in the canon of English poetry.

6.8 Summary

In summary, John Milton's "Lycidas" stands as a poignant and profound elegy that combines personal grief with universal themes of mortality, faith, and the transformative power of poetic expression. Its lyrical beauty and thematic richness continue to captivate readers and scholars, ensuring its place as a masterpiece of English literature. Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" is a masterpiece of metaphysical poetry that combines passionate desire with intellectual inquiry, exploring profound themes through its use of wit, imagery, and rhetorical persuasion.

6.9 Key Takeaways

☐ **Literary Influence**: Both Milton and Marvell left an indelible mark on English literature through their exploration of profound themes, innovative use of poetic form, and enduring relevance to philosophical and political discourse.

☐ **Philosophical Depth**: Their poetry engages with existential questions, moral dilemmas, and the human condition, reflecting the intellectual currents and cultural debates of their time.

☐ **Legacy**: Milton and Marvell's poetry continues to be studied and celebrated for its literary craftsmanship, intellectual rigor, and exploration of timeless themes that transcend their historical contexts.

6.10 Review Questions

1. What is the historical context in which "Lycidas" was written? How does this context inform the poem's themes and imagery?

2. Discuss the theme of mourning and lamentation in "Lycidas." How does Milton use pastoral imagery to convey his grief and sorrow?

3. Analyze the use of classical and biblical allusions in "Lycidas." How do these allusions contribute to the poem's meaning and resonance?

4. Discuss the theme of carpe diem ("seize the day") in "To His Coy Mistress." How does the speaker use this theme to persuade the mistress to yield to his advances?

5. Examine Marvell's use of metaphysical conceits in "To His Coy Mistress." How does he employ unconventional comparisons and elaborate metaphors to express the speaker's desire and argument?

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UNIT 7: NEO-CLASSICISM AND ALEXANDER POPE

STRUCTURE

7.1 Objectives

Neoclassicism, which emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, especially in France and England, sought to revive the classical ideals of ancient Greece and Rome.

7.2 Introduction

The acknowledged master of the heroic couplet and one of the primary tastemakers of the Augustan age, British writer Alexander Pope was a central figure in the Neoclassical movement of the early 18th century. He is known for having perfected the rhymed couplet form of his idol, <u>John Dryden</u>, and turned it to satiric and philosophical purposes. His mock epic *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) derides elite society, while *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) and *An Essay on Man* (1733–34) articulate many of the central tenets of 18th-century aesthetic and moral philosophy. Pope was noted for his involvement in public feuds with the writers and publishers of low-end Grub Street, which led him to write *The Dunciad* (1728), a scathing account of England's cultural decline, and, at the end of his life, a series of related verse essays and Horatian satires that articulated and protested this decline.

Pope is also remembered as the first full-time professional English writer, having supported himself largely on subscription fees for his popular translations of Homer and his edition of the works of <u>William Shakespeare</u>. Although a major cultural figure of the 18th century, Pope fell out of favor in the Romantic era as the Neoclassical appetite for form was replaced by a vogue for sincerity and authenticity. Interest in his poetry was revived in the early 20th century. He is recognized as a great formal master, an eloquent expositor of the spirit of his age, and a representative of the culture and politics of the Enlightenment.

7.3 Alexander Pope

Pope was born on May 21, 1688, to a wealthy Catholic linen merchant, Alexander Pope, and his second wife, Edith Turner. In the same year, the Protestant William of Orange took the English throne.

Because Catholics were forbidden to hold office, practice their religion, attend public schools, or live within 10 miles of London, Pope grew up in nearby Windsor Forest and was mostly self-taught, his education supplemented by study with private tutors or priests. At the age of 12, he contracted spinal tuberculosis, which left him with permanent physical disabilities. He never grew taller than four and a half feet, was hunchbacked, and required daily care throughout adulthood. His irascible nature and unpopularity in the press are often attributed to three factors: his membership in a religious minority, his physical infirmity, and his exclusion from formal education. However, Pope was bright, precocious, and determined and, by his teens, was writing accomplished verse. His rise to fame was swift. Publisher Jacob Tonson included Pope's Pastorals, a quartet of early poems in the Virgilian style, in his Poetical Miscellanies (1709), and Pope published his first major work, An Essay on Criticism, at the age of 23. He soon became friends with Whig writers Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, editors of the Spectator, who published his essays and poems, and the appearance of The Rape of the Lock made him famous in wider circles.

An Essay on Criticism is a virtuosic exposition of literary theory, poetic practice, and moral philosophy. Bringing together themes and ideas from the history of philosophy, the three parts of the poem illustrate a golden age of culture, describe the fall of that age, and propose a platform to restore it through literary ethics and personal virtues. The work showcases Pope's mastery of the heroic couplet, in which he was capable of making longer arguments in verse as well as of producing such memorable phrases as "The Sound must seem an Eccho to the Sense" and "To Err is humane; to Forgive, Divine." The mock epic The Rape of the Lock made Pope known to a general audience. Based on an actual incident in 1711, when Robert Lord Petre ("The Baron") publicly cut a lock of hair from the head of Arabella Fermor ("Belinda"), and said to have been written at the request of a friend to encourage a rapprochement between the families, the poem nimbly depicts the foibles of high society. At once light-hearted and serious, addressing both the flimsiness of social status and the repercussions of public behavior, the poem is an in-depth study of contemporary social mores and the reasons for their existence. The Rape of the Lock was followed by "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717), which lyrically explored the 12th-century story of the passionate love of Heloïse d'Argenteuil and her teacher, the philosopher Peter Abelard.

In the mid-1720s, Pope became associated with a group of Tory literati called the Scriblerus Club, which included John Gay, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, and Thomas Parnell. The club encouraged the Pope to release a new translation of Homer's Iliad (circa 8th century BCE) via subscription, a publication method whereby members of the public gave money in advance of a text's appearance with the agreement that they would receive handsome, inscribed editions of the completed volumes. The Iliad was a tremendously popular publishing venture, and it made Pope self-supporting. He followed with subscription editions of the Odyssey (circa 8th to 7th centuries BCE) and of Shakespeare's works. After these successes, Pope could afford a lavish lifestyle and moved to a grand villa at Twickenham. The estate's grounds included miniature sculptured gardens and a famous grotto, an underground passageway decorated with mirrors that connected the property to the London Road. Here, Pope feted friends and acquaintances, cultivated his love for gardening, and wrote increasingly caustic essays and poems. Frequently maligned in the press, he responded publicly with The Dunciad (1728), an attack on the Shakespearean editor Lewis Theobald; The Dunciad, Variorum (1729), which appends a series of mock footnotes vilifying other London publishers and booksellers; and another edition of The Dunciad that articulates the writer's concern over the decline of English society. Using the term "duncery" to refer to all that was tasteless, dull, and degraded in culture and literature, Pope mocked certain contemporary literary figures while making a larger point about the decline of art and culture. In the 1730s, Pope published two works on the same theme: An Essay on Man and a series of

"imitated" satires and epistles of Horace (1733-38). After the final edition of The Dunciad was released in 1742, Pope began to revise and assemble his poetry for a collected edition. Before he could complete the work, he died of dropsy (edema) and acute asthma on May 30, 1744.

An Essay on Man is didactic and wide-reaching and was meant to be part of a larger work of moral philosophy that Pope never finished. Its four sections, or "epistles," present an aesthetic and philosophical argument for the existence of order in the world, contending that we know the world to be unified because God created it. Thus, it is only our inferior vision that perceives disunity, and it is each man's duty to strive for the good and the orderly.

Pope's literary merit was debated throughout his life, and successive generations have continually reassessed the value of his works. Pope's satires and poetry of manners did not fit the Romantic and Victorian visions of poetry as a product of sincerity and emotion. He came to be seen as a philosopher and rhetorician rather than a poet, a view that persisted through the 19th and early 20th centuries. The rise of modernism, however, revived interest in pre-Romantic poetry, and Pope's use of poetic form and irony made him of particular interest to the New Critics. In the latter half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, Pope remained central to the study of what scholars deem the long 18th century, a period loosely defined as beginning with publication of John Milton's Paradise Lost (1667) and extending through the first generation of the Romantics in the 1820s.

Modern scholars have evaluated Pope as a major literary voice engaged with both high and low cultural scenes, a key figure in the sphere of letters, and an articulate witness to the rise of the commercial printing age and the development of modem English national identity. Howard D. Weinbrot (1980) read Pope's late satires in the context of 18th-century neoclassicism, arguing that he did not simply imitate Horace but worked with elements from Juvenal and Persius as well. Pope, Weinbrot asserted, had a far wider satiric range than modem readers assume: he was "more eclectic, hostile, and both sublime and vulgar." John Sitter (2007) concentrated on the range of voices employed by Pope in his poetry, offering an alternative to prevailing views on rhyme and the couplet form. Sophie Gee (2014) argued that The Rape of the Lock is important because of its emphasis on character and identity, a focus that she identified as novelistic, while Donna Landry (1995) placed Pope in the context of the critical history of landscape poetry, maintaining that he was a central figure in the 18th-century invention of the concept of the "countryside." The transformation of the physical country into the aesthetic object of the countryside, Landry explained, is enacted through Pope's ideology of stewardship and control, which imagines a landscape halfway between the country and the city that Landry called an early version of suburbia.

7.4 Cultural and Artistic Impact

- **Literary Forms and Genres:** Neoclassical literature favored genres such as satire, ode, essay, and mock-heroic poetry.
- **Political and Philosophical Influence:** Neoclassical thought influenced Enlightenment thinkers and played a role in shaping political ideologies and revolutions.
- **Legacy:** Neoclassical principles continued to influence art, architecture, literature, and education well into the 19th century and beyond, leaving a lasting impact on Western culture.

In summary, Neoclassicism represented a deliberate return to classical ideals, emphasizing reason, order, clarity, and moral instruction in literature and the arts. Its objectives aimed to establish enduring principles of beauty, harmony, and intellectual rigour, reflecting a desire to emulate and revive the achievements of ancient civilizations.

7.5 Ode on Solitude

Happy the man, whose wish and care
  A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
               In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
  Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
               In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcernedly find
  Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
               Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
  Together mixed; sweet recreation;
And innocence, which most does please,
               With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
  Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
               Tell where I lie.

7.6 Poem Analysis

Throughout, Pope engages with themes of solitude, hard work, and happiness. It is these three things that the speaker suggests are needed for a man to live a good life. Happy is the man, he begins, whose cares extend to a few "paternal acres bound." Working hard and being content with the simple things are the most important ingredients for happiness. He concludes the poem by asking that he live "unseen, unknown" and die away from the world where no one can find him. It's this kind of life, without exterior pressures or an image to maintain that appeals to him.

'*Ode on Solitude*' by Alexander Pope is a five-stanza poem that is divided into sets of five lines. These lines follow a simple rhyme scheme of ABAB, changing end sounds from stanza to stanza. There are a few moments where the rhymes are less than perfect though. For instance, "bread" and "shade" at

the ends of lines one and three of the first stanza. In regard to the <u>meter</u>, Pope structured the first three lines of each stanza with eight syllables and the fourth stanza with four. '*Ode on Solitude*' by Alexander Pope is a five-stanza poem that is divided into sets of five lines. These lines follow a simple <u>rhyme scheme</u> of <u>ABAB</u>, changing end sounds from <u>stanza</u> to stanza. There are a few moments where the <u>rhymes</u> are less than perfect though. For instance, "bread" and "shade" at the ends of lines one and three of the first stanza. In regard to the <u>meter</u>, Pope structured the first three lines of each stanza with eight syllables and the fourth stanza with four.

7.7 Summary

Alexander Pope, widely considered the most prominent English poet of the early 18th century, wrote "Ode on Solitude" in 1700—when he was only 12 years old! The poem bears little resemblance to the later satirical work for which he is mostly known; in a style that is more or less earnest and contemplative, this "Ode" praises people who live simple and solitary lives, arguing that the happiest people are self-sufficient and unconcerned with the opinions or recognition of others. In essence, "Ode on Solitude" offers readers a glimpse into Alexander Pope's early poetic talent and his engagement with Neoclassical ideals of simplicity, virtue, and the contemplative life. Despite its modest origins, the poem continues to be studied for its thematic richness and as a testament to Pope's early literary promise.

7.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Theme of Solitude and Retreat**:

- The poem explores the virtues of solitude and retreat from the busyness of the world. It portrays solitude not as isolation but as a deliberate choice conducive to introspection, peace, and self-discovery.

☐ **Natural Imagery and Simplicity**:

- Pope employs natural imagery to depict the tranquility of rural life, emphasizing simplicity and harmony with nature. This reflects the Neoclassical ideal of returning to nature as a source of purity and moral lessons.

☐ **Philosophical Reflections on Life**:

- Despite its brevity, "Ode on Solitude" touches upon universal themes such as the fleeting nature of human existence and the pursuit of contentment through moderation and self-restraint.

☐ **Early Mastery of Form and Language**:

- The poem showcases Pope's early mastery of poetic form, using regular rhyme and meter to convey its message effectively. His language is clear, concise, and imbued with maturity beyond his years.

□ **Neoclassical Principles**:

- As a product of the Neoclassical era, the poem upholds principles of reason, order, and simplicity in its expression. It reflects a rejection of the ornate style of the Baroque period in favor of clarity and rationality.

□ **Influence on Pope's Later Works**:

- While "Ode on Solitude" may not be as well-known as Pope's later masterpieces, its themes of nature, simplicity, and introspection resonate throughout his oeuvre. It provides insights into the development of his poetic voice and thematic concerns.

7.9 Review Questions

1. Discuss the theme of solitude in "Ode on Solitude." How does Pope portray solitude as a virtue rather than isolation?
2. Describe the poem's structure and rhyme scheme. How does Pope's use of regular rhyme and meter contribute to the poem's overall impact?
3. Discuss the poem's perspective on the passage of time and the fleeting nature of human life. How does Pope convey these themes through his imagery and language?
4. Analyze the use of personification in "Ode on Solitude." How does Pope personify solitude and nature to convey deeper meanings and emotions?
5. What is the significance of Pope's early composition of "Ode on Solitude"? How does this poem foreshadow themes and techniques that appear in his later works?

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STRUCTURE

8.1 Objectives

Studying Aphra Behn, one of the earliest English women to earn a living as a professional writer, offers several important objectives and insights into literature, history, and gender studies:

1. **Literary Exploration**:
   o **Diverse Literary Works**: Behn wrote plays, novels, poetry, and prose, contributing significantly to Restoration literature. Studying her works provides insights into various literary genres and styles popular during her time.
   o **Themes and Ideas**: Her works often explore themes such as love, betrayal, power dynamics, and social issues, reflecting the cultural and political climate of the Restoration period.
2. **Historical Perspective**:
   o **Restoration Era**: Behn lived during the Restoration period (1660-1688), a time of significant social, political, and cultural change in England. Her writings provide a window into the societal norms, political intrigues, and cultural transformations of the era.
   o **Colonialism and Slavery**: Behn's experiences as a spy in Suriname influenced her writings, offering perspectives on colonialism, race, and slavery that are crucial for understanding the historical context of the British Empire.
3. **Feminist and Gender Studies**:
   o **Pioneering Female Writer**: As one of the first English women to earn a living through writing, Behn's life and works are important for feminist studies. Her writings often challenge gender norms and explore issues of female agency, sexuality, and identity.
   o **Representation of Women**: Behn's portrayal of female characters, their roles, and their relationships in her plays and novels provide insights into evolving ideas about women's rights and representation in literature.
4. **Literary Influence and Legacy**:

- **Impact on Literature**: Behn's innovative use of narrative techniques, her exploration of complex characters, and her engagement with contemporary social issues influenced later writers and contributed to the development of English literature.
- **Critical Reception**: Studying Behn's reception by critics and scholars over time sheds light on changing interpretations of her works and their relevance to ongoing discussions about gender, race, and colonialism.

8.2 Introduction

Aphra Behn, one of the most influential dramatists of the late 17th century, was also a celebrated poet and novelist. Her contemporary reputation was founded primarily on her "scandalous" plays, which she claimed would not have been criticized for impropriety had a man written them. Behn's assertion of her unique role in English literary history is confirmed not only by the extraordinary circumstances of her writings but by those of her life history as well.

No one really knows her birth name or when exactly she was born. Her parentage has been traced to Wye, and tradition has it that she was born in 1640. One version of her life postulates that her parents were a barber, John Amis, and Amy, his wife. Another speculation about Behn has her the child of a couple named Cooper. However, an essay by the unidentified "One of the Fair Sex" affixed to the collection of *The Histories And Novels of the Late Ingenious Mrs. Behn* (1696) maintains that Aphra was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Johnson of nearby Canterbury. Johnson was a gentleman related to Francis, Lord Willoughby, who appointed him lieutenant general of Surinam, for which Willoughby was the royal patentee. Whether Aphra was Johnson's natural child or fostered by him is not known, but what has been established with reasonable certainty was that in 1663 Aphra accompanied Johnson, his wife, and a young boy, mentioned as Behn's brother, on a voyage to take up residence in the West Indies. Johnson died on the way, and the mother and two children lived for several months in Surinam. This episode was to have lasting effects on Behn's life. Her most famous novel, *Oroonoko* (1688), is based on her experiences there and her friendship with a prince of the indigenous peoples. The facts about Behn's life after her return to England in 1664 are also unclear. She is known to have met and taken the name of a man considered to be her husband, who was perhaps a Dutch merchant whose name was either "Ben," "Beane," "Bene," or "Behn." Whatever the true circumstances, from that time on she was known publicly as "Mrs. Behn," the name she later used for her professional writing. Aphra Behn was propelled into writing for a living by the death of her husband in 1665, and her indebtedness as a result of her employment as a spy for King Charles II.

When her husband died, Behn was left without funds. Perhaps because of her association, through him, with the Dutch, she was appointed an intelligence gatherer for the king, who was, at least, to pay for her trip to Antwerp as his spy. But Charles did not respond to Behn's requests for money for her trip home, so in December 1666 she was forced to borrow for her passage back to England. Charles continued to refuse payment, and in 1668 Behn was thrown into debtor's prison. The circumstances of her release are unknown, but in 1670 her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage* (published, 1671), was produced in London, and Behn, having vowed never to depend on anyone else for money again, became one of the period's foremost playwrights. She earned her living in the theater and then as a novelist until her death on April 16, 1689.

Even before her arrest for indebtedness, Aphra Behn had written poetry. These early poems indicate the versatility of her literary gifts and prefigure the skill and grace that characterize all of Behn's verse.

Although it was impossible to make a living from writing poems exclusively, Behn, in the tradition of famous English playwrights whose poetry was also accorded distinction, pursued verse writing as an adjunct to her more lucrative work. Behn's contemporary reputation as a poet was no less stunning than her notoriety as a dramatist. She was heralded as a successor to Sappho, inheriting the great gifts of the Greek poet in the best English tradition exemplified by Behn's immediate predecessor, Katherine Philips. Just as Philips was known by her pastoral *nom de plume* and praised as "The Matchless Orinda," so Behn was apostrophized as "The Incomparable Astrea," an appellation based on the code name she had used when she was Charles's spy.

8.3 Behn's Lyrics

Some of Behn's lyrics originally appeared in her plays, and there were longer verses, such as the Pindaric odes, published for special occasions. But the majority of her poetry was published in two collections that included longer narrative works of prose and poetry as well as Behn's shorter verses. Poems upon Several Occasions: with A Voyage to the Island of Love (1684) and Lycidus: Or The Lover in Fashion (1688) reflect Behn's customary use of classical, pastoral, courtly, and traditionally English lyric modes. Forty-five poems appeared in Poems upon Several Occasions; ten poems were appended to Lycidus. Ten more works appeared in the 1685 Miscellany. Posthumous publications include poems in Charles Gildon's Miscellany Poems Upon Several Occasions (1692) and in The Muses Mercury (1707-1708).

Behn's distinctive poetic voice is characterized by her audacity in writing about contemporary events, frequently with topical references that, despite their allegorical maskings, were immediately recognizable to her sophisticated audience. Although she sometimes addressed her friends by their initials or their familiar names, she might just as easily employ some classical or pastoral disguise that was transparent to the initiated. Behn's poetry, therefore, was less public than her plays or her prose fiction, as it depended, in some cases, on the enlightened audience's recognition of her topics for full comprehension of both the expression and implications of her verse. Such poetic technique involved a skill and craft that earned her the compliments of her cohorts.

Behn's response to this admiration was to display even more fully those characteristics which had earned her praise. Frequently her poems are specifically addressed to members of her social community and might employ mild satire as commentary, present events of their lives, and detail or explore the emotional states of their frequently complex relationships, especially those of love and sex. Less commonly Behn might use a translation or adaptation of another author's verse to discuss these issues in her own style. In these cases the poems are frequently redrawn to reveal Behn's own emphases and display more her artistic perspective than that of the original author.

Whatever the source of the texts, whether her plays, a political or personal occasion, an adaptation or translation, or an emotional or psychological exploration, Behn's verse style is particular and identifiable, with a very distinctive voice. The speaker is usually identified as a character or as "Astrea," Behn's poetic self, and there is usually a specific audience. There may be dialogue within a poem, but, unlike the dialogue in her plays, in the poetry the voices are joined in lyrical rather than dramatic expression. In fact, the musicality of Behn's verse is another identifying characteristic. Whereas many of Behn's predecessors and contemporaries, including Philips, to whom Behn was frequently compared, are known for the Metaphysical aspects of their verse, Behn's poems are more

classical, in the tradition of Ben Jonson rather than John Donne. As such they rely more on the heritage of 16th-century ornate lyricism as practiced by Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare, along with the epigrammatic tradition of light Juvenalian satire in Jonson and Robert Herrick, than the Marvellian wit and Miltonic grandeur of later 17th-century verse. Behn shares with John Dryden a preference for the couplet, but she also uses a modified ballad stanza and more varied verse forms if the content permits. The decorum of her verse is based in a very traditional relationship between structure and meaning, so that her discourse has a sense of immediacy and directness despite the conventionality of her literary forms. Perhaps it is because her use of vocabulary and form is so traditional that Behn, who was criticized as outrageous for the content of her works, was able, nevertheless, to thrive as a successful author.

The first of the Poems upon Several Occasions, "The Golden Age," presents Behn's customary combination of tradition and innovation. It is described in the text as "A Paraphrase on a Translation out of French," and although Behn criticism usually emphasizes that the poem is a translation, Behn herself presents rather more of the aspect of paraphrase. The poem restates well-known concepts in a typically idiosyncratic way. Behn conventionally places her paradise in a prelapsarian garden but then goes on to describe that sinless state as devoid also of "civilized" constraints. Lovers' vows are "Not kept in fear of Gods, no fond Religious cause, / Nor in obedience to duller Laws" but merely for joy alone. Honor, rather than being perceived as a desirable characteristic, is furiously attacked in two long verses as responsible for introducing the shame and formality that "first taught lovely Eyes the art, / To wound, and not to cure the heart." This, she maintains, is "a Cruel Law." She asserts that women have sexuality and can teach men how to express their feelings if only this false value, honor, were not in the way.

Business and the rules of honor are also rejected in favor of a natural and easy "Love" in the poem "A Farewel to Celladon, On his Going into Ireland." These verses ask Celladon why he bothers with boring government business ("To Toyl, be Dull, and to be Great"), when he knows that success will not bring happiness. It is more important, the speaker advises him, to enjoy the company of his close good friend, Damon, to whom Celladon is "by Sacred Friendship ty'd," and from whom "Love nor Fate can nere divide" him. The tradition of close male friendships has both a literary and social history based in the classics. In this "Pindarique," Behn elevates such a relationship over politics and commerce. In her other poems as well, there is a precedence of close personal relationships over public enterprise. The portrayal of many of these relationships is in the classical pastoral tradition, and several of the poems also present the classical concept of the person with attributes of both sexes, the androgyne or hermaphrodite.

"Friendship" that is "Too Amorous for a Swain to a Swain" is the basis for one section in the long poem describing Behn's social circle, "Our Cabal." The verses on "Mr. Ed. Bed." describe the relationship between Philander and Lycidas as conventionally androgynous, with implicit overtones of sexuality. Philander, she writes, "nere paid / A Sigh or Tear to any Maid: / ... / But all the Love he ever knew, / On Lycidas he does bestow."

Homoeroticism is standard in Behn's verse, either in descriptions such as these of male to male relationships or in depictions of her own attractions to women. Behn was married and widowed early, and as a mature woman her primary publicly acknowledged relationship was with a gay male, John Hoyle, himself the subject of much scandal. Behn was known to have had male lovers throughout her lifetime, most notably the man allegorized as "Amintas" in her verses, but she also writes explicitly of the love of women for each other. Just as the emotional and physical closeness of men is justified by

their androgynous qualities, so, for women, hermaphroditic characteristics transcend conventional boundaries by allowing the enjoyment of female and male qualities in lovers.

The breaking of boundaries in poetry, as in her life, caused Behn to be criticized as well as admired publicly. Her best-known poem, "The Disappointment," finely illustrates Behn's ability to portray scandalous material in an acceptable form. The poem was sent to Hoyle with a letter asking him to deny allegations of ill conduct circulating about his activities. Both the letter and the poem were reprinted in early miscellaneous collections. "The Disappointment" has been traditionally interpreted to be about impotence. But it is also about rape, and presents a woman's point of view cloaked in the customary language of male physical license and sexual access to women. The woman's perspective in this poem provides the double vision that plays the conventional against the experiential.

One evening Lysander comes across Cloris in the woods. They are in love, and he makes sexual advances. She resists and tells him to kill her if he must, but she will not give up her honor, even though she loves him. He persists. She swoons. He undresses her. She lies defenseless and fully exposed to him, but he cannot maintain an erection. He tries self-stimulation without success. She recovers consciousness, discovers his limp penis with her hand, recoils in confusion, and runs away with supernatural speed. He rages at the gods and circumstance but mostly directs his anger at Cloris, blaming her for his impotence.

The traditional interpretation of this poem is that Cloris, having been aroused by Lysander's advances, flees from him in shame and that the lovers are both disappointed by Lysander's inability to consummate their relationship sexually. But that is only one line of meaning in the poem. Embedded in the text is another interpretation of these 14 stanzas. Cloris is definite: she says leave me alone or kill me. For her, rape is a fate worse than death, and she will not endure dishonor even for one she loves. When Lysander continues to force her "without Respect," she lies "half dead" and shows "no signs of life" but breathing. Traditionally her passion and breathlessness have been read as sexual arousal, but they might just as easily be read as signs of her struggle to escape Lysander, which exhausts her. As soon as her struggle ends, he is "unable to perform." In the poem, even though Cloris is unconscious, Lysander unsuccessfully tries self-stimulation, ostensibly to continue the attack. Cloris awakens, however, and takes the first opportunity she has to run away from him as fast as she can. Her decision to flee may clearly be seen as an attempt to escape. When she sees the state of things, she shows no sympathy. Lysander's anger is greater than mere disappointment—he rants at the gods and the universe for his impotence and accuses Cloris of witchcraft. The extent of his rage is more that of a thwarted assailant than an embarrassed lover.

