

M.A. ENGLISH PART-1

NOTES

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Classical Poetry Notes

Milton: Character of "Satan"

Satan occupies the most prominent position in the action of Paradise Lost. Though the main theme of the poem is the "Man's first disobedience" yet it is the character of Satan which gives a touch of greatness to this epic. All the poetic powers of Milton are shown on the delineation of the majestic personality of the enemy of God and Man, i.e. Satan.

As it is shown in Paradise Lost Book-I that the character of Satan is a blend of the noble and the ignoble, the exalted and the mean, the great and the low, therefore, it becomes difficult to declare him either a hero or a wholly villain.

In Paradise Lost Book-I we can hardly doubt his heroic qualities because this book fully exhibits his exemplary will-power, unsurpassable determination, unshakable confidence and unbelievable courage. However, the encyclopedia of religion removes some of the confusion from our minds regarding Satan's character in the following words:

"Satan means the arch-enemy of men, the adversary of God and of Christianity, a rebel against God, a lost arch-angel."

Milton also confirms the remarks and tells us that Satan is an archangel. When God declares the Holy Christ his viceroy, Satan refuses to accept God's order because he himself is a confident for it, his false strength and pride leads him to revolt against God for the fulfillment of his lust for power but he and his army suffers a heavy defeat and throw headlong into the pit of hell.

Milton's description of Satan's huge physical dimension, the heavy arms he carries, his tower like personality and his gesture make him every inch a hero. In his first speech, Satan tells Beelzebub that he does not repent of what he did and that defeat has brought no change in him at all. He utters memorable lines:

“What though the field be lost?
All is not lost – the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.”

Actually he is not ready to bow before the will of God and is determined to wade and eternal war by force and will never compromise. He proudly calls himself the new possessor of the profoundest hell and foolishly claims to have a mind never to be changed by force or time. As he says:

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“The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.”

Although Satan undergoes perpetual mental and physical torture in hell yet he is fully satisfied because he is at liberty to do whatever he likes, without any restriction. The following line clearly indicates his concept of freedom.

“Better to reign in Hell, the Serve in Heaven.”

It can be said without any doubt that Satan gives an evidence of great leadership qualities which are certainly worthy of an epic hero and Beelzebub appreciates him for his undaunted virtues as the commander of undaunted virtue as the commander of fallen angels. His speech to the fallen angels is a sole roof of his great leadership because it infuses a new spirit in the defeated angels who come out of the pit of hell with their swords and are ready to face any danger regardless of their crushing and humiliating defeat at the hands of God. We fully laud Satan’s views on the themes of honour, revenge and freedom, but we cannot help sympathizing him because he embodies evil. He is the embodiment of disobedience to God.

As the poem proceeds, the character of Satan degenerates and he fails to produce any impression to true heroism because he is morally a degraded figure. When we closely examine his addressed to his followers, we find that it is full of contradictions and absurdities, because he tries to throw dust into the eyes of his comrades. In fact, on the one hand, he says that they will provoke war against God and on the other hand, he wants peace which is only possible through submission. Then, on reaching the earth, he enters into a serpent and is completely degrades. Pride is the cause of his fall from Heaven – Pride that has ‘raised’ him to contend with the mightiest. But where is that pride when the Archangel enters into the mouth of a sleeping serpent and hides himself in its “Mazy folds”. Here from the grand figure that he is in the beginning, he degenerates into a man and cunning fellow, and then he tries to tempt Eve by guile. So, Satan degenerates from the role of a brave hero to that of a cunning villain as C. S. Lewis remarks:

“From hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service

agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bed-room or bath-room window and thence toad, and finally to a snake – such is the progress of Satan.”

So, it can easily be said in the light of above mentioned facts that Satan is out and pouter hero in Book-I of Paradise Lost, but in Book-IX he appears before us every inch a villain because of his evil design and he himself says that his chief pleasure lies in the destruction of mankind which lowers him in our estimation as a hero.

John Donne a metaphysical poet

Dryden once remarked:

“Donne affects metaphysics not only in his satires but in amorous verses, too, where nature only should reign.”

Though Donne was influenced by the sixteenth and the seventeenth century poets, yet he did not tread on the beaten track. His concept of poetry was unconventional. In his poetry, intellect takes the form, primarily, of wit by which heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence. The seventeenth century poets labeled his poetry as ‘strong line poetry’, mainly, on account of his concise expression and his deliberate toughness. In his life, he was never called a metaphysical poet. After his death, his poetry was re-evaluated and some other important features were found in it, which won the name of a metaphysical poet for Donne.

Grierson’s defines metaphysical poetry as:

“Poetry inspired by a philosophical concept of the universe and the role assigned to human spirit in the great drama of existence”.

This definition is based on the metaphysical poetry of Dante, Goethe and Yeats. So “metaphysical” is applicable to poetry who is highly philosophical or which touches philosophy.

Combination of passion and thought characterizes his work. His use of conceit is often witty and sometimes fantastic. His hyperboles are outrageous and his paradoxes astonishing. He mixes fact and fancy in a manner which astounds us. He fills his poems with learned and often obscure illusions besides, some of his poems are metaphysical in literal sense, they are philosophical and reflective, and they deal with concerns of the spirit or soul.

Conceit is an ingredient which gives a special character to Donne’s metaphysical

poetry. Some of his conceits are far-fetched, bewildering and intriguing. He welds diverse passions into something harmonious.

“When thou weep’st, unkindly kinde,
My lifes blood doth decay.”

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“When a teare falls, that thou falst which it bore,”

“Here lies a she-sun and a he-moon there”

“All women shall adore us, and some men.”

His approach is based on logical reasoning and arguments. He provides intellectual parallels to his emotional experiences. His modus operandi was “to move from the contemplation of fact to a deduction from it and, thence, to a conclusion”. He contemplates fidelity in a woman but, in reality, draws it impossible of find a faithful woman.

“No where
Lives a woman true, and faire.”

He does not employ emotionally exciting rhythm. His poetry goes on lower ebb. Even his love poems do not excite emotions in us. Even in a “Song” while separating, he is logical that he is not parting for weariness of his beloved.

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“But since that I
Must dye at last, ’tis best,
To use my selfe in jest
Thus by fain’d deaths to dye;”

His speculations and doctrines are beyond common human experience. His ideas are beyond the understanding of a layman and are a blend of intellect and emotions making his approach dialectical and scholastic. He asks his beloved in “The Message” to keep his eyes and heart because they might have learnt certain ills from her, but then, he asks her to give them back so that he may laugh at her and see her dying when some other proves as false to her as she has proved to the poet.

Donne was a self-conscious artist, therefore, had a desire to show off his learning. In his love poetry, he gives illustrations from the remote past. In his divine poems, he gives biblical references like the Crucification.

“Or snorted we in the seaven sleepers den?”

“Get with child a mandrake roote.”

“But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall.”

Metaphysical poetry is highly concentrated and so is Donne's poetry. In “The Good Morrow”, he says

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“For love, all love of other sights controules.”

