

British Poetry and Drama: 17th and 18th Centuries PYQ 2022

Q1. Identify and comment on "I wish I were that dull, that constant thing Which thou wouldst have, and nature never meant me. .."

Ans. The line "I wish I were that dull, that constant thing Which thou wouldst have, and nature never meant me" is from John Donne's poem "The Sun Rising." In this poem, the speaker addresses the sun, expressing his frustration at its intrusion into his private space with his lover. The speaker wishes to create an insular, timeless world with his lover, away from the external demands of time and nature. **Let's delve into the line's meaning and significance:**

In the quoted line, the speaker expresses a desire to be a "dull, that constant thing" - an unchanging, constant entity that his lover would prefer. He contrasts this ideal with his own nature, which he believes was not intended by nature to conform to such stability. This reflects the speaker's longing for a love that transcends the disruptions and intrusions of the external world.

The phrase "thou wouldst have" refers to the lover's desire for consistency and constancy, suggesting that the speaker wishes he could meet this desire. However, he acknowledges that his nature is inherently different and refuses to be subdued or confined to such a role. The speaker's tone here is somewhat resigned, indicating his understanding that he cannot change his innate nature.

This line illustrates the tension between the speaker's personal desires and the demands of the external world, represented by the sun. The speaker's wish to be an unchanging presence for his lover reflects a deep yearning for an intimate, timeless connection that shields them from the disruptions of daily life.

Overall, this line showcases John Donne's skill in capturing the complexities of human emotions and desires. The speaker's wish to conform to his lover's idealized image while recognizing his own individuality encapsulates the themes of love, time, and nature that are central to the poem "The Sun Rising."

Q2. Write a short note on the toilet scene in The Rape of the Lock as a critique of mercantile capitalism.

Ans. The toilet scene in Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" serves as a satirical critique of the excesses and superficiality associated with mercantile capitalism, particularly in the context of the 18th-century British society. The poem itself is a mock-heroic satire that humorously addresses the triviality of a social scandal involving the cutting of a lock of hair.

In the toilet scene, Belinda, the central character, is depicted as she prepares herself for the day. The meticulous attention to detail and the extravagant items she uses, including cosmetics and accessories, highlight the excessive consumerism and materialism of the upper class. This scene

effectively satirizes the fashionable trends and consumption-driven culture of the time, where individuals were driven by status and appearance rather than genuine substance.

The critique of mercantile capitalism is evident in the emphasis on the commercial aspect of beauty. The Baron's role in the hair-cutting incident is a manifestation of the commodification of beauty, where he seeks to possess a token of Belinda's charm to gain social favor. This reflects a shallow mindset where even matters of personal attractiveness are driven by economic motives.

Furthermore, the presence of Sylphs and Gnomes, supernatural beings responsible for protecting Belinda's beauty items, can be interpreted as an allegory for the rising financial class that benefits from the consumerism of the upper class. These beings are attentive to Belinda's possessions, guarding her cosmetics and accessories as if they were valuable treasures. This satirical depiction of their attentiveness mocks the misplaced priorities and extravagance associated with a society driven by consumer capitalism.

The toilet scene, as a whole, serves as a commentary on the shallowness and superficiality of the upper class's obsession with material possessions and external appearances. By humorously exaggerating these aspects, Pope critiques the values and behaviors of a society where mercantile capitalism led to a fixation on trivial matters and a neglect of genuine virtues and meaningful connections.

Q3. Discuss the thematic and theatrical significance of the Porter scene in Macbeth.

Ans. The Porter scene in William Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" holds both thematic and theatrical significance, contributing to the overall atmosphere, tone, and themes of the play. This scene appears in Act 2, immediately following the murder of King Duncan. **Let's delve into the thematic and theatrical aspects of the Porter scene:**

Thematic Significance:

Dark Humor and Irony: The Porter scene introduces a contrasting element of dark humor and irony in the midst of the tense and tragic events. The Porter's comic monologue and his interactions with Macduff and Lennox provide a brief respite from the gravity of Duncan's murder. This contrast heightens the intensity of the surrounding tragedy.

Duality of Human Nature: The Porter's speech contains references to the consequences of excessive drinking, which symbolize the duality of human nature. The idea of the "equivocator" and the "porter of hell-gate" alludes to the blurred boundaries between good and evil, reflecting the theme of moral ambiguity that runs throughout the play.

Role Reversal: The Porter scene introduces a theme of role reversal and deception. As the Porter imagines himself as the gatekeeper of hell, he speaks of people being deceived and not knowing the truth of their actions. This foreshadows the theme of appearances versus reality, which is central to the play as characters struggle with the consequences of their choices.