For the first 13 stanzas of the poem, the story is told in the third person, with an omniscient speaker. But in the last verse, in a startling change of voice to the first person, the speaker identifies herself with Cloris and closes the narrative in sympathy with the "Nymph's Resentments," which the speaker, as a woman, can "well Imagine" and "Condole." The usual interpretation of "The Disappointment" will stand in a conventional reading, but this point of view ignores a particularly female perspective that Behn clearly asserts when, in the last stanza, she identifies with Cloris and not Lysander. The unconventionality of this poem is apparent when it is contrasted with the presentation of joyous amorous relations in some of Behn's other poems.

One of her best-known verses, happily juxtaposed to "The Disappointment," is "The Willing Mistriss." This poem describes how the female speaker becomes so aroused by the excellent courtship of her lover that she is "willing to receive / That which I dare not name." After three verses describing their

lovemaking, she concludes with the coy suggestion, "Ah who can guess the rest?" The poem is a good example of Behn's treatment of conventional courtly and pastoral modes, as is "Love Armed," which describes Cupid's power to enamour.

Convention and ingenuity are further united in the poem "Song: The Invitation," where, witnessing Damon's pursuit of Sylvia, the speaker interposes herself to meet "the Arrows" of love and save Sylvia "from their harms" because Sylvia already has a lover and Damon would more appropriately be paired with the speaker.

In her poems Behn uses the dramatic qualities of voice which gave her such great stage success. Her verses are always spoken by a specific, identifiable individual, whose self-characterization becomes clear in the text. The effect of this technique is to give the poems a sense of immediacy and energy that reveals Behn's personality through her works. She almost always speaks from the point of view of a woman, and her attitudes convey a woman's confidence in dealing with men's amorous advances and betrayals. In the poem "A Ballad on M. JH to Amoret, asking why I was so sad," the speaker tells how she was betrayed by her lover, and she warns Amoret to be careful and be sure to get the better of the man. Here the relationship between women is primary, as they are allies on the same side of the war of love. Men are frequently shown as enemies in the battle of the sexes, as Behn's poem "The Return" illustrates. In it she warns a tyrannous shepherd not to stray, since "Some hard-hearted Nymph may return you your own."

"The Reflection" is a classic song of betrayal with a twist. It is written from the point of view of a woman who gave in to her lover. He used every means he could to get her; then, the more she wanted him, the less he wanted her. Although he made many vows, he betrayed her. Since her pain is too great for tears, traditional consolation is inadequate; therefore, she will die. This poem is a variation on the standard pastoral "lover's complaint" of the male: conventionally the courtly beloved refuses to give in to her suitor, and he proclaims he will die of lovesickness. This poem uses the conventional pastoral mode, including the appeal to nature, to witness and participate in the lover's grief. But although the woman's sorrow is conventional, the consequences of betrayal are far more profound for her than they would be for a male counterpart. She is, in the old-fashioned meaning of the word, "dis-maid," bereft of her maidenhood, and as one no longer virgin, banished from consideration by future suitors. In her society there is nothing for her to look forward to, so she may as well die.

In "To Alexis in Answer to his Poem against Fruition. Ode" Behn asserts that men are only interested in conquest and that once they get what they want from one woman, they go on to another. This point of view, as presented by a male speaker, is also a highlight of the poems interspersed throughout the prose text of Lycidus: Or The Lover in Fashion. The popular "A Thousand Martyrs I have made" presents the philanderer's scorn for "the Fools that whine for Love" in the context of the narrator's lighthearted appraisal of his unreformed self. The speaker of the poem takes delight in his ability to play the game of love in appearances only, exempting himself from serious hurt. Because of his emotional detachment, ironically, he scores more conquests than those for whom love is serious.

One of Behn's strongest statements on the failure of a double standard in heterosexual love is "To Lysander, on some Verses he writ, and asking more for his Heart then 'twas worth." This poem uses metaphors from banking and investment to illustrate Lysander's materialism, and the speaker promises to get even. She tells him to take back his heart, since he wants too much from her for it. He does not want an equal or fair return (her heart for his heart) but much more from her than he is willing to give. He does not allow her even to be friendly with others, but, at the same time, he is cheating on her. She

protests that he gives her rival easily what she only gets with pain, and his intimacy with another hurts her. She calls for fairness in love—if he takes such liberties, she should be allowed them as well. If Lysander does not maintain honesty with her, she warns, he will find that she can play a trick too. Her "P. S. A Song" declares: "Tis not your saying that you love, / Can ease me of my Smart; / Your Actions must your Words approve, / Or else you break my Heart."

Behn's poems express anticonventional attitudes about other topics as well. She makes a strong antiwar statement in "Song: When Jemmy first began to Love," concluding with the question of what is to become of the woman left behind. In "To Mr. Creech (under the Name of Daphnis on his Excellent Translation of Lucretius)," she praises the translator for making accessible to unlearned women a work originally in Latin. As a member of the female class, which is denied education in the classics, she would like, she says, to express her admiration to him in an acceptable, manly fashion. Because she is a woman, however, her response to his translation is not mere admiration, but a fiery adoration, since women are thereby advanced to knowledge from ignorance. She describes the state of women as her own: "Till now, I curst my Birth, my Education, / And more the scanted Customes of the Nation: / Permitting not the Female Sex to tread, / The mighty Paths of Learned Heroes dead."

Behn writes, then, as the representative of all women, allying herself openly with women against men in the war conventionally called love. She tells her friend Carola, "Lady Morland at Tunbridge," that even though she is a rival for Behn's lover, when she saw her, she grew to admire and love her. Because of that, she warns, beware of taking my lover as your own—he is experienced and can slip the chains of love. You deserve a virgin, she says, someone who has never loved before, who only has eyes for you and has a "soul as Great as you are Fair."

Women uniting to oppose a faithless male lover is the theme of Behn's entertainment, "Selinda and Cloris," in which the title characters befriend each other in order to deal with betrayal. First Selinda is warned by Cloris about Alexis, who was untrue to her. Selinda's response is to ally herself with the other woman and vow that Alexis will not conquer her as he did Cloris. The women praise each other's generosity and intelligence, agreeing to be good friends. The reciprocal relationship between the women includes both physical and intellectual attraction, friendship, and sexuality. Cloris "will sing, in every Grove, / The Greatness of your Mind," to which Selinda responds, "And I your Love." They trade verses and sing together just as traditional pastoral speakers do. In this case, however, in addition to being poets, lovers, singers, and shepherds, the speakers are also, untraditionally, female. The celebration of their mutual joy is a variant on the conventional masque of Hymen, and it presents in song and dance a formal poetic drama that emphasizes the eroticism of the women's relationship.

The bonding of women in female friendship is most clearly stated by Behn in her explicitly lesbian love poem, "To the Fair Clorinda." This is the last of the poems appended to Lycidus, and in it Behn shows how important to her were those androgynous qualities for which she herself was praised. Just as she was commended in the dedicatory verses of her Poems upon Several Occasions for having "A Female Sweetness and a Manly Grace," Behn asserts the unity of "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics in her "beloved youth." She cleverly argues that she "loves" only the "masculine" part of Clorinda and to the "feminine" gives merely friendship. Since Clorinda's perfection manifests the idealized Platonic form, loving her cannot and should not be resisted. Further, since that by which society defines sex is not found in the female form, that is, women do not have the necessary physical equipment to consummate what is culturally considered "the sex act," love between women is, by definition, "innocent," and therefore not subject to censure. Clorinda is a "beauteous Wonder of a different kind, / Soft Cloris with the dear Alexis join'd."

The poem may be read as the speaker's justification of her own approach to a forbidden beloved, but Clorinda is not a passive fair maiden. She is the one who, the title states, "made Love" to the speaker, and, in the last quatrain, her "Manly part ... wou'd plead" while her "Image of the Maid" tempts. Clorinda, therefore, may also be seen as the initiator of their sexual activity, with the speaker justifying her own response in reaction to the public sexual mores of her time. As the poem ends, Behn, in a witty pun on her first name, asserts the multigendered sexuality of both Clorinda and the speaker, and "the noblest Passions do extend / The Love to Hermes, Aphrodite the Friend."

8.4 I led My Silvia to a Grove – The Willing Mistriss

Amyntas led me to a Grove,
Where all the Trees did shade us;
The Sun it self, though it had Strove,
It could not have betray'd us:
The place secur'd from humane Eyes,
No other fear allows.
But when the Winds that gently rise,
Doe Kiss the yielding Boughs.

Down there we satt upon the Moss,
And id begin to play
A Thousand Amorous Tricks, to pass
The heat of all the day.
A many Kisses he did give:
And I return'd the same
Which made me willing to receive
That which I dare not name.

His Charming Eyes no Aid requir'd
To tell their softning Tale;
On her that was already fir'd
'Twas easy to prevaile.
He did but Kiss and Clasp me round,
Whilst those his thoughts Exprest:
And lay'd me gently on the Ground;
Ah who can guess the rest?

8.5 Poem Analysis

The line "I led my Sylvia to a grove" is the opening line of a poem by Sir John Suckling titled "A Ballad upon a Wedding." Here's a brief analysis and context for this line:

Context and Analysis:

1. **Poetic Style and Structure**:
   o "A Ballad upon a Wedding" is a lyrical poem written in a ballad form, characterized by its simple language, regular meter, and narrative structure.
   o The poem celebrates a wedding ceremony and the joyous occasion surrounding it.
2. **Narrative Setting**:
   o The opening line, "I led my Sylvia to a grove," sets the scene for a pastoral setting, typical of Renaissance and early modern poetry.
   o The grove symbolizes a tranquil and idyllic natural environment, often associated with love, romance, and privacy.
3. **Themes of Love and Romance**:
   o The poem explores themes of love, courtship, and marriage. The speaker's action of leading Sylvia to a grove suggests a private and intimate moment shared between the lovers.
   o It reflects traditional ideals of courtly love and chivalric romance, where nature serves as a backdrop for expressing deep affection and devotion.
4. **Literary Influences**:
   o Suckling's poem draws on the conventions of pastoral poetry, which idealizes rural life and natural beauty.
   o The poem may also be influenced by classical literature and the Renaissance tradition of celebrating love and marriage in lyrical forms.
5. **Emotional Tone**:
   o The opening line sets a tone of tenderness and intimacy. It conveys the speaker's affection and attentiveness towards Sylvia, emphasizing the personal and emotional aspects of their relationship.
   o The pastoral imagery enhances the poem's emotional impact, evoking a sense of harmony between the lovers and their natural surroundings.

8.6 Significance

□ **Poetic Legacy**: "A Ballad upon a Wedding" exemplifies Suckling's skill in capturing moments of love and celebration through lyrical verse.
□ **Cultural Context**: The poem reflects the social and cultural values of its time, particularly attitudes towards courtship, marriage, and romantic ideals.
□ **Literary Influence**: Suckling's work contributed to the development of English poetry during the early modern period, influencing subsequent poets and writers.

8.7 Summary

In conclusion, the line "I led my Sylvia to a grove" encapsulates the pastoral charm and romantic sentiment of Sir John Suckling's poem "A Ballad upon a Wedding." It invites readers to envision a serene and intimate moment between the speaker and his beloved, set against a backdrop of natural beauty and emotional depth. Aphra Behn's later reputation as a playwright, novelist, and poet has benefited from her value as a model for women writers as noted first by those distinguished Victorian women of letters, Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. Sackville-West's early biography (1927) and Woolf's memorializing of Behn in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as the first woman in England to earn her living by writing place Behn foremost in feminist literary history. The complexity of Behn's verse, its logical argument, pastoral and courtly conventions, biblical and classical allusions, and

incisive social comment define a unique poetic vision.

8.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Celebration of Love and Marriage**:

- The poem celebrates the joyous occasion of a wedding. It portrays love as a central theme, emphasizing the happiness and fulfillment found in union and commitment.

☐ **Pastoral Imagery and Romanticism**:

- The grove symbolizes an idyllic and romantic setting. It reflects the pastoral tradition in literature, where natural landscapes serve as a backdrop for expressing love, intimacy, and emotional connection.

☐ **Narrative and Descriptive Style**:

- Suckling employs a narrative ballad form, characterized by its simple language, regular meter, and storytelling structure. This style enhances the poem's accessibility and emotional impact.

☐ **Emotional Depth and Intimacy**:

- The opening line, "I led my Sylvia to a grove," sets a tone of intimacy and personal connection between the speaker and Sylvia. It conveys the speaker's tender and attentive gesture towards his beloved.

☐ **Cultural and Literary Influence**:

- The poem reflects cultural values and ideals of courtship and marriage during the Renaissance period. It contributes to the literary tradition of celebrating love and romance through lyrical verse and pastoral imagery.

☐ **Poetic Legacy**:

- "A Ballad upon a Wedding" exemplifies Suckling's skill in capturing moments of emotional resonance and personal significance through poetry. It continues to be studied for its lyrical beauty and thematic exploration of love and matrimony.

8.9 Review Questions

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1. Discuss the significance of the grove as a setting in the poem. How does it contribute to the poem's portrayal of love and romance?
2. Analyze the poem's structure and form. How does the ballad form contribute to the poem's narrative style and emotional impact?
3. What is the emotional tone established in the opening line "I led my Silvia to a grove"? How does

it set the stage for the rest of the poem?

4. Examine Suckling's literary influences and style. In what ways does the poem reflect the poetic traditions and values of its time, particularly in relation to love poetry?

5. Discuss the legacy of "A Ballad upon a Wedding" in English literature. How has the poem been received and interpreted by later readers and critics?

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STRUCTURE

9.1 Objectives

☐ **Literary Exploration**:

- **Poetic Style and Themes**: Herrick is known for his lyric poetry characterized by its musicality, wit, and sensuality. His works explore themes such as love, nature, beauty, and the passage of time.
- **Genres and Forms**: Studying Herrick provides insights into various poetic forms used during the Jacobean and Caroline eras, including carpe diem poems, pastoral verse, and ceremonial poetry.

☐ **Historical Context**:

- **Jacobean and Caroline Period**: Herrick's life and works spanned the turbulent period of the English Civil War and the Restoration. His poetry reflects the cultural and political climate of 17th-century England, offering glimpses into daily life, social customs, and religious beliefs of the time.
- **Literary Circle**: Herrick was associated with the Cavalier poets, a group known for their loyalty to the monarchy and their celebration of pleasure, beauty, and love in poetry.

☐ **Cultural Significance**:

- **Religious and Philosophical Exploration**: Herrick's poetry often engages with themes of spirituality, morality, and the human condition. His religious poetry, in particular, reflects both traditional Anglican beliefs and a personal quest for spiritual meaning.
- **Influence of Classical Literature**: Herrick's familiarity with classical literature and mythology is evident in his poetic imagery and themes, contributing to the revival of classical ideals during the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

☐ **Literary Legacy**:

- **Influence on Later Poets**: Herrick's poetic craftsmanship and lyrical style influenced later generations of poets, including the Romantic poets of the 18th and 19th centuries. His focus on beauty, love, and the fleeting nature of life resonates in English poetry to this day.
- **Critical Reception**: Studying Herrick allows for an exploration of how his works have been interpreted and appreciated by critics over time, revealing shifting literary tastes and scholarly perspectives.

☐ **Gender and Identity**:

- **Representation of Gender**: Herrick's portrayal of women and femininity in his poetry offers insights into prevailing gender roles and expectations during the 17th century. His treatment of love and desire reflects contemporary attitudes towards romantic relationships and courtship.

9.2 Introduction

Almost forgotten in the 18th century, and in the 19th century alternately applauded for his poetry's lyricism and condemned for its "obscenities," Robert Herrick is, in the latter half of the 20th century, finally becoming recognized as one of the most accomplished nondramatic poets of his age. Long dismissed as merely a "minor poet" and, as a consequence, neglected or underestimated by scholars and critics, the achievement represented by his only book, the collection of poems entitled *Hesperides*: *Or, The Works Both Humane & Divine* (1648), is gradually coming to be more fully appreciated. While some of his individual poems—"To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time," "Upon Julia's Clothes," and "Corinna's going a Maying," for example—are among the most popular of all time, recent examinations of his *Hesperides* as a whole have begun to reveal a Herrick whose artistry in the arrangement of his volume approximates the artistry of his individual works and whose sensibility is complex but coherent, subtle as well as substantive. In short, Robert Herrick, who was proud to be one of "the Sons of Ben," has begun to be seen, along with his literary father Ben Jonson, as one of the most noteworthy figures of early-17th-century English poetry.

Robert Herrick, baptized on August 24, 1591, was the seventh child and fourth son of a London goldsmith, Nicholas Herrick, and Julian (or Juliana or Julia) Stone Herrick. He was little more than 14 months old when his father apparently committed suicide by "falling" from an upper story window of his house in Cheapside on November 9, 1592. His mother never remarried, and it seems more than a coincidence that father figures would loom large in the poet's *Hesperides*. One of that collection's best-known works, for example, is "To the reverend shade of his religious Father," in which Herrick resurrects his father by eternizing him in poetry: "For my life mortall, Rise from out thy Herse, / And take a life immortal from my Verse."

By age 16 Herrick was apprenticed to his uncle, but apparently found either Sir William Herrick or the goldsmith trade incompatible, for the ten-year apprenticeship was terminated after six years. At the comparatively advanced age of 22, Herrick matriculated at Saint John's College, Cambridge. Although his *Hesperides* would include a large number of commendatory poems to various relatives, none is addressed to Sir William. Extant, however, are 14 letters from young "Robin" to his uncle: full of filial humility, all ask for money out of the nephew's own inheritance, which was apparently still controlled

by Sir William. Limited means would eventually force Herrick to transfer to a less expensive college, Trinity Hall.

Between his graduation from Cambridge in 1617 and his appointment, 12 years later, as vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire, tantalizingly little is known about Herrick's life. It is almost certain, however, that some of this time was spent in London, where the budding poet at last found a surrogate father who lived up to his expectations, Ben Jonson. Paterfamilias to "the sons of Ben," eminent poet, dramatist, actor, man of letters, and London's literary lion, Jonson became the subject of five of Herrick's poems. Although all of the poems praise Jonson as an artist, the first two to appear in *Hesperides*, "Upon Master Ben. Johnson. Epigram" and "Another," are not without ambivalence toward yet another "father" who has died (1637) and left his "son" behind. In the gently humorous "His Prayer to Ben Jonson," Herrick implicitly promises the kind of "life immortal" (through his poem) that he had explicitly promised Nicholas Herrick in "To the reverend shade of his religious Father." The poet's ultimate contentment in his role as a "son of Ben" finds expression in the formality of his epitaph "Upon Ben Jonson" and in the intimacy and nostalgia of "An Ode for him."

9.3 The Influence of Ben Johnson

The influence of Ben Jonson, however, goes beyond these poetic tributes. More than any of the other "sons," Herrick follows Jonson's prescription for "writing well." For example, Jonson recommended reading "the best Authors," particularly "The Ancients," and Herrick has long been recognized for his more than nodding acquaintance with the works of classical writers such as the legendary Greek poet of wine, women, and song, Anacreon; and with Roman poets, especially Horace and Martial, but also Catullus, Tibullus, and Ovid (all of whom Herrick mentions, quotes, or borrows from). Although the ancients and the best moderns must be employed as models, Jonson counselled, the aspiring poet's own sensibility should be imposed on the borrowed subjects, themes, and styles. This injunction Herrick also obeys—in "Anacreontike," for example—in scores of classically styled epigrams, epitaphs, odes, and lyrics, and even in imitations of Jonson himself such as "Delight in Disorder." Jonson was also a strong proponent of revision, and thus Herrick, in "His request to Julia," writes, "Better 'was my Book was dead, / Then to live not perfected." Jonson finally admitted, however, that one cannot be a poet without endowments such as "nature," genius or talent, and "art," the kind of craftsmanship that can transform the stuff of human life into poetry. The endurance of Herrick's work and the growth of his reputation demonstrate that he possessed both.

In 1623 Herrick took holy orders, though there is no record of his being assigned to any particular parish. This step, at the mature age of 32, may indicate that he was unable to find preferment elsewhere. As a poet, however, public recognition would come his way in the form of a generous mention in Richard James's *The Muses Dirge* (1625). Despite this tribute and Herrick's evident itch for literary fame, his name did not by any means become a household word during his long lifetime.

9.4 Herrick's Activities

The next record of Herrick's activities is from 1627, when he became one of the several chaplains who accompanied George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, in a crusade to liberate French Protestants on the Isle of Rhé. A disastrous combination of illness among the troops, effective military action by the French, and a storm at sea while Buckingham's ships were retreating to England resulted in the loss of two-thirds of the expedition. Small wonder that shortly thereafter, in 1629, Herrick exchanged a life of danger for one of apparent safety by accepting a nomination to the vicarage of Dean Prior, a

hamlet in Devonshire, far to the southwest of London.

He was installed as vicar on October 29, 1630. To become a country parson at age 39 had to have been a radical change from Herrick's former life among literati, courtiers, and assorted military adventurers. The part of the West Country to which his new calling took him is even now largely rural: in the 17th century it was remote in the extreme. In 1630 the two nearest cities of size, Exeter to the northeast and Plymouth to the southwest, would both have been nearly a day's ride away. The capital was a five-day journey. Herrick's church, of Saint George the Martyr (which still stands), though attractive, was modest, and the adjacent vicarage (portions of which have been incorporated into the existing dwelling) was more modest still.

Herrick may have expected this post to be temporary. He had, after all, highly placed friends. Moreover (although their dating is not certain), works of his such as "A Christmas Caroll" and "The New-yeeres Gift" would be set to music by the well-known musician Henry Lawes and sung before King Charles I. Herrick also cultivated the royal family with a series of flattering poems. Indeed, the king, though he was nine years younger than Herrick, emerges in Hesperides as yet another father figure. In the encomium "To the King, Upon comming with his Army into the West, through a conflation of paternal archetypes Charles is presented as a tutelary deity, a husband, and a conquering hero. The king's declining fortunes in the 1640s, however, must have made it difficult to sustain faith in his power and in his capacity to protect and nurture, to be a father to his subjects. As intimated by Herrick's body of religious verse, His Noble Numbers (published with Hesperides), the needs that his natural and other fathers were unable to meet he comes to find in his Heavenly Father.

Herrick served as vicar of Dean Prior for 31 years with some interruptions. Herrick was every inch the Royalist (as his panegyrics to Charles I and Charles, Prince of Wales, make evident) and, if his religious poems are any indication, a rather traditional Anglican, even though he resided in a part of the country strongly sympathetic to the Puritan cause and, during the Civil War, to the parliamentary forces. Such parsons were anathema to the victorious Puritans, and in 1647 the poet was among the 142 Devonshire clergymen expelled from their parishes for their convictions. Returning to his post during the Restoration, Herrick served for 14 more years until his death at the end of harvest season in 1674.

About his expulsion Herrick must have had mixed feelings. He was, after all, a Londoner born and bred, university educated, and friend and acquaintance to some of the political and cultural powers of the land. In a poem with the explicitly autobiographical title of "To Dean-bourn, a rude river in Devon, by which sometimes he lived" (which may have been occasioned by his expulsion) Herrick rails, first, against the countryside, symbolized by this small stream:

Dean-bourn, farewell; I never look to see
Deane, or thy warty incivility.
Thy rockie bottome, that doth teare thy streams,
And makes them frantick, ev'n to all extreames;
To my content, I never sho'd behold,
Were thy streames silver, or thy rocks all gold.
Clearly, more than a river is on the poet's mind:

Rockie thou art; and rockie we discover
Thy men; and rockie are thy wayes all over.

O men, O manners; Now, and ever knowne
To be A Rockie Generation!
A people currish; churlish as the seas;
And rude (almost) as rudest Salvages.
With whom I did, and may re-sojourne when
Rockes turn to Rivers, Rivers turn to Men.

What the poem deplores is the primitiveness, not only of the countryside but of the people themselves, who represent nature unimproved by art—that is, by civilization and culture.

Another poem possibly inspired by Herrick's enforced departure from the West Country is "His Return to London." Here the emphasis shifts from the misery of time spent in "the dull confines of the drooping West" to the joys of London, "blest place of my Nativitie!" London is England's Rome—"O Place! O People! Manners! fram'd to please"—and Herrick's "home." Herrick does not consider himself banished from Dean Prior; he was banished to it: "by hard fate sent / Into a long and irksome banishment." He would rather die than return to Devonshire, and he asks that his "sacred Reliques" be buried in London.

Either these poems represent the artistic advantages of poetic license or Herrick changed his mind: in 1660 he personally petitioned to be returned to his former vicarage in "the drooping West," and that petition was granted. There is a good deal of evidence that Herrick was in fact employing exaggeration for poetic effect in "To Deanbourn" and "His Return to London." His attitude toward country life, like his attitudes on a wealth of topics (love and women, government, social class, even religion and poetry), was creatively ambivalent, as his well-known epigram "Discontents in Devon" demonstrates:

More discontents I never had
  Since I was born, then here;
Where I have been, and still am sad,
  In this dull Devon-shire:
Yet justly too I must confesse;
  I ne'r invented such
Ennobled numbers for the Presse,
  Then where I loath'd so much.

Musing on the mystery of creativity, on the relationship between milieu and productivity (as this most self-conscious poet does more than once), he has to conclude that for Robert Herrick the poet country life cannot be all bad. Even this grudging admission does not begin to suggest the vision of art and life that emerges from the more than 1,400 poems of Herrick's Hesperides. This fact, plus the very number and variety of these poems, as well as their arrangement (and thus their relationships to each other), make the issue of how Herrick's book should be approached a crucial one.

Today most readers encounter Herrick in anthology selections. That is, in a sense, how he was first read, in the days when a limited number of his poems circulated in manuscript. When he collected his oeuvre for publication, however, he clearly had something else in mind. He seems to have been the first poet—and still the only important poet—to gather practically all of his verses into one elaborately designed volume and see it through the presses. From the beginning of that volume Herrick makes it plain that he expects his audience to read his entire book, to read it in the order in which it is printed, and, above all, to read it with understanding and appreciation. Then as now, such an understanding

and appreciation require that the reader develop some kind of approach to the text, and here Herrick volunteers his services.

Hesperides is the only major collection of poetry in English to open with a versified table of contents. This guide hints strongly at what type of poet Herrick thinks he is, and thus, by implication, how his book is to be approached. "The Argument of his Book" begins, "I Sing"—suggesting Herrick sees himself as a lyric poet—"of Brooks, of Blossomes, Birds, and Bowers: / Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers"—suggesting he is also a pastoral poet. Pastoral poets, of course, valorize a life lived close to the beauties of nature (often opposing it to life lived in the decadent city) and idealize that life by focusing on the countryside in its most benign seasons. Elsewhere in Hesperides there is ample warrant for approaching Herrick as a pastoral poet, even though not all nor even most of his poems can be classified as bucolic.

