

**History of English Language and Literature**  
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**Lecture 10b**

**The Age of Pope Prose – Periodicals, Essays, and the Rise of the Novel**

Good morning everyone and welcome to yet another session of the NPTEL course, The History of English Language and Literature. Today's lecture is a continuation of the previous lecture where we began to look at the spectacular contributions made by the prose writers to 18th century English literature. We also noted how this period led the foundation to the beginning of novel and also to the various forms of experimentation in terms of prose writings.

We ended the previous session taking a look at Daniel Defoe who was to begin an entirely new kind of writing in terms of prose literature in English. Today's session we continue to look at Jonathan Swift who was a contemporary of Daniel Defoe and also together they are considered as the forerunners of special kind of satirical prose which was also to later lay the foundations of novel writing in English.

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**+ Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)**

- The most powerful and original genius of the 18<sup>th</sup> century
  - A poet and cleric
  - More '**respected**' than Defoe because of his Church affiliation
  
- Born in **Ireland** to English parents
  - Stressed his '**Englishness**' despite the way others saw him as Irish
  
- 1689 – confidential secretary to **Sir William Temple** – the first step towards his political career
  - First on Whig side and then on the Tory side
  - Enormously ambitious



Swift is generally considered as the most powerful and original genius of the 18th century. He was a poet and cleric, rare combination of that. And in that sense he was also, because of his affiliation with the Church he was also a little more respected than Defoe. But nevertheless he

also was the same kind of iconoclast as Defoe was. But his Church affiliation prevented him from getting into further trouble at many points of time.

He had a very peculiar kind of lineage. He was born in Ireland to English parents and this was a matter of concern not just to him but also to his fellow citizens for a very long time. He was generally considered as Irish by many of his colleagues and contemporaries but he continued to stress his Englishness not just in his personal articulations but also in his writings. And Swift also strongly believed that he was more English than anyone else.

By 1689 he had secured a position as the secretary to Sir William Temple. This we had noted even when we, we are talking about Sir Temple's contribution in the previous decade. This was also one of Swift's steps towards political career which he was quite ambitious about but however we do not find him making it really big in politics in England. In terms of his, the sides that he took, in terms of his political affiliations were also quite ambiguous.

He was initially a supporter of the Whig side and later we find him swaying more towards the Tory side. He was enormously ambitious and we do find this getting reflected in some of the political treatises that he wrote. He also was idealist and he also hoped to make some kind of contribution and also radical changes within the English politics though he did not get that kind of an opportunity in England.

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- Restoration influence – verbal violence, hyperbole, explicit sexual and excretory terms
- Made his mark as a pamphleteer
- Friendship with Pope, Addison and Steele
- 1728 - The death of Esther Johnson (Stella)
  - Journal to Stella
- Recurrent attacks of a mysterious brain disease – gradual and complete loss of memory by 1736
- An age of flippant and shallow optimism – Swift was a profound pessimist
- Originally published all his works under pseudonyms – Lemuel Gulliver, Isaac Bickerstaff, MB Drapier – or anonymously

Though he belonged to a different generation altogether in some of his articulations critics do notice a certain influence of the Restoration period. Because he did display a lot of verbal violence, he used a lot of hyperbole in his writings. He also used expletives especially when he was referring to anything sexual and also there was a lot of excretory terms which found its way into his vocabulary. He made a mark as a pamphleteer and as we noted in the previous session as well the periodical essay was quite a popular genre during those times.

He also had a wonderful friendship with Pope Addison and Steele and this also reflected in the kinds of collaborative work and also in the ways in which they continue to influence each other and their writings. A particular personal incident marked a radical shift in his temperament. There was this Esther Johnson whom he formerly referred to as Stella, whom he had met in Sir William Temple's office. And the nature of their relationship also remained ambiguous. However he was quite fond of Stella and her death in 1728 was something quite tragic that happened.

And that had left a permanent mark on Swift's general temperament and we do not find him recovering from that blow even at a later point. His Journal to Stella which was mostly of a personal nature, it was the result of this relationship that he had with Esther Johnson. He also went through a lot of tragic things in his life. One of them was the mysterious brain disease, the recurrent attack of which continued to bother him almost throughout his career.

And by 1736 it also noted that he gradually and completely loses his memory. This also had a very adverse effect on his writing career and also on the general ways in which he was leading his life. The Augustan Age or the Age of Pope was generally celebrated as the age of flippant and shallow optimism. Maybe it was only at the surface level but nevertheless there was this articulation of hope and optimism that most of the writers resorted to.