Theatrical Significance:

Relief and Transition: The Porter scene provides a brief interlude, allowing the audience and the actors on stage a moment to catch their breaths after the intense murder scene. It serves as a transition from the horrific event to the discovery of Duncan's body.

Atmospheric Contrast: The humorous tone of the Porter scene creates a contrast with the preceding and subsequent scenes, emphasizing the emotional roller coaster the audience experiences. This contrast heightens the dramatic impact of the play as it shifts between moments of tension and moments of dark humor.

Characterization: The Porter scene offers insight into the working-class life of Macbeth's castle and introduces a common man's perspective amidst the noble characters. This adds depth to the play's world and allows for a broader representation of society.

Audience Engagement: The Porter's monologue engages the audience directly, as he imagines admitting various types of people to hell. This participatory element helps maintain the audience's involvement in the play.

In conclusion, the Porter scene in "Macbeth" serves as a thematic and theatrical pivot that contributes to the overall complexity of the play. Through its dark humor, thematic references, and change of tone, the scene offers a nuanced exploration of human nature, morality, and the interplay between appearances and reality. Its theatrical role provides a moment of relief and transition, while also engaging the audience in the play's themes and atmosphere.

Q4. Briefly describe the Pandemonium scene in Paradise Lost.

Ans. The Pandemonium scene in John Milton's "Paradise Lost" is a significant episode that occurs in Book I of the epic poem. It takes place in the grand hall of Pandemonium, a palace built by the fallen angels in Hell. The term "Pandemonium" itself refers to the capital city of Hell and means "place of all demons." The scene serves as a gathering of the fallen angels to discuss their plans after their defeat in the war against God and His angels.

In the Pandemonium scene, Satan addresses his followers, the rebel angels, who have been cast down from Heaven due to their rebellion against God. Satan rallies the fallen angels, asserting that they can still find ways to defy God and continue their opposition. He acknowledges their loss in the war but emphasizes that their spirits remain unbroken. Satan proposes that they engage in a new battle by corrupting God's creation, mankind, in order to spite God.

The Pandemonium scene is significant for several reasons:

Leadership of Satan: The scene highlights Satan's charismatic leadership among the fallen angels. Despite their defeat, he maintains their allegiance and inspires them to rally around his vision of revenge against God.

Defiance and Rebellion: The scene reinforces the theme of defiance and rebellion against divine authority. The fallen angels reject God's rule and express their determination to continue opposing Him.

Strategic Planning: The fallen angels engage in strategic planning for their future actions. They discuss their next course of action, which involves corrupting God's newest creation, mankind, and leading them away from God's grace.

Unity and Discord: While the fallen angels initially display unity, there is an underlying sense of discord and differing opinions among them. Some angels express doubts about the feasibility of their plans, but Satan's persuasive rhetoric maintains their commitment.

Foreshadowing: The scene foreshadows the central conflict of the poem—the Fall of Man—and sets the stage for the narrative that unfolds in subsequent books.

Overall, the Pandemonium scene is a pivotal moment in "Paradise Lost" as it introduces the motivations and actions of the fallen angels. It showcases Satan's ability to rally his followers and underscores their determination to challenge God's authority by targeting humanity. The scene contributes to the poem's exploration of themes such as free will, rebellion, and the consequences of disobedience.

Q5. Briefly explain Hobbes idea that in the absence of a social contract, "the life of man will be solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short".

Ans. Thomas Hobbes, a philosopher of the 17th century, presented the concept that in the absence of a social contract or organized society, human life would be characterized as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." This idea is a central tenet of Hobbes' political philosophy, as outlined in his work "Leviathan."

Hobbes believed that in the natural state of human existence, without the presence of a governing authority or social order, individuals would be driven by their self-interest and self-preservation. In this state of nature, there would be no established laws, rules, or institutions to mediate conflicts, ensure justice, or protect individuals from harm.

As a result, Hobbes argued that life would be "solitary" because individuals would have no secure relationships or communities to rely on. It would be "poor" because there would be no organized systems of production, trade, or economic stability. The absence of social norms and cooperation would lead to a "nasty" existence characterized by violence and constant competition for resources. Additionally, without institutions to maintain order, life would be "brutish" due to the harsh and uncivilized conditions prevailing.

Finally, Hobbes emphasized that without social structures and governance, life would be "short" due to the high risk of violent conflict, disease, and the absence of organized protection.