“For, not in nothing, nor in things
Extreme, and scatt'ring bright, can love inhere.”

“Hee that hath all can have no more.”

His poetry is full of arguments, persuasion, shock and surprise. Instead of conventional romantic words, he used scientific and mathematical words to introduce roughness in his poetry; e.g. he used the words ‘stife twin compasses’, ‘cosmographers’, ‘trepidation of the spheres’ etc.

His style is highly fantastic, curt and he uses rough words. He rejects the conventional style which was romantic, soft and diffused.

Paradoxical statements are also found in his poems. In “The Indifferent” Donne describes constancy in men as vice and ask them:

“Will no other vice content you?”

In “The Legacy” the lover becomes his own ‘executor and legacy’. In “Love's Growth” the poet's love seems to have increased in spring, but now it cannot increase because it was already infinite, and yet it has increased:

“No winter shall abate the spring's increase.”

He deals with the problem of body and soul in “The Anniversarie” of the individual and the universe in “The Sunne Rising” and of deprivation and actuality in “A Noctrunall”. In his divine poems he talks about the Crucification, ransom, sects / schism, religion, etc.

Donne is a coterie poet. He rejects the Patrarchan tradition of poetry, adopted by

the Elizabethans. The Elizabethan poetry was the product of emotions. He rejected platonic idealism, elaborate description and ornamentation. He was precise and concentrated in poetry while the Elizabethans are copious and plentiful in words.

Seventeenth century had four major prerequisites; colloquial in diction, personal in tone, logical in structure and undecorative and untraditional imagination, which were also present in Donne.

To conclude, he is more a seventeenth century poet than a metaphysical poet. There are some features in his poetry which differentiate him e.g. he is a monarch of wit and more colloquial than any other seventeenth century poet. If other seventeenth century poets bring together emotions and intellect, he defines emotional experience with intellectual parallels etc. Still he writes in the tradition of the seventeenth century poets.

Paradise Lost: A Classical Epic

Homer and Virgil were the two great masters of the Classical epic. Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid have invariably served as models for all writers of the classical epic. Milton was a great classical scholar and he sought to write an epic. He dreamt of immortality and he aspired to be one with Homer and Virgil as the author of a classical epic. Milton turned his great classical and Biblical learning to a poem to "assert eternal providence, and justify the ways of God to men".

"I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

Milton achieved eminent success in making Paradise Lost as classical epic. In spite of certain drawbacks and defects, Milton's epic is entitled to take its rightful place among half a dozen classical epics in the world. The first essential feature of the epic is its theme. The theme of an epic must have a national importance or significance; that is, the epic must be a true and faithful mirror of the life and of a nation. Homer represented the national life, thought and culture of the Greeks in the Iliad, and Virgil gave expression to the hopes and aspirations of the Romans in the Aeneid. The Fall of Man is the theme of the epic.

"Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,"

The epic action has three qualifications. First, it should be one action, secondly, it should be an entire action, and thirdly, it should be a great action. In short, the action of an epic should be one, entire and great. All these three qualities of epic action are followed by Milton.

The action of Paradise Lost is one and there is a unity of action. The central action is the Fall of Man, and everything in the epic as, the battle of angels, the creation of the world, is subordinated to this central action. There are digressions at the beginning of the third and seventh books, but they do not affect the unity and central action of the poem. The whole action of Paradise Lost is single and compact. In the second place, its action is entire which means that it has a beginning, middle and an end. The action in Paradise Lost is contrived in hell, executed upon earth, and punished by heaven. In the third place the action ought to be great, by greatness of the action, Aristotle means that it should not only be great in its nature but also in its duration. The entire action of Paradise Lost has a stamp of grandeur and greatness about it. Milton's subject is greater than Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid. It does not determine the fate of one single person or nation; but of the whole human race.

Milton plunges into the middle of the action. Milton, in imitation of the great poets, opens his Paradise Lost, with an infernal council plotting the fall of man.

The characters of the epic must have dignity and variety. In Paradise Lost, we have a wide variety of characters marked with qualities. In Paradise Lost, we have human as well as superhuman characters. Adams and Eve are human characters, whereas God, Christ and Satan are superhuman characters.

An epic must have a hero with great qualities. Identification of the hero is different in Paradise Lost. Adam can be called the hero of the epic. He is not a warrior or a conqueror but a noble figure.

An epic is a serious poem embodying sublime and nobler thoughts. Milton's Paradise Lost is a sublime and noble poem characterized by loftiness of thought and sentiment.

An epic is not without a moral. Moral forms an integral and intrinsic part in Milton's poem. It seeks to "vindicate the ways of God to man, to show the reasonableness of religion and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law".

Milton, in conformity with the epic practice, begins Paradise Lost by invoking the Muse to help him in his great task. But since Milton seeks the aid of the Heavenly Muse, the Holy spirit,

"And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st:"

He requests:

"-----: what in me is dark

illumine, what is low raise and support,”

In and epic poem the poet narrates very little in his person. The characters themselves carry forward the mission of the poet.

Lastly the language of an epic must be sublime and rose above the language of common parlance.

“----- What though the fields be lost?
All is not lost”

Aristotle observes that a sublime style can be formed by three methods --- by the use of metaphors, by making use of the idioms and by lengthening of the phrase by the addition of words. Milton employs all these three methods to give the air of grandeur to his epic. His similes and metaphors are epical. Latin words are frequently introduced. The style of Paradise Lost is the truest example of grand style. On one place, Satan says:

“The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n”

On the other place:

“Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.”

Milton’s Paradise Lost is a successful classical epic. Paradise lost has thus many excellences as an epic but the defects in it also not be forgotten. The introduction of allegorical persons like sin and death, the frequent allusions to heathen mythological fables, the intervention of grotesque incidents, the frequent indulgence in puns and useless display of learning and the unnecessary use of technical terms as in the description of Pandemonium are some blemishes in the style of the poem.

One other point must also be noted. An epic is an objective poem, and personal reflections are out of place in it. But the most sublime parts of Paradise Lost reflect the individuality of the poet. How ever this has added to the interest of the work as a poem though it is not, strictly speaking, permissible in an epic.

[John Donne: a love poet](#)

Donne was the first English poet to challenge and break the supremacy of Petrarchan tradition. Though at times he adopts the Petrarchan devices, yet his imagery and rhythm, texture and colour of his love poetry is different. There are three distinct strains of his love poetry – Cynical, Platonic and Conjugal love.

Giving an allusion to Donne's originality as the poet of love, Grierson makes the following observation:

"His genius temperament and learning gave a certain qualities to his love poems ... which arrest our attention immediately. His love poems, for instance, do have a power which is at once realistic and distracting."

Donne's greatness as a love-poet arises from the fact that this poetry covers a wider range of emotions than that of any previous poet. His poetry is not bookish but is rooted in his personal experiences. His love experience were wide and varied and so is the emotional range of his love-poetry. He had love affairs with a number of women. Some of them were lasting and permanent, other were only of a short duration.