In such an age Swift came as a very stark contrast and he exhibited only a profound pessimism throughout his personal bearings, also throughout his writings. And he initially had published all his works under different pseudonyms such as Lemuel Gulliver, Isaac Bickerstaff and MB Drapier And some of the works were also published anonymously but they were of course credited to him at later point of time. So throughout his lifetime we do not find him using his original name in any of his published works.

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## + Satires and other works

- *Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England may be attended with Some Inconveniences*
  - A scathing attack upon the free-thinkers and upon the insincere professors of the current religion
- *The Battle of the Books, A Tale of a Tub (1704) – among the finest prose satires in the language*
  - The Battle – a controversy regarding the merits of ancient and modern literatures – the involvement of Sir William Temple – more about personal opponents, not much about the issue
  - A great battle in the King's Library between the rival hosts
  - A Tale – satire on church history
  - to champion the Protestant church against the pretensions of the Church of Rome and the extravagances of the dissenting sects – to expose the corruptions of modern Christianity

Now we begin to take a look at some of the more important works of Swift. He mostly wrote satires and also certain other kinds of works. His important satires included those which critiqued the government, the systems which were in place, a critic of society and mankind, et cetera. One of these earlier works was titled *Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England may be attended with Some Inconveniences*.

This was a scathing attack upon free-thinkers and also upon the insincere professors of the current religion. So he being a cleric himself he thought that was his mission to try and reform the kind of religious practices which were prevalent in England. He also thought that it was very important to expose the various kinds of corruption and superstitions which were, which had found its way into the Anglican Church even after the turn of events which led to the English Reformation.

So he also became highly unpopular because of these many expositions that he made. But his insight, as we also give a different kind of insight into his critics. Some of his other works also include *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub*, both published in 1704. These two works, *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub* are also considered among the finest prose satires in English language.

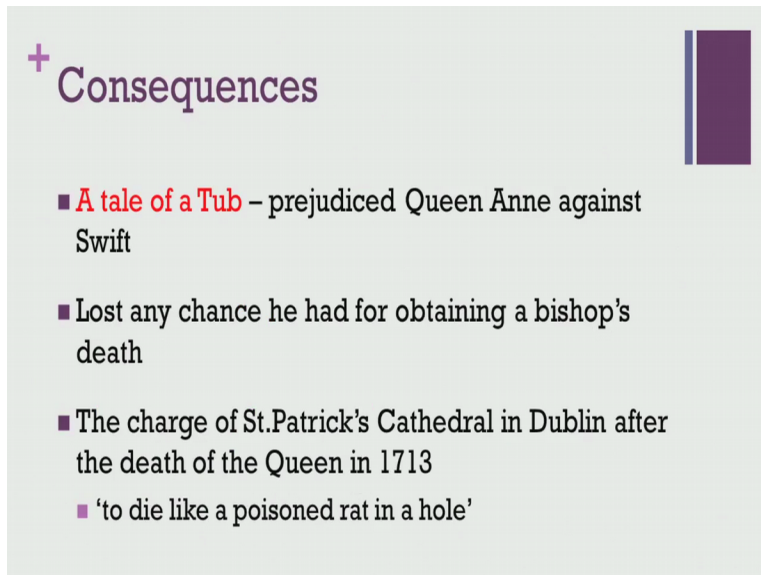
So if we look at the content of both these works, we find that it continues to be quite scathingly satirical. *The Battle of the Books* was about controversy regarding the merits and demerits of ancient and modern literatures. Sir William Temple was directly involved in this controversy, so

Swift took it upon himself as a defense of Temple's stance as well. In this work we find Swift engaging more with his opponents than with the actual issue. Nevertheless this, the craft of it, the structure of it was so amazingly put together that it was in the form of a great battle which happened in the King's Library between the rival hosts.

The structure of this was greatly amusing. It was in the form of a great battle in the King's Library between the rival hosts. In that sense it also amused the people greatly. They also found this new found satirical structure quite interesting. A Tale of a Tub was based on ecclesiastical history, on church history. And this was, the objective of this work was to champion the Protestant church against the pretensions of the Church of Rome and also to expose the extravagances of certain dissenting sects.

At this point it is important to remember that even after the Protestant Reformation, there were many who thought that the English Church was not completely reformed. So there were lot of dissenting sects who proposed to begin new churches and new systems of worship in order to purify the church from its existing corruptive tendencies. So Swift was not altogether a supporter of all these sorts of dissent. And we also find that though he wanted to expose the corruptions of modern Christianity, he does not show any tendency to break away from the institution of the established church.