To avoid this bleak scenario, Hobbes proposed the idea of a social contract—a collective agreement among individuals to surrender certain rights and create a sovereign authority in exchange for protection and a more stable social order. The sovereign authority would establish laws, maintain order, and ensure the security of individuals, thereby preventing the "state of nature" described as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

In essence, Hobbes' idea underscores the importance of social and political institutions in maintaining order and protecting individuals from the potential chaos and suffering that could arise in the absence of a structured society.

Q6. Unnatural deeds Do breed unnatural troubles. Discuss , how the destruction of the natural order becomes one of the main themes of Macbeth.

Ans. The theme of the destruction of the natural order is a central and pervasive motif in William Shakespeare's play "Macbeth." The line "Unnatural deeds Do breed unnatural troubles" from Act 5, Scene 1, spoken by the Doctor, encapsulates this theme, underscoring how the disruption of the natural order leads to a cascade of negative consequences. This theme is evident throughout the play, reflecting the moral, social, and cosmic repercussions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's actions.

1. Supernatural Interference: The play opens with the supernatural—witches on a heath. Their mere presence and their prophecies set the tone for the disruption of the natural order. The supernatural elements, including the witches' predictions and the appearance of Banquo's ghost, signify a breach in the natural world.

2. Murder of Duncan: Macbeth's regicide sets the course for the destruction of the natural order. Killing a king—an ordained ruler—violates the social hierarchy and divine order. Macbeth's ambition and murder disrupt the natural progression of power, leading to turmoil.

3. Motif of Sleep: Sleep is a natural human function and represents innocence and peace. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and Macbeth's inability to sleep highlight their internal turmoil and the disturbance of their moral equilibrium. The destruction of sleep is symbolic of the destruction of the natural order within themselves.

4. Disruption of Hierarchy: The play depicts the breakdown of traditional hierarchies. Macbeth, originally a loyal subject, usurps the throne, upsetting the political order. This triggers a chain reaction of disorder as subjects revolt, leading to more unnatural acts.

5. Storm Scene: The storm on the night of Duncan's murder reflects the turmoil in the natural world that mirrors the chaos unleashed by Macbeth's actions. The "unnatural troubles" in the realm of nature correspond to the moral turmoil Macbeth and his world experience.

6. Trees and Nature: The witches' prophecies about Birnam Wood moving to Dunsinane and Macbeth's eventual defeat point to nature itself rising against Macbeth. The natural world, which should be impartial, turns against him due to his actions.

7. Lady Macbeth's Descent: Lady Macbeth's mental and emotional decline is marked by her preoccupation with the "spot" of blood on her hands, a physical representation of her guilt. This showcases how guilt and remorse disrupt her psychological equilibrium.

In conclusion, the destruction of the natural order is a pervasive and interconnected theme in "Macbeth." The play illustrates how the violation of moral, social, and cosmic norms leads to a series of cascading consequences that culminate in the downfall of Macbeth and those around him. The quote "Unnatural deeds Do breed unnatural troubles" serves as a reminder of the consequences that arise when individuals disrupt the natural order for their own gain.

Q7. The ambivalence with which Satan is portrayed by Milton in Book I of Paradise Lost reveals him to be the true protagonist of the poem. Do you agree with this statement? Elaborate, based on your reading of the poem.

Ans. The question of whether Satan is the true protagonist of John Milton's "Paradise Lost" is a subject of considerable debate and interpretation. While some argue that Satan's complexity and

prominence make him a protagonist, others contend that the true focus lies on other characters or themes. **Let's examine both sides of the argument:**

Satan as the Protagonist:

Prominence: In Book I, Satan is undoubtedly a central and prominent figure. He delivers several important speeches, articulating his defiance against God and his determination to continue his rebellion. His dramatic introduction and his rallying of the fallen angels suggest that he is a key player in the narrative.

Complexity: Satan is depicted with a range of emotions, thoughts, and motivations. His character is explored in depth, and readers gain insight into his internal struggles and ambition. This complexity is often associated with protagonists.

Narrative Focus: The narrative begins in medias res with Satan and his followers having already fallen. The focus on their activities and plans suggests that their actions will propel the plot forward.

Satan as a Villain and the Fall's Consequences:

Antagonistic Role: Despite his complexity, Satan is unequivocally the antagonist. His rebellion against God and his destructive influence cast him in the role of the villain.

The Fall of Humanity: The true narrative trajectory is the story of Adam and Eve's fall from grace and their subsequent redemption. The primary focus shifts to them as the poem progresses, highlighting their significance in the grand scheme of creation.