Donne is quite original in presenting the love situations and moods.

The "experience of love" must produce a "sense of connection" in both the lovers. This "sense of connection" must be based on equal urge and longing on both the sides.

"The room of love" must be shared equally by the two partners.

Donne magnifies the ideal of "Sense of connection" into the physical fulfillment of love.

"My face in thine eyes thine in mine appears"

This aspect of love helps him in the virtual analysis of the experience of love. Donne was a shrewd observer who had first hand knowledge of "love and related affairs. That is why in almost all his poems, he has a deep insight.

His love as expressed in his poetry was based not on conventions but on his own experiences. He experienced all phase of love – platonic, sensuous, serene, cynical, conjugal, illicit, lusty, picturesque and sensual. He could also be grotesque blending thought with passion.

Another peculiar quality of Donne's love lyrics is its "metaphysical strain". His poems are sensuous and fantastic. Donne's metaphysical strain made his reader confused his sincerity.

Donne's genius temperament and learning gave to his love poems power and fascination. There is a depth and range of feeling unknown to the majority of Elizabethan poets. Donne's poetry is startlingly unconventional even when he dallies, half ironically, with the hyperboles of Petrarch.

Donne is realistic not an idealistic. He knows the weakness of Flesh, the

pleasure of sex, the joy of secret meeting. However he tries to establish a relationship between the body and the soul. Donne is very realistic poet.

Grierson distinguished three distinct strains in it. First there is the cynical strain. Secondly, there is the strain of conjugal love to be noticed in poems like "valediction: forbidding mourning". Thirdly, there is platonic strain. The platonic strain is to be found in poems like "Twickenham Garden", "The Funeral", "The Blossoms", and "The Primroses". These poems were probably addressed to the high-born lady friends. Towards them he adopts the helpless pose of flirtations and in high platonic vein boasts that:

Different of sex no more we know
Than our Guardian Angles doe

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In between the cynical realistic strain and the highest spiritual strain, there are a number of poems which show an endless variety of mood and tone. Thus there are poems in which the tone is harsh, others which are coarse and brutal, still others in which he holds out a making threat to his faithless mistress and still others in which he is in a reflective mood. More often than not, a number of strains and moods are mixed up in the same poem. This makes Donne as a love poet singularly, original, unconventional and realistic.

Whatever may be the tone or mood of a particular poem, it is always an expression of some personal experience and is, therefore, presented with remarkable force, sincerity and seriousness. Each poem deals with a love situation which is intellectually analyzed with the skill of an experienced lawyer.

Hence the difficult nature of his poetry and the charge of obscurity have been brought against him. The difficulty of the readers is further increased by the extreme condensation and density of Donne's poetry.

The fantastic nature of the metaphysical conceits and poetry would become clear even we examine a few examples. In "Valediction: Forbidden Mourning" true lovers now parted are likened to the legs of a compass. The image is elaborated at length. The lovers are spiritually one, just as the head of the compass is one even when the legs are apart. One leg remains fixed and the other moves round it. The lover cannot forget the beloved even when separated from her. The two loves meet together in the end just as the two legs of the compass are together again, as soon as circle has been drawn.

At other times, he uses equally exaggerated hyperboles. For example, he mistakes his beloved to an angel, for to imagine her less than an angel would be profanity.

In Donne's poetry, there is always an "intellectual analysis" of emotion. Like a clever lawyer, Donne gives arguments after arguments in support of his points of

view. Thus in "Valediction: Forbidden Mourning" he proves that true lovers need not mourn at the time of parting. In "Canonization" he establishes that lovers are saints of love and in "The Blossome" he argues against the petrarchan love tradition. In all this Donne is a realistic love poet.

Chaucer: Art of Characterization

On the aisle of English poetry, Chaucer flourishes the fantastic colours of his words and paints different characters of his age with minute observation. Indeed, he is a great painter who paints not with colours but with words. Undoubtedly, he has:

"The Seeing Eye, the retentive memory, the judgment to select and the ability to expound."

His keen analysis of the minutest detail of his characters, their dresses, looks and manners enable him to present his characters lifelike and not mere bloodless abstractions.

His poetical piece, "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" is a real picture gallery in which thirty portraits are hanging on the wall with all of their details and peculiarities. Rather it is a grand procession with all the life and movement, the colour and sound. Indeed,

"His characters represent English society, morally and socially, in the real and recognizable types".

And still more representative of humanity in general. So, the characters in Chaucer's "The Prologue" are for all ages and for all lands.

Chaucer is the first great painter of character in English literature. Infact, next to Shakespeare he is the greatest in this field. In "The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" the thirty portraits traced by Chaucer give us an excellent idea of the society at that time. Except for royalty and aristocracy, on one hand and the robbers or out casts on the other, he has painted in brief practically the whole English nation.

The thirty pilgrims, including the host, belong to the most varied professions. The Knight and the Squire presents the warlike element of the society. The learned and liberal vocations are signified by the Man of Law, the Doctor, the Oxford Clerk and the Poet himself. The Merchant and the Shipman stand for the higher commercial community while the Wife of Bath, an expert Cloth maker represents the traders and manufacturers. Agriculture is represented by the Ploughman, the Miller and the Franklin. The upper servants like Manciple and the Reeve and the lower servant like Yeoman and the Cook represent the town and Country

between them. The Monk from his monastery, the Prioress from her convent, her attendant priests, the village Parson, the roaming Friar, the Pardoner and the Summoner sufficiently cover the casual categories of the religious order in those days.

To preserve the distinctions among these typical characters, Chaucer has indicated the differences in their clothes, manner of speech, habits and tendencies representing the common traits and the average characteristics of each profession. These personages, therefore, are not mere phantasms of the brain but real human beings.

These characters represent various types of contemporary society. They are no longer mere dummies or types but owing to their various peculiarities, their arguments and agreement and their likes and dislikes we recognize them as real living beings, true to the mould in which all human nature is cast.

His world is almost freak-free and his characters are perfectly lifelike. Some of them are so modern that they seem to be living today. The old Knight is an example of the chivalrous character which is found in every generation. The Squire is just the typical man of any day.

“He was as fresshe as is the monthe of May”

The Merchant has all the vanity which comes from the growing of wealth, while the Man of Law like lawyers of all times, is piling up fees and buying land. We recognize in him the typical lawyer of our own day:

“Nowhere so busy a man as he ther was”
And yet he seemed busier than he was.

There are characters like the Prioress, the Monk, the Franklin, the Reeve, the Summoner, the Pardoner, and the Wife of Bath whom we do not identify at first. But none of them is really extinct. They have changed their name and profession but their chief part is an element of humanity. That is why when we accompany the Pilgrims on their way we feel quite at home and have no feeling of being among aliens.

Chaucer's art of characterization is superb. He looks at his characters objectively and delineates each of the men and women sharply and caressingly. His impression of casualness, economy, significance and variety of every detail are examples of that supreme art which conceals art.