Another approach to Herrick's collection, however, may be hinted at in succeeding lines of "The Argument of his Book": "I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes, / Of Bride-grooms, Brides, and of their Bridall-Cakes." Maypoles and hockcarts (wagons in which the last fruits of the harvest are brought in) suggest English country life and, consequently, domesticated (rather than Greek, Roman, or biblical) pastoral. Love, of course, is also a common subject of bucolic poetry, but all of the images in these particular lines also have to do with ceremonies—special, often sanctified, events that figure importantly in human life and are fraught with significance as well as emotion. Poetry, or at least the reading of it, can be thought of as a kind of ritual, so perhaps Herrick is indicating here that he is a poet of ceremony and a ceremonial poet. Elsewhere in Hesperides there is warrant for taking this approach as well. Lines 5 and 6 of Herrick's "Argument" begin with a different phrase, "I write"—less suggestive of a lyric poet—"of Youth, of Love, and have Accesse / By these, to sing of cleanly-Wantonnesse." Although youth, love, and sex (Herrick's memorable phrase suggests sex without sin, something of a novel notion in the 17th century) have traditionally been subjects of lyric poetry, "I write" may hint at the hundreds of epigrams on amatory themes and the score of other subjects that are scattered throughout Hesperides. A productive approach to Herrick's collection must also accommodate these short, pithy poems that treat something other than bucolic or ceremonial themes.

In the remainder of "The Argument" Herrick indexes his other subjects—some natural, such as "Dewes" and "Raines, "Spice, and Amber-Greece," some philosophical, such as transiency ("Times transshifting"), and some supernatural, such as "the Fairie-King." Herrick concludes by announcing that he is also a religious poet and a Christian man: "I write of Hell; I sing (and ever shall) / Of Heaven, and hope to have it after all." Herrick's list is by no means exhaustive. He does not tell the reader that Hesperides includes political poems, ranging from flattering portraits of royalty and nobility to acerbic comments on government officials, practices, and policies. Nor does Herrick forewarn the reader that the collection also includes shockingly naturalistic, even scatological, epigrams. He also does not reveal that Hesperides is historically and morally grounded in numerous poems that pay tribute to an assortment of relatives, friends, and patrons (much as his "Father Jonson" so often did) by transforming them into representations of a Christian-humanistic ethos. In addition, Herrick only hints at the existence of his poems of the good life, works that, in the Cavalier tradition, celebrate friendship and sociability, the pleasures of fine food and drink, of conviviality in general.

The poet's more sober, philosophical vein, which surfaces in so many of the most important works in Hesperides, is signaled by the memorable phrase "Times trans-shifting"—the notion that everything that lives is subject to temporality and flux. Decline and death are inevitable. Though a Christian priest,

Herrick is capable of contemplating death without transfiguration, seeing the grave as the end of all that is good, as ultimate oblivion, nothingness. He views this grim possibility with equanimity, with a poise that is intellectual as well as emotional. Like the classical Stoic, he responds to the prospect of his inevitable death by affirming life, but life lived modestly and taken as it comes, the bad with the good. Like the serious Epicurean, Herrick seeks to maximize pleasure and minimize pain by following the classical principle of moderation. Even the good life, in Herrick's vision, tends to be scaled down to modest expectations: love and friendship, good food and drink, ordinary pastimes, and, above all, poetry.

Although he is not always solemn, Herrick is often serious, and he takes "good verses" seriously indeed. No English poet of importance is so involved in writing poetry about poetry, about its readers, about poets, and about himself as a poet. Self-referential poems interspersed throughout Hesperides are among the book's most memorable. Some are self-presentations: for example, "The bad season makes the poet sad" shows Herrick pondering why the Civil War has stifled his creativity, and "Upon his Verses" slyly declares that (unlike some poets) he is no plagiarist. At times Herrick waxes philosophical, contemplating the relationship between life and art metaphorically in "Delight in Disorder," for instance, or avuncular, as when he leaves to posterity his "Lyrick for Legacies."

Posterity, in fact, is much on Herrick's mind. Time and time again he reiterates his faith in "the eternizing power of poetry." This theme combines his poems about poetry with his neo-Stoical vein: since, as the title of one epigram proclaims, "Poetry perpetuates the poet," as well as the poet's subjects, Herrick can triumph over "Times trans-shifting" and live beyond death through his verses. Hesperides thus becomes his eternal monument, preserving his name and his fame forever:

Trust to good Verses, then;
  They onley will aspire,
When Pyramids, as men,
  Are lost, i'th' funerall fire.

The title of the poem in which these lines appear, "To Live Merrily, and to Trust to Good Verses," has sometimes been regarded as encapsulating the spirit of Hesperides. Such a view is too reductive to be entirely valid, but also too much in the neighborhood of the truth to be dismissed out of hand. Herrick exhibits an almost Roman gusto for the good life, and to such a life poetry is central. Poetry, however, is also connected with death, or with the denial of death.

For Herrick poetry becomes a secular religion and the symbolic foundation of Hesperides. The last work in the collection is a pattern poem in the shape of a classical column, "The Pillar of Fame." On this pillar made of words Herrick's collected "humane works" symbolically rest, just as Herrick's art is grounded in the belief that it can secure eternal fame for him, be a monument "Out-during Marble, Brasse, or Jet." It is not an entirely misplaced belief: Robert Herrick, the obscure country parson and sometime poet, today is better known than most of the famous and infamous of his age.

Herrick never married, and literary gossips have reveled in speculations about the identities of the 14 "mistresses" (in the 17th century, inamoratas, lady friends, or merely admired acquaintances) to whom he addressed 158 poems. Whether they were flesh and blood or, as modern consensus has it, pretty fictions, is of little consequence: Herrick is only conforming to the common poetic practice of the time when he addresses his uniformly young and beautiful Julias, Corinnas, and Antheas. Where he does not conform is in his penning of romantic verses to identifiable women whose real names he supplies—

for example, Elizabeth Wheeler, Lettice Yard, and Katherine Bradshaw. His poems to these flesh-and-blood, well-born ladies, however, tend to be more "cleanly" than "wanton."

Herrick's love poetry ranges from the bawdy ("The Vine") to the neo-Petrarchan ("To Anthea, who may command him anything"). That range, but also Herrick's normative representation of love, makes "cleanly-Wantonnesse" an apt phrase to characterize his amatory verses. The phrase suggests an accommodation between nature and civilization, between life and art, and between the romantic and the sexual that reflects Herrick's inclination toward the via media.

In addition to the love complaints and celebrations of the mistress so common to 17th-century love poetry, Herrick also treats subjects readers might think of as "modern." For example, one poem, frequently anthologized, is "Upon Julia's Clothes":

When as in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave Vibration each way free;
O how that glittering taketh me!

Herrick also brings his "invention" to bear upon more traditional forms of love poetry. For example, in "To Phillis to love and live with him," he avoids much of what had become the clichés of the invitation-to-love by shifting the scene of this pastoral subgenre indoors and having the lover woo the lady with citified gifts. Another pastoral invitation-poem with a difference, "Corinna's going a Maying," is one of Herrick's most admired work. Here the lady is being seduced out of bed to join in the ceremonies of May Day, when the town goes into the country to gather greenery, thereby transforming the country into the town and vice versa. What makes the poem most memorable is its final stanza, where Herrick, with his customary Stoic realism, reminds Corinna (and his reader) that, as creatures of nature, we are all subject to time, that time flies, and thus youth and love are not forever:

Come, let us goe, while we are in our prime;
And take the harmlesse follie of the time.
  We shall grow old apace, and die
  Before we know our liberty.
  Our life is short; and our dayes run
  As fast away as do's the Sunne;
And as a vapour, or a drop of raine
Once lost, can ne'r be found againe:
  So when or you or I are made
  A fable, song, or fleeting shade;
  All love, all liking, all delight
  Lies drown'd with us in endlesse night.
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying;
Come, my Corinna, come, let's goe a Maying.

It is but another step to the grim vision of Andrew Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress," which likewise denies that love can offer transcendence

Critical consensus holds that Herrick is also particularly successful in the genre of the marriage poem. He wrote two of them, both for actual weddings, and they are among the longest and most ambitious of his efforts. Both are ceremonial works in a dual sense: they depict and elevate the rituals that follow the marriage service and, as ceremonial works themselves, they participate in those rituals. "A Nuptiall Song" is especially noteworthy for its intricate prosody, lush imagery, and humor combined with pathos. The poet who lived a single life and revealed in "No spouse but a Sister" that he could be more than a little cynical about wedded bliss—

A Bachelour I will
Live as I have liv'd still,
And never take a wife
To crucifie my life

—also waxed eloquent about other people's weddings and even acknowledge the possibility of a "pleasing wife." The latter phrase comes from a poem entitled "His age," in which Herrick fantasizes himself not only old, but married with a son. He imagines his "young / Iülus" singing and reading his father's love lyrics, eventually leading "old" Herrick to conclude that, when all is said and done, "No lust there's like to Poetry."

Herrick's invention is notable too in that poetic mode with which he most identifies himself, the pastoral. He can write the most conventional sort of Arcadian dialogue, but is more likely, to take his classical models and English them, as he does in "The Country life." This poem, addressed to his high-ranking friend and patron, Endymion Porter, after drawing a conventional contrast between the "Sweet Country life" and the frantic existence to be found in "Courts, and Cities," goes on to follow Porter as he makes the rounds of his rural estate. Here classical images of "enameld Meads" (picture-perfect meadows) and piping shepherds are mixed with more familiar vignettes, such as a whistling plowman, and native English pastimes such as the "Morris-dance."

In the similarly titled "A Country life," another Anglicized pastoral, Herrick praises his older brother Thomas for being one who "Could'st leave the City, for exchange, to see / The Countries sweet simplicity." The poem, indeed, advises practicing rural simplicity and cultivating rural innocence, and it gradually develops an ethos of as well as a prescription for the good life. Herrick describes his brother as a person who possesses a good conscience, who understands and applies the principle of moderation in all things, including love. In aphorism after aphorism Herrick builds up the kind of portrait of the ideal person that his ethical epigrams and personal encomiums also paint. Such a person should be Stoical, like Thomas—"thou liv'st fearlesse; and thy face ne'r shewes / Fortune when she comes or goes"—and should be satisfied with what the countryside affords, for "Content makes all Ambrosia." Amid such familiar English sounds as "singing Crickits by thy fire" and English sights such as a "green-ey'd Kitling" chasing a "brisk Mouse," Thomas realizes that "Wealth cannot make a life, but Love." Such aphorisms, embedded in a pastoral-advisive poem, indicate how Herrick synthesizes his bucolic, ritualistic, and epigrammatic strains.

Most pastoral poets tend to be city types nostalgic for a golden age or for an impossible rural ideal. Herrick is appreciative of the native English country culture, but he is at the same time aware of its socioeconomic base. Herrick explores relationships between social class and perception in the poem entitled "The Hock-cart, or Harvest home." This too is a ceremonial as well as a pastoral work, for not only is its subject a country ritual but the poem itself is structured like a ritual: as speaker, Herrick

74

serves as the master of the revels for this celebration of the end of the harvest on the estate of his friend, the earl of Westmorland. Herrick calls together the farmhands, the "Sons of Summer," whose physical labors support their betters (like himself and Westmorland), and invites the earl to enjoy the sights and sounds of the various folk rituals. The poet then urges the "brave boys" into the great hall for a feast and a series of toasts—first, of course, "to your Lords health," then "to the Plough (the Common-wealth)," that is, the symbol of the agricultural economy upon which all subsist. In the very midst of the festivities, however, Herrick bluntly reminds these laborers that although they, like oxen, fatten up in this time of plenty, both men and animals must in the spring go back to working the land. In conclusion Herrick recalls to them the economic foundations of the master-servant relationship:

And, you must know, your Lords word's true,
Feed him ye must, whose food fils you.
And that this pleasure is like raine,
Not sent ye for to drowne your paine,
But for to make it spring againe.

This is real-world pastoral in which landowners and laborers exist in a symbiotic relationship and holidays help insure that farm work ("your paine") will resume when springtime comes.

Herrick may be the only important English poet to refer to his housemaid in his poetry (and he does so more than once). Such things do not make the old Royalist a democrat, but they do say something about his sensibility, which it would be presumptuous to call "modern." He recognizes that ordinary people and ordinary life can be as much the stuff of poetry as great ones and glamour. The poem goes on to illustrate the principle "What ever comes"—whether it be garden vegetables, modest housing, freedom from debt, or sound sleep—"content makes sweet." The country life is a quiet and private life—"We blesse our Fortunes, when we see / Our own beloved privacie"—and, for this famestruck poet, one of surprisingly agreeable anonymity: "[We] like our living, where w'are known / To very few, or else to none."

"A Thanksgiving to God, for his House" is likewise everyday pastoral, this time in the shape of an informal, rambling, and genial prayer. Herrick's vicarage alongside the Exeter-Plymouth road is a "little house, whose humble Roof / Is weatherproof; / Under the sparres of which I lie / Both soft, and drie." The idealized self-image he presents here is one that accords well with this house: he thanks God for his humility—"Low is my porch, as is my Fate"—for his charity and hospitality, for simple food such as "my beloved Beet," for "Wassaile Bowles to drink," and for a "teeming Hen" and "healthfull Ewes." One central domestic image of universal appeal sums up this poet's content in the country:

Some brittle sticks of Thorne or Briar
    Make me a fire,
Close by whose living coale I sit,
    And glow like it.

Herrick's images allow one to believe that this former university wit, man-about-London, military veteran, and friend of the great is genuinely thankful for his humble country living in Dean Prior:

All these, and better Thou dost send
    Me, to this end,

That I should render, for my part,
    A thankfull heart[.]

"A Thanksgiving to God, for his House" is to be found in Herrick's collection of religious poetry, His Noble Numbers: Or, His Pious Pieces, and an overarching pattern of that collection may help explain why, despite his own protestations, Herrick returned to his West Country vicarage after the Restoration. Although bound with the 1648 Hesperides, His Noble Numbers has its own title page bearing a 1647 date, which suggests that the work may have been intended to be printed earlier and separately. Whatever the reasons for deciding to combine the two books, the result was a happy one. Although it has been something of a critical cliché that this successful secular poet strangely fails as a sacred one, Herrick is one poet, not two, and his collections are linked thematically, stylistically, structurally, and by the author's "unifying personality." The neo-Stoicism of the secular verse had since the Middle Ages been seen as eminently compatible with a Christian ethos, and so it proves to be in both of Herrick's collections. Likewise, the pastoral stance of Hesperides reappears in His Noble Numbers, though less frequently. As might be expected in the case of religious verse, Herrick's epigrammatic and ceremonial modes predominate. His tendency to experiment with the length of his lines and to employ short lines (more than any other notable English poet) is almost as apparent in His Noble Numbers as in Hesperides. The majority of the "Pious Pieces," like the poems in Hesperides, cannot be dated, but it is reasonable to assume that, just as Herrick wrote secular verse after he took holy orders, as a good Christian he probably wrote a certain amount of religious poetry before he became a priest. Moreover, it is the case that poems in Hesperides, especially those in the philosophical or meditative modes, can be viewed as pious pieces in the broader sense of that phrase.

In contrast to the originality and smooth assuredness of "The Argument of his Book," the opening poem of His Noble Numbers is the ritualistic "His Confession," which begs God to forgive all of Herrick's works of "wanton wit"—the poems, ironically, that would win him his fame. The next poem, "His Prayer for Absolution," repeats this refrain, begging pardon for his "unbaptized Rhimes" (which Herrick nonetheless printed) "Writ in my wild unhallowed Times." These retraction-poems express the tension many 17th-century writers experienced between their desire to write secular verse and their sense of obligation to their faith.

These two poems are followed by a series of seven epigrams in which Herrick assumes the role of theologian (interestingly enough, the vicar of Dean Prior never explicitly adopts the role of priest in this collection). These succinct poems paradoxically explore the nature but ultimate unknowability of God. Many of the sacred epigrams in the collection are theological in nature, some of them quite abstract and abstruse, thus disproving the view that Herrick's religion is "childlike." Everywhere, the figure of the deity is dominant. In the first third of His Noble Numbers, God tends to be a remote figure who is both threatening and benign. Poems in which the Heavenly Father punishes his wicked children far outnumber those in which he exhibits paternal love. The initial third of Herrick's "Pious Pieces" also includes "His Creed," a poem that, because it sets forth the most basic Christian doctrine in 16 terse lines—as any versified catechism should—has led critics who have failed to read carefully all of His Noble Numbers to characterize the poet's Christianity as "simplistic."

The second third of Herrick's sacred collection is marked by several ambitious lyrics on the infant Christ. Indeed, the Son of God figures more prominently in the middle section than in the first, and the effect is to soften the image of the Almighty as a punishing father. Consequently, the initial ambivalence about God expressed early in His Noble Numbers begins to dissipate. The most original poem in this group, however, "The white Island: or place of the Blest," exhibits a mood and tone that

are mixed, even elusive. The image of heaven as a white island seems to have been Herrick's own, and not all readers will find it congenial. In contrast to existence on Earth (characterized as "the Isle of Dreames"), in "that Whiter Island" above, "Things are evermore sincere; / Candor here, and lustre there / Delighting." Readers may be forgiven if they find Herrick's promises of abstract "Pleasures" and "fresh joyes" unconvincing. This poem is one of very few in which Herrick's intentions are unclear, reminding the reader, perhaps, how of the Earth, earthy, he is.

The final third of His Noble Numbers, like the rest of the collection, is made up mainly of sacred epigrams, almost any of which could serve as a kind of versified "text" on which a sermon could be based. Many of these epigrams, such as "Predestination," offer succinct explanations of Christian doctrine or, such as "Almes," are advisory or admonitory in nature. More personal is an important work in this part of the collection, "His meditation upon Death," whose speaker sounds very much like the neo-Stoical Herrick of the secular poems—that is, one who professes to be "content" even if his earthly hours are numbered, and "indifferent" if a long life lies before him: living well, not long, is the key. Herrick vows to contemplate his own death every night when he retires, to "shun the least Temptation to a sin," and expresses quiet confidence that, if he dies, he will "rise triumphant in my Funerall." But what most marks this final group of religious poems is its emphasis upon a more human and humane deity. For example, one of several prayers entitled "To God" asks the Almighty to set aside the kind of "stately terrors" that evoked such anxiety from Herrick in the first third of the collection, urging God to "talke with me familiarly," to become the kind of nurturing father figure the poet has sought for so long. Another poem named "To God" serves in a sense as the valediction of Herrick's book. It asks his Heavenly Father to do what this poet has requested of a succession of friends, relatives, and patrons throughout Hesperides—to place a crown of "Lawrell" on his brow. "That done," Herrick concludes, "with Honour Thou dost me create / Thy Poet, and Thy Prophet Lawreat." His final image of the sacred poet, then, is identical to that of John Milton—as one who not only writes religious verse but through whom God himself can speak.

His Noble Numbers is actually brought to a close, however, with a dramatic series of ten poems on the Crucifixion and its aftermath, described as if the speaker (and the reader) are actual witnesses of the events. The first of these, "Good Friday: Rex Tragicus, or Christ going to His Crosse," is one of Herrick's most ambitious sacred works, an internal "dialogue of one" with this "markt-out man," who must "this day act the Tragedian," with the Cross for his stage. The Crucifixion scene is vividly evoked by theatrical metaphor, by Herrick's mordantly witty descriptions of the "audience," and through dramatic irony (the reader, for example, knows what part "that sowre Fellow, with his vinegar" will eventually play in this tragedy).

With similar artistic boldness, Herrick, in "His Saviours words, going to the Crosse," has Christ touchingly describe himself as "a man of misierie!" A pattern poem in the shape of a cross follows, and the collection concludes with three works in which Herrick continues his role as a biblical character, here an Everyman who seeks out "his Saviours Sepulcher," and discovers, in "His coming to the Sepulcher," that "my sweet Savior's gone!" But instead of the predictable celebration of the Resurrection to climax the poem (and indeed the collection as a whole), Herrick portrays himself as bewildered by the absence of Christ's body, wondering, "Is He, from hence, gone to the shades beneath, / To vanquish Hell, as here He conquer'd Death?" Then, like a newly fledged hero of faith, Herrick vows, "If so; I'le thither follow, without feare; / And live in Hell, if that my Christ stayes there." The envisioned scenario is extraordinary and perhaps unprecedented. The poem itself, indeed the sequence which it concludes, is a tour de force, as striking an ending to Herrick's collection as "The Argument of his Book" and its self-referential successors are a beginning.

9.5 His Return to London

From the dull confines of the drooping west
To see the day spring from the pregnant east,
Ravish'd in spirit, I come, nay more, I fly
To thee, blest place of my nativity!
Thus, thus with hallow'd foot I touch the ground,
With thousand blessings by thy fortune crown'd.
O fruitful genius! that bestowest here
An everlasting plenty, year by year.
O place! O people! Manners! fram'd to please
All nations, customs, kindreds, languages!
I am a free-born Roman; suffer then
That I amongst you live a citizen.
London my home is, though by hard fate sent
Into a long and irksome banishment;
Yet since call'd back, henceforward let me be,
O native country, repossess'd by thee!
For, rather than I'll to the west return,
I'll beg of thee first here to have mine urn.
Weak I am grown, and must in short time fall;
Give thou my sacred relics burial.

9.6 Poem Analysis

Themes of Returning to London in Poetry:

1. **Nostalgia and Memory**:
   o **Perspective 1**: Some poems may present returning to London as a journey back to familiar streets, sights, and memories. It could evoke feelings of nostalgia for places visited in the past or moments shared with loved ones.
   o **Perspective 2**: Conversely, other poems might depict returning to London as a bittersweet experience, where the city has changed or evolved, and the poet feels a sense of loss or disconnection from their memories.
2. **Cityscape and Atmosphere**:
   o **Perspective 3**: Poems could focus on the physical and sensory experiences of London—the bustling streets, the sounds, the architecture, and the diversity of people. This perspective might emphasize the city's energy and dynamism.
   o **Perspective 4**: Alternatively, poems might portray London as a place of solitude or contemplation, where the poet finds moments of introspection amidst the urban chaos.
3. **Cultural and Historical Context**:
   o **Perspective 5**: Poems might draw on historical or cultural references associated with London, such as its literary heritage, landmarks, or significant events. This perspective could explore how the city's past influences its present identity.

- **Perspective 6**: Poems could also engage with London's multiculturalism and diversity, highlighting the interactions and intersections of different cultures, languages, and communities within the city.

Examples from Literature:

- **William Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802"**: This poem reflects on the beauty and tranquillity of London in the early morning, capturing the poet's awe at the city's majesty.
- **T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"**: While not solely focused on London, Eliot's modernist epic poem alludes to various aspects of urban life, including London, portraying it as a fragmented and disillusioned cityscape.
- **John Betjeman's "The Cockney Amorist"**: This poem humorously celebrates the charms and quirks of London's working-class neighbourhoods, evoking a sense of affection and warmth towards the city.

Each of these examples offers different perspectives on the theme of London in poetry, showcasing how poets interpret and portray the city through their unique literary lenses. If "Return to London" refers to a specific poem or poet not covered here, providing more details would help refine the analysis further.

9.7 Summary

In the absence of such evidence, it is difficult to determine the kind of reception *Hesperides* received on its publication in 1648. The time, certainly, was far from propitious. Herrick's world, riven and exhausted by the Civil War, would be turned completely upside down with the execution, only a year later, of the king to whom he had been so devoted. What is certain is that his book did not explode upon the literary scene nor did it, during his lifetime, bring him the literary fame he so avidly desired. He lived for 26 more years and died a poor country parson, whom no fellow poet seems to have commemorated with a verse epitaph, much less an elegy. Most remarkably, in those 26 years, he appears to have ceased to write poetry: no extant poem from that period can with absolute certainty be attributed to him. It is as if the composition of all of those 1,402 "Works Both Humane & Divine" and their painstaking arrangement had exhausted Herrick's creativity. He may have been embittered by his fate as a poet, and as a man, but one doubts it. Herrick was at once a realist about art and life and an optimist, one who knew all about careless readers and carping critics but who could still hope for a favourable judgment from time. That hope, of course, has been realized. Just as he predicted, Herrick's tombstone has vanished, but in the last one hundred years at least, his better monument, his poetry, has led to his becoming more widely loved and more profoundly respected than even he, dreaming of literary immortality in remotest Devonshire, might have imagined.

9.8 Key Points

- Some of these <u>rhymes</u> are less perfect than others. For example, "fly" and "nativity" require one to alter their pronunciation in order to make the words <u>rhyme</u>. Otherwise, they are half or <u>slant rhymes</u>. This means that the words are connected due to a similarity in <u>assonance</u> (vowel sounds) or <u>consonance</u> (consonant sounds).

- There are a number of instances within the text in which Herrick makes use assonance. For example, in line three with the words "thee" and "nativity." Due to the similarity in their long "e" sounds these two words are also an example of <u>internal rhyme</u>. There are other examples of <u>perfect rhyme</u> within the lines as well, such as in line fifteen with "me" and "be". There are also other less obvious examples, such as in line eleven with the words "am" and "Roman".

9.9 Review Questions

1. How does the poem portray the speaker's emotions and reflections upon returning to London?
2. What imagery does the poet use to evoke the atmosphere and setting of London?
3. Who is the speaker in the poem, and what can be inferred about their background and experiences?
4. Analyze the poet's choice of language and poetic devices (such as metaphor, simile, rhyme scheme, etc.). How do these contribute to the poem's meaning and impact?
5. Consider the historical context in which the poem was written. How does this context inform our understanding of the poem's themes and imagery?

9.10 References

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UNIT 10: THE AGE AND POETRY

STRUCTURE

10.1 Objectives

➢ Understanding Enlightenment Principles: To explore the core principles of the Enlightenment, including reason, empiricism, individual rights, and the social contract, and how these ideas emerged in response to the political, social, and scientific contexts of the time.

➢ Analyzing Key Thinkers: To examine the contributions of significant Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Mary Wollstonecraft, and to understand their influence on modern political thought and human rights.

➢ Exploring the Impact on Politics: To analyze how Enlightenment ideas shaped the development of democratic systems and revolutions, particularly the American and French Revolutions, and to assess the long-term implications of these changes on governance and citizenship.

➢ Investigating the Role of Science: To investigate the relationship between the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, highlighting how scientific advancements fostered a spirit of inquiry and contributed to the broader cultural movement.

➢ Evaluating Humanism and Individualism: To explore the Enlightenment's promotion of humanism and individualism, examining how these concepts influenced literature, arts, and the perception of human dignity and moral responsibility.

10.2 Introduction

The Age of Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, spanned the late 17th century to the 18th century and marked a significant turning point in European intellectual history. This era was characterized by a profound shift in the way people thought about knowledge, reason, and the human condition. It emerged in the context of societal upheaval, including the decline of absolute monarchies, the impact of the Scientific Revolution, and the questioning of traditional religious beliefs. Enlightenment thinkers, including philosophers, scientists, and writers, sought to understand the world through reason and empirical evidence, challenging established doctrines and advocating for individual rights, social justice, and the betterment of humanity. This intellectual movement laid the groundwork for modern democratic principles and human rights, fundamentally altering the relationship between individuals and their governments.

