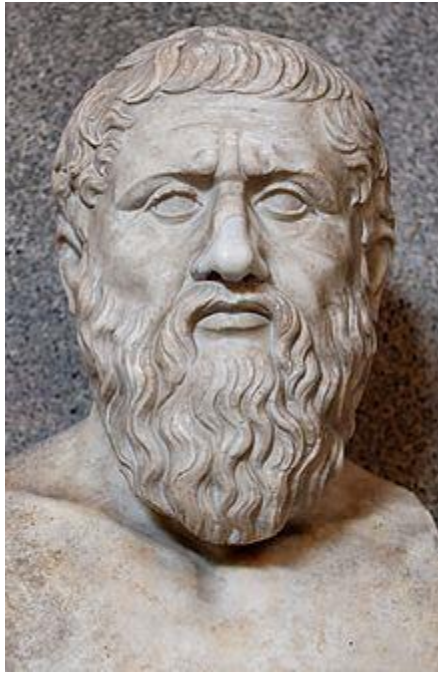


**The Travails of Critics vs the Labour Pain of Creative Writers
A Critique of the Mindset of the Classicists and the Neoclassicists**

Dr. S. Joseph Arul Jayraj



Plato

Courtesy: <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Plato>

Abstract

The paper presents the travails of critics and the labour pain of creative writers, limitations of criticism and creative writings, Plato's views on the abuse of poetry, poetic inspiration, the emotional appeal of poetry, and function of poetry and its non-moral character. It places before the reader Aristotle's views on the origin and development of poetry, the nature of poetry, imitation, the objects of imitation, the manner of imitation, difference between poetry and history, the function of poetry, the emotional appeal of poetry and catharsis, critical objections against poetry and their solutions. It traces Renaissance and its impact, medieval literary theory, the origin of

English criticism, an age of the seed time for the germination of literature of higher order, the development of English drama, the spirit of renaissance in the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, and the noteworthy contribution of the early neoclassicists. It highlights Ben Jonson's neoclassicism, the influence of the classical writers, the drawback in English literature and Jonson's wish. It brings out the praiseworthy contribution of the neoclassicists, their liberal approach to classicism, deviation from classicism, vacillation of criticism between a blind application of rules and judgment by sheer taste, focuses on reason as test of literary values, and the sure test of literary judgment which rests on surer foundations.

Keywords: Travails, Labour Pain, Brainchildren, Critique, Classicism, *Republic*, *Poetics*, Renaissance, the 'Tudor Trio,' the 'Areopagus,' Neoclassicism, etc.

1.0. Introduction



Ben Johnson

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Jonson

by [Abraham Blyenberch](#); oil on canvas painting at the [National Portrait Gallery, London](#)

The travails of critics are not more painful than the labour pain of creative writers in giving birth to their brainchildren (creative writings). To be a critic or a creative writer is the most challenging task for both because they too are human beings. But those creative writers and critics, who believe in the principle of 'criticism of life,' have produced the best creative works through

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their critical evaluations, which have universal appeal. The creative writers, who have also played the roles of critics, have exhibited their most balanced aesthetic sensibility and critical acumen through their creative writing.

Classical critics advise the writers to cultivate esteem for the ancient rules because they want the writers to imitate the ancients and to follow their rules. Neoclassicism has made attempts “to discover and formulate the principles, laws and rules of literature, of literary creation, of the structure of literary composition and of the response to the readers” (Ramaswami and Sethuraman xii). As its name suggests, neoclassicism is connected with the classicism of the ancients. It emphasizes the implementation of the classical rules in creative writing. Since Neoclassical Age extols reason very much, it is called ‘the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment’ (Danzier and Johnson 120). Neoclassicism values order, proportion, balance and symmetry (Danzier and Johnson 118). It focuses not on the particular and individual, but on the typical and universal representation (Danzier and Johnson 119).