In fact, there is a different method of almost every pilgrim. He varies his presentation from the full length portrait to the thumb-nail sketch, but even in the brief sketches, Chaucer conveys a strong sense of individuality and depth of portraiture.

Chaucer's method of portraying characters is a scientific manner by differentiating them by means of their obvious distinctions. It was for the first time in European literature that a writer proved himself clearly conscious of the relation between individuals and ideas. Moreover, Chaucer's characters are consistent and instead of being static, they grow and develop in the course of the tale, like living human beings. They give their opinions on the stories that have been told and these comments reveal their dominant thoughts, their feelings and the objects of their interests.

Thus Chaucer is the master in the art of characterization.

Chaucer: A Humorist

Humour is an essential ingredient of Chaucer's poetry and the back-bone of "The Prologue and The Canterbury Tales". All the characters in The Prologue have been humorously described. Humour, infact, makes Chaucer's characterization distinct. A humorist is one who is quick to perceive the funny side of the things and who has the capacity to laugh and makes other laugh at what is absurd or ridiculous or incongruous.

Chaucer is called the first humorist of English literature. No English literary work before him reveals humour in the modern sense. And Chaucer is a greater humorist than Boccaccio. Chaucer's humour is consistent all pervasive and intense as we find in Shakespeare's plays. He paints all the characters in "The Prologue" in a humorous manner. The Knight is as gentle as a maid; the Squire is too sentimental in his love to sleep at night; the Friar has relations with the bar-maids instead of the poor; the Parson is too innocent and Clerk is too studious. Chaucer even does not spare himself and says:

"My wit is short, ye may well understonde"

His humour has refined and sophisticated touches and it does not offend anybody. For example, when he tells us that Prioress is so amiable and pleasant in her manners that she takes pains to imitate the manners of the court we cannot know whether he is praising her or laughing at her affection:

And full pleasant and amiable of port;
And peyned hire to counterfete cheere
Of court, and been es'attich of manere,

But his humour is of the finest type. It is pleasant and sympathetic because he is a man of pleasant temperament. He knows that every human being has one type

of defect or others. He pinpoints the defect in a light manner with a view to cure them, not for degrading the victim. His attitude is positive. So, when he says that the Friar lisps a little out of affection and when he plays on a harp, his eyes twinkles in his head like sparkling stars on the frosty night, we do not hate him or his affection, rather we just laugh at him at this weakness.

Chaucer's humour is also tinged with pity. It makes us thoughtful of the weakness of his victim and we start pitying him. For example, when he tells us that the Monk is more interested in riding, hunting and other worldly pursuits than in religious activities we pity him and wish him better. It means that his humour carries a sound message.

Chaucer's humour is, of course, satirical but it is sugar coated. His purpose is to awake the people against realities of life. His age is of romantic idealism and people are blind to the realities of life. His satire is not corrosive but gentle and mild. Secondly, he is not a zealous reformer. He satirizes only these characters that cannot be reformed at any cost, e.g. the Summoner, and the Pardoner who are extremely corrupt. Here he openly passes remarks about their dishonesty and corruption.

Most of the time, Chaucer's humour takes the form of irony because it relieves the bitterness of satire. For example, the use of the word "Worthy" for the most unworthy characters brings a tickling irony except for the "Worthy" Knight. Chaucer employs different sorts of irony. He has made an ample use of irony by contrast in "The Prologue". For example, after talking about the bravery, skill, experience and grandeur of the Knight, he tells us that in his behaviour he is as gentle as a maid and cannot harm anyone.

"And of his port as meeke as is a mayde"

He also employs irony by exaggeration when he says the Prioress has all the manners of eating because she knows how to carry a morsel and how to keep. She does not let any morsel fall from her mouth and she does not dip her fingers deep in the sauce. This is all exaggeration because these things do not account for manner and everyone knows them well.

He creates irony by situation too. For example, he describes those qualities of the Monk, which are not worth of his religious rank i.e. he is a good rider and brave man.

A monk there was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie;
A manly man, to been an abbot able.

In this way, he creates an ironical situation, which makes us think since he is a Monk, he should not do this. His actions are set in contrast with his situation as a

Monk.

Chaucer's humour is wide in range. It covers all kinds of humour from downright jokes to good-natured strokes when he paints the physical appearances of characters. For example, he describes Reeve:

Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene

Then, he says, that the Doctor of Physic is the greatest physician because he has the knowledge of astronomy.

In the description of the Shipman, he creates humour by incongruity when he says that he is a good fellow because he steals wine and has no prick of conscience.

In conclusion, we can say that critics may be divided in opinion as to Chaucer's right to be called the father of the English poetry, but there can be no question that he is the first great English humorist.

Chaucer: Realism

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Literature is the mirror of its age. Supreme literary artist is one who becomes a mouthpiece and provides a real picture of his age with its minute details. Chaucer is a perfect representative of his age. He is in true sense a social chronicler of England. His poetry reflects the 14th century not in fragment but as a complete whole.

Realism of Chaucer in "The Canterbury Tales" not gives us the impression that whatever has been described is real in the ordinary sense of the word. Realism is not reality; it is a collective term for the devices that give the effect of reality.

Chaucer represented life in its nakedness.

"What he has given is a direct transpiration of daily life."

Chaucer's principle object of writing poetry was to portray men and women truthfully without any exaggeration and to present an exact picture of average humanity. He painted life as he saw it, and he saw it with so observant eye that it seems that he was viewing all the events as well as characters through a kaleidoscope. Because of his this quality his epoch, "The Prologue of the Canterbury Tales" has become one of the vivid epoch of history. Moreover he is a man of the world so he mixes with all types of mankind and he observes the minute peculiarities of human nature. "The Canterbury Tales" is not only a long

poetical piece but a social history of England. He exposes almost all the aspects of his age as well as of the people along with the detail of their appearance, sex profession, attire and conduct.

Chaucer shed off the influence of the French and Italian models based on fantasies and dreams, upon which he had worked for so long and entered the abundance of his own real self. He worked like a true interpreter or chronicler, relating in a most realistic manner, the stories he had heard, without change of wording or tone.

The setting of "The Canterbury Tales" is highly realistic. A pilgrimage was one of the most common sights in the fourteenth century England. To relate the stories of these pilgrims, Chaucer gives the illusion, not of an imaginary world, but of real one. The more real the world of his setting is, the more his tales by contrast seems like tales, even though some to them deal with real everyday life. Unlike Boccaccio, who in his tales quickly slips back into frank artificiality, Chaucer held consistently to realism throughout "The Canterbury Tales".

Gifted with an acute power of observation Chaucer sees things as they are, and he possesses the art of printing them as he sees them. He does not project the tint of his likes and dislikes, views and prejudices on what he paints.

"Chaucer sees what is and paints it as he sees it."

In the portrayal of characters in "The Prologue" he gives us his minute and delicate records of details in dress, behaviour, which makes it a mime of observation as from the portrait of Prioress:

"She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fynghres in hir sauce depe,
Wel koude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe
That no drope no fille upon hir brest."