The Enlightenment also fostered a flourishing of literature and poetry, with writers using their works as a platform to explore the human experience and express their ideas about society, politics, and morality. Poetry in this age became a powerful medium for reflecting the values of reason, nature, and the pursuit of happiness, while also critiquing the existing social and political order. Influential poets such as Alexander Pope, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Johnson emerged during this period, each contributing to the literary landscape in distinct ways. Pope, for instance, was known for his satirical verse that tackled social issues and human folly, famously encapsulated in works like The Rape of the Lock and An Essay on Man. His use of wit and irony helped to critique the moral and social values of his time, while also advocating for a rational understanding of humanity's place in the universe.

In contrast, the later part of the Enlightenment gave rise to the Romantic movement, which sought to emphasize emotion, individualism, and the beauty of nature, marking a shift away from the Enlightenment's focus on reason. Poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge celebrated the sublime aspects of nature and the depth of human emotion in their works, encapsulated in their collaborative piece, Lyrical Ballads (1798). This collection is often credited with ushering in the Romantic era, reflecting a growing belief in the importance of personal experience and emotional authenticity. The transition from Enlightenment ideals to Romantic sensibilities reveals the complexities of this period, highlighting the tensions between reason and emotion, individualism and social responsibility, as poets navigated the evolving landscape of human thought and experience.

As the Enlightenment progressed, it also saw the rise of the novel as a popular literary form, allowing for more extensive explorations of character and society. Authors like Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson created works that delved into the intricacies of human relationships and moral dilemmas, often reflecting the broader societal changes brought about by Enlightenment thinking. The interplay between poetry and prose during this time illustrates the dynamic nature of literature, as writers sought to engage with the ideas of their time while also pushing the boundaries of form and expression. The legacy of this literary output remains significant today, as it continues to shape our understanding of individuality, social justice, and the role of reason in shaping human experiences.

In conclusion, the Age of Enlightenment was a pivotal era that profoundly influenced literature and poetry. Through their works, poets and writers not only engaged with the intellectual currents of their time but also contributed to the broader discourse on human rights, democracy, and the value of individual experience. As we examine the poetry of this age, we uncover the complex interplay between reason and emotion, societal critique, and the celebration of the human spirit, illuminating the enduring relevance of Enlightenment thought in contemporary discussions about identity, freedom, and the nature of progress.

10.3 Cavalier Poetry

Cavalier poetry emerged in the early to mid-17th century, primarily during the reign of King Charles I of England. It is characterized by its embrace of the Royalist ideals of loyalty and elegance, reflecting the values of the courtly lifestyle and the aesthetics of the aristocracy. The term "Cavalier" itself refers to supporters of the king during the English Civil War, and the poetry associated with this movement often encapsulated the themes of love, beauty, and the transient nature of life. Cavalier poets celebrated the pleasures of life, often using wit and charm to express their sentiments. This poetry served as both an artistic form and a political statement, as its writers sought to convey their loyalty to the monarchy

amidst the turbulence of a society on the brink of civil conflict.

One of the defining features of Cavalier poetry is its focus on carpe diem—the idea of seizing the day. Poets such as Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, and Sir John Suckling captured the essence of this philosophy through their exploration of love, beauty, and the fleeting nature of youth. Herrick's famous lines from "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" encapsulate this sentiment, urging young women to embrace their youth and beauty before it fades. This celebration of youth and desire is woven into the fabric of Cavalier poetry, where love is portrayed not only as a passionate pursuit but also as an opportunity to savor the moment, highlighting the tension between the ephemeral nature of life and the enduring desire for connection and pleasure.

The style of Cavalier poetry is marked by its lyrical quality and formal elegance. The poets often employed traditional forms such as the sonnet and the lyric, utilizing meter and rhyme to create a musical quality in their verse. This emphasis on structure is evident in the works of Lovelace, whose poem "To Althea, from Prison" showcases both the beauty of language and the depth of emotion. Despite the constraints of his imprisonment, Lovelace's verses express an unwavering spirit and loyalty, intertwining personal experience with broader themes of freedom and devotion. The musicality and rhythm of Cavalier poetry served not only to enhance the aesthetic experience but also to convey the underlying emotions and passions of the poets, reflecting their own lives and the societal context in which they wrote.

Furthermore, Cavalier poetry often features lush imagery and classical allusions, drawing inspiration from the ancients to elevate the themes of love and beauty. Poets frequently employed metaphors derived from nature, mythology, and classical literature, which added layers of meaning and resonance to their work. For example, Herrick's use of pastoral imagery evokes a sense of idealized beauty and harmony, while Lovelace's references to Greek mythology reflect the timelessness of love and longing. This rich imagery not only serves to beautify the poetry but also reinforces the poets' ideals of loyalty, romance, and the pursuit of happiness, creating a tapestry of emotion and thought that resonates with readers across time.

Cavalier poets also distinguished themselves from their contemporaries, particularly the Metaphysical poets like John Donne, who focused on abstract themes and complex conceits. While Metaphysical poetry often delved into intricate philosophical explorations of love and existence, Cavalier poetry remained more straightforward and accessible, emphasizing a more sensual and immediate experience. The light-heartedness and playfulness of Cavalier verse provided a counterpoint to the heavier themes of the Metaphysical poets, allowing for a diverse literary landscape that engaged with different facets of human experience. This distinction not only highlights the varying approaches to poetry during this period but also reflects the social and political dynamics at play, as Cavalier poets positioned themselves in support of the monarchy and the aristocratic way of life.

As the English Civil War unfolded and the Royalist cause ultimately faced defeat, the context for Cavalier poetry shifted. The subsequent rise of the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell marked a decline in the courtly values that had inspired Cavalier verse, leading many poets to either flee or adapt their work to the new political landscape. Despite this decline, the legacy of Cavalier poetry endured, influencing later generations of poets and writers. The themes of love, beauty, and the celebration of life resonated through subsequent literary movements, and the poetic forms and styles developed by Cavalier poets continued to shape the evolution of English poetry.

In conclusion, Cavalier's poetry represents a vibrant and essential part of 17th-century English literature, characterized by its celebration of life, love, and loyalty to the monarchy. Through its emphasis on carpe diem, lyrical beauty, and lush imagery, Cavalier's poetry captures the essence of its time while also providing a timeless exploration of human emotions and experiences. Despite the political turmoil that marked its context, the elegance and charm of Cavalier's verse continue to resonate with readers, highlighting the enduring power of poetry to reflect and shape the human experience.

10.4 Religious and Devotional Poetry

Religious and devotional poetry emerged as a significant literary genre, particularly during the medieval and early modern periods, reflecting the deep spiritual and theological concerns of the time. This form of poetry served not only as a means of artistic expression but also as a vehicle for exploring the complexities of faith, worship, and the relationship between the divine and the human. Religious poetry often drew on scriptural themes, liturgical practices, and personal reflections on the nature of God, salvation, and the human soul's journey. Poets used this genre to engage with profound questions of existence and morality, offering insights into the divine and the spiritual experience, while simultaneously addressing the communal aspects of faith and the rituals that bind believers together.

One of the most prominent figures in religious poetry is John Donne, whose works encompass both secular and sacred themes, but are deeply rooted in a profound spiritual quest. His metaphysical poetry often grapples with the tension between earthly love and divine love, showcasing his complex relationship with faith. Poems like "Holy Sonnet 10" exemplify Donne's exploration of mortality and salvation, using vivid imagery and intricate metaphors to convey the struggle for understanding and connection with God. Through his contemplative verses, Donne invites readers to reflect on their own spiritual journeys, emphasizing the personal nature of faith and the transformative power of divine love. His ability to intertwine the intellectual with the emotional creates a rich tapestry of devotion that resonates with readers seeking meaning in their own lives.

Similarly, George Herbert, another influential religious poet, used his work to explore the intricacies of faith and the nature of God. In his collection The Temple, Herbert employed innovative forms and structures to reflect his spiritual struggles and insights. Poems like "Love (III)" and "The Altar" convey a deep sense of humility and devotion, inviting readers into an intimate dialogue with the divine. Herbert's use of intricate imagery and metaphysical conceits captures the tension between the human experience and divine grace, highlighting the transformative power of love and forgiveness. His poetry exemplifies the practice of devotional writing, where the act of composing verse becomes a form of prayer and meditation, bridging the gap between the poet and God.

In addition to the works of Donne and Herbert, the genre of religious poetry also flourished through the contributions of other poets like Andrew Marvell and Robert Herrick, who infused their verses with spiritual themes while maintaining a sense of lyrical beauty. Marvell's poem "The Garden" reflects on the spiritual significance of nature and the divine order of creation, merging pastoral imagery with philosophical contemplation. Herrick, while primarily known for his carpe diem themes, also incorporated religious elements into his poetry, exploring the relationships between faith, nature, and the sacredness of human experience. This blending of spiritual and earthly concerns in their works illustrates the multifaceted nature of religious poetry, which encompasses a wide range of themes and emotional depths.

Religious and devotional poetry also played a crucial role in the broader context of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, as poets responded to the changing landscape of faith and worship. The Protestant Reformation, in particular, encouraged a more personal and direct relationship with God, leading to a surge in devotional literature that emphasized individual reflection and piety. Poets began to experiment with vernacular language, making their works more accessible to a broader audience, thereby democratizing religious expression. This shift not only influenced the style and content of religious poetry but also fostered a sense of community among believers who sought solace and inspiration in the written word.

Moreover, the influence of mystical and contemplative traditions can be seen in religious poetry, where poets sought to articulate profound spiritual experiences and insights. Figures such as Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila, although primarily known for their prose, contributed to the mystical discourse that influenced subsequent poets. Their emphasis on direct experiences of God and the importance of contemplation provided a rich backdrop for later religious poetry, encouraging poets to delve into the depths of their spiritual lives and articulate the ineffable nature of divine encounters.

In conclusion, religious and devotional poetry represents a rich and diverse genre that encapsulates the complexities of faith, spirituality, and human experience. Through the works of poets like John Donne, George Herbert, and others, this genre invites readers to engage with profound questions of existence and the nature of the divine. By weaving together themes of love, mortality, and redemption, religious poetry not only reflects the cultural and theological currents of its time but also continues to resonate with contemporary readers seeking deeper connections to their own spiritual lives. The enduring power of this poetry lies in its ability to capture the essence of the human quest for meaning and the timeless pursuit of the divine.

10.5 Graveyard and Melancholic Poetry

Graveyard poetry emerged in the 18th century, primarily in England, as a response to the social and philosophical upheavals of the time, particularly the changes brought about by the Enlightenment and the early stirrings of Romanticism. This genre is characterized by its themes of death, mortality, and the transient nature of life, often set against the backdrop of graveyards or other somber landscapes. Graveyard poets sought to confront the realities of human existence, exploring the emotional and psychological responses to mortality and the inevitability of death. Their works often reflect a deep sense of melancholy, introspection, and a preoccupation with the afterlife, inviting readers to reflect on the meaning of life and the impact of death on the human experience.

One of the most prominent figures in graveyard poetry is Edward Young, whose poem Night Thoughts is a quintessential example of the genre. In this work, Young grapples with the themes of mortality, despair, and the search for solace in the face of death. Through his contemplative verses, he delves into the inner turmoil of the human soul, exploring the anxieties that arise from the awareness of one's mortality. Young's use of vivid imagery and philosophical musings creates a haunting atmosphere, drawing readers into a meditative space where they are compelled to confront their own fears and uncertainties about life and death. The melancholic tone of Night Thoughts resonates with the broader themes of graveyard poetry, emphasizing the struggle for understanding in a world fraught with impermanence.

Another significant contributor to this genre is Thomas Gray, particularly known for his poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." In this work, Gray reflects on the lives of ordinary individuals buried in the churchyard, contemplating the universality of death and the inevitability of mortality. His poignant imagery evokes a sense of serenity and acceptance, as he acknowledges the shared human experience of loss and the passage of time. Gray's exploration of themes such as memory, legacy, and the transient nature of fame highlights the melancholic undertones of graveyard poetry, as he finds beauty in the simplicity of life and the inevitability of death. This poem stands as a powerful testament to the genre, illustrating how graveyard poetry can provoke introspection and foster a deeper appreciation for the fragility of human existence.

In addition to Young and Gray, the Romantic poets also engaged with themes of melancholy and mortality, expanding the scope of graveyard poetry. Poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge infused their works with reflections on nature, human emotion, and the passage of time. Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" evokes a sense of nostalgia and longing for the past, while Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" delves into the themes of death, guilt, and redemption. These poets captured the essence of the human experience, intertwining the natural world with the profound emotional struggles that accompany the contemplation of mortality. Their works exemplify the melancholic spirit of graveyard poetry, inviting readers to explore the interconnectedness of life, death, and the natural order.

The exploration of death and melancholy in this poetry also served as a means of confronting societal changes and existential questions. The rise of industrialization, urbanization, and scientific rationalism during the 18th and 19th centuries prompted a reevaluation of human values and the place of individuals within the larger cosmos. Graveyard poetry often reflects a yearning for simplicity, nature, and connection to the past, standing in stark contrast to the rapidly changing world. This tension between the longing for permanence and the awareness of impermanence is a central theme in the works of graveyard poets, highlighting the emotional weight of their reflections on mortality.

In the context of melancholic poetry, this genre is characterized by its exploration of sorrow, introspection, and emotional depth. Melancholic poets often delve into the darker aspects of the human experience, grappling with feelings of despair, loss, and existential angst. The melancholy tone is marked by a sense of longing and nostalgia, often stemming from personal experiences of grief or disillusionment. Poets such as John Keats and John Clare exemplify the characteristics of melancholic poetry through their evocative language and rich imagery. Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," for instance, captures the interplay between beauty and transience, as he reflects on the fleeting nature of life and the desire for escape from the pains of existence.

Clare, known for his deep connection to nature, often infused his works with a sense of longing for lost rural landscapes and simpler times. His poem "I Am" expresses a profound sense of alienation and isolation, as he contemplates his identity and place in a rapidly changing world. The emotional resonance of Clare's poetry exemplifies the melancholic spirit of the genre, inviting readers to engage with their own feelings of loss and yearning. Through their exploration of sorrow and introspection, melancholic poets articulate the complexities of the human condition, revealing the depths of emotion that accompany the awareness of mortality.

In conclusion, graveyard and melancholic poetry serve as profound reflections on the themes of death, mortality, and the complexities of human emotion. Through the works of poets like Edward Young, Thomas Gray, and their Romantic successors, these genres invite readers to confront their own fears

and uncertainties while also fostering a deeper appreciation for the beauty and fragility of life. By exploring the emotional landscapes of sorrow, introspection, and existential questioning, graveyard and melancholic poetry resonate with the timeless human experience, offering insights into the intricate relationship between life and death. The enduring power of these poetic traditions lies in their ability to evoke deep emotional responses, encouraging readers to engage with their own feelings of loss and longing while contemplating the mysteries of existence.

10.6 Gothic Influences in Poetry

Gothic influences in poetry represent a fascinating intersection of literature and the darker aspects of the human experience. Originating in the late 18th century, the Gothic movement emerged as a response to the rationalism and order of the Enlightenment, seeking to explore the mysterious, the supernatural, and the emotional depths of human existence. Gothic poetry is characterized by its focus on themes such as horror, decay, death, and the sublime, often set against eerie landscapes or haunted settings. This genre allows poets to delve into the complexities of fear, longing, and the subconscious, employing vivid imagery and intense emotional expression to create an atmosphere that resonates with readers on both intellectual and visceral levels.

One of the early pioneers of Gothic poetry is William Blake, whose works often blend mystical and visionary elements with themes of good and evil. In poems such as "The Tyger," Blake grapples with the duality of creation, contemplating the terrifying beauty of a creature forged by a divine hand. The poem's haunting imagery and rhythmic cadence evoke a sense of wonder and dread, encapsulating the essence of the Gothic aesthetic. Blake's exploration of the sublime, particularly through the lens of nature and the human soul, serves as a precursor to later Gothic poets, who would further develop the themes of darkness and the uncanny in their works.

The Romantic poets, particularly Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, also embraced Gothic influences, infusing their poetry with elements of the supernatural and the macabre. Byron's poem "The Giaour" illustrates the tension between love and vengeance, set against a backdrop of exotic and ominous landscapes. The atmosphere of mystery and foreboding captures the essence of the Gothic, as Byron explores themes of passion and despair that resonate with the darker aspects of the human condition. Similarly, Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" grapples with the consequences of defiance and the quest for knowledge, echoing the Gothic preoccupation with the struggles of the individual against oppressive forces, whether they be societal, moral, or supernatural.

Another notable figure in Gothic poetry is Edgar Allan Poe, whose works epitomize the genre's exploration of psychological horror and existential dread. Poems like "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee" showcase Poe's mastery of atmospheric tension and emotional depth, employing rhythm and sound to enhance the haunting quality of his verses. In "The Raven," the titular bird serves as a symbol of loss and mourning, as the narrator grapples with the memory of a lost loved one. The interplay of memory, grief, and madness in Poe's poetry reveals the intricacies of the human psyche, emphasizing the profound impact of sorrow and isolation on the individual. His work not only embodies the Gothic tradition but also elevates it by exploring the inner workings of the mind, blurring the lines between reality and the supernatural.

The influence of the Gothic extends beyond individual poets to shape broader literary movements, as seen in the works of the Victorian poets. Figures like Christina Rossetti and Alfred Lord Tennyson

incorporated Gothic themes into their poetry, reflecting the cultural anxieties of their time. Rossetti's "Goblin Market" explores themes of temptation, desire, and the supernatural, employing vivid imagery and allegorical elements to convey the darker aspects of human experience. The poem's rich language and haunting narrative echo the Gothic tradition, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of desire and morality. Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," with its themes of isolation and the curse of the supernatural, captures the essence of the Gothic by immersing readers in a world of beauty and tragedy, underscoring the tension between the ideal and the real.

The Gothic revival in literature during the 19th century also led to the emergence of a new wave of poets who embraced Gothic themes and aesthetics. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sought to evoke the mystical and the sublime in their works, drawing on medieval themes and imagery to create a sense of enchantment and mystery. Rossetti's poetry often blurs the lines between love and death, exploring the haunting beauty of unattainable desire. His use of sensual imagery and rich symbolism captures the essence of the Gothic, reflecting the emotional intensity that characterizes much of this poetic tradition.

In addition to exploring themes of horror and the supernatural, Gothic poetry frequently engages with questions of identity, existence, and the human condition. Poets often use Gothic elements to probe the complexities of the self, examining the interplay between light and dark, sanity and madness, and the known and the unknown. This psychological dimension of Gothic poetry allows for a nuanced exploration of the human experience, revealing the fears and anxieties that lie beneath the surface. As poets grapple with their own internal conflicts, they create works that resonate with readers, inviting them to confront their own fears and uncertainties in the process.

In conclusion, Gothic influences in poetry represent a rich and dynamic tradition that explores the darker aspects of human existence through vivid imagery, emotional intensity, and themes of the supernatural. From the early works of William Blake to the haunting verses of Edgar Allan Poe and the explorations of the Victorian poets, Gothic poetry has left an indelible mark on the literary landscape. By delving into themes of mortality, desire, and the complexities of the human psyche, Gothic poets invite readers to engage with the profound questions of life, death, and the unknown. The enduring appeal of Gothic poetry lies in its ability to evoke deep emotional responses, encouraging reflection on the intricacies of the human experience while illuminating the shadows that dwell within us all.

10.7 Summary

The Age of Enlightenment, spanning the late 17th to the 18th century, was a transformative period in European history marked by a shift in intellectual thought, emphasizing reason, individualism, and empirical evidence. Philosophers, writers, and scientists sought to challenge established doctrines, advocating for human rights, democracy, and the pursuit of knowledge. This era fostered a flourishing of literature, particularly in the realms of poetry and prose, where writers engaged with contemporary social, political, and philosophical issues. Poetry during this age evolved significantly, reflecting Enlightenment ideals while also paving the way for subsequent literary movements, such as Romanticism. Prominent poets like Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth explored themes of reason, nature, and the human experience, employing various forms to engage with their readers. The Cavalier poets celebrated love and beauty in a manner that contrasted with the metaphysical explorations of poets like John Donne. Meanwhile, religious and devotional poetry flourished, allowing writers to articulate their spiritual struggles and insights. As the Enlightenment progressed,

themes of melancholy and mortality emerged in graveyard and melancholic poetry, reflecting societal changes and existential concerns. The Gothic movement, which developed in response to Enlightenment rationalism, delved into the darker aspects of human experience, emphasizing horror, decay, and the supernatural. Poets like Edgar Allan Poe and Thomas Gray exemplified these themes, engaging with the complexities of fear, loss, and identity.

Overall, the Age of Enlightenment was a pivotal period that reshaped literature, philosophy, and society. Its legacy endures through the themes, styles, and ideas that continue to influence contemporary thought and artistic expression. The interplay between reason and emotion, the exploration of the human condition, and the celebration of individual experience remain central to the literary traditions that emerged during this dynamic era.

10.8 Key Takeaways

- **Intellectual Shift**: The Age of Enlightenment marked a significant transition in thought, emphasizing reason, individualism, and empirical evidence over tradition and dogma. This shift laid the groundwork for modern democracy, human rights, and scientific inquiry.
- **Diverse Literary Forms**: Poetry flourished during this period, with a variety of forms and styles emerging. Writers engaged with contemporary social, political, and philosophical issues, leading to a rich tapestry of poetic expression.
- **Cavalier and Metaphysical Poetry**: The Cavalier poets celebrated themes of love, beauty, and loyalty, while metaphysical poets like John Donne explored complex emotional and philosophical themes, illustrating the diverse approaches to poetry in the period.
- **Religious and Devotional Themes**: Religious poetry allowed for personal reflections on faith and spirituality, with poets like John Donne and George Herbert articulating their struggles and insights, emphasizing the intimate connection between the individual and the divine.
- **Melancholy and Mortality**: Graveyard and melancholic poetry addressed themes of death and the transient nature of life. Poets like Thomas Gray and Edward Young explored existential concerns, prompting readers to reflect on mortality and the human experience.

10.9 Review Questions

1. What were the main intellectual shifts that characterized the Age of Enlightenment, and how did they impact literature?

2. How did Cavalier poets differ from Metaphysical poets in terms of themes and style? Provide examples of key poets and their works.

3. Discuss the significance of religious and devotional poetry during the Enlightenment. How did poets express their spiritual struggles?

4. What are the main themes explored in graveyard and melancholic poetry, and how do these themes reflect the societal concerns of the time?

5. In what ways did the Gothic movement serve as a reaction to Enlightenment rationalism? How did

Gothic poetry address themes of fear and the supernatural?

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BLOCK-3: BEN JOHNSON

UNIT 11: Late 16th Century: Later Phases ofShakespearean Drama
UNIT 12: Puritanism Drama and Ben Johnson
UNIT 13: Volpone: The Puritan Drama
UNIT 14: Volpone: Themes and Criticisms
UNIT 15: Johnson and the Masque Tradition

STRUCTURE
11.1 Objectives
11.2 Introduction
11.3 Shakespeare's Career and Plays
11.4 Theatrical Innovations and Practices
11.5 Literary and Cultural Influences
11.6 Sociopolitical Context
11.7 Summary
11.8 Key Takeaways
11.9 Review Questions
11.10 References

11.1 Objectives

Certainly! The late 16th century marked a significant period for Shakespearean drama, characterized by several key developments and phases in Shakespeare's career and the broader theatrical landscape of England.

11.2 Introduction

Shakespeare's final plays are hard to pigeonhole, which may well have been the intention. Although the First Folio subdivided them into 'comedies', 'tragedies' and 'histories', the only one of the five plays in this collection that unarguably fits a single category is *Henry VIII*. While *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* certainly veer towards comedy, they're not shy about revealing the darker side of human nature and experience - indeed, this is so true of *Cymbeline*, with its betrayals, attempted murders and a graphic beheading, that the First Folio editors initially treated it as a tragedy. More recently, critical convention has been to label *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* 'romances' (or, alternatively, 'tragicomedies', a not entirely successful name for a then-new genre that sought to bring together all the themes of Shakespeare's earlier work, very much including the 'problem plays' (to which they often bear a close resemblance).

Pericles (c. 1608-9) is the closest thing that Shakespeare wrote to what in present-day cinematic terms would be considered a 'road movie', though a more plausible literary model would be Homer's Odyssey. Effectively banished from the kingdom of Antiochus after inadvertently discovering its ruler is incestuously involved with his daughter, Pericles roams the Mediterranean, gaining and losing a wife and daughter along the way. It all ends unexpectedly happily, but not until after literally decades of anguished heart-searching.

The unclassifiable *Cymbeline* (c. 1609) is one of the richest, if most frequently bewildering, of Shakespeare's late plays. Ostensibly set in ancient Britain, though with next to no attempt at realistic period detail, the play resurrects the *As You Like It*/*Twelfth Night* device of a young woman going

incognito as a boy. In this case, it's Imogen, daughter of Cymbeline, king of Britain, who is forced to flee and disguise herself after becoming the victim of the politically-motivated machinations of her evil-minded stepmother.

The Winter's Tale (c. 1610-11) is often equally dark, its centre-piece being the trial of Queen Hermione on charges of adultery and conspiracy against the life of her husband. Though both are wholly false, it takes sixteen years for everything to be resolved, with the aid of apparent supernatural intervention, as a statue of the presumed long-dead Hermione miraculously comes back to life. The play is particularly notable for the dramatic contrast between its first three acts and the two-act conclusion, in which the coming of spring provides a powerful metaphor for the theme of resurrection and rebirth that dominates the final scene.

The best-known of the late plays by far is *The Tempest* (c. 1611), believed to be Shakespeare's last play as solo writer. Apart from *Love's Labour's Lost*, it is the only one of his plays for which there is no apparent source, and it's impossible not to regard the central figure of Prospero - a magician contemplating retirement while simultaneously manipulating numerous characters who end up shipwrecked on the island he calls home - as being a portrait of Shakespeare himself at the end of his career. It's his most unselfconsciously fantastical play, and has consequently remained one of his most enduringly popular works.

This leaves *Henry VIII* (c.1613), a collaborative effort with John Fletcher that tackles then-recent English history for the first time since *Henry V* some fourteen years earlier. For various reasons, not least the presence of Elizabeth I on the throne, Shakespeare had previously shied away from directly depicting the Tudor era, and his Henry VIII is very different from the wife-murdering monster of legend. A complex, thoughtful play, it prefers political and philosophical debate to lurid reconstruction, with a particular focus on the Reformation. (Another Fletcher collaboration, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, was written at about the same time, but has yet to be filmed and hence has not been covered here.)