Loss of Moral Compass: Satan's characterization as a villain is underlined by his manipulation, deceit, and corruption of others, as well as his unrepentant nature. These traits are inconsistent with the traditional qualities of a protagonist.

Ambiguity and Complex Themes:

Multiple Layers: "Paradise Lost" is a multi-layered work with themes of free will, obedience, temptation, and divine justice. The poem's complexity extends beyond Satan's character, making it difficult to label him as a simple protagonist.

Moral Dilemmas: The poem raises complex moral questions about good, evil, and the nature of humanity's relationship with God. While Satan's ambition is explored, it's not necessarily presented as an admirable quality.

In conclusion, while Satan is undoubtedly a complex and captivating character, the narrative and thematic focus of "Paradise Lost" expands beyond his role. The poem explores a wide array of characters and themes, with Satan's character serving to illustrate certain concepts rather than necessarily being the true protagonist. The ambivalence with which Satan is portrayed reflects the poem's exploration of the complexities of human nature, morality, and divine justice, making the argument that he is the true protagonist a matter of interpretation.

Q8. Discuss how, in The Rape of the Lock Pope uses a mock-epic framework to portray imaginatively, the world of feminine sensibility.

Ans. In "The Rape of the Lock," Alexander Pope employs a mock-epic framework to satirize the triviality of a social scandal while also playfully exploring the world of feminine sensibility. Through this satirical form, Pope portrays the extravagant concerns and emotions of the aristocratic society, particularly those of women, with a blend of humor and imaginative detail. **Here's how Pope achieves this portrayal:**

1. Triviality Elevated to Epic Proportions:

Pope takes a minor incident—the cutting of a lock of hair—and elevates it to epic proportions. By using the grand style of an epic poem, he satirizes the characters' exaggerated reactions to such a trivial event. This framework highlights the self-importance of the characters and the shallow concerns of their world.

2. Hyperbole and Exaggeration:

Pope employs hyperbole and exaggeration to emphasize the overblown emotions of the characters. The "mighty contests" and "daring deeds" he describes are rendered absurd when applied to the trivial context. This exaggeration humorously underscores the melodramatic nature of feminine sensibility.

3. Use of Epic Conventions:

Pope parodies epic conventions, such as invoking the Muse, cataloging of characters, and epic similes, to juxtapose the grandeur of the form with the triviality of the subject matter. This contrast humorously underscores the discrepancy between the form and content.

4. Imaginative Detail in Descriptions:

Pope uses imaginative and elaborate descriptions to depict the characters' personal attributes, social roles, and even inanimate objects like cosmetics and accessories. These descriptions reflect the minutiae that occupy the minds of the aristocratic class, particularly women, and reveal their preoccupation with appearances.

5. Personification and Supernatural Elements:

Pope personifies abstractions such as Vanity, Love, and Sylphs, giving them supernatural attributes. These personifications allow him to portray the inner thoughts and emotions of the characters, revealing their concerns and desires in an imaginative and satirical manner.

6. Parody of Traditional Epics:

Pope's satirical play on traditional epic elements serves to deflate the grandiosity of the characters and their concerns. The lofty language and heroic imagery applied to the petty situation highlight the absurdity of their attitudes.

7. Critique of Gender Roles:

Through the portrayal of the female characters, Pope critiques the limited roles and expectations placed on women in this society. While he satirizes their concerns, he also suggests the constraints imposed upon them by societal norms.

In conclusion, Alexander Pope employs the mock-epic framework in "The Rape of the Lock" to satirize the triviality and extravagance of the aristocratic world, particularly the realm of feminine sensibility. Through exaggeration, parody, and imaginative detail, he humorously exposes the

characters' preoccupations and reveals the societal pressures and expectations they face. By applying epic grandeur to the minutiae of their lives, Pope simultaneously critiques and imaginatively portrays the world of feminine sensibility in the 18th-century aristocratic society.

Q9. Critically comment on Aphra Behn's subversion and questioning of love, marriage and sex in *The Rover*.

Ans. Aphra Behn's play "The Rover" is a bold and groundbreaking work that subverts and questions traditional notions of love, marriage, and sex, particularly in the context of the 17th-century society in which it was written. Behn's exploration of these themes challenges societal norms and offers a more complex and nuanced perspective on relationships. **Here's a critical comment on how Behn achieves this subversion:**

1. Exploration of Female Agency:

Behn's female characters, particularly Hellena and Florinda, exhibit agency and independence in matters of love and marriage. They actively pursue their desires and challenge the idea that women are passive objects to be won by men. Hellena disguises herself to engage in carnival revelry, asserting her right to experience pleasure and make her own choices.