In "The Canterbury Tales" Chaucer has blended laughter and tears, the comic and tragic as is found in life with such case and grace, that his story-telling seems like a veracious picture of real life. Though his pilgrimage is remote from our experience, yet we feel that this is what we might see if we could turn the clock back few centuries.

Chaucer as a realist presents before us in The Canterbury Tales the pulsating life of the common people. Chaucer's pilgrims talk of "their purse, their love affairs or their private fends". Their vision is confirmed to the occurrences within their parish. This is the typical vision of the common people which is realistically presented by Chaucer in the Canterbury Tales.

Chaucer's depiction of the Shipman represents the salient features of the trade.

The Merchant is another important figure who signifies the changed conditions of Chaucerian society.

Chaucer has introduced a number of artificial elements, but he does it so skillfully and artistically that the impression of realism he creates, makes us forget them. He is "devilishly" sly, and deceives us as he should with the most innocent air in the world.

In the words of Hazlitt:

"There is not artificial, pompous display, but a strict parsimony of the poet's material like the rude simplicity of the age in which he lived."

It would be quite justifiable to call Chaucer as a realist of high rank because his principle object has been to portray men and women trustfully without an acute power of observation. He sees things as they are and describes them as he really sees them.

The Metaphysical Poets

This essay was originally a review in the London Times Literary Supplement (October 20, 1921) of the book *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*. In this essay, Eliot discusses three questions: To what extent did the so-called metaphysical form a school or a movement? How far is this so-called school or movement a digression from the main current? What is the importance in the modern age, of the study of these poets? The essay may be summarized under four headings:

1) DEFINITION OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY

According to T. S. Eliot, it is extremely difficult to define metaphysical poetry. The difficulty arises when we are to decide what poets practised it and in which of their poems. The poetry of Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Cowley and Donne is usually called metaphysical. However, it is difficult to find any precise use of metaphor, simile or other conceit, which is common to all these poets. Donne and often Cowley, "employ a device which is sometimes considered characteristically metaphysical: the elaboration of a figure of speech to the farthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it". Donne develops a comparison of two lovers to a pair of compasses. Sometimes we find in them "a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader". Donne is more successful than Cowley because in developing comparisons, he uses brief words and sudden contrasts:

"A bracelet of bright hair about the bone"

where the most powerful effect is produced by the sudden contrast of the associations of "bright hair" and of "bone". So it is to be maintained that metaphysical poetry is the elaboration of far-fetched images and communicated association of poet's mental processes.

Johnson employed the term 'metaphysical poets', apparently having Donne, Cleveland and Cowley chiefly in mind. In their poetry, he remarks:

"the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together".

The force of this accusation lies in the fact that often the ideas are yoked but not united. But this is not blameworthy in itself, as it has been practised by a number of poets and even by Johnson himself. Johnson, shrewd and sensitive critic, Eliot concludes, failed to define metaphysical poetry by its faults.

Eliot adopts the opposite method to define metaphysical poetry. Instead of calling these poets metaphysical, he calls them "the poets of the seventeenth century". He assumes that these poets were the direct and normal development of the precedent age. Without prejudicing their case by the adjective 'metaphysical', we may consider "whether their virtue was not something permanently valuable".

Eliot lays emphasis on the synthetic quality in these poets. Eliot praises the metaphysical poets for their successful attempt to unite what resists unification. To unite thought and feeling, the poetic and unpoetic, form and content, was the main quality of the metaphysical poets. Eliot points out the difference by dividing the poets into two kinds: intellectual poets and reflective poets.

"Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly merging disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular fragmentary".

In the mind of the poet experiences are related to one another and from new wholes.

2) DISSOCIATION OF SENSIBILITY

The poets of the 17th century possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult or fantastic. In the 17th century dissociation of sensibility set in and Milton and Dryden, the two great poets carried on with this process. While the language became more refined, the feeling became cruder. The language became unnatural and artificial. But this development of language reduced the importance of feeling. The logical conclusion of the influence of Milton and Dryden was that:

“The sentimental age began early in the 18th century and continued. The poets revolted against the ratiocinative”.

In Shelley and Keats, there are traces of a struggle towards unification of sensibility. But they died and reflective poets Tennyson and Browning held the ground. If there had been no gap between the 17th and 18th centuries, poets like Donne would not have been called metaphysical. The poets in question have, like other poets, various faults.

3) THE METAPHYSICAL POETS AND THE MODERN AGE

It is not a permanent necessity that poets should be interested in philosophy, or in any other subject. But our present civilization demands the poets to be difficult.

“Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and refined results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning”.

Hence we get something which looks very much like the conceit. If this is done, the poets of the present age will draw closer to the metaphysical poets, because both use obscure words and simple phrasing.

4) CONCLUSION

In the end, Eliot defends the metaphysical poets that the charges such as quaintness, obscurity, wittiness and unintelligibility are found even in serious poets. The metaphysical ideas are not simply the possession of this group of poets. They are found in other poets as well.

From this essay we can draw three conclusions: First, the main quality of the metaphysical poets is their fidelity to thought and feeling, an attempt to merge into one whole the most heterogeneous ideas; secondly, if dissociation of sensibility has not taken place during the 17th century and a gap had not occurred, they would not have been called metaphysical; thirdly, modern poets are tending to become like them in their use of language and ideas and hence the metaphysical poets are in the direct current of English poetry.

RAPE OF THE LOCK AS A COMIC EPIC

An epic, according to Aristotle, is the tragedy of a conspicuous person, who is involved in adventurous events and meets a tragic fall on account of some error of judgment i.e. hamartia which throws him from prosperity into adversity, however, his death is not essential. So, the subject matter of an epic is grand and that's

why it is written in bombastic language heroic couplet. Its style, too, is grand.

A mock-epic is a satire of an epic. It shows us that even a trivial subject can also be treated on epic scale. The subject of "The Rape of the Lock" is trivial – a love dispute between a lady and a gentleman. Lord Byron proposes Belinda who rejects his proposal. Byron cuts one of her beautiful locks. This trivial theme has been given epic treatment as if it were some grave event of paramount importance.

The style of the poet is mock-heroic. He employs bombastic and showy diction for thoughts and ideas which are not really grand – pompous expression for low action – for example, the game of Ombre had been described as a war of nerves, the table has been termed as the battlefield, the dispersed cards have been dubbed as routed army etc.

Similarly, the process of Belinda's make-up has been termed as adoration and the sacred rites of prayer. Belinda is called 'inferior priestess' and her toilet an 'altar' etc.

The poet has employed the epic method to heighten the effect i.e. the great has been made look small and vice versa. The introduction of the aerial machinery is used for heightening of effect. Belinda is an ordinary fashionable girl, but she has been shown being protected by thousands of spirits. The trivial game of Ombre has been compared with a grave war of nerves. The ordinary flight between the supports of Belinda and those of Peter has been compared with the fatal war between gods and goddesses and their hair pins, fans, etc. with which they fought have been termed as 'deadly weapons', spears, etc. The grief of Belinda at the loss of the lock has been compared with the shock at the death of a husband or a lapdog or at the breakage of a China vessel. Thus the poet raises a lapdog to the level of a husband or reduces a husband to the level of a lapdog.