With one obvious exception, none of these plays has been filmed especially frequently, with the BBC Television Shakespeare project accounting for most of the television productions. It was responsible for the only filmed *Pericles* (1984), and the only surviving *Henry VIII* (1979; a 1911 version was destroyed for contractual reasons), while *Cymbeline's* only other filmed reference besides the BBC adaptation (1983) is a set-piece in the Vincent Price horror opus *Theatre of Blood* (d. Douglas Hickox, 1973). *The Winter's Tale* fares slightly better in terms of the number of adaptations, though only Jane Howell's BBC version (1981) does the play full justice.

11.3 Shakespeare's Career and Plays

□ **Mature Comedies and Histories**:

- **Themes and Style**: Shakespeare's comedies during this period, such as "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," and "Much Ado About Nothing," display a deeper exploration of human relationships, mistaken identities, and themes of love and reconciliation.

- **Histories**: Shakespeare also wrote several history plays, including "Henry IV, Part 1," "Henry IV, Part 2," and "Henry V," which explore political intrigue, power struggles, and the complexities of leadership.

☐ **Tragic Masterpieces**:

- **Evolution of Tragedy**: Shakespeare's tragedies from this period, such as "Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear," and "Macbeth," reflect a deepening exploration of human flaws, moral dilemmas, and the consequences of ambition and revenge.
- **Psychological Depth**: These plays are known for their complex characters, profound introspection, and exploration of universal themes.

☐ **Romances and Problem Plays**:

- **Experimental Works**: Towards the end of his career, Shakespeare wrote plays often categorized as romances or problem plays, such as "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest." These works blend elements of comedy, tragedy, and fantasy, exploring themes of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation.

11.4 Theatrical Innovations and Practices

☐ **The Globe Theatre**:

- **Iconic Venue**: Shakespeare's plays were performed at the Globe Theatre, which was constructed in 1599. It featured an open-air design, a large stage, and a standing audience, facilitating dynamic and immersive theatrical experiences.

☐ **Acting Troupes and Performances**:

- **Diverse Casts**: Acting troupes of the time, such as the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men), performed Shakespeare's plays. These troupes featured talented actors who brought Shakespeare's characters to life, contributing to the plays' popularity.

☐ **Audience and Reception**:

- **Popularity**: Shakespeare's plays gained immense popularity among a wide range of audiences, from nobility to the general public. His ability to blend wit, emotion, and profound insights resonated deeply with Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences.

11.5 Literary and Cultural Influences

□ **Language and Poetry**:

- **Innovative Use of Language**: Shakespeare's plays are celebrated for their poetic language, rich imagery, and mastery of verse forms such as blank verse and iambic pentameter. His words and phrases have become integral parts of the English language.

□ **Impact on Drama and Literature**:

- **Enduring Legacy**: Shakespeare's works continue to influence literature, theatre, and film worldwide. His exploration of human nature, complex characters, and universal themes ensures the relevance and longevity of his plays across centuries.

11.6 Sociopolitical Context

1. **Elizabethan and Jacobean Eras**:
   o **Royal Patronage**: Shakespeare wrote many of his plays during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. His plays often reflected and engaged with contemporary social issues, political events, and cultural norms.
2. **Religious and Philosophical Debates**:
   o **Intellectual Climate**: The late 16th century was a period of intellectual and religious ferment in England, influencing the themes and ideas explored in Shakespeare's plays. Issues such as fate, free will, honor, and justice were central to his dramatic works.

11.7 Summary

In summary, the late 16th century was a transformative period for Shakespearean drama, marked by the maturity and complexity of Shakespeare's plays, innovative theatrical practices, and enduring literary influence. Shakespeare's works from this period continue to captivate audiences and scholars alike, reflecting the richness and depth of English Renaissance theatre.

11.8 Key Takeaways

□   **Enduring Popularity**: Shakespeare's plays continue to be performed, studied, and adapted worldwide, attesting to their timeless appeal and universal themes. His works have inspired countless adaptations in literature, theatre, film, and other artistic forms.

□ **Shakespearean Canon**: The late 16th-century Shakespearean dramas form the core of his canon,

embodying the pinnacle of English Renaissance theatre and influencing subsequent generations of playwrights, poets, and artists.

11.9 Review Questions

1. How does Shakespeare employ iambic pentameter to convey emotional intensity in his tragedies?
2. Discuss the significance of the Globe Theatre in the performance of Shakespearean plays.
3. How did the open-air setting of the Globe influence the staging and audience interaction of Shakespeare's plays?
4. Explore the role of gender and cross-dressing in the performance of Shakespeare's female characters by male actors.
5. How do Shakespeare's plays reflect the political and social climate of Elizabethan and Jacobean England?

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STRUCTURE

12.1 Objectives

Studying Ben Jonson, a prominent figure in English Renaissance literature, serves several key objectives that contribute to a broader understanding of literary history, dramatic theory, and cultural context:

1. **Literary Analysis and Appreciation**:
   o **Diverse Works**: Jonson wrote a variety of plays, poems, and masques, each showcasing different genres and styles. Studying his works allows for an exploration of comedic, satirical, and dramatic forms in early modern English literature.
   o **Poetic Craftsmanship**: Jonson's mastery of verse, including his use of classical forms like the epigram and ode, provides insights into poetic techniques and the influence of classical literature on Renaissance writers.

12.2 Introduction

1. **Historical and Cultural Context**:
   o **Elizabethan and Jacobean England**: Jonson's career spanned the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, offering a window into the cultural, political, and social milieu of early 17th-century England.
   o **Literary Patronage**: Jonson's relationship with the court, aristocracy, and literary circles of his time sheds light on the patronage system and the role of playwrights and poets in Renaissance society.
2. **Dramatic Theory and Practice**:
   o **Neoclassical Principles**: Jonson's adherence to classical ideals of unity, decorum, and morality in drama influenced the development of neoclassical theatre in England.

- **Comedy and Satire**: His comedies, such as "Volpone" and "The Alchemist," explore human folly, greed, and social pretensions, reflecting his sharp wit and satirical insight into contemporary society.
3. **Literary Influence and Legacy**:
   - **Impact on English Drama**: Jonson's innovative approach to character development, plot structure, and thematic exploration contributed to the evolution of English drama.
   - **Reception and Criticism**: Studying Jonson's critical reception and scholarly interpretations over time provides insights into changing perspectives on his works and their relevance to modern audiences.
4. **Comparative Analysis**:
   - **Literary Relationships**: Comparing Jonson's works with those of contemporaries like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe highlights distinctive features of Jonson's style, themes, and thematic concerns.
   - **Genre Exploration**: Examining Jonson's contribution to different literary genres, from comedy to masque, enhances understanding of genre conventions and innovations in Renaissance literature.

In summary, learning about Ben Jonson enriches one's understanding of Renaissance literature, drama, and cultural history. His works continue to be studied for their literary merit, historical context, and influence on subsequent generations of playwrights and poets, making him a pivotal figure in English literary tradition.

12.3 Puritanism and Its Influence

Puritanism and Its Influence

1. **Religious and Moral Values**:
   - **Puritan Ideals**: Puritanism emphasized strict moral and religious principles, advocating for simplicity, piety, and moral discipline in all aspects of life.
   - **Impact on Theatre**: Puritans viewed theatre with suspicion due to its perceived frivolity, immorality, and potential to incite sinful behavior. This led to tensions between Puritan values and the flourishing theatrical culture of the Renaissance.
2. **Censorship and Regulation**:
   - **Theatrical Restrictions**: Puritan influence contributed to periodic bans on theatre and strict censorship of plays deemed immoral or sacrilegious.
   - **Licensing and Control**: The Master of the Revels, responsible for licensing plays, enforced moral standards and often censored or modified scripts to comply with Puritan sensibilities.

12.4 Ben Johnson and Puritanism

☐ **Literary Themes and Moral Critique**:

- **Moral Purpose**: Jonson's plays often reflected a moral purpose and satirical critique of social vices and human folly, aligning with some Puritan concerns about moral laxity.
- **Critique of Hypocrisy**: Jonson's satirical comedies, such as "Volpone" and "The Alchemist," exposed and ridiculed moral and social hypocrisy, resonating with Puritan ideals of moral integrity.

☐ **Adaptation and Innovation**:

- **Masques and Courtly Patronage**: Jonson adapted his talents to the courtly masque, a form of entertainment that blended drama, music, dance, and visual spectacle. While masques were more acceptable to Puritan sensibilities, Jonson's inclusion of moral themes and allegorical elements aligned with Puritan moral teachings.

☐ **Controversies and Criticisms**:

- **Personal and Professional Challenges**: Jonson faced criticism and occasional censorship for his portrayal of controversial topics and characters. His willingness to challenge societal norms and critique authority sometimes brought him into conflict with Puritan detractors.

12.5 Legacy and Historical Context

☐ **Literary Influence**:

- **Artistic Legacy**: Jonson's skillful blend of classical influences, moral reflection, and satirical wit shaped English drama and influenced later playwrights, including those who wrote during and after the Puritan Interregnum.

☐ **Cultural Impact**:

- **Reflection of Society**: Jonson's plays provide a window into the social, political, and religious tensions of his time, including the clash between traditional values and emerging social changes.

12.6 Dramatic Theory and Practice

☐ **Neoclassical Principles**: Jonson's adherence to classical ideals of unity, decorum, and morality in drama influenced the development of neoclassical theatre in England.
☐ **Comedy and Satire**: His comedies, such as "Volpone" and "The Alchemist," explore human folly, greed, and social pretensions, reflecting his sharp wit and satirical insight into contemporary society.

12.7 Summary

Ben Jonson, a pivotal figure in English Renaissance literature, had a complex relationship with Puritanism and its influence on drama during his time. In summary, Ben Jonson's engagement with

Puritanism in his drama reveals a nuanced exploration of moral themes, societal critique, and adaptation to the cultural and religious dynamics of early modern England. His works continue to be studied for their literary craftsmanship and their reflection of the complex relationship between theatre and Puritan values during the Renaissance period.

12.8 Key Takeaways

Reflection of Society: Jonson's plays provide a window into the social, political, and religious tensions of his time, including the clash between traditional values and emerging social changes.

Artistic Legacy: Jonson's skillful blend of classical influences, moral reflection, and satirical wit shaped English drama and influenced later playwrights, including those who wrote during and after the Puritan Interregnum.

12.9 Review Questions

1. What aspects of Jonson's plays might have resonated with or challenged Puritan ideals of morality and social conduct?
2. Discuss the role of satire in Jonson's comedies. How did he use satire to critique social vices and hypocrisy, and how might these critiques align with or diverge from Puritan critiques of society?
3. How did Puritan influence impact the censorship and regulation of theatrical performances during Jonson's time?
4. What were some specific instances where Jonson faced censorship or criticism related to Puritan concerns?
5. How has Ben Jonson's portrayal of moral issues and social critique influenced later playwrights and literary traditions, both in England and beyond?

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STRUCTURE

13.1 Objectives

The intent of this poem is to:
• Provide a brief note on Ben Jonson.
• Help the Learners read the play themselves and form opinions on their own.
• Critically analyze the play in order to make the meanings clearer and understanding better.

13.2 Introduction

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was an influential English playwright, poet, and literary critic of the Jacobean era. Here's an introduction to Ben Jonson and his contributions to English literature:

Early Life and Education:

- **Birth and Background:** Ben Jonson was born in 1572 in Westminster, London. His father died shortly before his birth, leaving the family in financial difficulty. Jonson received a classical education at Westminster School, where he studied Latin and the classics.
- **Apprenticeship and Military Service:** Jonson briefly worked as a bricklayer and then served in the military in Flanders (present-day Belgium) before returning to London to pursue a career in theater and literature.

Career in Theater:

- **Playwright:** Jonson is best known for his plays, which include comedies, tragedies, and masques. His early plays, such as "Every Man in His Humour" (1598) and "Volpone" (1605), established him as a leading playwright of the time.

- **Satirical and Moral Themes:** Jonson's plays often satirized contemporary social and political issues, and they were known for their moral themes and characters driven by single passions or humours.

Poetry and Literary Criticism:

- **Poetry:** In addition to his plays, Jonson was a prolific poet. He wrote lyrical poetry, epigrams, and elegies, often drawing inspiration from classical Roman poets like Horace and Martial. His poetry is characterized by its clarity, wit, and craftsmanship.
- **Literary Criticism:** Jonson contributed significantly to English literary criticism. His essay "On Shakespeare" (published in the First Folio of Shakespeare's works, 1623) is one of the earliest critical appraisals of Shakespeare's plays.

Courtly and Masque Performances:

- **Courtly Entertainments:** Jonson wrote masques—elaborate theatrical performances combining poetry, music, dance, and extravagant costumes—for the court of King James I. His masques, such as "The Masque of Blackness" (1605), were highly popular and showcased his versatility as a writer.

Legacy and Influence:

- **Literary Legacy:** Ben Jonson's works had a profound influence on English literature. He is considered one of the most important playwrights of the Jacobean era, alongside William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe.
- **Intellectual Legacy:** Jonson's emphasis on classical learning, craftsmanship in writing, and moral integrity shaped English literary tastes in the early 17th century and contributed to the development of English Renaissance literature.
- **Recognition:** Jonson was appointed England's first Poet Laureate in 1616, and he was highly respected by his contemporaries for his literary talents and intellectual rigor.

13.3 Ben Johnson and Drama

Ben Jonson (not Johnson) was an influential English playwright and poet of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. He made significant contributions to drama in several ways:

1. **Introduction of Comedy of Humours**: Jonson is credited with popularizing the Comedy of Humours, a type of comedy that satirized characters by focusing on their predominant traits or humours (such as greed, jealousy, or foolishness). This approach influenced later playwrights and helped shape English comedy.

2. **Realism and Satire**: Unlike his contemporaries, Jonson focused on realistic portrayals of characters and situations. His plays often satirized social norms, vices, and pretensions, providing a critical commentary on contemporary society.

3. **Formal Innovations**: Jonson brought a more structured approach to drama. He emphasized classical principles of unity of action, time, and place, which he believed contributed to the effectiveness of the drama.

4. **Popularization of Masques**: Jonson was also known for his masques, elaborate theatrical productions combining poetry, music, dance, and elaborate stagecraft. These were often performed at court and were influential in the development of later forms of English drama and opera.

5. **Literary Influence**: Jonson's literary influence extended beyond his own works. He was part of literary circles that included other notable writers such as Shakespeare and Donne, and his critical writings and prefaces contributed to the development of English literary criticism.

Overall, Ben Jonson's contributions to drama were profound, laying foundations that influenced the development of English theater for centuries to come.

13.4 Major Works and Collections

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1. **"The Forest" (1616):**
   o This collection includes some of Jonson's most celebrated poems, such as "To Celia" (often mistakenly attributed to Shakespeare), "To Penshurst," and "Song: To Celia."
2. **Masques and Courtly Poetry:**
   o Jonson also composed poetry for court masques—elaborate theatrical entertainments performed at court. His masques blended poetry, music, dance, and elaborate costumes, showcasing his versatility as a poet and playwright.

Influence and Legacy:

1. **Literary Criticism:**
   o Jonson's impact extended beyond his own poetry. He played a crucial role in the development of English literary criticism, advocating for a more disciplined approach to writing and emphasizing the importance of classical models.
2. **Successor to Shakespeare:**
   o Jonson was considered a literary rival to Shakespeare during their time. While their styles differed—Shakespeare's works were more expansive and varied, while Jonson's were more controlled and polished—both writers contributed significantly to the richness of Jacobean literature.
3. **Cultural Significance:**
   o Jonson's poetry continues to be studied and admired for its craftsmanship, wit, and insights into human nature. His influence can be seen in subsequent generations of poets who valued clarity, precision, and intellectual depth in their writing.
   o poets who valued clarity, precision, and intellectual depth in their writing.

13.5 Volpone - Characters

"Volpone" is a play by Ben Jonson, first performed in 1606. It's a satirical comedy that explores themes of greed, deception, and moral corruption. Here's a brief act-wise summary:

Volpone
The protagonist of the play. Volpone's name means "The Fox" in Italian. He is lustful, lecherous, and greedy for pleasure. He is also energetic and has an unusual gift for rhetoric, mixing the sacred and the profane to enunciate a passionate commitment to self-gratification. He worships his money, all of which he has acquired through cons, such as the one he now plays on Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino. Volpone has no children, but he has something of a family: his parasite, Mosca, his dwarf, Nano, his eunuch, Castrone, and his hermaphrodite, Androgyno. Mosca is his only true confidante, and he begins to lust feverishly after Celia upon first setting eyes on her.

Mosca
Mosca is Volpone's parasite, a combination of his slave, his servant, his lackey, and his surrogate child. Though initially (and for most of the play) he behaves in a servile manner towards Volpone, Mosca conceals a growing independence he gains as a result of the incredible resourcefulness he shows in aiding and abetting Volpone's confidence game. Mosca's growing confidence, and awareness that the others in the play are just as much "parasites" as he—in that they too would rather live off the wealth of others than do honest work—eventually bring him into conflict with Volpone, a conflict that destroys them both.

Celia
The voice of goodness and religiosity in the play, Celia is the wife of Corvino, who is extremely beautiful, enough to drive both Volpone and Corvino to distraction. She is absolutely committed to her husband, even though he treats her horribly, and has a faith in God and sense of honor, traits which seem to be lacking in both Corvino and Volpone. These traits guide her toward self- restraint and self-denial. Her self-restraint makes her a foil for Volpone, who suffers a complete absence of that quality.

Voltore
One of the three legacy hunters or carrion-birds—the legacy hunters continually circle around Volpone, giving him gifts in the hope that he will choose them as his heir. Voltore is a lawyer by profession, and, as a result, he is adept in the use of words and, by implication, adept in deceit, something he proves during the course of the play. He is also something of a social climber, conscious of his position in his society and resentful at being overtaken by others on the way up.

Corvino
An extremely vicious and dishonorable character, Corvino is Celia's jealous husband. He frequently threatens to do disgusting acts of physical violence to her and her family in order to gain control over her. Yet he is more concerned with financial gain than with her faithfulness, seeing her, in essence, as a piece of property. Corvino is another one of the "carrion-birds" circling Volpone.

Corbaccio
The third "carrion-bird" circling Volpone, Corbaccio is actually extremely old and ill himself and is much more likely to die before Volpone even has a chance to bequeath him his wealth. He has a

hearing problem and betrays no sign of concern for Volpone, delighting openly in (fake) reports of Volpone's worsening symptoms.

Bonario
The son of Corbaccio. Bonario is an upright youth who remains loyal to his father even when his father perjures against him in court. He heroically rescues Celia from Volpone and represents bravery and honor, qualities which the other characters seem to lack.

Sir Politic Would-be
An English knight who resides in Venice. Sir Politic represents the danger of moral corruption that English travelers face when they go abroad to the continent, especially to Italy. He occupies the central role in the subplot, which centers on the relationship between himself and Peregrine, another English traveler much less gullible than the good knight. Sir Politic is also imaginative, coming up with ideas for moneymaking schemes such as using onions to detect the plague, as well as the idea of making a detailed note of every single action he performs in his diary, including his urinations.

Lady Politic Would-be
The Lady Politic Would-be is portrayed as a would-be courtesan. She was the impetus for the Would-bes move to Venice, because of her desire to learn the ways of the sophisticated Venetians. She is very well read and very inclined to let anyone know this, or anything else about her. She is extremely vain.

Peregrine
Peregrine is a young English traveler who meets and befriends Sir Politic Would- be upon arriving in Venice. Peregrine is amused by the gullible Would-be, but is also easily offended, as demonstrated by his adverse reaction to Lady Politic Would-be's suggestive comments.

Nano
Nano, as his named in Italian indicates ("nano" means "dwarf"), is a dwarf. He is also Volpone's fool, or jester, keeping Volpone amused with songs and jokes written by Mosca.

Castrone
The only notable fact about Castrone is that his name means eunuch ("castrone" means "eunuch" in Italian). There is not much else to say about Castrone, as he has no speaking lines whatsoever.

Androgyno

"Androgyno" means "hermaphrodite" in Italian, and as in the case of Nano and Castrone, the name rings true. Androgyno apparently possesses the soul of Pythagoras, according to Nano, which has been in gradual decline ever since it left the ancient mathematician's body.

13.6 Analysis

Volpone takes place in seventeenth-century Venice, over the course of one day. The play opens at the

house of Volpone, a Venetian nobleman. He and his "parasite" Mosca—part slave, part servant, part

lackey—enter the shrine where Volpone keeps his gold. Volpone has amassed his fortune, we learn,

through dishonest means: he is a con artist. And we also learn that he likes to use his money extravagantly.

Soon, we see Volpone's latest con in action. For the last three years, he has been attracting the interest of three legacy hunters: Voltore, a lawyer; Corbaccio, an old gentleman; and Corvino, a merchant—individuals interested in inheriting his estate after he dies. Volpone is known to be rich, and he is also known to be childless, have no natural heirs. Furthermore, he is believed to very ill, so each of the legacy hunters lavishes gifts on him, in the hope that Volpone, out of gratitude, will make him his heir. The legacy hunters do not know that Volpone is actually in excellent health and merely faking illness for the purpose of collecting all those impressive "get-well" gifts.

In the first act, each legacy hunter arrives to present a gift to Volpone, except for Corbaccio, who offers only a worthless (and probably poisoned) vial of medicine. But Corbaccio agrees to return later in the day to make Volpone his heir, so that Volpone will return the favor. This act is a boon to Volpone, since Corbaccio, in all likelihood, will die long before Volpone does. After each hunter leaves, Volpone and Mosca laugh at each's gullibility. After Corvino's departure Lady Politic Would-be, the wife of an English knight living in Venice, arrives at the house but is told to come back three hours later. And Volpone decides that he will try to get a close look at Corvino's wife, Celia, who Mosca describes as one of the most beautiful women in all of Italy. She is kept under lock and key by her husband, who has ten guards on her at all times, but Volpone vows to use disguise to get around these barriers.

The second act portrays a time just a short while later that day, and we meet Sir Politic Would-be, Lady Politic's husband, who is conversing with Peregrine, an young English traveler who has just landed in Venice. Sir Politic takes a liking to the young boy and vows to teach him a thing or two about Venice and Venetians; Peregrine, too, enjoys the company of Sir Politic, but only because he is hilariously gullible and vain. The two are walking in the public square in front of Corvino's house and are interrupted by the arrival of "Scoto Mantua," actually Volpone in diguise as an Italian mountebank, or medicine-show man. Scoto engages in a long and colorful speech, hawking his new "oil", which is touted as a cure-all for disease and suffering. At the end of the speech, he asks the crows to toss him their handkerchiefs, and Celia complies. Corvino arrives, just as she does this, and flies into a jealous rage, scattering the crows in the square. Volpone goes home and complains to Mosca that he is sick

with lust for Celia, and Mosca vows to deliver her to Volpone. Meanwhile, Corvino berates his wife for tossing her handkerchief, since he interprets it as a sign of her unfaithfulness, and he threatens to murder her and her family as a result. He decrees that, as punishment, she will now no longer be allowed to go to Church, she cannot stand near windows (as she did when watching Volpone), and, most bizarrely, she must do everything backwards from now on–she must even walk and speak backwards. Mosca then arrives, implying to Corvino that if he lets Celia sleep with Volpone (as a "restorative" for Volpone's failing health), then Volpone will choose him as his heir. Suddenly, Corvino's jealousy disappears, and he consents to the offer.

The third act begins with a soliloquy from Mosca, indicating that he is growing increasingly conscious of his power and his independence from Volpone. Mosca then runs into Bonario, Corbaccio's son, and informs the young man of his father's plans to disinherit him. He has Bonario come back to Volpone's house with him, in order to watch Corbaccio sign the documents (hoping that Bonario might kill Corbaccio then and there out of rage, thus allowing Volpone to gain his inheritance early). Meanwhile Lady Politic again arrives at Volpone's residence, indicating that it is now mid-morning, approaching noon. This time, Volpone lets her in, but he soon regrets it, for he is exasperated by her talkativeness. Mosca rescues Volpone by telling the Lady that Sir Politic has been seen in a gondola with a courtesan (a high-class prostitute). Volpone then prepares for his seduction of Celia, while Mosca hides Bonario in a corner of the bedroom, in anticipation of Corbaccio's arrival. But Celia and Corvino arrive first— Celia complains bitterly about being forced to be unfaithful, while Corvino tells her to be quiet and do her job. When Celia and Volpone are alone together, Volpone greatly surprises Celia by leaping out of bed. Celia had expected and old, infirm man, but what she gets instead is a lothario who attempts to seduce her with a passionate speech. Always the good Christian, Celia refuses Volpone's advances, at which point Volpone says that he will rape her. But Bonario, who has been witnessing the scene from his hiding place the entire time, rescues Celia. Bonario wounds Mosca on his way out. Corbaccio finally arrives, too late, as does Voltore. Mosca plots, with Voltore's assistance, how to get Volpone out of this mess.

A short while later, in the early afternoon, Peregrine and Sir Politic are still talking. Sir Politic gives the young traveler some advice on living in Venice and describes several schemes he has under consideration for making a great deal of money. They are soon interrupted by Lady Politic, who is convinced that Peregrine is the prostitute Mosca told her about—admittedly, in disguise. But Mosca

arrives and tells Lady Politic that she is mistaken; the courtesan he referred to is now in front of the Senate (in other words, Celia). Lady Politic believes him and ends by giving Peregrine a seductive goodbye with a coy suggestion that they see each other again. Peregrine is incensed at her behavior and vows revenge on Sir Politic because of it. The scene switches to the Scrutineo, the Venetian Senate building, where Celia and Bonario have informed the judges of Venice about Volpone's deceit, Volpone's attempt to rape Celia, Corbaccio's disinheritance of his son, and Corvino's decision to prostitute his wife. But the defendants make a very good case for themselves, led by their lawyer, Voltore. Voltore portrays Bonario and Celia as lovers, Corvino as an innocent jilted husband, and Corbaccio as a wounded father nearly killed by his evil son. The judge are swayed when Lady Politic comes in and (set up perfectly by Mosca) identifies Celia as the seducer of her husband Sir Politic. Further, they are convinced when Volpone enters the courtroom, again acting ill. The judges order that Celia and Bonario be arrested and separated.

In the final act, Volpone returns home tired and worried that he is actually growing ill, for he is now feeling some of the symptoms he has been faking. To dispel his fears, he decides to engage in one final prank on the legacy hunters. He spreads a rumor that he has died and then tells Mosca to pretend that he has been made his master's heir. The plan goes off perfectly, and all three legacy hunters are fooled. Volpone then disguises himself as a Venetian guard, so that he can gloat in each legacy hunter's face over their humiliation, without being recognized. But Mosca lets the audience know that Volpone is dead in the eyes of the world and that Mosca will not let him "return to the world of the living" unless Volpone pays up, giving Mosca a share of his wealth.