2. Satirical Portrayal of Patriarchy:

The play satirizes the patriarchal norms of the time, highlighting the hypocrisy of men who pursue pleasure while condemning women for doing the same. The male characters' attitudes towards sex and relationships are critiqued through comedic situations and dialogues, revealing the double standards of the society.

3. Questioning of Marriage as Control:

Behn questions the institution of marriage as a means of social control and economic security for women. Characters like Florinda and Angellica Bianca assert their right to choose their partners based on genuine affection rather than financial gain. Angellica's status as a courtesan complicates societal norms surrounding marriage.

4. Complexity of Love:

Behn portrays love as multifaceted and contradictory. The characters experience love that is passionate, fleeting, and sometimes deceitful. Love is not solely romantic; it's also intertwined with power dynamics, lust, and personal ambition. The relationships in the play reflect the complexities of human emotions.

5. Carnival and Subversion:

The carnival setting allows for the temporary suspension of social norms and hierarchies. This temporary liberation provides characters with the opportunity to act against societal constraints and express their desires more freely. The carnival becomes a space where roles and identities can be temporarily subverted.

6. Exploration of Sexual Desire:

Behn openly discusses sexual desire and attraction, challenging the taboo surrounding the topic in her time. The characters' candid conversations about their desires reflect a more open and realistic approach to human sexuality.

7. Rejection of Sentimental Idealization:

Behn rejects the idealized notions of romantic love often depicted in literature of the time. Instead, she portrays love as a complex interplay of emotions, desires, and practical considerations. This rejection of idealization reflects a more pragmatic approach to relationships.

In "The Rover," Aphra Behn effectively subverts traditional norms and raises questions about love, marriage, and sex by giving agency to her female characters, satirizing patriarchal attitudes, and presenting a more nuanced view of human relationships. Through her exploration of these themes, Behn challenges the prevailing societal expectations and offers a more realistic and progressive perspective on matters of the heart and society.

Q10. Bacon's essay "Of Deformity" begins by quoting negative assumptions about disability in his time, yet eventually his essay seeks to establish the idea that the 'deformed' can be useful and excellent. Discuss.

Ans. Francis Bacon's essay "Of Deformity" addresses the societal biases and negative assumptions surrounding physical deformity in his time. While the essay begins by quoting and acknowledging the prevailing negative perceptions of deformity, Bacon gradually shifts his focus to challenge these assumptions and advocate for the idea that individuals with physical deformities can still be valuable, useful, and even excellent in various aspects of life. **Here's how Bacon's essay accomplishes this shift:**

1. Acknowledgment of Negative Assumptions:

In the beginning of the essay, Bacon quotes negative assumptions and stereotypes about physical deformities, such as "they are in the body professed enemies, and underminers of the mind." He acknowledges the commonly held belief that physical deformities are somehow linked to moral and intellectual shortcomings.

2. Refutation of Negative Assumptions:

Bacon counters these negative assumptions by asserting that physical deformities do not necessarily reflect the true nature of a person's character or abilities. He argues that deformity is a matter of chance, and that it is unjust to judge individuals based solely on their physical appearance.

3. Highlighting Positive Attributes:

Bacon emphasizes that individuals with deformities can possess exceptional qualities, talents, and virtues that can be valuable to society. He provides historical examples of renowned figures who were physically deformed but achieved greatness in their respective fields. These examples challenge the notion that physical appearance is a determinant of a person's worth or capabilities.

4. Utility and Excellence:

Bacon's central argument revolves around the idea that deformity can actually serve as a source of utility and excellence. He suggests that individuals with deformities may be driven to develop their intellectual and creative faculties due to societal limitations on physical activities. This can lead to excellence in areas that do not require physical prowess.

5. Intellectual and Moral Excellence:

Bacon contends that individuals with deformities often develop intellectual and moral virtues to compensate for societal biases. He argues that they may possess qualities such as wit, eloquence, compassion, and humility, which contribute to their overall excellence.

6. Challenging Conventional Wisdom:

Throughout the essay, Bacon challenges the conventional wisdom that physical deformities are indicative of moral deficiency or intellectual inferiority. He presents a more nuanced and humanistic perspective that appreciates the potential of individuals beyond their physical appearances.

In summary, Bacon's essay "Of Deformity" begins by acknowledging negative assumptions about physical deformity but ultimately seeks to establish the idea that individuals with deformities can be useful and excellent. He challenges societal biases, refutes the notion that deformity defines a person's worth, and presents a more inclusive view that recognizes the potential for intellectual, moral, and creative excellence among those who are physically deformed.