The poet has also employed epic and heroic images, which is one of the prerequisites of a mock-epic. For example, Belinda has been named as 'the fairest of mortals', the 'bright fair'. The cards have been called 'parti-coloured troops'. The pair of scissors has been termed as a two-edged 'weapon', 'little engine', 'forfex', 'fatal engine', etc.

Belinda's dreams have been called mystic vision. The hair-pins have been compared with 'deadly weapons' and 'deadly spears' etc. Belinda's eyes have been dubbed as 'fair suns'.

Humour is one of the prerequisites of a mock-epic and the poem is full of humour and its humour is pleasing as compared to Swift's humour.

Moral is an essential part of a mock-epic. This poem is full of morals from the beginning till the end. However, the speeches of Belinda and Clarissa are

especially soaked in moral. Belinda repents that she would have been ten times happier if she had indulged herself in the pursuits of the fashionable circle. So, the more a woman exposes herself and her beauty, the more her chastity is in danger.

RAPE OF THE LOCK SOCIAL SATIRE

As Shakespeare is the poet of man, Pope is a poet of society. “The Rape of the Lock” is a social document because it mirrors contemporary society and contains a social satire, too. Pope paints about England in 18th century.

The whole panorama of “The Rape of the Lock” revolves around the false standard of 18th century. Pope satirizes the young girls and boys, aristocratic women and men, their free time activities, nature of husbands and wives, the professional judges and politicians of the day.

Pope clearly depicts the absurdities and the frivolities of the fashionable circle of the 18th century England. The world of Belinda – the world of fashion is a trivial world. The whole life of Belinda is confined to sleeping, make-up, enjoyment and alluring the lords. There are no transcendental elements in her life. This life is marked by ill-nature, affection, mischievousness, coquetry, yielding and submissive nature, fierce and unruly nature, infidelity, cheapness, meanness, trivialities and frivolities etc. Belinda represents all the fashion struck women, busy in such stupidities.

The gallants of the time have not been spared by Pope. Baron not only represents Peter but also typifies the aristocratic gallants of the age.

Pope satirizes man’s nature that is always weak at beauty. Men sacrifice everything at the altar of beauty and even the most intelligent man behaves foolishly when he fall a victim to beauty.

In order to make his satire sharper and all the more effective, Pope introduces the aerial machinery, which facilitates the satire. Through this weapon, the poet throws in contrast the weaknesses of the fashionablewomen of that age. He satirizes women who are interested in fashionable life and its pursuits and who go on exercising their evil influence even after their death. For the sake of worldly grandeur, they can bid farewell even to their chastity and honour. He satirizes women of fiery, coquettish mischievous and yielding nature and gives them different names. It also provides the poet with an opportunity to satirize the class consciousness of women.

All the women and beaus gather at the place where they exchange talks on trivial things e.g. visits, balls, films, motions, looks, eyes, etc. and “at every word, a reputation dies”.

“A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.”

Man's favourite activity is to take suffered women to play with fan. There is singing, dancing, laughing, ogling, etc. and nothing else. Women are busy alluring the dukes and lords. The poet reflects the hollowness of men in the character of Sir Plume who is coward, foolish and senseless, lacking courage. Women are on the whole irresolute and they have made toyshops of their hearts. They have even illicit relations with the beaus. Women are meant only for the entertainment of men, who play toy with them.

Pope also satirizes of the husbands and wives of the day. Husbands always suspect their wives. They think that their wives have been merry making with their lovers.

Wives are also not virtuous at all. They love their lap-dogs more than their husbands. And the death of husbands is not more shocking than the death of a lap dog or the breakage of a china vessel.

So through the medium of satire, Pope paints a picture of 18th century English society. His satire is didactic and impersonal. It is not inflicted against any person or individual, rather against the society and that, too, owing to some moral faults. He is dissatisfied with the society around which he wants to reform. The society he pictured is the aristocratic group of 18th century fashionable English society. But there are several allied subjects, too, on which he inflicts his satire. For example, he satirized the judged who make hasty decisions.

“The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine”

He also satirized those friends whose friendship is but lust, those politicians who do not have a deeper insight and cannot see beyond the shows and take steps just for their own interests and ends etc.

To sum up, the poem is a reflection of this artificial and hollow life, painted with a humorous and delicate satire. Pope's satire is intellectual and full of wit and epigram. Is picture of Addison as Atticus though unjust and prompted by malice, is a brilliant piece of satire.

“As an intellectual observer and describer of personal weakness, Pope stands by himself in English verse.”

Pope explains that “machinery” is a term invented by the critics to signify the part which deities, angles, or demons play in a poem. He goes on to say that the machinery in this poem is based on the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits in which the four elements are inhabited by sylphs, nymphs, gnomes and salamanders. The sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best-conditioned creatures.

Pope tells us that beautiful women return, after their death, to the elements from which they were derived. Termagants or violent tempered women become salamanders or spirit of the fire. Women of gentle and pleasing disposition pass into nymphs or water-spirits. Prudish women become gnomes or earth spirits. Light-hearted coquettes are changed into sylphs or spirits of the air.

The first and the foremost activity of the sylphs is the protection of fair and chaste ladies who reject the male sex. They guard and save the chastity of maidens and save them from falling victims to the “treacherous friends”. The gnomes or earth spirits fill the minds of proud maidens with foolish ideas of being married to lords and peers. These gnomes teach young coquette to ogle and pretend blushing at the sight of fashionable young men. However, sylphs safely guide the maidens through all dangers. Whenever a maiden is about to yield to a particular young man, more attractive and tempting man appears on the scene and the fashionable maiden at once transfers to the new comer. This may be called levity or fickleness in women but it is all contrived by the sylphs.

In most of the famous epics, “machinery” consists in supernatural beings like gods and angles who play a vital role in the poems thus showing that the human world is not independent and that supernatural powers have an important bearing in this world. Pope thought that his mock epic would be incomplete without machinery. The machinery of his poem comprises the sylphs led by Ariel. Pope described wittily the occupation and tasks of the sylphs in general.

Ariel and his followers were assigned humble but pleasant duty of serving fashionable young ladies. Their functions are described humorously including saving the powder from being blown off from the cheeks of ladies, preventing scents from evaporating, preparing cosmetics, teaching the ladies to blush and to put on enchanting airs, suggesting new ideas about dress.

The sylphs show a delightful downscaling of the epic machines. They are heroic standards but feel scared when a crisis approaches. They are Belinda's counselors. They explain the various anxieties that make up Belinda's day.

“The Rape of the Lock” may be described as a satirical comedy of manners. The sylphs in this poem are both in mirror and mock customs and conventions of the society of the time. Belinda is told in a dream about the danger of life.