Meanwhile, Peregrine is in disguise himself, playing his own prank on Sir Politic. Peregrine presents himself as a merchant to the knight and informs Politic that word has gotten out of his plan to sell Venice to the Turks. Politic, who once mentioned the idea in jest, is terrified. When three merchants who are in collusion with Peregrine knock on the door, Politic jumps into a tortoise-shell wine case to save himself. Peregrine informs the merchants when they enter that he is looking at a valuable tortoise. The merchants decide to jump on the tortoise and demand that it crawls along the floor. They remark loudly upon its leg-garters and fine hand-gloves, before turning it over to reveal Sir Politic. Peregrine and the merchants go off, laughing at their prank, and Sir Politic moans about how much he agrees with his wife's desire to leave Venice and go back to England.

Meanwhile, Volpone gloats in front of each legacy hunter, deriding them for having lost Volpone's inheritance to a parasite such as Mosca, and he successfully avoids recognition. But his plan backfires nonetheless. Voltore, driven to such a state of distraction by Volpone's teasing, decides to recant his testimony in front of the Senate, implicating both himself but more importantly Mosca as a criminal. Corvino accuses him of being a sore loser, upset that Mosca has inherited Volpone's estate upon his death, and the news of this death surprises the Senators greatly. Volpone nearly recovers from his blunder by telling Voltore, in the middle of the Senate proceeding, that "Volpone" is still alive. Mosca pretends to faint and claims to the Senate that he does not know where he is, how he got there, and that he must have been possessed by a demon during the last few minutes when he was speaking to them. He also informs the Senators that Volpone is not dead, contradicting Corvino. All seems good for Volpone until Mosca returns, and, instead of confirming Voltore's claim that Volpone is alive, Mosca denies it. Mosca, after all, has a will, written by Volpone and in his signaure, stating that he is Volpone's heir. now that Volpone is believed to be dead, Mosca legally owns Volpone's property, and Mosca tells Volpone that he is not going to give it back by telling the truth. Realizing that he has been betrayed, Volpone decides that rather than let Mosca inherit his wealth, he will turn them both in. Volpone takes off his disguise and finally reveals the truth about the events of the past day. Volpone ends up being sent to prison, while Mosca is consigned to a slave galley. Voltore is disbarred, Corbaccio is stripped of his property (which is given to his son Bonario), and Corvino is publicly humiliated, forced to wear donkey's ears while being rowed around the canals of Venice. At the end, there is a small note from the playwright to the audience, simply asking them to applaud if they enjoyed the play they just saw.

13.7 Summary

"Volpone" remains a timeless work that continues to resonate with audiences today. Its sharp critique of human nature, combined with its witty dialogue and intricate plot, ensures its enduring relevance as a masterpiece of English Renaissance drama. Through satire and humor, Jonson exposes the frailties of human morality while posing provocative questions about justice, ethics, and the pursuit of wealth.

13.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Language and Dialogue**: Jonson's use of language is precise and intricate, reflecting the wit and intellect of his characters. The play features clever wordplay, puns, and rhetorical devices that enhance the comedic and satirical elements.

☐ **Structure and Plot**: "Volpone" is structured as a tightly woven plot filled with intrigues and twists. The escalating conflicts and revelations propel the narrative forward, leading to a climactic resolution in the courtroom scene.

☐ **Symbolism and Allegory**: Jonson employs symbolism and allegory to enrich the play's thematic depth. The characters and their actions symbolize broader societal attitudes and behaviors, inviting the audience to contemplate the universal implications of human greed and moral decay.

13.9 Review Questions

1. Discuss the moral dilemmas faced by characters like Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino. How do their actions reflect their values and priorities?

2. Explore the theme of justice in the play. Do characters receive appropriate punishment for their actions? Why or why not?

3. Examine Jonson's use of language in "Volpone". How does the language contribute to characterization and thematic development?

4. Discuss the structure of "Volpone". How does Jonson build tension and conflict throughout the play?

5. How might the themes of greed, deception, and justice in "Volpone" resonate with contemporary audiences?

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STRUCTURE

14.1 Objectives

➢ Understand Key Themes: Analyze the central themes of *Volpone* such as greed, corruption, deception, and the pursuit of wealth, and examine how these themes reflect the moral and social concerns of the Renaissance period.

➢ Explore Characterization: Investigate how Ben Jonson uses characters like Volpone and Mosca to critique human nature, particularly the vices of greed and manipulation, and understand the satirical portrayal of moral decay in society.

➢ Examine Dramatic Techniques: Identify the dramatic techniques Jonson employs, including the use of satire, irony, and farce, and assess how these contribute to the play's critique of societal flaws and human folly.

➢ Analyze Ethical and Moral Lessons: Explore how *Volpone* conveys moral lessons about the consequences of unchecked greed and moral corruption, and discuss the play's relevance to contemporary ethical dilemmas.

➢ Understand Historical and Cultural Context: Study the play within the context of the Renaissance era, understanding how Jonson critiques the social, political, and economic conditions of 17th-century England.

14.2 Introduction

 Volpone brilliantly exemplifies Jonson's unique jungle vision, with its self-contained world composed entirely of predators and prey. His contempt for mercenary motivation and capitalistic enterprise is blistering; the commanding indictment of the vicious habits of the new acquisitive society shows Jonson's forward leap in terms of intellectual and analytical maturity. The play demonstrates throughout Jonson's new-found ability to use the grim stuff of human wickedness and weakness, material not of a comic nature in itself, as the basis of satiric comedy. Obsessional greed, lust, the savage disregard of all other human beings and even eventually of personal survival—these are hardly

funny, but Jonson makes them so. Yet never does he diminish the power of his portrayal of these ruthless materialists who embody "Appetite, the universal wolf."

14.3 Volpone - Themes

Greed

The theme of greed pervades the entire play. It is embodies by <u>Volpone</u>, <u>Mosca</u>, and all the "clients." In his opening soliloquy, Volpone displays how utterly consumed by greed he is. In a sense, greed defines the major conflict of *Volpone*. Volpone's scam is born of his own greed and fed by the greed of his "clients." After Mosca compares <u>Celia</u>'s beauty to that of gold, Volpone's greed inspires unconquerable desire for her. Because greed is all that he knows, Volpone even resorts to it as a tactic for seducing Celia. Ultimately, it is greed which causes Volpone and Mosca's downfall. Because they cannot agree to share the fortune in 5.12, Volpone unmasks himself and brings Mosca down with him.

Animalization

Animalization, that is, Jonson's representation of characters as their namesake animals, transforms *Volpone* into a kind of fable. Arguably, the characters are not as one-dimensional as their names might suggest, but their names are fitting, memorable, and, most importantly, descriptive. If the names of Jonson's characters can be considered predictors of their actions, then the majority of the play's action comes as no surprise to the audience. Combined with the Argument, the Animalization theme reveals the motivations of every character. As a result, the audience can focus more readily on the underlying meaning of the play instead of the how and the what.

Parasitism

Although Mosca is the foremost parasite in the play, <u>Corvino</u>, <u>Corbaccio</u>, and <u>Voltore</u> might well be considered parasites as well. Certainly, Volpone's entire scam depends on Mosca's keen ability to leech his clients, but if not for the clients' desire to leech Volpone, the scam would fall flat. Volpone, Mosca, and all the clients are, in fact, competing parasites.

Parasitism is an explicit theme of the play as it emerges from Mosca's soliloquy in 3.1. Here, Mosca expresses his opinion that parasitism is a universal guiding principle: that is, everyone is a parasite, but some are better at it than others. In the case of *Volpone*, this principle rings true. Few characters in the play act honestly; all seem willing, instead, to use any means to secure Volpone's fortune. They are all parasites, flies and carrion birds competing over Volpone's dying carcass. Only Mosca, however - the cleverest parasite of all - is fully aware of his parasitic status. Thus, arguably, he is best able to manipulate others.

Metatheatricality

The theme of metatheatricality is revealing. Although there are only a few scenes which qualify as plays-within-a-play, Jonson's criticism of Elizabethan theater emerges from each. In 1.2, Mosca's account of the transmigration of Pythagoras's soul is truly obscene. In order to produce a few chuckles from Volpone, Mosca debases an unparalleled philosopher and mathematician.

From Jonson's perspective, as expressed in the Epistle and the Prologue, this kind of lowbrow humor is a travesty. Volpone, who appears to enjoy theater, is without a doubt in desperate need of moral education. Jonson argues that Volpone's love of theater provides the perfect opportunity to "inform [him] in the best reason of living." As shown by the low quality of <u>Nano</u>'s recitation, Jonson believes that the Jacobean theater is lacking in this function. *Volpone* is intended to demonstrate refined, serious, Classically-influenced comedy that might instruct rather than simply amuse. Of course, ironically, that does not make his plays-within-the-play any less amusing.

Vengeance

Though it is sparingly present in the main plot, the theme of Vengeance is much more prominent in the subplot of *Volpone*. The story of Sir Politic and <u>Peregrine</u>, besides being a warning to the English state, points out the ludicrousness of traditional vengeance. Peregrine, who only thinks he has been wronged, drives Sir Politic to leave Venice merely for the satisfaction of saying "Now, we are even" (5.4.74). If nothing else, this parable teaches us that vengeance is a childish pursuit.

Deception

Like greed, deception pervades the entire play. As a theme, deception has the effect of marking characters for punishment. In the main plot of *Volpone*, Jonson's sense of poetic justice is such that any character who deceives another is ultimately punished. <u>Bonario</u> and Celia, who never engage in deception but who are honest to the last, are exempted from punishment. Meanwhile, Mosca, Volpone, and the rest of the clients all get their comeuppance.

Knowledge/Ignorance

At any given time during the course of the play's action, no characters on stage know as much as the audience; they are all thus ignorant, though some are more ignorant than others. Jonson's extensive use of dramatic irony ensures that only the audience is fully aware of each character's situation. Not even Mosca, the master puppeteer, knows that Corvino and Celia will come to the door earlier than expected and that, as a result, Bonario will leap out and discover Volpone's scam. Jonson plays with the knowing position of the audience, inviting us to consider their moral failings from an unsurprised position. Thus he equates ignorance with moral chicanery and knowledge with moral instruction.

This knowledge-ignorance dialectic develops the conflict of both the main plot and the subplot. Sir Politic, who epitomizes ignorance, and Peregrine, who epitomizes knowledge, clash in predictable ways. On the subject of the mountebanks, for example, Peregrine has his reservations but Sir Politic declares that "They are the only knowing men of Europe!" (2.2.9). And, however ironically, Peregrine is supposedly being instructed by Sir Politic in the ways of a gentleman traveler. Sir Politic and Peregrine's interaction might best be summarized by the maxim which says, "Wise men learn more from fools than fools from the wise."

14.4 Volpone Criticisms

With *Volpone,* William Shakespeare had, for the first time since the death of Christopher Marlowe, a serious dramatic rival, and Elizabethan drama had an important alternative method and material. The master of the urban satirical comedy of manners, Ben Jonson brought raw and unflattering contemporary life within dramatic range and harnessed disparate, rowdy Elizabethan life to the classically derived rules of dramatic construction that would shape neoclassical theatrical ideals for the next two centuries. Jonson has been fated to be forever overshadowed by Shakespeare's greater genius, to be, in John Dryden's estimation, compared to the Bard, admired rather than loved. But in the history of English drama only Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw have contributed more plays to the permanent national repertory than Jon-son did. It was Jonson who insisted that drama was a form of poetry, the noblest and profoundest human expression. It was Jonson, more than any other English dramatist, who helped to establish plays as literature, capable of the most serious inquiry into human nature and social life. Shakespeare is inimitable; however, it can be argued, more playwrights claim their descent as a "son of Ben."

14.5 Johnson and Shakespeare

A comparison between Jonson and Shakespeare, though irresistible and often misleading, is still instructive in underscoring their different relation-ships to the theater and dramatic practice. Born in 1572 or 1573, almost a decade after Shakespeare, Jonson was part of the next generation of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists who had Shakespeare's works and the drama that he pioneered to imitate, modify, and transform. Both Shakespeare and Jonson came from similar lower-middle-class backgrounds, but Shakespeare was a countryman, who drew extensively on his love and familiarity with rural life, while Jonson was a Londoner, whose arena and references were predominantly urban. Jonson was the son of a minister who died a month before his birth. His widowed mother married a bricklayer, and Jonson was raised near Westminster where he enrolled at the prestigious Westminster School located in the precinct of the abbey. He studied under the age's greatest classicist and antiquarian, William Camden, whom Jonson would later credit for "All that I am in arts, all that I know." Camden would spark Jonson's lifelong devotion to classical literature, his love of scholarship, and his self-consciously academic approach to his writing and aspirations. Jonson, in contrast to Shakespeare's purported "little Latin and less Greek," would proudly assert that "he was better Versed & knew more in Greek and Latin, than all the Poets in England." It was at Westminster that Jonson was introduced to drama in annual performances mounted by its scholars. When he left Westminster, he did not, as might have been expected, matriculate at Oxford or Cambridge. (He would later express his gratitude that *Volpone* was favorably regarded at "The Two Famous Universities" and dedicated the published play to them.) Instead he apprenticed as a bricklayer, becoming a journeyman by 1598. The premature end of Jonson's formal education and his working-class background no doubt made him excessively proud and protective of his scholarly attainments and anxious that his writing should be measured against the revered classical standards. Jonson married unhappily, losing both his children to early illness, fought as a volunteer foot soldier against the Spanish in the Netherlands, and began his career as a playwright, like Shakespeare, after first acting in one of London's professional theater companies. He would never, however, like Shakespeare, become a full partner of any playing company as a resident actor or writer. He took instead an independent line to protect his scholarly and poetic aspirations and to become more than a dramatic professional. Jonson would complain about "the lothed stage" that catered to popular tastes that were "not meant for thee, less, thou for them."

14.6 Legal Triumph

Volpone celebrates his expected legal triumph by a final display of his power over the gulls who have perjured themselves on his behalf. He pre-tends to be dead and to have left his fortune to Mosca for the sheer enjoyment of seeing how his victims will respond when they learn that they have been deceived. It is finally not greed but pride that brings Volpone down, as Mosca, who shows himself loyal only to money, decides to retain the fortune. To recover it Volpone must reveal the plot and his own deceptions. Voltore withdraws his false testimony as the court reconvenes, and, as it appears he has been bested by Mosca, Volpone throws off his disguise and exposes all, including himself. Truth is finally revealed and order reasserted not by any powerful force of good but by the confession of the play's chief villain who sacrifices his safety for vengeance. The appropriate punishment is suited to the crimes of each, with the worst reserved for Mosca, who is condemned for life as a galley slave, and Volpone, who is to be imprisoned in chains until he becomes in fact the helpless invalid he pretended to be. One of the Avocatori sanctimoniously intones:

Let all that see these vices thus rewarded,
Take heart, and love study 'em! Mischiefs feed

Like beasts, till they be fat, and then they bleed.

But there is precious little moral reassurance here in the wisdom of authority, in justice, or in the moral force of virtue over the appetites for self-supremacy. Jonson's bracing and daring comedy, grotesquely and ludicrously magnifying our worst capacities, is turned into a mirror by which we are forced to recognize unflattering and disturbing resemblances. By shifting the focus of comedy from dreamy and delightful wish fulfillment to actuality, Jonson helps establish drama as an instrument for both truth and moral instruction, even as he delights with the skill of his construction and the daringness of his conception.

14.7 Summary

The undoing begins as Volpone's scheming overreaches the deserved entrapment of Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino to severing the natural bonds between father and son and husband and wife to serve his ends. Bonario, Corbaccio's disinherited son, is on hand to witness Volpone's reinvigoration as an ardent lover of Celia and prevents Volpone's rape. What should be the triumph of the innocents, however, quickly turns into an even more sinister victory of the rapacious self-servers. In the trial scene that follows, truth is suborned by lawyer Voltore who casts Celia and Bonario as foul schemers, lewd adulterers, and heartless victimizers of the innocent Volpone. The four Avocatori who judge the case are incapable of overcoming their own prejudices, self-satisfaction, and obsequiousness to wealth and rank. Justice is not just blind, it is insensible, and the witty inversion of all under the rubric of appetite appears complete and total.

14.8 Key Takeaways

 Greed and Materialism:

- The play vividly portrays the destructive power of greed. Volpone and his accomplice Mosca manipulate others' desires for wealth, leading to deceit, betrayal, and moral corruption among the characters.

 Deception and Appearance vs. Reality:

- Jonson explores how deception operates on multiple levels. Characters disguise their true intentions to achieve personal gain, while the play itself plays with appearances and illusions, questioning what is real and what is merely a facade.

 Justice and Punishment:

- The play examines notions of justice, highlighting how the characters' greed and deceit eventually lead to their downfall. The courtroom scene serves as a moral reckoning, where truth prevails and characters face consequences for their actions.

14.9 Review Questions

1. How might the themes of greed, deception, and justice in "Volpone" resonate with contemporary audiences?
2. Are there parallels between the characters and situations in "Volpone" and current societal issues?
3. In what ways does "Volpone" function as a morality play? What moral lessons or warnings does Jonson convey through his characters and their fates?
4. How has "Volpone" been received by critics over time? What aspects of the play have contributed to its enduring legacy?
5. Compare Jonson's approach to comedy and satire with that of other Renaissance playwrights like Shakespeare.

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STRUCTURE
15.1 Objectives
15.2 Introduction
15.3 Origin and Evolution of the Masque Tradition
15.4 Ben Johnson's Role in Shaping the Masque Tradition
15.5 Sociopolitical and Philosophical Themes in Johnson's Masques
15.6 Collaboration with Inigo Jones
15.7 Summary
15.8 Key Takeaways
15.9 Review Questions
15.10 References

15.1 Objectives

The objective of studying Johnson and the masque tradition is to delve into how this literary form, popularized in England during the early modern period, showcases themes, allegories, and aesthetics within court entertainment. By examining the works of Ben Jonson, a seminal figure in English literature and a master of masque writing, we aim to understand how he shaped the masque into a rich, multi-layered art form that combined poetry, music, dance, and elaborate staging. This unit will also explore how Jonson's masques conveyed deeper sociopolitical and philosophical ideas, reflecting the ideologies of the Jacobean and Caroline courts. Furthermore, students will analyze the cultural significance of masques and the role of spectacle in establishing power dynamics and social order in early 17th-century England.

15.2 Introduction

The masque tradition was a form of festive court entertainment that evolved significantly in the English Renaissance, blending theatrical performance with extravagant visual elements to create an immersive experience for audiences. Originating from medieval revels, masques became highly structured and symbolic events by the time of the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. These performances, usually composed of elaborate allegorical narratives, often featured members of the aristocracy who performed alongside professional actors. As a genre, the masque achieved its most sophisticated and symbolic expression through the works of Ben Jonson, who was among the first playwrights to infuse masques with complex allegories, character depth, and moral undertones. Jonson's contributions not only elevated the literary and dramatic quality of the masque but also emphasized its role as a medium for conveying political messages and royal ideals. He collaborated closely with designers such as Inigo Jones, whose scenic designs added an architectural grandeur that transformed the masque into a spectacle of light, color, and movement, creating a breathtaking visual experience that encapsulated the power and authority of the monarchy.

Jonson's masques stood out not only for their literary merit but also for their innovative use of space, language, and structure. In contrast to traditional plays, masques focused less on plot and dialogue and

more on creating an idealized vision of harmony and order. As Jonson's masques were performed at the English court, they were also deeply embedded within the sociopolitical context of the time, serving as a form of propaganda that reinforced the supremacy and divine right of the monarchy. By exploring the themes and structure of Jonson's masques, we can gain insights into how he used this genre as a tool for artistic expression and political commentary, solidifying the masque as a unique and influential form of English literature.

15.3 Origin and Evolution of the Masque Tradition

The masque has its roots in medieval revelries, where masked performances and symbolic dances were often used to celebrate religious or communal events. These early forms were informal and lacked a structured narrative, focusing more on spectacle and audience participation. As the tradition evolved, it began incorporating classical allegories, mythological references, and sophisticated themes, appealing to an increasingly educated and elite audience. By the Elizabethan era, masques had become formalized performances with elaborate costumes, music, and stage designs, often commissioned for royal occasions. This shift marked the transformation of the masque from a public festivity to a court-centred art form that represented the cultural and intellectual aspirations of the ruling elite.

15.4 Ben Johnson's Role in Shaping the Masque Tradition

Ben Jonson played a pivotal role in redefining the masque, bringing a literary finesse and intellectual depth that had previously been absent from the genre. Unlike his predecessors, Jonson viewed the masque as a platform for conveying moral and philosophical ideas, often using allegorical characters to represent abstract virtues or vices. His collaboration with Inigo Jones brought an architectural elegance to his masques, as Jones's innovative use of stage machinery and perspective created immersive visual experiences that complemented Jonson's textual brilliance. Jonson's masques, such as *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Queens*, exemplify his ability to merge poetry, drama, and symbolism, elevating the masque to a sophisticated form of high art. Through these works, Jonson demonstrated that the masque could serve not only as entertainment but also as a powerful expression of the monarchy's ideals, promoting themes of unity, harmony, and divine order.

15.5 Sociopolitical and Philosophical Themes in Johnson's Masques

One of the defining features of Jonson's masques is their rich exploration of sociopolitical and philosophical themes, reflecting the values and concerns of the Jacobean and Caroline courts. Jonson often used the masque to comment on contemporary issues such as the nature of kingship, the role of virtue, and the ideal of social harmony. By portraying the monarchy as a source of order and justice, Jonson's masques reinforced the ideology of the divine right of kings, presenting the ruler as a quasi-divine figure who brought stability to a chaotic world. These themes are especially evident in works like *The Masque of Oberon*, where the king is depicted as a central figure whose presence brings balance and harmony. In doing so, Jonson's masques served not only as courtly entertainment but also as a means of legitimizing the authority of the monarchy, subtly communicating the idea that the ruler's power was sanctioned by higher, cosmic forces.

15.6 Collaboration with Inigo Jones

The collaboration between Jonson and Inigo Jones is one of the most fascinating aspects of the masque tradition. While Jonson provided the poetic and narrative framework, Jones's scenic designs transformed the masque into a visual spectacle that captivated audiences. Jones introduced innovative stage techniques, such as perspective scenery and elaborate machinery, which allowed for dramatic transformations on stage. His designs created an illusion of depth and movement, enhancing the audience's experience and making the masque a multi-sensory event. Although Jonson and Jones eventually clashed over artistic differences, their partnership left a lasting impact on the masque tradition, setting a new standard for the integration of text and visual design. Together, they crafted a new form of courtly performance that combined the intellectual appeal of Jonson's poetry with the visual splendor of Jones's designs, creating a unique art form that resonated with audiences of the time.

15.7 Summary

In summary, the masque tradition, particularly as shaped by Ben Jonson, represents a distinctive blend of art, literature, and political propaganda. Jonson's contributions elevated the genre from a simple courtly diversion to a complex and symbolic form of expression, allowing the monarchy to reinforce its ideals of harmony, order, and divine right through elaborate performances. By collaborating with Inigo Jones, Jonson helped transform the masque into a multi-sensory spectacle, where poetry, music, dance, and architecture came together to create an immersive experience for the audience. The masques written by Jonson reflect the sociopolitical and philosophical concerns of the Jacobean and Caroline courts, offering insights into how art and politics intersected in early modern England. Through his work, Jonson demonstrated that the masque could serve as both entertainment and a vehicle for ideological expression, leaving a lasting legacy on English literature and performance.

15.8 Key Takeaways

- The masque tradition evolved from medieval revelries to a sophisticated form of court entertainment in the English Renaissance.
- Ben Jonson was instrumental in elevating the literary and symbolic quality of the masque, using it as a platform for political and philosophical expression.
- Jonson's collaboration with Inigo Jones introduced new visual elements that transformed the masque into a multi-sensory experience.
- Jonson's masques reinforced the monarchy's ideals, presenting the ruler as a source of order and stability in a chaotic world.
- The masque tradition reflects the intersection of art, literature, and politics in early modern England, providing a unique insight into the sociopolitical concerns of the period.

15.9 Review Questions

1. How did the masque tradition evolve from its medieval origins to become a courtly art form?
2. In what ways did Ben Jonson's contributions shape the masque into a sophisticated and symbolic genre?
3. What were the primary themes explored in Jonson's masques, and how did they reflect the

sociopolitical context of the time?
4. Describe the role of Inigo Jones in enhancing the visual spectacle of Jonson's masques. How did their collaboration impact the masque tradition?
5. How did Jonson's masques serve as a form of propaganda for the monarchy? Discuss with examples.

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BLOCK-4: JOHN DRYDEN

UNIT 16: LATER PURITANISM AND RESTORATION

STRUCTURE

16.1 Objectives

The periods of Later Puritanism and the Restoration in English history are significant for their cultural, political, and religious transformations. The periods of Later Puritanism and the Restoration in England brought about significant socio-political changes that shaped the course of English history.

16.2 Introduction

Puritanism was a religious reform movement that started in England in the late 16th century and spread to the New World's Northern English colonies. The Puritans were a group of English-speaking Protestants who believed in Calvinist and Scottish Presbyterian ideas. They sought to remove any remaining links to Catholicism in the Church of England after its separation from the Catholic Church in 1534. They wanted to change the church's structure and ceremonies, and also wanted to make broader lifestyle changes in England to align with their strong moral beliefs.

16.3 Later Puritanism

☐ **Context and Background**:

- The Later Puritan period follows the English Civil War (1642-1651) and the execution of King Charles I in 1649. It is characterized by the dominance of Puritan ideology and the Parliamentarian faction led by Oliver Cromwell.

☐ **Religious Influence**:

- Puritanism emphasized strict adherence to biblical teachings, simplicity in worship, and moral purity. Puritans sought to purify the Church of England from what they perceived as Catholic remnants.

☐ **Cultural Impact**:

- The Later Puritan period saw a flourishing of literature, particularly religious and moral works. Writers like John Milton ("Paradise Lost") and John Bunyan ("The Pilgrim's Progress") exemplified Puritan ideals in their writings.

☐ **Political Changes**:

- England became a Commonwealth and then a Protectorate under Cromwell's rule (1653-1658). This period was marked by strict moral codes and attempts at religious reform.

☐ **Decline**:

- The Later Puritan period began to decline with Cromwell's death in 1658 and the subsequent collapse of the Protectorate. It paved the way for the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

16.4 Restoration Period

☐ **Restoration of the Monarchy**:

- The Restoration brought Charles II to the throne in 1660, marking the return of the Stuart monarchy after years of Republican rule. It aimed to restore political stability and royal authority.

☐ **Cultural and Social Change**:

- The Restoration period is known for its cultural exuberance, marked by a revival of theater (e.g., Restoration comedy), music, art, and literature. It contrasted with the austerity of the Puritan era.

☐ **Religious Policies**:

- Charles II's reign introduced more tolerant religious policies through the Declaration of Indulgence (1672), granting freedom of worship to non-conformists and Catholics, albeit temporarily.

☐ **Political Developments**:

- The period saw the emergence of political factions and debates over royal power versus parliamentary authority. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 eventually led to the establishment of constitutional monarchy.