Even though the neoclassicists insist on adhering to classical rules, they have not failed to point out the fact that criticism and creative writing are conditioned by many factors such as the trend of the age or time and by the attitude of the critic/creative writer himself. These factors prove the fact that either a critic or a creative writer cannot come out of the framework of his mind and the popular notion of his time. These limitations make criticism and creative writing different from one another. If one aims at morality, another will aim at aesthetic pleasure and a third will aim at both. That is why, the classical critics advocate conformity to rules and the neoclassicists advocate either for a reasonable deviation from the rules or for a complete freedom from them. From these different perspectives, one can understand the fact that there can be no fixed rules for criticism and creative writing that can be applied indiscriminately to the works of art of all ages and writers. Thus, in the history of literary criticism and creative writing, one can come across the rules of criticism and creative writing of one age are discarded in another and the subsequent age accepts them (Prasad “Introduction,” xii). This research paper captures these features in words and presents them with examples to the readers in the forthcoming paragraphs.

1.1. Plato's Views on the Abuse of Poetry

In *Republic*, Plato (427-347 BCE) says that the ideas are the ultimate reality. Things are conceived as ideas before they take the form or shape as things. The shape of an object is a concrete embodiment of its image in idea. Objects are the imperfect copies of the ideas from which they come, and their reproduction in the form of art is still more imperfect. They alienate the onlookers from the reality. So, art is a copy of a copy. Therefore, it can be said that the object is twice removed from reality. Thus, art not only fails to mould character, but also fails to promote the well-being of the state. By its charm, it allures people which Plato considers to be dangerous for the individual and the society (Davies, John Llewelyn and David James Vaughan xxx-xxxii).

1.2. Poetic Inspiration

If the Poet writes not because of his deep thought over the subject but because of inspiration, then how can such a sudden outpouring of the soul be a reliable substitute for truths based on reason? A poet's statement of profound truth has to be put to the test of reason. Since poets are guided by impulses, their statements are not based on reason; their statements cannot mould the minds of the individuals as better citizens and the state a better organization. So, poets are not safe guides (Prasad 3-4).

1.3. The Emotional Appeal of Poetry

Poetry, according to Plato, arises from its appeal to the emotions. Since it is a product of inspiration, it appeals to emotion rather than reason. Emotions are formed based on impulses. So, they cannot be safe guides like reason. With reference to tragic poetry, he says that if weeping and wailing are introduced to move the hearts of the spectators, they cannot have control over them when they experience them in their real life (Prasad 4).

1.4. Function of Poetry and Its Non-Moral Character

The chief function of poetry is to teach and delight. But poetry lacks concern with morality. It treats both virtue and vice alike. The evil flourish but the virtuous suffer. Poetry portrays both gods and heroes in unfavourable light: gods as unjust or revengeful, or guilty of other vices,

and heroes under the sway of uncontrollable passion of all kinds—pride, anger, grief, and so on. Such literature will corrupt both the individual and the state (Prasad 4-5).

2.0. Aristotle’s (384-322 BCE) Views on the Origin and Development of Poetry

Poetry originates from three basic instincts of man: 1) Imitation 2) Harmony, and 3) Rhythm (Potts 20-22). Artistic imitation provides aesthetic pleasure. Things that one would simply detest in real life, give one delight when those things are artistically reproduced with verisimilitude. For example, ‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever’ (John Keats’ “Endymion”), when presented in the form of art (Potts 21).

2.1. The Nature of Poetry and the Objects of Imitation

Speaking of the nature of poetry, Plato calls the poet an imitator. According to him, the poet imitates one of the following: 1) things as they were or are, 2) things as they are said to be or thought to be, and 3) things as they ought to be. a) Men in action are either of higher type or of lower type. b) Men are represented either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are (Potts 18-19).

2.2. The Manner of Imitation

Imitation is a common principle of all fine arts. It differs from one another in medium, object, the manner or mode. Artists imitate for the pleasure it affords. Unlike Plato, Aristotle says that poet’s imitations or pictures of life are real because they reveal truths of a permanent or universal kind. The poet may imitate either a narrative manner or a dramatic manner. The mode of narration must present characters with verisimilitude as in the case of Homer. Imitation differs in medium, in object and in manner (Potts 19).

2.3. Difference between Poetry and History

Poetry	History
1. Poetry relates to what may happen.	1. History relates to what has happened.

2. It is more philosophical and higher than history.	2. It is inferior to poetry.
3. It tends to express the universal.	3. It tends to express the particular.

2.4. The Function of Poetry

Poetry is not a reproduction of facts, but truths embedded in those facts that apply to all places and times. Aristotle does not make any categorical statement about the function of poetry in *Poetics*. But his observations on poetry imply that the function of poetry is to give pleasure (Prasad 12-13).