Reassuring Belinda in this way, Ariel is in fact undermining her moral position. He

explains how a woman's defence is achieved. A maid would fall to Florio if Demon were not at hand to divert her attention. It is the sylphs who make her do that.

The machines are present at every crucial situation in the play. The sylphs are present during Belinda's journey by boat to Hampton Court. They have been warned by Ariel to remain alert and vigilant. Fifty of them take charge of Belinda's petticoat. They attend on her when she plays Ombre. They hover around her when she sips coffee and they withdraw only when Ariel sees "an earthly lover lurking at her heart". A gnome, called Umbriel, goes to the cave of Spleen and brings a bag full of sighs, sobs, screams and outbursts of anger, and a phial filled with fainting fits, gentle sorrows, soft briefs, etc. all of which are released over Belinda. And then sylphs are present to witness the flight of Belinda's lock of hair to the sky.

The sylphs were added to the poem not simply as shinning trinkets and three-penny bits to a Christmas pudding but to develop and flavour the whole. They improve the literary and human mockery. The machinery of sylphs is the principal symbol of the triviality of Belinda's world. "The light militia of the lower sky" is a parody of both Homeric deities and Miltonic guardian angles. Like these they have an ambiguous status; they exist within and without the characters. The sylphs who protect Belinda are also her acceptance of the rules of social convention which presume that a coquette's life is a pure game.

The machinery of sylphs in this poem is vastly superior to the allegorical personages of respective mock-epics. It allows Pope to show his awareness of the absurdities which nevertheless is charming, delightful and filled with a real poetry. The myth also allows him to suggest that the charm, in past at least, springs from the very absurdity.

Machinery serves various purposes in the poem. It imparts splendour and wonder to the actors and the actions in the story. Like Homer's gods, Pope's sylphs move easily in and out of the lower world. What they really stand for – feminine honour, flirtation courtship, the necessary rivalry of man and woman – is seen in its essence, and is always beautiful.

These "light militia of the lower sky", increase dramatic suspense and story depth. They help to universalize the whole action. They are in binding symbolism of the little drama.

The sylphan machinery is superb. Ariel offers a satanic substitute for Christianity. Addison advised Pope against adding the machinery of the sylphs to the poem but that Pope ignored the advice. Pope succeeded eminently in his design of introducing his element.

According to John Dennis, Pope's machinery contradicts the doctrine of the Christian religion and all sound morality. They provide no instruction and make no

impression upon a sensible reader. Instead of making the action wonderful and delightful, they render it absurd, and incredible. Dennis' opinion is, however, not sound or convincing.

Paradise Lost: Treatment of women

REATMENT OF WOMEN IN "PARADISE LOST"
OR
COMPARISON BETWEEN ADAM & EVE

Adam and Eve are the very first human couple and the parents of the whole human race and the masterpiece of God's art of creation, primarily lived in Edenliberty to enjoy everything available there, with only one restriction that they were not to eat the forbidden fruit there, but they could not act upon this curb, therefore, God punished them for their disobedience and expelled them from Paradise.

When we make a careful and critical analysis of "Paradise Lost" Book IX, we discover that in spite of having many common features of character and personality both Adam and Eve have a world of difference between them as well. Both of them are made of clay which is an indescribable beautiful garden in Heaven. God had given them the , have steadfast faith in God and equally love each other yet at the same time they are divided in opinion about their work, passionfear of an enemy.

As far as Eve is concerned, she possesses female charm and attraction, a suggestive and justifying mind, a rational and convincing manner of conversation, but at the same time she is highly confident, short sighted, jealous and deluded about her powers.

Adam, on the other hand, is an embodiment of sagacity, moderation, contentment, foresightedness, knowledge, mankind, passionate love and sacrifice.

When Eve rationally suggests that they should work separately because when they are together, they waste most of their time in petty things. Adam foresightedly objects the idea and reminds her of the danger of her being seduced by Satan. At this, she pounces upon him for suspecting her faithfulness. She also under-estimates their enemy. Adam tries his best to convince her that they should not separate from each other but she remains unmoved. At last, he retreats and reluctantly allows her to work after her own heart and, thus, they part from each other for the very first time and this very alienation, in fact, leads to their expulsion from Heaven.

Satan, who possesses a great determination and an unyielding power and ever-

scheming mind, is, in fact, afraid to face Adam because of his physical strength, intellectual powers, great courage and impressive manlihood. He, therefore, is always in search of an opportunity to find Eve alone, so that, he may succeed in his evil and revengeful designs against God and His master creature. After assuming the shape of a serpent, which is the most cunning of all animals, he managed to enter Eden where he finds his target, that Eve is all alone, busy with her work. He very cleverly starts praising and flattering her that she is "the sole mistress", "the queen of this universe", "the empress" and "the humane goddess". When she, in the state of utter amazement, asks him how he can speak while he is a serpent he relates a fake story of his tasting the forbidden fruit of knowledge

When she tells him about the warning of God that tasting the fruit of knowledge could result in death, he washes her brain by saying that this fruit will raise her to the stature of God and that she will not die because he is a living example before her eyes. She is fully entrapped by the oily tongue of Satan, tastes the forbidden fruit due to short sightedness and over confidence. After eating the fruit she thinks if she dies, God will create another Eve for Adam and he will live a long life of everlasting enjoyment with the new Eve. This very thought arises in her an intense feeling of jealousy for the first time and she mounts to Adam to tell him about her blunder.

On the other side, Adam restlessly waits for her with garland of beautiful and attractive flowers to welcome her back, but she does not reach at the fixed time. He goes out in search of her and finds her on the way with a bough of apple talking-serpent and her act of tasting the forbidden fruit. Adam leaves a deep sigh of grief and scolds her, but at the same time his passionate love for Eve over powers him and he expresses his uncontrollable sentiments of love in the following famous romantic and emotional words:

The link of nature draw me; flesh of my flesh,
Bone of my bone, thou art, and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted; bliss or woe.

Thus Adam also eats the forbidden fruit deliberately just for the sake of his love prefers a woman to obedience of God.

In the end, we can conclude that both Adam and Eve are responsible for their sin of disobedience and their consequent expulsion from Heaven. It is, however, clear that Eve is entrapped by the glib-tongue and the praising words of Satan while Adam falls a prey to his passionate love for Eve. and the and its miraculous effects. in her hand. She tells him all about the for Eve for Adam feels himself incomplete without Eve.