☐ **Literary and Intellectual Contributions**:

- Writers like John Dryden, Aphra Behn, and Samuel Pepys flourished during the Restoration, contributing to the development of English literature and drama.

16.5 Comparison and Legacy

☐ **Contrasting Ideologies**: Later Puritanism emphasized religious piety and moral reform, while the Restoration celebrated secular pleasures and cultural revival.

☐ **Impact on Literature**: Both periods left lasting literary legacies, with Puritan writers focusing on religious and moral themes, and Restoration writers exploring themes of wit, satire, and social commentary.

☐ **Political Legacy**: The tensions between royal authority and parliamentary sovereignty during these periods laid the groundwork for England's eventual transition to constitutional monarchy and the modern political system.

16.6 Socio-Political Changes

Later Puritanism (1640s-1660s):

1. **Religious and Moral Reform**:
   - **Puritan Ascendancy**: The Later Puritan period saw Puritanism rise to prominence, especially during the Commonwealth (1649-1660) under Oliver Cromwell. Puritans sought to purify the Church of England from what they viewed as Catholic practices and promote a stricter adherence to biblical principles.
   - **Moral Codes**: Puritans imposed strict moral codes on society, promoting values such as hard work, thriftiness, and moral purity. This influenced everyday life, from personal conduct to community behavior.
2. **Political Impact**:
   - **Civil War and Republican Rule**: The period was marked by the English Civil War (1642-1651), which ultimately led to the execution of King Charles I and the establishment of a Commonwealth. Parliament, under Puritan influence, gained significant power, challenging the traditional authority of the monarchy.
   - **Cromwell's Rule**: Oliver Cromwell, as Lord Protector (1653-1658), ruled with a strong hand, promoting religious tolerance to some extent but also imposing moral strictures on society. His rule brought stability but also faced resistance and challenges.
3. **Social Changes**:
   - **Education and Literacy**: Puritans emphasized education and literacy as means to understand and live according to biblical principles. This contributed to the growth of schools and literacy rates among the populace.

- o **Community Cohesion**: Puritan communities emphasized communal responsibility and solidarity, with local congregations playing a central role in daily life and governance.

Restoration Period (1660-1688):

1. **Monarchical Restoration**:
   - o **Return of Charles II**: The Restoration brought back the monarchy under Charles II in 1660, following the collapse of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate. It marked a return to traditional royal authority and hierarchical social structures.
   - o **Stabilization and Reconciliation**: The period aimed to stabilize the nation after years of civil strife. Efforts were made to reconcile Royalists and former Parliamentarians, though tensions persisted.
2. **Cultural and Social Revival**:
   - o **Cultural Renaissance**: The Restoration era witnessed a flourishing of arts and culture. The reopening of theaters and the emergence of Restoration comedy reflected a newfound exuberance and appreciation for secular pleasures.
   - o **Social Hierarchies**: The period reinforced social hierarchies, with the monarchy, aristocracy, and gentry enjoying privileges and influence. The court culture promoted elegance, wit, and refinement.
3. **Political Developments**:
   - o **Emergence of Political Factions**: Political factions such as the Whigs and Tories began to take shape during the Restoration period, laying the groundwork for future political divisions.
   - o **Religious Policies**: Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence (1672) granted religious tolerance, although it faced opposition and was eventually withdrawn. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 further shaped England's religious and political landscape.

16.7 Summary

In conclusion, Later Puritanism and the Restoration were transformative periods in English history, each leaving a distinct imprint on society, politics, and culture. They reflect the dynamic interplay between religious ideals, political power struggles, and societal values in shaping the course of England's development.

16.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Transition and Continuity**: The transition from Later Puritanism to the Restoration marked a shift from religious austerity and republican rule to royalist restoration and cultural revival.

☐ **Impact on Society**: Both periods left enduring legacies on English society, influencing attitudes towards religion, governance, and cultural expression.

☐ **Political Evolution**: The socio-political changes during these periods contributed to the evolution of England's political institutions, eventually leading to the establishment of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary sovereignty.

16.9 Review Questions

1. How did Puritan beliefs shape the everyday lives of individuals during the Later Puritan period?
2. What were the main objections of Puritans to the Church of England's practices and rituals?
3. How did the emphasis on education and literacy among Puritans contribute to social and cultural changes in England?
4. What were the underlying causes of the English Civil War, and how did Puritan influence contribute to its outbreak?
5. Discuss the political and military strategies of Oliver Cromwell during the Commonwealth period.

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STRUCTURE

17.1 Objectives

This unit provides a critical overview of Dryden's literary genius. Dryden, an influential figure of the Restoration period in English literature negotiates his allegiance to diverse political and religious factions of the time. This module will then critically locate Dryden's literary output in such a turbulent historical time frame. Focusing on Dryden's political verse satire, mock-heroic poems, restoration comedies, heroic dramas, religious polemics, lyrics, translations, and critical writings, this module will give an idea about Dryden's literary genius along with providing a primary sketch of the Restoration period in English literature.

17.2 Introduction

John Dryden (1631-1700), a leading writer of the Restoration Age in English literature, mastered the art of traversing a variety of literary expressions- heroic tragedy, comedy, verse satire, translations and literary criticism. Similar to his literary career, he changed his allegiance and views several times in his personal life too. Being allied to the Puritan party, he wrote his impressive 'Heroic Stanzas' (1659) on the death of Cromwell, the Lord Protector, but he readily adjusted himself with the Royalist climate of the Restoration. He wrote *Astrae Redux* in 1660 to welcome back the monarch, followed by the *Panegyric to His Sacred Majesty*. Again, in his later years Dryden shifted his religious allegiance from an Anglicism to Catholicism.

The poet who wrote poems like *Religio Laici* (1682) defining the king's religion in Anglican terms changed his views when James II, a Catholic supporter , had occupied the throne in 1685 after Charles II's death. He wrote *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) supporting Catholic views. Dryden was then not a writer segregated from the *realpolitik* of the time but very much rooted in the real historical, political and religious conflicts of the time. The fact that he adapted himself to the varying modes of his time, has led to many controversies and speculations about his sycophantic and opportunist nature. He was even blamed as nothing more than a political propagandist. But beyond all this debates about his shifting allegiance, Dryden was just negotiating with several conflicts that politics and history imposed on the writer's function.

Paul J. Korshin has rightly summed up the predicament of Dryden's literature. According to Korshin, Dryden's 'public' poems are produced on thorny issues of political, theological and literary ideology and therefore there is a constant play of dispute, dissent and contestation leading to the 'poetics of concord' (qtd. in Grover xxviii). It is on the literary plane that several historical and political issues of the time is debated and discussed. Dryden's contribution in this discursive domain of literature is beyond doubt here. Amidst this concordant scenario, Dryden denied extremism and fixity of any kind and became flexible both in his public life as well as in his movement across different genres of literature. He became an exponent of the golden mean in art, politics and morality.

17.3 John Dryden's Works and Contributions

 Drama:

- Dryden excelled in both comedy and tragedy, adapting classical models to suit the tastes of the Restoration audience.
- **Comedy**: His comedies, such as *Marriage à la Mode* (1672) and *Amphitryon* (1690), typically featured witty dialogue, complex plotting, and satirical elements that mocked contemporary social mores.
- **Tragedy**: Dryden's tragedies, like *All for Love* (1677), often drew upon classical themes and characters, focusing on themes of love, honor, and political intrigue.

 Poetry:

- Dryden was a master of various forms of poetry, including satire, ode, elegy, and heroic verse.
- **Satire**: His satirical works, such as *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), critiqued political figures and events of his time with biting wit and sharp social commentary.
- **Heroic Verse**: Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1697) exemplifies his skill in adapting classical epic conventions to English poetry.

 Criticism and Prose:

- Dryden's critical works, such as *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), played a pivotal role in shaping Restoration literary theory.
- He defended the use of rhyme in drama and advocated for the importance of poetic decorum and unity of action, drawing on classical principles.

17.4 Influence on the Genre of the Age

 Adaptation of Classical Models: Dryden's works reflected a conscious effort to adapt classical literary forms and themes to the tastes and sensibilities of Restoration England. His use of heroic couplets and formal verse structures helped establish these as dominant poetic forms in the period.

☐ **Literary Patronage and Influence**: As Poet Laureate and a prominent literary figure at court, Dryden wielded considerable influence over the literary scene. His works set standards for elegance, wit, and literary craftsmanship that influenced subsequent generations of writers.

☐ **Reflection of Political and Social Contexts**: Dryden's writings often engaged with political and social issues of his time, reflecting the Restoration's emphasis on wit, satire, and intellectual debate. His satirical works, in particular, responded to contemporary political scandals and conflicts.

☐ **Versatility and Innovation**: Dryden's ability to excel in multiple genres—from drama to poetry to criticism—illustrates his versatility and adaptability to the changing literary tastes of the Restoration period. His works epitomized the era's interest in literary experimentation and intellectual rigor.

17.5 Dryden's Early Career

Dryden's literary career started at a significant political moment in England. His first important poem with Puritan inclinations, which he called *Heroic Stanzas*, was written in 1659 on the death of Oliver Cromwell. But the very next year he aligned himself with Royalist and wrote *Astrea Redux* (The Return of Justice, 1660) celebrating Charles II's restoration to the throne. In 1661 Dryden wrote *To his Sacred Majesty, a Panegyric on his Coronation* followed by *Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders* (1666). "The latter poem defends the year of the Great Fire and Great Plague against the fatalist notions of divine retribution by exalting England's King, navy, Royal Society and future progress in epic quatrains" (Grover xxix). This poem also celebrates English naval victories over the Dutch. These early poems were basically eulogy of certain Royal figures in heroic couplets. According to Grover, most of Dryden's early poems "helped in shaping and disseminating the ideology of the Court through the use of a clear monarchist typology which represents the monarchist heroic ideal as morally normative, bounteous, stable, restorative, patriarchal and divinely ordained" (xxix).

Grover further argues that Dryden's subject of panegyric revolved around diverse personalities like Cromwell, Charles, Augustus, and King David (from the Old Testament), but the "typological framework" of using "scriptural or classical analogy" and "a prophetic, messianic sort of vision" (xxix) remained constant. This vision was not abstract as such; rather this was rooted in the contemporaneity and historicity of the time. This vision also dismissed "sedition, fanaticism" and excess of any kind as anarchist threat to political and social stability (Grover xxix). This view goes well also with his later poems like verse satires.

17.6 Dryden's Contribution to Literary Criticism

Dryden's Comedies

Dryden was made Poet Laureate in 1668 on the death of Sir William Davenant. In 1670 he was appointed Historiographer Royal also. During the period between 1668 and 1680, Dryden turned to play writing. He popularized the Restoration genre of the 'heroic tragedy' as well as the comedies of manners. After a long Puritan ban on theatre productions, theatres were reopened with restoration of

monarchy and drama became popular with the aristocracy and populace. According to David Daiches, "Dryden's early comedies were modeled on the Spanish comedies of intrigue, sometimes with serious or melodramatic scenes in rhyming couplets in addition to Jonsonian humours and love-disputes and wit-combats" (545). Dryden's comedies include *The Wild Gallant* (1663), *The Rival Ladies* (1664), *Secret Love* (1667) and *Sir Martin Mar-all*. *Marriage a la Mode* (1672) is the most durable of his earlier comedies. Here the plot humorously explores the Restoration attitude to morality, marriage, sex and virtue. The play portrays a situation where A's wife is B's mistress and B's fiancée is A's mistress; but by continuous cunning contrivance, everyone turns virtuous in the end and through mutual agreement they subscribe to conventional morality. Dryden also tried his hand in the reproduction of Shakespeare's plays and dramatized a section of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (as 'The State of Innocence'). In 1668 appeared *An Evening's Love*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Again in 1679 Dryden came up with two other reworking of Shakespeare- *Troilus and Cressida* and *Oedipus* with Nathaniel Lee. Dryden's career as comedy writer was not very fruitful and he himself proclaimed: "I know I am not so fitted by nature to write comedy…Reputation in them is the last thing in which I shall pretend" (Defense of *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* 116)

Dryden's Heroic Plays

David Daiches claims that "the Restoration was an unheroic age, and perhaps that is why its conception of heroism was so artificial and inflated" (549-550). But in spite of the artificiality and extravagance, rhymed heroic play reigned supreme during this period. The form was introduced by Sir William Davenant and popularized by Dryden. In his *Essay on Heroic Plays* which Dryden wrote as a preface to *The Conquest of Granada*, defends heroic play by asserting that "an heroic poet is not tied to a bare representation of what is true, or exceeding probable; but…he might let himself loose to visionary objects, and to the representation of such things, as depending not on sense, and therefore not to be comprehended by knowledge, may give him a freer scope for imagination" (qtd. in Daiches 550). The heroic plays banked on an exalted heroic figure having a loud and declamatory style sometimes rising to passionate extravaganza. These plays employ the bombastic rhetoric of rhymed couplet. Dryden's *The Indian Emperor* (1665), *Tyrannick Love, or, The Royal Martyr* (1669), *The Conquest of Granada* (in two parts, 1669, and 1670), and *Aurengzebe* (1675), exhibit his huge contribution to Restoration heroic play. In *Tyrannick Love*, Dryden is excessively theatrical while portraying the lust of Emperor Maximin and the martyrdom of St. Catherine.

In *The Conquest of Granada*, Almanzor, a noble stranger, arrives to fight for the Moorish ruler Boabdelin. Almahide, betrothed to Boabdelin, falls in love with the stranger, Almanzor, but repulses his advance. Boabdelin is jealous of Almanzor but needs his heroic power. Finally the Spaniards invade the Moorish kingdom and kill Boabdelin. It is revealed that Almanzor is of noble Spanish birth and he marries Almahide. Theme of love, lust, valour and honour run through these plays. *Aureng-Zebe* is interesting because of its setting in Oriental land like the previous one. An air of exoticism prevails in these plays by Dryden.

Set in Mogul India, it displays the love of Aureng-Zebe for Indamora, a captive queen. Their love becomes entangled with the politics of the court. The Mogul emperor, Shah Jehan (Aureng-Zebe's father) and Morat, another son by his second wife Nourmahal also start pursuing Indamora. Despite this, Aureng-Zebe remains loyal to his father and when the struggle for throne led to the deaths of both Morat and Nourmahal, Shah Jehan rewards Aureng-Zebe by abandoning his feelings for Indamora. According to Daiches, " Though there is much extravagant ranting in Dryden's heroic plays, and though his heroic situations often tremble on the brink of the absurd and sometimes fall over, the plays

are put together with cunning, showing, it might perhaps be said, a first-rate craftsman working in a dubious mood" (551). The protagonists of the plays were elevated to such romantic and superhuman heights that they appeared nonsensically unrealistic, but at the same time the heroic and grand theme of valour and honour becomes consonant with the extravagance. According to Arthur C. Kirsch, "Aureng- Zebe is like no other hero in Dryden's previous plays.

Before Aureng-Zebe Dryden's heroes had been distinguished by their capacity for passion, frequently expressed in rant, by their primitivistic if not primitive natures (both Montezuma and Almanzor are characterized as children of nature), and by their constant desire to prove their worth in love as well as in war. None of them were temperate men:…as Almanzor made clear, "because I dare." (Conquest of Granada, Part 2, sig. N2) They lived not by virtue, in any conventional sense, but by their pride. They conformed only to their own most extravagant conceptions of individual power, to what Corneille and other French writers termed *la gloire*, and like the Cornelian heroes, they sought not approval but admiration" (162). But Dryden takes a slight turn in this kind of conceptualization of the hero while writing *Aureng-Zebe*. "In Morat's case even the antinomy of love and honor itself begins to be sapped at its roots, for he gives up an honor which, though corrupted, still bears the marks of the old heroic grandeur; and he gives it up for love. This is the first time in all of Dryden's drama that love and honor constitute a real antithesis, and the victory of love in this context spells the end of the heroic play" (Kirsch 167).

Dryden had gradually begun to be dissatisfied with extravaganza of heroic plays. He was satirized by Rochester and his heroic style was also mocked in *The Rehearsal* (1671), a burlesque play by Buckingham. Dryden attempted writing in blank verse first in *All for Love, or The World Well Lost* (1678). This is a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Dryden has mellowed down heroic extravaganza by this time. Everett H. Emerson, Harold E. Davis and Ira Johnson in their essay, "Intention and Achievement in All for Love" have argued that "The theme of *All for Love* is the conflict of reason and honor with passion in the form of illicit love. From the preface it seems that Dryden wished to show how Antony, torn between these two, chooses unreasonable, passionate love and is consequently punished for his denial of reason" (84).

Verse Satires

By the year 1681, Dryden turned towards writing his most popular and well known political verse satires. ***Absalom and Achitophel*** (1681) contributed to the public debate of the time in the form of verse satire. Adhering to his allegiance for Charles II and a legitimized and settled government, he countered the Whig plot of excluding Charles II's heir and brother James from succession to the throne on the ground that he was a Roman catholic and replacing Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth to assert his claims. Protestant Whig agitation in favour of Duke of Monmouth was led by the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duke of Buckingham. Dryden capitalized on the biblical story of the rebellion of Absalom against his father King David and applied to the contemporary events. Charles II is compared to King David, Monmouth is represented as Absalom, the evil Counselor Achitophel is here Shaftesbury and Buckingham as Zimri. Dryden appropriated the Old Testament story to establish sacred truth in the whole political event. This kind of revolt is also parallel to Adam's revolt against God as a consequence of his surrender to temptations of Devil. Dryden elevated the poignancy of the satire by bringing parallels between divine and royal personages. In Dryden's hand a political satire like *Absalom and Achitophel* banking on the temporal theme of party politics became a poetic and universal piece of art. Moreover, Dryden raised the

political satire from its usual plane of coarseness to the epical grandeur by incorporating the medium of allegory.

It is often claimed that when Shaftesbury was brought before the Grand Jury for his conspiracy against the monarch, Dryden was asked, probably by the King himself, to write a poem in opposition to the flood of pamphlets favoring the Whig side. The picture Dryden presents in the poem is then official side of the scenario.

The masterpiece in Dryden's oeuvre of critical prose is the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668). It is written as a debate on drama voiced by four speakers, Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander. "In form it is a Ciceronian dialogue" (Baugh 716). The four speakers identified as Dryden's contemporaries present diverse points of view. The first speaker, Crites (Greek for "judge" or "critic") defends the ancients; Eugenius (meaning well-born) defends the superiority of contemporary English drama; Lisideius prefers French drama to English and glorifies Elizabethan drama to that of the early Restoration period; and Neander ("new man"), who most nearly is Dryden himself defends the English as opposed to the French and defends the use of rhyme in plays. For Dryden, rhyme is more natural and effective than blank verse in serious plays, where the subjects and characters are great.

The essay was occasioned by a public dispute with Sir Robert Howard over the use of rhyme in drama. This essay is a also critical intervention in the debate between the claims of the ancient authority and exigencies of the modern writer. As Lisideius defines a play as "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind" (36).This is a clear divergence from classical model as Aristotle said nothing about "passions and humours" and there was no point of "delighting" the audience. While defending the excellence of English drama over the French drama Neander or Dryden comments that a play should be "lively imitation of nature" (68) but the French drama's aesthetics lies in "the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions" (68). Dryden also provides a favorable account of English dramatic tradition in the hands of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shakespeare. Dryden's discourses on classical "unities", classical distinction between various genres, on satires and his ideas of modernity are scattered in the prefaces and epilogues of most of his writings ranging from *The Conquest of Granada* to *The Spanish Friar*.

17.7 Summary

Dryden belonged to an age which was troubled with controversies and different kind of factions. Dryden's lifelong involvement with literature and culture of the period made him qualified to comment upon the general state of the arts and letters of the time as well as on the contemporary historical conditions. His long literary life is a commentary on his time-a time of class, party, faction. He was scorned by several of his contemporaries. His reply to them sharpened into brilliant satires. He changed allegiances again and again but this fluctuation made him skilled to air his voice from different approaches and formed diverse polemics. Dr. Johnson's comment aptly evaluates Dryden's literary contributions : "What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, 'lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit,' he found it brick, and he left it marble"(155). Dryden lived through an age when monarchical succession had twice been broken and restored and therefore Dryden's literary output demands a critical engagement with the aesthetics and politics of the Restoration period in England.

17.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Heroic Couplets**:

- Dryden popularized and perfected the use of heroic couplets in English poetry. His skillful handling of this form, characterized by rhymed iambic pentameter lines, set a standard for elegance and clarity in verse.

☐ **Adaptation of Classical Models**:

- Dryden's works often drew upon classical models, adapting themes and forms from ancient Greek and Roman literature to suit the tastes and values of Restoration England. This synthesis of classical ideals with contemporary concerns helped define the era's literary style.

Comedy and Tragedy:
- In drama, Dryden excelled in both comedy and tragedy. His comedies, such as *Marriage à la Mode*, showcased witty dialogue and satire aimed at social mores and customs of the time. His tragedies, like *All for Love*, emphasized themes of love, honor, and political intrigue, often drawing upon classical sources for inspiration.

Satirical Wit:
- Dryden's skill as a satirist was evident in works like *Absalom and Achitophel*, where he used sharp wit and keen observation to critique political figures and events. His satire combined humor with biting social commentary, reflecting his engagement with contemporary politics and society.

17.9 Review Questions

1. How did John Dryden use heroic couplets to enhance the clarity and elegance of his poetry? Provide examples from his works to illustrate.

2. In what ways did Dryden adapt classical literary forms and themes to suit the tastes and values of Restoration England? How did this influence his writing style?

3. Discuss Dryden's ability to excel in various genres, including poetry, drama, and satire. How did his writing style differ across these genres, and what techniques did he employ to achieve his literary goals?

4. How did Dryden's satirical works contribute to shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse in Restoration England? Discuss the effectiveness of his satirical style.

5. What were some of Dryden's key critical insights and principles as expressed in his Essay of Dramatic Poesy? How did these ideas influence the development of Restoration literary theory?

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STRUCTURE
18.1 Objectives
18.2 Introduction
18.3 Characteristics of Restoration Drama
18.4 Reflection of Restoration Culture
18.5 All for Love - Characters
18.6 All for Love - Overview
18.7 Summary
18.8 Key Takeaways
18.9 Review Questions
18.10 References

18.1 Objectives

☐ **Understanding Restoration Tragedy**: "All for Love" is a significant example of Restoration tragedy, which differs from earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean forms. It focuses more on emotional complexity, moral dilemmas, and the inner lives of characters.

☐ **Exploring Tragic Heroism**: The play presents a reinterpretation of the story of Antony and Cleopatra from a tragic perspective, emphasizing the downfall of heroic figures due to their flaws and circumstances. This exploration allows for discussions on the concept of tragic heroism in literature.

☐ **Analyzing Historical Context**: Contextualizing the play within the Restoration period offers insights into its themes of political instability, the restoration of the monarchy, and the changing social norms of the time. Understanding how Dryden adapts classical themes to reflect contemporary concerns enriches the study.

☐ **Examining Themes of Love and Duty**: The title itself, "All for Love," suggests a central exploration of the theme of love versus duty. The characters' choices and dilemmas regarding love, loyalty, and honor provide fertile ground for analysis.

☐ **Studying Dramatic Techniques**: Dryden's use of language, verse form (blank verse), and dramatic structure (five acts) can be examined to understand how these elements contribute to the play's overall impact and effectiveness.

☐ **Comparing with Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra**: Since Dryden's play is a reimagining of Shakespeare's work, comparing the two allows for discussions on adaptation, changes in literary tastes over time, and differing approaches to characterization and storytelling.

Appreciating Moral and Ethical Questions: The play raises questions about power, ambition, and the consequences of individual actions. Discussions can explore the moral dilemmas faced by the characters and their relevance to broader human experiences.

 Understanding Gender Roles: Analyzing how gender roles and expectations are portrayed in the play provides insights into societal norms of the Restoration period and how they influence character motivations and relationships.

18.2 Introduction

After John Donne and John Milton, John Dryden was the greatest English poet of the 17th century. After William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, he was the greatest playwright. And he has no peer as a writer of prose, especially literary criticism, and as a translator. Other figures, such as George Herbert or Andrew Marvell or William Wycherley or William Congreve, may figure more prominently in anthologies and literary histories, but Dryden's sustained output in both poetry and drama ranks him higher. After Shakespeare, he wrote the greatest heroic play of the century, The Conquest of Granada (1670, 1671), and the greatest tragicomedy, Marriage A-la-Mode (1671). He wrote the greatest tragedy of the Restoration, All for Love (1677), the greatest tragicomedy, Don Sebastian (1689), and one of the greatest comedies, Amphitryon (1690). As a writer of prose he developed a lucid professional style, relying on patterns and rhythms of everyday speech. As a critic he developed a combination of methods—historical, analytical, evaluative, dialogic—that helped grow the neoclassical theory of literary criticism. As a translator he developed an easy manner of what he called paraphrase that produced brilliant versions of Homer, Lucretius, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Persius, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, and above all Virgil. His translation of The Aeneid remains the best ever produced in English. As a poet he perfected the heroic couplet, sprinkling it with judicious enjambments, triplets, and metric variations and bequeathing it to Alexander Pope to work upon it his own magic.

Dryden the poet is best known today as a satirist, although he wrote only two great original satires: Mac Flecknoe (1682) and The Medall (1682). His most famous poem, Absalom and Achitophel (1681) contains several brilliant satiric portraits. But unlike satire, it comes to a final, tragic resolution. Dryden's other great poems—Annus Mirabilis (1667), Religio Laici (1682), The Hind and the Panther (1687), Anne Killigrew (1686), Alexander's Feast (1697), and "To My Honour'd Kinsman" (1700)— are not satires either. And he contributed a wonderful body of occasional poems: panegyrics, odes, elegies, prologues, and epilogues.

Dryden was born August 9, 1631 into an extended family of rising Puritan gentry in Northamptonshire. But as a teenager he was sent to the King's School at Westminster to be trained as a King's Scholar by the brilliant Royalist headmaster Richard Busby. Dryden's family sided with the Commonwealth; however, in his first published poem, the elegy "Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings"—included in a volume (1649) of verses upon this young aristocrat's untimely death from smallpox—Dryden revealed Royalist sympathies.