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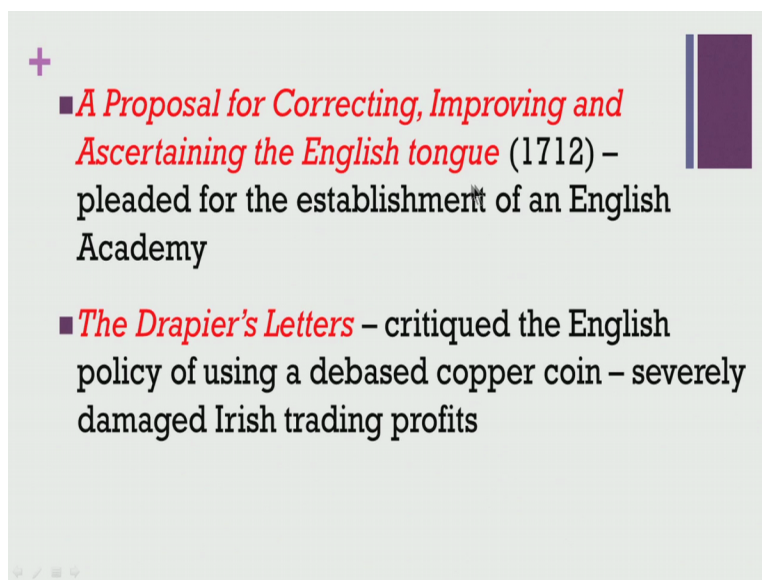
## + Consequences

- A tale of a Tub – prejudiced Queen Anne against Swift
- Lost any chance he had for obtaining a bishop's death
- The charge of St.Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin after the death of the Queen in 1713
  - 'to die like a poisoned rat in a hole'

Some of his works also had severe consequences, For instance, A tale of a Tub had greatly prejudiced to Queen Anne against Swift and so much so that it said that it even sabotage the possibility of him becoming the bishop at some point of time. Instead he was given the charge of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. And soon after the Queen's death in 1713, this was not a position that Swift had looked forward to. In fact he wrote about this to one of his acquaintances that it was to die like a poisoned rat in a hole.

It is always useful to remember at this point of time that though he was born in Ireland, he and though he was quite critical of the way in which the English were treating the Irish, we do not find him taking much pleasure in continuing to live in Dublin or in Ireland. We find him more English in many of such choices that he likes to make.

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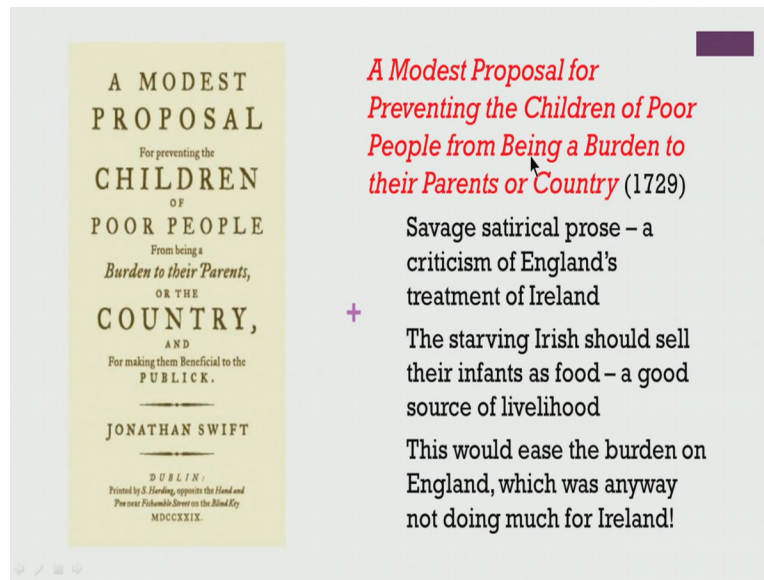


Another important work was concerning a Proposal for Correcting Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue. This was like a plea that he had put forward in 1712 in order to plead for the establishment of an English Academy. And The Drapier's Letters had, it was more like a political treatise. It critiqued the English policy of using a debased copper coin for its financial transactions. This was quite beneficial to the English but it was not seen as a beneficial thing for the Irish.

It severely damaged the Irish economy and also damaged the Irish trading profit. So Swift takes it upon himself to write against this policy of using this debased copper coin in the work title The

Drapier's Letters. Through all of these works Swift also succeeded in making a lot of enemies, political enemies at that. And because of this we also find that though he was enormously ambitious to begin with, we do not find him making it really big in the political scene in England.