2.5. The Emotional Appeal of Poetry and Catharsis

Aristotle agrees with Plato that poetry gives emotional appeal. According to him, tragedy is the best form of poetry because it evokes pity and fear which have cathartic effect in the minds of the poet and the reader (Prasad 13).

2.6. Critical Objections against Poetry and their Solutions

If the poet describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error. However, it can be justified, if it succeeds in attaining the end of the art, which is to teach and delight. In general, 'the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion' (Potts 55-59).

3.0. Renaissance and Its Impact

Due to the fall of the Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, the Greek scholars were compelled to disperse to different parts of Europe with their rich treasures of ancient Greek and Italian art and literature. They went to Italy in large numbers. Thus, began the Renaissance or the revival of the Greek-Italian culture, art and literature. This marked the break with medievalism. Modern literary criticism began in Italy during the formative period of Renaissance in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was possible due to the revival of learning and renewal of the study of the classical literatures of ancient Greece and Italy.

3.1. Medieval Literary Theory

Before Literary Criticism began in England under the influence of Renaissance, the medieval literary theory was in vogue. It could be found in the form of the contemporary literary works of Geoffrey of Vinsau, John of Garland, followed by Hawes and others. The medieval literary theory was formulated based on the post-classical master minds. Some of the outstanding Humanistic contributors to literary theory were Laurentius Valla, Politian, Vergerius, Vittornio da Feltre, Guarino da Verona, Leonardo Bruni, Aeneas Sylvius, Pico della Mirandola and Savonarola. Due to their committed activities, literary studies received fresh impetus and a new direction (Atkins 8).

3.2. The Origin of English Criticism

Italy was the cradle of the new spirit where the study of the classical literatures was revived. At the same time, during the 13th and 14th centuries, which are known as the age of Chaucer in England, the Church and the Medieval habits and traditions continued to influence the masses. Petrarch, Boccaccio, Giotto, Nicolo Pisano, Raphael, Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Pico Della Mirandola, Machiavelli and Medicis liberated the people from the slavery of feudalism and the Church. They introduced the spirit of humanism which was one of the formative influences of the age of Chaucer. Even before Chaucer, Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*, the oldest English poetry of Caedmon and Cynewulf, John Gower's *Troylus and Cryseyde*, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the greatest monument of Old English Prose, King John's *Magna Charta*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of Briton* (1132), and John Wyclif's *Bible*, which revived spiritual Christianity, were available in England (Hudson 9-19, 26).

3.3. An Age of the Seed Time for the Germination of Literature of Higher Order in England

With the invention of the printing press by Caxton, the *Translation of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer* by Sir John William Tyndale, *The English Prayer Book* by Thomas Cranmer, and *Sermons on the Ploughers* by Latimer in the 15th century became the sources for the spread of the ideas and culture of the Greeks in the form of printed books. Due to the impact of the Renaissance, Martin Luther started the Reformation of the Christian Church in Germany. Owing to the spread of the spirit of Renaissance and Reformation, Schools and Universities were

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established in large numbers. The Age witnessed the explosion of knowledge which paved the way for great explorations, new sea-routes and discoveries. The influence of the Renaissance reached England only by the end of the 15th century. A number of social, political, religious and national forces made England a Super Power. William Grocyn and Thomas Lincare went to Italy to study with the Italian humanists. They brought home the Greek studies. Therefore, Desiderius Erasmus, the Dutchman came to England to study Latin, instead of going over to Italy. Erasmus, John Colet, Sir Thomas More, Sir Roger Ascham, Sir Thomas Elyot, Sir John Cheke were the pioneers of humanism in the early Renaissance period. Sir Thomas Wyatt, a Renaissance poet, visited Italy, Spain and France on diplomatic missions. Great humanists like Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Thomas Sackville bear witness to the influence of Italy through their sonnets in English (Hudson 36-37).