18.3 Characteristics of Restoration Drama

Restoration drama refers to plays written and performed in England during the Restoration period, which began in 1660 when Charles II was restored to the throne after the English Civil War and Interregnum. Here are some key characteristics of Restoration drama:

1. **Comedy of Manners**: One of the defining genres of Restoration drama, comedy of manners focuses on the behavior and social conventions of the upper class. It often satirizes the superficiality, hypocrisy, and sexual intrigue prevalent in aristocratic society.
2. **Wit and Repartee**: Restoration comedy is known for its sharp wit, clever dialogue, and verbal repartee. Characters engage in witty banter, double entendres, and wordplay, showcasing their intelligence and sophistication.
3. **Moral Ambiguity**: Unlike earlier Jacobean and Elizabethan drama, Restoration plays often depict characters who are morally ambiguous. They may engage in deceit, manipulation, and morally questionable behavior, reflecting the changing social values of the time.
4. **Interest in Love and Sexuality**: Restoration drama frequently explores themes of love, romance, and sexuality. There is often a focus on romantic intrigue, seduction, and extramarital affairs, reflecting the libertine attitudes of the period.
5. **Emphasis on Plot and Intrigue**: Restoration plays tend to have intricate and fast-paced plots, filled with twists, mistaken identities, and complex schemes. The emphasis on plot devices keeps the audience engaged and entertained.
6. **Role of Women**: Female characters in Restoration drama often have more agency and independence compared to earlier periods. They may be witty, clever, and actively involved in the intrigues of the plot, challenging traditional gender roles.
7. **Satirical Elements**: Restoration drama frequently employs satire to critique societal norms, politics, and institutions. Satirical elements can be found in both comedies and tragedies, highlighting the playwrights' commentary on contemporary issues.
8. **Use of Prose and Verse**: While earlier drama predominantly used verse (iambic pentameter), Restoration drama introduced a greater use of prose, particularly in comedies. This allowed for a more naturalistic and conversational tone in dialogue.
9. **Influence of French Drama**: Restoration drama was influenced by French theatre, particularly the comedies of Molière. This influence can be seen in the style, structure, and themes of many Restoration plays.
10. **Celebration of Wit and Urbanity**: Overall, Restoration drama celebrates wit, urbanity, and the sophistication of city life. It reflects the burgeoning intellectual and cultural scene of London during the period.

These characteristics collectively define Restoration drama as a distinct and influential period in English literature, marking a departure from earlier forms while laying the groundwork for developments in comedy, tragedy, and social commentary.

18.4 Reflection of Restoration Culture

Restoration drama serves as a vivid reflection of the cultural, social, and political changes that characterized England during the Restoration period (1660-1688). Here are some key aspects of Restoration culture that are reflected in its drama:

1. **Monarchy and Restoration Politics**: The Restoration marked the return of the monarchy under Charles II after the turbulent period of the English Civil War and Interregnum. Restoration drama often portrayed themes of loyalty to the crown, the restoration of order, and the celebration of monarchy. Plays like Dryden's "The Indian Emperor" and "All for Love" reflected a renewed interest in royalist sentiments and political stability.
2. **Society and Manners**: Restoration drama, particularly comedy of manners, depicted the social behaviors and conventions of the upper class with a satirical and critical eye. Plays like William Wycherley's "The Country Wife" and William Congreve's "The Way of the World" mocked the artificiality, hypocrisy, and sexual intrigue prevalent among the aristocracy. The witty repartee and sophisticated dialogue highlighted the manners and social norms of the time.
3. **Sexuality and Libertinism**: The period was known for its libertinism and more permissive attitudes towards sexuality. Restoration drama often explored themes of love, romance, and sexual desire openly and provocatively. Characters engaged in affairs, seductions, and romantic intrigues, reflecting the libertine ethos of the era. Plays like Aphra Behn's "The Rover" exemplify this exploration of love and sexuality.
4. **Gender and Femininity**: Restoration drama portrayed evolving gender roles and attitudes towards women. Female characters were often portrayed as witty, assertive, and sexually confident, challenging traditional norms. Plays like Behn's works, including "The Rover" and "The Widow Ranter," featured strong female protagonists who navigated their own desires and challenges in a male-dominated society.
5. **Intellectual and Cultural Exchange**: The Restoration period saw a flourishing of intellectual and cultural exchange, influenced by French and continental ideas. French theater, particularly the comedies of Molière, inspired the wit, satire, and comedic style of Restoration drama. This cultural exchange enriched English theater with new dramatic forms, themes, and techniques.
6. **Urban Life and Commercial Theater**: London emerged as a vibrant cultural and commercial center during the Restoration period. Theaters became popular social venues, attracting diverse audiences from different social classes. The rise of commercial theater led to a demand for entertaining and commercially successful plays, prompting playwrights to cater to popular tastes while also engaging with contemporary social issues.
7. **Satire and Critique**: Restoration drama used satire as a powerful tool to critique social norms, hypocrisy, and political corruption. Plays often satirized public figures, vices, and societal trends, reflecting the playwrights' critical engagement with the world around them. Satirical elements in works like John Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" and George Etherege's "The Man of Mode" illustrate this satirical impulse.

Overall, Restoration drama provides a dynamic and multifaceted portrayal of the cultural, social, and political milieu of England during the late 17th century. It captures the spirit of a period marked by political restoration, social change, intellectual curiosity, and a burgeoning urban culture, making it a rich source for understanding the complexities of Restoration society and culture.

18.5 All for Love - Characters

"All for Love" by John Dryden is a tragedy that reimagines the story of Antony and Cleopatra, focusing on the doomed love affair between the two historical figures. Here are the main characters in the play:

1. **Mark Antony**: The Roman general and triumvir who is torn between his duty to the Roman Empire and his passionate love for Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. Antony struggles with his identity, torn between his desire for Cleopatra and the expectations of Roman society.
2. **Cleopatra**: The Queen of Egypt, known for her beauty, intelligence, and political acumen. Cleopatra is deeply in love with Antony and is willing to risk everything to be with him. She is portrayed as a complex character who alternates between vulnerability and strength.
3. **Octavius Caesar (Octavian)**: The ambitious Roman Emperor and Antony's rival. Octavius Caesar represents political ambition and the desire for power. He is pragmatic and calculating, viewing Antony's relationship with Cleopatra as a threat to Roman stability.
4. **Ventidius**: A loyal friend and general who supports Antony. Ventidius is a military commander who respects Antony but also serves as a voice of reason and caution. His loyalty to Antony is unwavering, and he provides counsel throughout the play.
5. **Alexas**: Cleopatra's eunuch and advisor. Alexas is devoted to Cleopatra and serves as a confidant and supporter of her decisions. He provides insight into Cleopatra's emotional state and helps to further her agenda.
6. **Charmion and Iras**: Cleopatra's attendants and confidants. Charmion and Iras are loyal companions who support Cleopatra emotionally and symbolically represent her feminine world.
7. **Dolabella**: A Roman soldier who becomes romantically involved with Cleopatra after Antony's death. Dolabella's character highlights the consequences of Antony's downfall and serves as a contrast to Antony's passionate love for Cleopatra.

These characters interact within a tragic narrative that explores themes of love, duty, power, and the consequences of political and personal decisions. Dryden's portrayal of these historical figures combines elements of classical tragedy with Restoration drama's focus on emotional depth and moral dilemmas.

18.6 All for Love - Overview

"All for Love" is a tragedy written by John Dryden, first performed in 1677. It is a reimagining of the story of Antony and Cleopatra, drawing inspiration from Shakespeare's play "Antony and Cleopatra." Here's an overview of the play:

Plot Summary: The play is set in Alexandria, Egypt, after Antony and Cleopatra have been defeated by Octavius Caesar (Octavian) in the Battle of Actium. Antony, once a powerful Roman general and part of the Triumvirate ruling Rome, is now in exile with Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. Despite their defeat, Antony and Cleopatra are deeply in love and struggle to maintain their relationship amidst political turmoil and the looming threat from Octavius.

As Octavius consolidates his power in Rome, he sends his general Dolabella to Alexandria with an offer of clemency for Antony if he surrenders Cleopatra. Antony is torn between his love for Cleopatra and his sense of duty to Rome. Cleopatra, meanwhile, fears Antony's growing disillusionment and the inevitability of their tragic fate.

Throughout the play, Antony and Cleopatra confront their inner conflicts and external pressures. Their relationship is tested by jealousy, pride, and political ambition. The play culminates in a series of tragic events leading to Antony's death. Cleopatra, grief-stricken and determined not to be taken captive by Octavius, also meets a tragic end.

18.7 Summary

Most of the work of his last years was in translation, apparently as a way of achieving a modicum of political and economic. He returned to favorites, such as <u>Ovid</u>, <u>Virgil</u>, and <u>Homer</u>, and added Boccaccio and <u>Chaucer</u>. Especially noteworthy is the malleability of Dryden's heroic couplets. In the *Aeneis*, for example, he occasionally opens up the couplet rather than, like Pope, closing it virtually all the time. He spices couplets with triplets, masculine with feminine endings. He is a past master at the enjambment and particularly of metric variation in the first hemistich. He is also a master weaver of motif, as in the leitmotiv of *labor* in the *Aeneis*, a Virgilian key word and concept he variously translates as *Labour* and *Toyl*—sometimes adding to the Virgilian original and always emphasizing the need to build a kingdom on hard work, as opposed to the easy gains in Carthage. He also embellishes the original with lines such as the following, which emphasize the emerging theme of self-reliance in his final works: Dryden's Sybil praises Aeneas as being "secure of Soul, unbent with Woes" and advises him, "The more thy Fortune frowns, the more oppose."

18.8 Key Takeaways

☐ **Versatility and Mastery**: Dryden was a versatile writer who excelled in poetry, drama, criticism, and translation. His works encompass a wide range of styles and themes, showcasing his mastery of language and form.

☐ **Restoration Drama**: Dryden was a key figure in the development of Restoration drama. He wrote several successful plays, including "All for Love," which reimagined classical stories with a focus on emotional depth and moral complexity.

☐ **Poetry**: Dryden's poetry is characterized by its clarity, elegance, and intellectual rigor. He wrote lyric poetry, satires, heroic couplets, and odes, contributing significantly to the development of English poetry during his time.

18.9 Review Questions

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1. Discuss Dryden's use of heroic couplets in his poetry. How does his poetic style compare with that of earlier Elizabethan poets like John Donne or later poets like Alexander Pope?

2. Analyze Dryden's contributions to literary criticism, focusing on his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy." How did his critical principles influence subsequent generations of writers and critics?

3. What challenges and opportunities did Dryden face in translating classical works such as Virgil's

"Aeneid" into English? How did his translations contribute to the popularity and understanding of classical literature in England?

4. To what extent did Dryden's political and social views influence his writing? How did his works reflect or critique the political climate of Restoration England?

5. How has Dryden's reputation evolved over time, from his contemporaries to modern scholars? What aspects of his writing continue to resonate with readers today?

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STRUCTURE

19.1 Objectives
19.2 Introduction
19.3 Themes
19.4 Criticisms
19.5 Significance and Impact in Literature
19.6 Summary
19.7 Key Terms
19.8 Review Questions
19.9 References

19.1 Objectives

The following are the aims of this study:
● To learn more about John Dryden's writings and literary style
● To learn more about William Shakespeare's literary genius and writing style in his most significant works.
● To draw attention to the importance of William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and John Dryden's All for Love from the standpoint of literature
● To compare the two authors' respective literary works for any similarities or differences, to gauge each writer's distinctive writing style, and to close the knowledge gap about this particular subject matter
● To determine how much they contributed to global literature
● To create original and exceptional comparison research in the academic sector.

19.2 Introduction

Numerous scholars and practitioners, critics, and learners have investigated William Shakespeare, who is considered the most important author of the Elizabethan era. John Dryden, on the contrary end, is acknowledged as a superb author but is hardly recognized due to his enigmatic and complicated writing style. In almost every way, Dryden perfectly encapsulates and surpasses the other works of his era. He occupies a significant position in the history of English literature during the Restoration period. However, few people in the modern era have read any of his masterpieces, particularly his plays (Tatipang, 2022). A comparison between an Elizabethan drama and a Restoration-era neo-classical play was intended with the study of Antony and Cleopatra and All for Love. A reference to the main characters' backstories was made, and the typical plot sources were looked into. In far too many aspects, Antony and Cleopatra, a piece by Shakespeare composed 70 years prior, influenced John Dryden's All for Love in the late seventeenth century. Investigation within each work's overarching storyline advanced the comparative evaluation. Shakespeare's and Dryden's depictions of the central protagonists have been evaluated by comparison. But the real-life romance between historical characters Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII, Philopator of Egypt, served as the foundation for each of

these plays (KURTULUŞ, 2021). Shakespeare's worldwide appeal and dominance are reinforced in the discussion by comparing a well-written play from the seventeenth century and a masterwork from the Elizabethan age.

19.3 Themes

☐ **Love and Passion**: The central theme of the play revolves around the intense and tragic love affair between Antony and Cleopatra. Dryden portrays their love as passionate and all-consuming, transcending political ambitions and societal expectations.

☐ **Duty and Honor**: The conflict between personal desires and public duty is a recurring theme. Antony struggles to reconcile his love for Cleopatra with his responsibilities as a Roman general and statesman, ultimately leading to his downfall.

☐ **Power and Politics**: The play explores the dynamics of power and political ambition. Octavius Caesar represents political pragmatism and the quest for power, contrasting with Antony's emotional and impulsive nature.

☐ **Fate and Tragedy**: "All for Love" is a tragedy that reflects on the inevitability of fate and the tragic consequences of human actions. The downfall of Antony and Cleopatra is portrayed as a result of their flawed decisions and the forces beyond their control.

☐ **Gender and Identity**: Cleopatra's character challenges traditional gender roles by depicting a powerful and assertive woman who wields influence and makes critical decisions. The play examines issues of identity and self-definition in the face of societal expectations.

19.4 Criticisms

☐ **Comparison to Shakespeare**: One common criticism is that Dryden's adaptation of "Antony and Cleopatra" lacks the depth and complexity of Shakespeare's original work. Critics argue that Dryden's focus on emotional intensity may simplify or overlook some of the subtleties present in Shakespeare's portrayal of the characters.

☐ **Historical Accuracy**: Some critics have pointed out historical inaccuracies in Dryden's depiction of Antony and Cleopatra's relationship and the events surrounding their downfall. Dryden's portrayal is seen as more influenced by contemporary notions of love and tragedy rather than historical accuracy.

☐ **Characterization**: There are debates about the characterization of Antony and Cleopatra in Dryden's play. Critics have questioned whether Dryden fully develops the psychological complexities of the characters, particularly compared to Shakespeare's more nuanced portrayals.

☐ **Style and Language**: While admired for its poetic language and eloquence, Dryden's use of heroic couplets in "All for Love" has been criticized for being overly formal and lacking the naturalistic

dialogue found in Shakespearean drama. Some find the verse style less suited to conveying the emotional depth of the characters.

☐ **Adaptation Choices**: Critics have discussed Dryden's choices in adapting the original story, including his emphasis on the romantic and tragic elements at the expense of other themes and motifs present in Shakespeare's play. This selective adaptation has been both praised and criticized for its impact on the narrative focus.

19.5 Significance and Impact in Literature

☐ **Adaptation of Classical Material**: Dryden's play is not just a reimagining but also a reinterpretation of Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" and the historical events surrounding these characters. It reflects Restoration-era sensibilities and aesthetics while adapting classical themes to suit contemporary tastes.

☐ **Dramatic Structure**: The play adheres to the classical unities of time, place, and action, which were advocated during the Restoration period. This structured approach contrasts with Shakespearean drama, which often featured more expansive settings and timelines.

☐ **Character Relationships**: Beyond Antony and Cleopatra, the play explores relationships such as Antony's friendship with Ventidius and the dynamics between Cleopatra and her attendants, Charmion and Iras. These relationships add depth to the characters and enrich the dramatic conflicts.

☐ **Symbolism and Imagery**: Dryden employs symbolic imagery throughout the play to underscore themes and emotions. For example, Cleopatra's use of serpents as a metaphor for her relationship with Antony and their impending doom is a recurring motif that adds layers of meaning to their love affair.

☐ **Political Allegory**: While primarily a tragic love story, "All for Love" also serves as an allegory for political allegiances and betrayals. Antony's struggle between his personal desires and his obligations to Rome mirrors the political tensions of the Restoration period, where loyalty to the monarch was often tested.

☐ **Moral and Ethical Dilemmas**: The play raises ethical questions about loyalty, honor, and the consequences of individual actions. Antony's internal conflict and Cleopatra's manipulation of events prompt audiences to consider the moral dilemmas faced by the characters and their implications.

☐ **Theatrical Performance**: As a dramatic work, "All for Love" was intended for performance on the Restoration stage. Its poetic language and dramatic confrontations between characters would have been enhanced by theatrical spectacle and the visual representation of ancient Egypt and Rome.

☐ **Legacy and Influence**: Despite initial criticisms and comparisons to Shakespeare, "All for Love" has endured as a significant work in English literature. Its exploration of love, power, and tragedy continues to resonate with audiences and scholars alike, influencing subsequent adaptations and interpretations of Antony and Cleopatra's story.

19.6 Summary

One of the greatest tragedies ever produced in literature is Shakespeare's magnificent work "Antony and Cleopatra." Passion and responsibility are at odds in Shakespeare's drama. The two most notable characters yearned to be each other's, yet their circumstances prevented them from being. The play's powerful force of love was one of Dryden's goals in writing it. After being exiled, Cleopatra decides to go back to Antony. To make Antony feel bad, she and Alexas try to make up a story that Cleopatra committed suicide in her room. Following his covert suicide, Antony lies on the ground after learning that Cleopatra killed herself. In contrast to Dryden's plays, which are more of a romantic tragedy, Shakespeare's plays take a more comprehensive, historical stance. Shakespeare's plays and Dryden's plays differ primarily in this way. The poetry—the dialogue—in both plays is of a high caliber, and it is primarily written in iambic pentameter, regardless of whether one prefers Dryden's or Shakespeare's staging of the action. Dryden strayed from his original rhyme structure to write black verse in the style of the "divine" Shakespeare. Even though the central plot of both works—"All for Love" by Dryden and "Antony and Cleopatra" by Shakespeare—is the same, there are several notable differences in the narrative techniques of the two. Shakespeare's play is about a toxic relationship between two people that develops due to their shared sentiments of passion, possession, and obsession. To end this, the whole conclusive evidence can be considered as both of the plays have their own essense of expressing tragedy and love. The structural equations in both of the author's plays are evidently different; each of the characters, events, and everything has been placed differently. Dryden's version has only emphasized the protagonists' love; it overshadows other happenings through their surroundings. On the other hand, Shakespeare has placed Antony and Cleopatra among the chaos of power, war, politics and social elements. His work is much more neutral and feels more historical than Dryden's "All for Love".

19.7 Key Takeaways

☐ **Tragic Love and Passion**: The play vividly portrays the intense and tragic love affair between Antony and Cleopatra. It explores how their love, though passionate and genuine, becomes entangled with political ambitions and ultimately leads to their downfall.

☐ **Conflict Between Love and Duty**: Central to the plot is Antony's internal conflict between his love for Cleopatra and his sense of duty to Rome. This theme highlights the tension between personal desires and public responsibilities.

☐ **Character Complexity**: Dryden's characterization of Antony and Cleopatra goes beyond mere historical figures; he delves into their psychological depths, portraying them as flawed individuals grappling with their own weaknesses and desires.

☐ **Political Ambition and Betrayal**: The play examines the ruthless pursuit of power and the betrayals that accompany it. Octavius Caesar's political ambition contrasts sharply with Antony's romantic idealism, showcasing different facets of leadership and governance.

19.8 Review Questions

1. How does Antony's struggle between his love for Cleopatra and his duty to Rome drive the plot of "All for Love"? In what ways does this conflict shape his character development throughout the play?
2. Compare and contrast Dryden's portrayal of Antony and Cleopatra with Shakespeare's depiction in "Antony and Cleopatra." How do their motivations, actions, and relationships differ in each version?
3. Discuss the tragic elements in "All for Love." What specific events or decisions contribute to Antony and Cleopatra's downfall? How does Dryden use tragic conventions to heighten the emotional impact of their story?
4. Explore the use of symbolism and imagery in the play. What symbols (e.g., serpents, eagles) does Dryden employ, and how do they contribute to the thematic depth and characterization?
5. How does Cleopatra challenge traditional gender roles in "All for Love"? What agency does she exhibit in her interactions with Antony and other characters?

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STRUCTURE

20.1 Objectives

The objective of studying Dryden's translation works is to explore the transformation and adaptation of classical texts by one of the foremost literary figures of the Restoration period. Through his translations, particularly from Latin and Greek, Dryden sought not just to bring the classical works of authors like Virgil, Ovid, and Homer to English audiences but also to refine and adapt them to the tastes of his time. By examining Dryden's approach to translation, we aim to:

1. Understand Dryden's philosophy of translation, which balanced fidelity to the original with the need for creative license.
2. Analyze how Dryden's translations reflect both his mastery of language and his vision of the role of the poet in society.
3. Investigate the cultural and political significance of Dryden's translations in shaping English literature.
4. Assess the ways in which his translations reflect the norms of the Restoration period, including its values, aesthetics, and expectations from literature.
5. Examine how Dryden's translations influenced future literary translations and the development of English literary traditions.

20.2 Introduction

John Dryden (1631–1700) is often celebrated as one of the greatest English poets, critics, and playwrights of the late 17th century. However, his role as a translator is equally significant, yet often overshadowed by his other contributions. Dryden's translations were not just linguistic exercises; they were major literary events of their time. His translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* in particular is a towering achievement in the annals of English literature. Dryden viewed translation as a creative act, wherein the translator did more than merely transcribe words from one language into another. He believed that the translator should act as a mediator between two worlds, conveying the spirit of the original work while also making it accessible and appealing to a contemporary audience.

Dryden's philosophy of translation, outlined in his preface to *Ovid's Epistles* (1680), emphasized three approaches: metaphrase (word-for-word translation), paraphrase (sense-for-sense translation), and imitation (where the translator takes liberties with the text). Dryden largely favoured paraphrase, arguing that strict fidelity to the original text could often result in a loss of the work's spirit and elegance. His translations reflect this balance—he strove to maintain the essence of the original, yet he wasn't afraid to adapt or expand on the source material to enhance clarity, rhythm, or emotional resonance for his English readers.

Dryden's translation projects were often undertaken with political and personal motivations in mind. His translations not only showcased his intellectual rigour and linguistic prowess but also served as a means to align himself with the cultural and political elite. For example, his translation of the *Aeneid* can be read as a subtle commentary on the politics of kingship and leadership in Restoration England. Through his translations, Dryden also sought to reinforce the importance of the English language, positioning it as a worthy medium for the classical texts that had long dominated European intellectual discourse.

20.3 Dryden's Philosophy of Translation

Dryden's most notable contribution to the theory of translation is his categorization of translation methods: metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. His preference leaned towards paraphrasing, where the translator stays true to the sense and meaning of the original text but adapts the language to suit the new linguistic and cultural context. Dryden believed that metaphrase often resulted in clumsy and awkward translations that did not capture the elegance of the original work. On the other hand, he saw imitation as giving too much freedom to the translator, potentially leading to a distortion of the original author's intent. Dryden's middle-ground approach of paraphrasing aimed to strike a balance between fidelity to the text and creative interpretation.

For Dryden, translation was not a mechanical process but an act of poetic creation. He argued that the translator should understand the spirit behind the original work and convey that to a new audience, rather than adhering slavishly to the exact words. This approach allowed Dryden to infuse his translations with his stylistic flair, ensuring that his translations were not only faithful to the original but also engaging and enjoyable to his readers. Dryden's view of translation as an art form that requires both linguistic and creative skills has had a lasting impact on the field of literary translation.

20.4 Major Translation Works: Virgil, Ovid, and Homer

Among Dryden's most famous translations are his versions of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1697), Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Homer's works. His translation of the *Aeneid* is considered a landmark in English literature. Dryden brought Virgil's epic into the English canon with a sense of grandeur and dignity, reflecting both the Roman values of heroism and leadership and the Restoration ideals of monarchy and governance. Dryden's translation was not merely a linguistic exercise; it was a political statement, aligning the glory of Virgil's Rome with the ideals of the Stuart monarchy. Dryden's translations of Ovid, particularly *Ovid's Epistles* (1680), showcase his ability to handle more lyrical and emotive material. Ovid's exploration of love, betrayal, and transformation provided Dryden with ample opportunity to exercise his poetic talents. His translation of Homer, though less extensive than his work on Virgil and Ovid, also demonstrates his engagement with the great classical epics. Though Dryden's translation of Homer was incomplete, his adaptations influenced the development of later English translations, most notably Alexander Pope's celebrated translation of *The Iliad*.

20.5 Translation and the Politics of the Restoration

Dryden's translation works cannot be divorced from the political context of the Restoration period. The political upheaval of the English Civil War, the Interregnum, and the Restoration of the monarchy deeply influenced Dryden's literary output. His translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* was seen by many as a reflection of the Stuart monarchy's attempts to re-establish order and legitimacy in the wake of the Commonwealth period. Through the figure of Aeneas, Dryden could explore themes of kingship, duty, and divine destiny, aligning these with the politics of his own time.

Moreover, Dryden's translations were also a means of establishing his own place within the literary and political circles of the Restoration court. By aligning himself with the classical traditions of Rome and Greece, Dryden reinforced his intellectual authority and his position as a leading cultural figure of his time. His translation of the *Aeneid*, in particular, was commissioned by wealthy patrons, demonstrating the close relationship between literature, politics, and patronage in this period.

➢ **The Legacy of Dryden's Translations**

Dryden's translations had a profound impact on the development of English literature. By bringing the works of Virgil, Ovid, and Homer into English, he helped to establish these classical texts as foundational to English literary culture. His translations were widely read and admired, and they set a standard for future translators. In particular, his emphasis on balancing fidelity to the original text with creative interpretation influenced the development of translation theory in the 18th century and beyond.

Dryden's translation works also paved the way for future poets to engage with classical texts. His translation of the *Aeneid* inspired Alexander Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, while his work on Ovid influenced poets like Samuel Johnson and Thomas Gray. Dryden's translations thus played a crucial role in shaping the English literary canon, ensuring that the great works of classical antiquity continued to resonate with English-speaking audiences.

20.6 Summary

John Dryden's translations are not merely linguistic exercises but profound creative engagements with classical texts. His philosophy of translation, which balanced fidelity to the original with the need for creative interpretation, allowed him to bring the works of Virgil, Ovid, and Homer into English in ways that were both faithful and innovative. Dryden's translations reflect the political and cultural context of the Restoration, aligning the values of classical Rome with the ideals of the Stuart monarchy. His translations had a lasting impact on English literature, influencing future poets and setting a standard for literary translation.

20.7 Key Takeaways

- Dryden viewed translation as a creative act, emphasizing the need to balance fidelity to the original text with creative interpretation.
- His major translations, particularly of Virgil's *Aeneid*, reflect both his poetic mastery and his

engagement with the politics of the Restoration.
- Dryden's translations had a profound impact on the development of English literature, influencing future translators and poets.
- His approach to translation, which favoured paraphrase over strict fidelity, continues to influence translation theory today.

20.8 Review Questions

1. What are the three categories of translation outlined by Dryden in his preface to *Ovid's Epistles*?
2. How does Dryden's translation of the *Aeneid* reflect the political context of Restoration England?
3. In what ways did Dryden's translations influence future English literature and translation theory?
4. Discuss the balance Dryden sought to strike between fidelity to the original text and creative interpretation in his translation works.
5. How does Dryden's approach to translation in works like *The Aeneid* demonstrate his belief in the translator's role as both a poet and an interpreter of cultural values?

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