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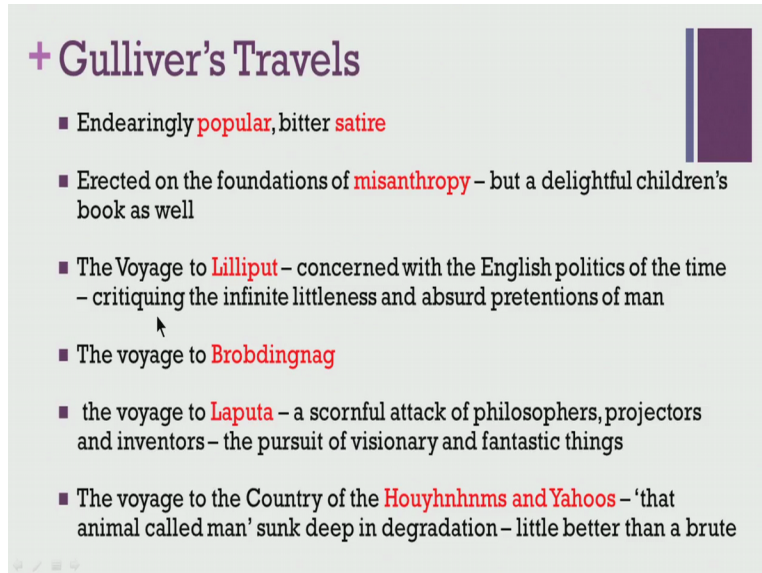
Perhaps the most important of his satires is *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burden to their Parents or Country*. It also is shortly known as a modest proposal. This is a continuation of the many concerns and grievances that he had against the English for not treating the Irish well. And published in 1729 this also had broken a lot of controversy. This was written in a very savage satirical prose and it was a criticism of England's treatment of Ireland.

He proposed that the starving Irish should sell their infants for food and this can also be seen as a good source of livelihood. This satire had provoked the sensibilities of both English and the Irish. Swift's argument was that this sort of selling of the infants for food would also ease the burden on England and which in anyway, in any case England was not doing much for Ireland or for the Irish benefit.

So this work was considered supremely provocative and also sort of doubled the enemies that Swift already had. But nevertheless a modest proposal continues to be used in even in contemporary political discussions to talk about certain inhuman kind of treatment inflicted upon

different communities or different segments of the people. And it also talks about, it is also used mystically to refer to certain very satirical attack on the prevalent governing systems.

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## + Gulliver's Travels

- Endearingly popular, bitter satire
- Erected on the foundations of **misanthropy** – but a delightful children's book as well
- The Voyage to **Lilliput** – concerned with the English politics of the time – critiquing the infinite littleness and absurd pretensions of man
- The voyage to **Brobdingnag**
- the voyage to **Laputa** – a scornful attack of philosophers, projectors and inventors – the pursuit of visionary and fantastic things
- The voyage to the Country of the **Houyhnhnms and Yahoos** – 'that animal called man' sunk deep in degradation – little better than a brute

This now leads us the masterpiece that Swift produced, Gulliver's Travels. This was an endearingly popular work of fiction, it was also of bitter satire. So we begin to see the contrasting nature of his works even in work of fiction. This work, Gulliver's Travels, it was directed on the foundations of misanthropy but we, on the contrary at later point we find that it also becomes a delightful children's book enjoyed even by the adults.

And this book is structured in four different parts, the voyage that a certain Gulliver Lemuel Gulliver undertakes to different parts of the world which also were, which also had fantastic elements in store for him So these four parts included The Voyage to Lilliput, voyage to Brobdingnag, the voyage to Laputa and finally the voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos.

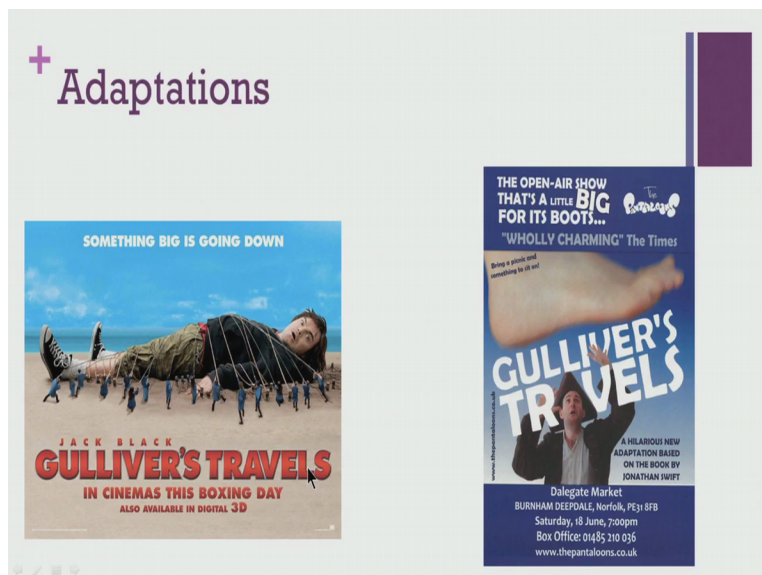
So we find that he, Swift had himself interestingly coined these fantastic places and also had given fantastic descriptions and out of the world experiences to this particular character who was travelling. And in the first one, The Voyage to Lilliput, we find that the critic was mainly about the English politics of the time. And we find him critiquing through a certain allegorical representation of the voyages that Gulliver undertakes.