3.4. The Development of English Drama

The mystery and miracle plays were enacted in Latin in the courts of the Kings and Queens. The Mystery plays dealt with subjects taken from the Bible and the Miracle plays with the lives of the saints. John Heywood, the court musician of Henry VIII, wrote his *Four P's*, which was an elementary comedy. Interludes were also written for scholastic purposes. The comedies of Plautus and Terence, and the tragedies of Seneca were acted at the Universities in England. Through these attempts, the English writers learned the principles of dramatic construction and techniques. For the performance of his students in the place of Latin plays, the first real English comedy, *Roister Doister*, was written by Nicholas Udall, the headmaster of Eton, around 1550. The first English tragedy, *Gorboduc*, which was later named *Ferrex and Porrex*, was written by Thomas Sackville (Hudson 39-43). Best known Chaucerian poets were Thomas Occleve, or Hoccleve and Thomas Lydgate (Hudson 31). The poet, William Dunbar, who lived between the period of Chaucer and Spenser, Robert Henryson, and Gawain or Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld who translated *Aeneid*, was a few poets of merit. Reginald Peacock, Bishop of St. Asaph's, was a very powerful prose writer (Hudson 32-33).

3.5. The Spirit of Renaissance in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Age

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By the time the Renaissance spirit reached its summit in England, it had died out in Italy. This age witnessed the influence of Latin and French mixed with the revival of Greek learning and the patriotic feelings in England as portrayed in the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer. Edmund Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, a pastoral poem of the artificial kind, was written under the influence of the Greek poets, Theocritus and Homer, Italian Poet, Virgil, the French and Italian writers of the Renaissance (Hudson 48). Chaucer coined new words, borrowed and used words from Latin and French languages. Chaucer's early poetry had an impact of contemporary French poetry. Chaucer's translation of *Roman de la Rose* modified his style of writing (Hudson 21). He was a true disciple of Renaissance humanism and Christian humanism. Chaucer's Italian period is replete with examples of a variety of new technical innovations in poetry. He paid a visit to Italy and saw the dawn of Renaissance which was influenced by the new trend of art and literature. He read 'sonetto' (a little sound) of the Italian sonneteers like Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. The French sonneteers namely Ronsard, Desportes, and Du Bellay infused a new vigour into the writing of sonnets which was vehemently protested against by Sir John Davis and Sir John Harrington. George Chapman translated *Iliad* (1611) and *Odyssey* (1613) into English. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote two sonnets as prefixes to the first book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (Hudson 49). Spenser was influenced by secular and humanistic spirit of Renaissance. Before the spirit of Renaissance began to spread into England, Chaucer imbibed it and expressed it in his works of art (Hudson 19). Thomas Watson was one of the earliest sonneteers who translated all the sonnets of Petrarch into Latin. Thomas Campion, Henry Constable, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, The Earl of Essex, Sir Edward Dyer, Percy, Lynch, Smith, Sir William Alexander of Scotland, William Drummond of Hawthornden, and Clement Robinson, and the verse satirists such as Joseph Hall, John Marston and George Wither were also important poets. In the meanwhile, a new kind of poetry was written by John Donne of the 'metaphysical' school (Hudson 53-54).

The influence of Greek, Roman and French humanism resulted in the form of individualism in the plays of the University Wits like John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Robert Green, Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nash. It also had its impact on William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Webster, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, George Chapman, Thomas Middleton, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Dekker, John Marston, Cyril Tourneur, Philip

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Massinger, John Ford and James Shirley. The prose writers like Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, John Selden, Coryate, Robert Burton, Michelet, and Richard Hakluyt's books on navigation and voyages, and Samuel Purchas popularized sea-prose were also influenced by it. William Warner's *Albion's England* (1586-1606) set the history of England from Noah's days to that of Elizabeth. Prose works like Raleigh's *History of the World* (1614), Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of Henry VII* (1622), Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* or *Book of Martyrs* (1563), and historical works like Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, which often influenced Shakespeare while writing plays were made available. Furthermore, religious writings like Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, the Authorised Version of *the Bible* (1611)—which exercised profound influence upon English writing, the puritan theology which was derived from the philosophy of John Calvin, and George Gascoigne and Barnabby Rudge, who echoed the hatred of the young men of the old religious system, came into existence. Sir Philip Sydney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (1581), William Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), and George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), (Hudson 55-76) are noteworthy contributions of the time.