[The Rape of the Lock as a Mock-heroic Poem](#)

When Pope called the poem “an heroicomic poem”, he intended to mean it a mock-epic. He could assume that his eighteenth century readers, educated in the classical and knowledgeable about epic, would recognise that it was a mockery. Besides, the mock-epic, which Boileau had established as a distinctive poetic genre with his poem *Le Lutrin*, was well-suited to the eighteenth century. Unlike the burlesque, which lampoons the epic, it plays off a high sense of the heroic against the diminished scale of contemporary life. In this confrontation, Pope might be expected to have a clear allegiance to the classical epic poets. His veneration of the classical antiquity is on record in the *Essay on Criticism*, and his low opinion of the general character of contemporary life is evident in the *Moral Essays and Intimations of Horace*. It is worthy of remark therefore that in *The Rape of the Lock* Pope presents a world dominated by trivialities in terms of an epic grandeur. The fashionable society of the beaux and belles is not only allowed the defects but also the advantages of its scale. In the midst of its ironies the poem delights in the exotic preparations and instruments of Belinda’s toilet and in the exquisiteness of the sylphs. It extends rapturous complimentary to Belinda and expresses genuine sympathy for the pathetic fate of the belles it mocks.

Many of Pope’s jokes in the poem derive their significance from the epic tradition. Epic subjects were grand; for instance, the Trojan War (*Iliad*), the founding theme (*Aeneid*), the Fall of Man (*Paradise Lost*) were narrated at length in twelve or more books, each consisting of several hundred lines. The epic hero also traversed a wide geographical area encountering battles, romantic interludes, journeyed by land and sea and even descended into the underworld. From on high the gods watched the human drama, intervening when they chose at critical moments. Success for the hero was dependent upon the subplot of divine intrigue as well as his own courage and skill. The mock heroic imitated the most recognisable aspects of the epic, its form and elevated language. It used an inflated style to ridicule the pretensions and pomposity of minor quarrel. Pope also borrowed elaborate phrases and similes from the great epics of the western tradition. The joke lies in his applying this elevated language to “the life of the modern ladies in the idle town”, as he deprecatingly described the subject of “*The Rape of the Lock*” in a letter to a lady friend.

Pope consciously imitates the epic opening in his first twelve lines, which may be called the invocation in the approved epic manner. He too will ‘sing’ his subject whose importance he indicates by inverted syntax and elevated language: “dire offence”, “mighty contest”, “tasks so bold”. He addresses the muse in order to invoke inspiration. His tone does gather declamatory epic ring as he commands the goddess: “Say what strange motive...?” At some points we begin to sense that Pope is not mocking the epic form so much as laughing at his subject. Once we realise that we are reading a mock-epic, it casts a different light on the apparent solemnity and dignity of Pope’s propositions and invocation. The first hint of the mock-epic comes from the third line of the poem when Pope credits a

human being, Caryll, rather than the muse with inspiring his poem. The lines from five to six have the effect of an anticlimax:

“Slight is the subject, but not so the praise If she inspire and approve my lays.”

As for the supernatural machinery, which neoclassical criticism considers indispensable for an epic, Pope reveals remarkable inventiveness. The sylphs of "The Rape of the Lock" are Pope's mocking recreation of the gods who watch over the heroes of epics and guide their fortune. It is nicely fitting that Pope's supernatural beings, who are supposed to imitate Homer's deities and Milton's angels, are tiny, frail and powerless. Although they are an amalgam of epic machinery, Rosicrucian lore, an English tale..., they are essentially Pope's inventions. As for epic battles, the game of ombre at the centre of the poem is presented in terms of a mighty epic contest, catching repeated echoes of Trojan War and the war in the heavens. As for the epic underworld, there is an effective counterpart in the Cave of Speen in "The Rape of the Lock", which is contrasted with the Golden glittering beauty of Belinda's delightful environment.

Pope was also mindful of the fact that a mock-epic should have a moral just as an epic does. Clarissa's speech in "The Rape of the Lock" opens out the moral of the poem about the fashionable society. The speech can be taken as an attempt to redefine for contemporary women a concept of honour, which apply to male epic heroes. In the world of belles, honour becomes courage to face decay with humour and duty, to use the power of beauty well.

Difference between Epic and Mock Epic

This will clear two question, Paradise Lost as an epic and Rape of the Lock as mock epic

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The Epic

The epic is generally defined: A long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race. The traditional epics were shaped by a literary artist from historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions of his nation during a period of expansion and warfare (Beowulf, The Odyssey, The Iliad).

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“An extended narrative poem, usually simple in construction, but grand in scope, exalted in style, and heroic in theme, often giving expression to the ideals of a nation or race. ”

Epic Conventions, or characteristics common to both types include:

1. The hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance, usually the ideal man of his culture. He often has superhuman or divine traits. He has an imposing physical stature and is greater in all ways than the common man.

2. The setting is vast in scope. It covers great geographical distances, perhaps even visiting the underworld, other worlds, other times.

3. The action consists of deeds of valor or superhuman courage (especially in battle).

4. Supernatural forces interest themselves in the action and intervene at times. The intervention of the gods is called "machinery."

5. The style of writing is elevated, even ceremonial.

6. Additional conventions: certainly all are not always present)

1. Opens by stating the theme of the epic.

2. Writer invokes a Muse, one of the nine daughters of Zeus. The poet prays to the muses to provide him with divine inspiration to tell the story of a great hero.

3. Narrative opens in media res. This means "in the middle of things," usually with the hero at his lowest point. Earlier portions of the story appear later as flashbacks.

4. Catalogs and genealogies are given. These long lists of objects, places, and people place the finite action of the epic within a broader, universal context. Oftentimes, the poet is also paying homage to the ancestors of audience members.

5. Main characters give extended formal speeches.

6. Use of the epic simile. A standard simile is a comparison using "like" or "as." An epic or Homeric simile is a more involved, ornate comparison, extended in great detail.

7. Heavy use of repetition and stock phrases. The poet repeats passages that consist of several lines in various sections of the epic and uses homeric epithets, short, recurrent phrases used to describe people, places, or things. Both made the poem easier to memorize.

Aristotle described six characteristics: "fable, action, characters, sentiments, diction, and meter." Since then, critics have used these criteria to describe two kinds of epics:

Epic

- * fable and action are grave and solemn
- * characters are the highest
- * sentiments and diction preserve the sublime
- * verse

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Comic Epic

- * fable and action are light and ridiculous
- * characters are inferior
- * sentiments and diction preserve the ludicrous
- * verse

When the first novelists began writing what were later called novels, they thought they were writing "prose epics." Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson attempted the comic form. Yet what they wrote were true novels, not epics, and there are differences.

The Epic

- * oral and poetic language
- * public and remarkable deeds
- * historical or legendary hero
- * collective enterprise
- * generalized setting in time and place
- * rigid traditional structure according to previous patterns

Comic Epic

- * written and referential language
- * private, daily experiential
- * humanized "ordinary" characters
- * individual enterprise
- * particularized setting in time and place
- * structure determined by actions of character within a moral pattern

Sidelight: Homer, the author of The Iliad and The Odyssey, is sometimes referred to as the "Father of Epic Poetry." Based on the conventions he established, classical epics began with an argument and an invocation to a guiding spirit, then

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started the narrative in medias res. In modern use, the term, "epic," is generally applied to all lengthy works on matters of great importance. The Rhapsodoi, professional reciters, memorized his work and passed it on by word of mouth as part of an oral tradition.

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