We find him critiquing the infinite littleness and the absurd pretensions of man. And similarly in the Voyage to Laputa, it is we find him launching out into a very scornful attack of philosophers, projectors and inventors of whom he had no high opinion. And he also thought that the pursuit of visionary and fantastic thing was a very wasteful kind of pursuit. In the final series, The Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, we find Swift talking about that animal called man who sunk deep in degradation.

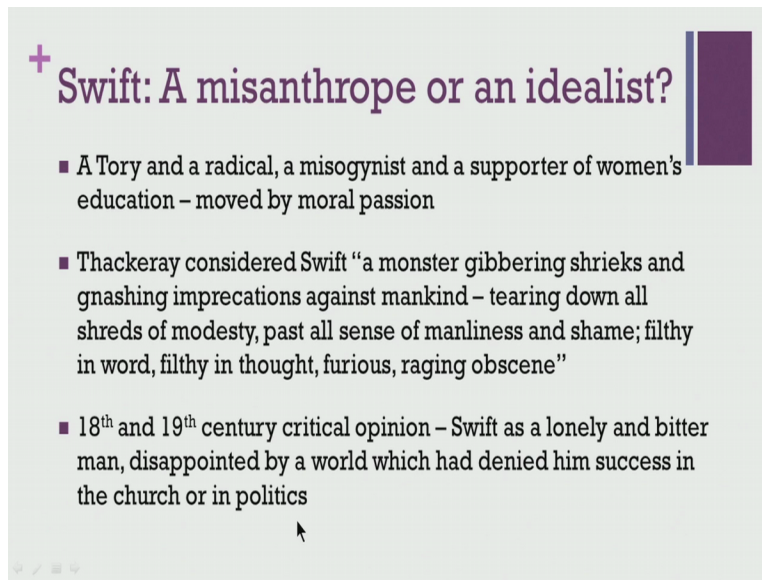
And he is also of the opinion that man in general is little better than a brute. So all of these depictions it was directly aimed in critiquing the English society and the English practices of those times. And it was not taken kindly by many of his contemporaries and even at a later point of time this sort of savage satire was considered quite unexpected at least for some time. But it is anyway different story that later point it continue to be rated as one of the most important and hugely popular texts from the 18th century.

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It even led to lot of adaptations even in the contemporary period. It has been adapted into movies, into comic series books, into different kinds of stage shows. So its popularity and significance, it continues to be unquestionable. Nevertheless critics have had different opinions and contesting opinions about his stature.

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### + Swift: A misanthrope or an idealist?

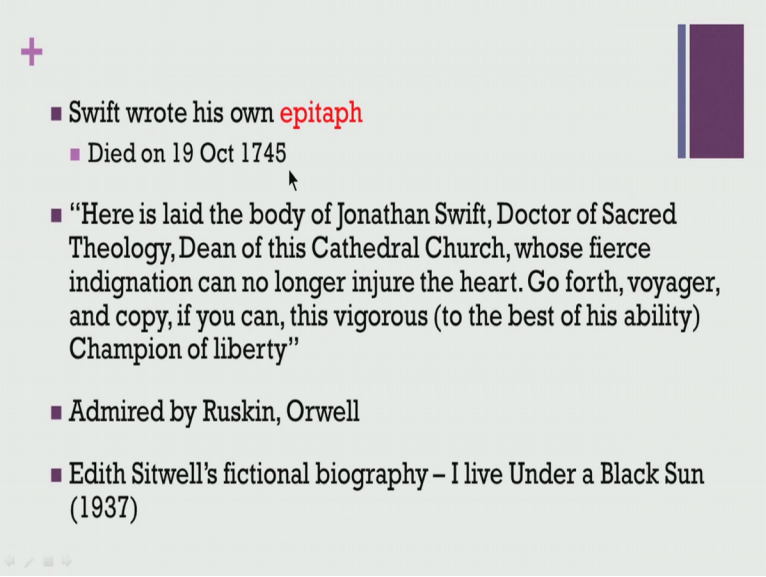
- A Tory and a radical, a misogynist and a supporter of women's education – moved by moral passion
- Thackeray considered Swift “a monster gibbering shrieks and gnashing imprecations against mankind – tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in word, filthy in thought, furious, raging obscene”
- 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century critical opinion – Swift as a lonely and bitter man, disappointed by a world which had denied him success in the church or in politics

Wondering whether to classify Swift as a misanthrope or as an idealist, so this dividing opinion was also based on the contrasting nature of his personality and the kind of beliefs that he upheld. For instance he was at the same time a Tory and a radical. He was a misogynist and also a supporter of women's education. But nevertheless whatever he did and whatever values that he professed, he was infinitely moved by moral passion which was perhaps the one quality which stood the test of time and made him an enduring character to the posterity.

And one of the earlier critics who came after Swift, William Thackeray, he was extremely critical of Swift's diction and Swift's imagery. He found it quite unexpected. He talked about Swift as a monster gibbering shrieks and gnashing imprecations against mankind, tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame, filthy in word, filthy in thought, furious, raging obscene.

So this was a critical opinion about Swift in the succeeding centuries. And in the 18th and 19th century there were also critics who try to annualize his works in connection with his personal experiences and (15:31) that. Swift perhaps was a lonely and bitter man disappointed by world which had denied him. Success in Church as well as in politics, so we do not find him making it really big either in the, as part of the church establishment or in English politics. And perhaps this had left him a bitter man to talk about mankind in general with the lot of misanthropy.

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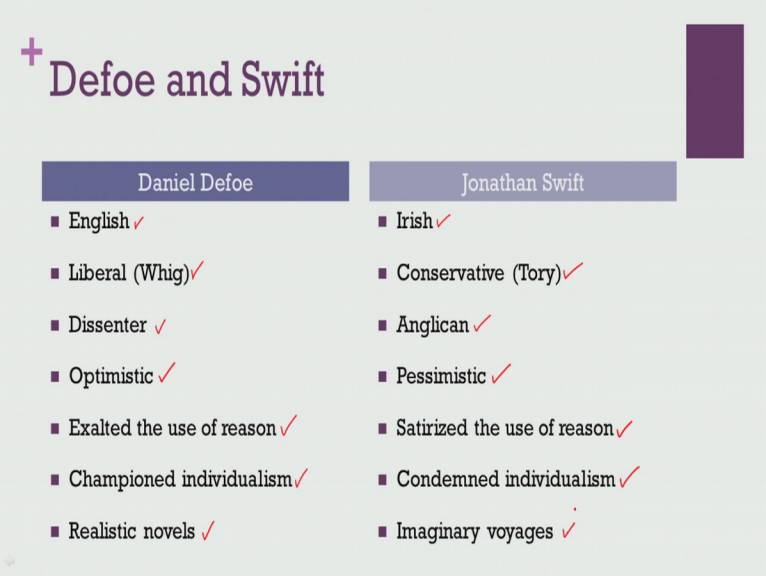


- Swift wrote his own **epitaph**
  - Died on 19 Oct 1745
- “Here is laid the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Sacred Theology, Dean of this Cathedral Church, whose fierce indignation can no longer injure the heart. Go forth, voyager, and copy, if you can, this vigorous (to the best of his ability) Champion of liberty”
- Admired by Ruskin, Orwell
- Edith Sitwell’s fictional biography – I live Under a Black Sun (1937)

Having said that one cannot entirely overlook the kind of fascinating things that this man did during his lifetime and even after his death. It said that Swift had prepared his epitaph well in advance and this is the same thing which is placed near his tombstone. He dies on 19th October 1745 and thus reads his epitaph, “Here is laid the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Sacred Theology, Dean of this Cathedral Church, whose fierce indignation can no longer injure the heart. Go forth voyager, and copy if you can this vigorous to the best of his ability, Champion of liberty.”

So even at death, even after his death he continues to dare people trying, asking them to copy this vigorous championship of liberty that he upheld. Regardless of how he was considered by his contemporary and even by his contemporaries and even the critics who came soon after, he was greatly admired by Ruskin and George Orwell at a later point of time. Edith Sitwell in the 20th century, particularly in 1937, he even produced fictional biogeography of Swift titled ‘I live Under a Black Sun’.

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Daniel Defoe	Jonathan Swift
■ English ✓	■ Irish ✓
■ Liberal (Whig) ✓	■ Conservative (Tory) ✓
■ Dissenter ✓	■ Anglican ✓
■ Optimistic ✓	■ Pessimistic ✓
■ Exalted the use of reason ✓	■ Satirized the use of reason ✓
■ Championed individualism ✓	■ Condemned individualism ✓
■ Realistic novels ✓	■ Imaginary voyages ✓

Let us also make a very quick comparison between Daniel Defoe and Swift, both of them being the perhaps the two most important figures of 18th century in terms of the foundations of novel. Defoe and Swift though they belonged to the same generation, to the same century, they perhaps only had one thing in common that they both try to lay a foundation to the prose writings in English. And beyond that we find very little in common that they share.

It is very interesting to note that everything about them differ and in spite of that we find him together contributing to the growth of prose writings and also to the growth of novel writing in English literature. For instance, if we look at the major differences between them, Daniel Defoe was English but on the other hand Jonathan Swift had an Irish origin. Defoe's political affiliations were quite strong and he continues to remain a Whig supporter throughout and he was a liberal in that sense.

Jonathan Swift though he shifts between two different political parties, towards the end he is a very strong supporter of the Tory party. He also remains conservative in his attitudes throughout. Defoe was a dissenter but Swift he remains quite loyal to the Anglican Church. And in fact we see this in their writings as well. Defoe supported dissent in multiple ways and he even argued for the cause of the dissenters.

But Swift, we find that he remains quite true to the Anglican Church and his problem was with those who were dissenting from the church and trying to come up with other kinds of sects.

Defoe in spite of the many things that struck him in his personal life, he remained optimistic throughout. Swift was starkly pessimistic and this also overshadowed the kind of writings both of them produced.

Defoe we find him exalting the use of reason, us keeping in tune with the enlightenment spirit of those times. But Swift, we find him satirizing the use of reason itself. He mocked those who pursued learning in a very different way. We already noted how he never had any kind of praise for the ones who went after the fantastic and ones who wanted to make the world a better place through their visionary inventions.

Daniel Defoe was the kind of person who championed individualism but Swift on the other hand he condemned individualism of any form. We find him being a more about to the institutional segments though we do also find him being an iconoclast in many different ways. This perhaps also talks about the contrasting kind of personality that Jonathan Swift had largely. And in terms of their novelistic production, Daniel Defoe's work were mostly realistic because Robinson Crusoe is increasingly classified as one of the realist, earliest realist novels.

And significantly we also noted in the previous session that many of his fictional works, Defoe also wanted to pass them off as real-life adventures. Though there was a lot of imagination built in, he did not want to press in them as a fiction of his imagination. He was more an adherent of realism. On the other hand Jonathan Swift he really enjoyed these imaginary voyages that he has written much about.

And in a certain way there is also a contradiction that we would find over here. Though Swift was a very conservative person in terms of his political affiliation and though he was pessimistic throughout and though he satirized the use of reason, we find him also in the same level of Defoe trying to use his imagination in its fullest sense. And both of them the one thing that they perhaps shared much in common in terms of the personality and also in terms of their writing is that both of them loved flight of their imagination in the wings of satire.

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Crusoe	Gulliver
■ Middle Class ✓	■ Middle class ✓
■ Travelled for transgression and for money ✓	■ To seek profits ✓
■ To real places ✓	■ To fantastic locations ✓
■ Reacts positively ✓	■ Finds himself displaced ✓
■ To exalt the ideals of 18 <sup>th</sup> century England ✓	■ To use Gulliver as a mask – to deliver scathing criticism ✓

Moving on if we also try to do a comparison between their fictional creations, Robinson Crusoe and Lemuel Gulliver, we also find a certain things in common and few things which were, which differentiate one from the other. So this sort of analysis is also important because it also tells us about the kind of fictional creations of those times which reflected the spirit of the times as well. Crusoe was from the middle class. We find Gulliver also belonging to the middle class. Crusoe in the, as the novel implies had traveled for transgression and also for money.

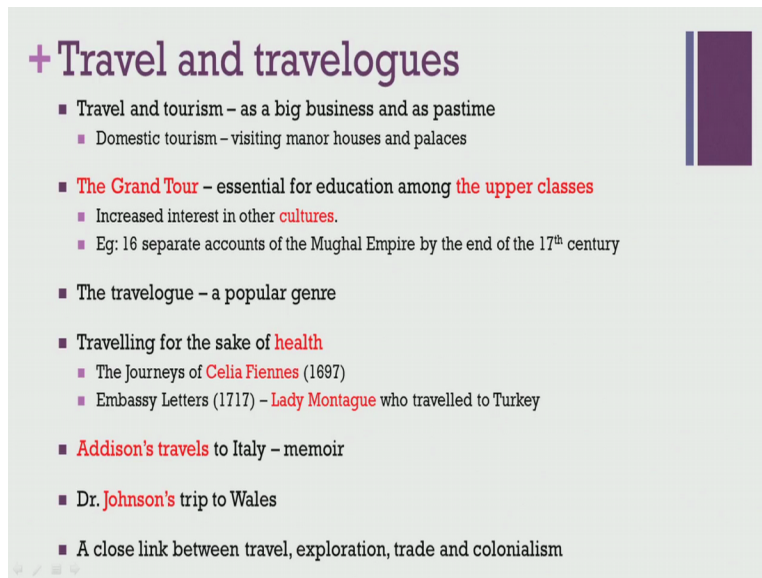
But Gulliver's intention was only to seek profit in a distant land. We find Crusoe primarily going to real places because he was, because the creator of Crusoe was also more like a realist. We find Gulliver undertaking a travel to fantastic locations because his creator was also someone who liked the fantastic and the unreal and the imaginary more than the real places. We find the character Crusoe reacting positively to the various circumstances that he is placed in.

But on the other hand Gulliver finds himself quite displaced wherever he was. And interestingly Crusoe also goes to places where perhaps he is not entirely out of place, also place where he is the master of. But on the other hand Gulliver finds himself placed in different sort of hierarchical positions in all these voyages that he undertakes. And in Crusoe we find a person who is trying to exalt the ideals of 18th century England.

And there is also a lot of positivism and lot of optimism built into the character. On the other hand Gulliver is used as a mask. That is how most of the readers and the critics felt after having

read Gulliver's Travel. Gulliver is being used more like a mask in order to deliver scathing criticism of the 18th century England. So in terms of their representation of the 18th century England, both of them do justice to their, both of them do justice though in two differing ways through two different vantage points and through two different kinds of perspectives.

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## + Travel and travelogues

- Travel and tourism – as a big business and as pastime
  - Domestic tourism – visiting manor houses and palaces
- **The Grand Tour** – essential for education among **the upper classes**
  - Increased interest in other **cultures**.
  - Eg: 16 separate accounts of the Mughal Empire by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- The travelogue – a popular genre
- Travelling for the sake of **health**
  - The Journeys of **Celia Fiennes** (1697)
  - Embassy Letters (1717) – **Lady Montague** who travelled to Turkey
- **Addison's travels** to Italy – memoir
- Dr. **Johnson's** trip to Wales
- A close link between travel, exploration, trade and colonialism

Moving on this is perhaps the most appropriate time also to talk about the interesting travel and travelogues in 18th century. Travel and tourism was a big business and emerging pastime in the 18th century England. We find people indulging not just in these distant travels but also in a form of (domesting) domestic tourism visiting these old medieval manor houses and palaces and also sharing a lot of interest in the places of antiquity.

During this time it was considered at a grand tour to distant lands was an essential part of education especially among the upper classes. We find that even during the medieval ages there was this opinion that if one had not made a visit to Italy his education was not complete. That was a time of Italian humanism. And with this increasing colonial and related expanse of tendencies, we find that the upper class English person also wanted to travel far in order to enhance his educational experiences.

We also find them getting increasingly interested in other cultures. For example, owing to the colonial expeditions to the far-east we find about 16 separate accounts of Mughal empire getting produced in English language within England by the end of the 17th century. The travelogue also

accordingly emerges as one of the popular genres of those times. And there were also these set of people who were traveling for the sake of health.

For instance, we find this particular account, *The journeys of Celia Fiennes in 1697* which was even before the beginning of the Age of Pope. Also, the accounts of a certain lady Montague who traveled to Turkey and came up with these travelogue *Embassy Letters* in 1717. Many of the notable figures, many of the notable literary figures of those times also had undertaken a lot of travel. Addison had written about his travels to Italy in a memoir.

And Dr. Johnson's trip to Wales also found its articulation in the ways in which he wrote. And owing to all of these things, it is very possible to identify a very close link between travel, exploration, trade and colonialism. We do notice that in spite of the many things at the background in terms of literature, culture, art, trade, we find one thing which continues quite unstaggeringly which is the growth of colonialism throughout the 18th century and also into the 19th and early 20th century.

With this fantastic note on the 18th century incredible interest in travel we begin to wind up this lecture. In the next lecture we shall continue to look at certain other important segments that led the foundation to the succeeding age. And that is all we have for today's session. Thank you for listening and look forward to seeing you in the next session.