4.0. Noteworthy Contribution of the Early Neoclassicists

John North Brooke in *Treatise Wherein Vain Plays or Interludes Are Reproved* (1577) attacked literature. The year 1579 saw the attack on Poetry and its defence. The Puritan critics attacked the renewed status and value of poetry. Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579) denounced the poets as the 'fathers of lies' (Prasad 76). Sir John Denham's *Second and Third Blast of Retreat from the Plays* (1580) accused the theatre for robbing 'Greece of gluttony, Italy of wantonness, Spain of pride, France of deceit, and Deutschland of quaffing' (Prasad 76). The intension of Gosson was that he did not attack poetry and drama as such but rather their 'abuse', during his age. This venomous attack on poetry and poets instantly drew forth replies from Thomas Lodge in his *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* (1580) and from Sir Philip Sidney *The Defence of Poesie* and *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1582), but published in (1595) (Prasad 76).

Around 1579, a literary circle called the 'Areopagus', which consisted of Edward Dyer (1543-1607), Gabriel Harvy (1545-1630), Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), Sir Philip Sidney (1554-

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1586), Samuel Daniel (1562-1619) and Thomas Campion (1567-1620) aimed at the ‘reform’ of English verse and substituted the Greek and Latin system of prosody for the English. While Harvey wrote verses of innovation, Sidney, Spenser, and Dyer, though supported Harvey, wrote poetry in the traditional English way. Though Thomas Campion’s verses in the traditional English mode belied his theory, he, in his *Art of English Poesie* (1602), supported writing poetry in the traditional English way. It was strongly opposed by Samuel Daniel in his *A Defence of Rime* (1602), an author of *Delia*, a beautiful sonnet sequence. It was against the onslaughts of the ‘Areopagus’. In 1662, after sixty years, its condemnation of rhyme was supported by Milton in his famous preface to *Paradise Lost* (Prasad 74).

Dyer, Harvey, Spenser, Sidney, Daniel, Campion and Ben Jonson supported the classics—the first three in metre and the last two generally in all matters (Prasad 77). The critical introductions of Gabriel Harvey and Edward Kirke (a Cambridge friend of Spenser) to Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calendar* (1579) and William Webbe’s *Discourse of English Poetrie* and *The Art of English Poesie*, published anonymously in (1589) were attributed to George Pultenham. These three writings were divided into three categories: i) *Of Poets and Poesy* (dealing with the nature of poetry and its form), ii) *Of Proportion* (dealing with prosody), and iii) *Of Ornament* (dealing with art of style and versification). The afore-said writers concerned themselves with the art of prosody and discussed the possibility of substituting for English rhyming verse, a system based on classical metres. Edward Kirke attempted to render a historical approach to poetry. In the first section, he traced the origin and development of poetry; in the second, the subject-matter and different types of poetry; and in the third, versification. Thus, the literary tastes and opinions were divided sharply among the intellectuals and the reformers of English language (Prasad 77).

4.1. Sir John Cheke

Sir John Chekean English humanist and supporter of the Protestant Reformation who “taught Cambridge and King Edward Greek” and with his friend Sir Thomas Smith, discovered the proper pronunciation of ancient Greek. Through his teaching, he made the University of Cambridge the centre of the “new learning” and the Reformed religion. Cheke published his letters on Greek pronunciation. One of the most erudite men of his time, Cheke was an indefatigable

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translator. His English works are of little importance, except for their avoidance of foreign words and for his reformed phonetic spelling, which make his letters some of the best plain prose of the period (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Cheke>). Cheke, a classical teacher and scholar, in his *Letter to Hoby*, was against over-ornate style. He did not want English to be adulterated by foreign tongues. But, he encouraged the study of classical models.

4.2. Roger Ascham

Roger Ascham, a British humanist, scholar, and writer, famous for his prose style, his promotion of the vernacular, and his theories of education. In 1538, he was elected a fellow of St. John's and appointed reader in Greek when the new Renaissance enthusiasm for the classics, especially Greek, was at its height.

Ascham's *Toxophilus* ("Lover of the Bow"), written in the form of a dialogue, was published in 1545 and was the first book on archery in English. In the preface, Ascham showed the growing patriotic zeal of the humanists by stating that he was writing "English matter in the English tongue for English men" (Prasad 73). *The Schoolmaster*, written in simple, lucid English prose and published posthumously in 1570, is Ascham's best-known book. It presents an effective method of teaching Latin prose composition, but its larger concerns are with the psychology of learning, the education of the whole person, and the ideal moral and intellectual personality that education should mould (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Roger-Ascham>). Though Roger Ascham did not like prose romance, in his *The Schoolmaster* (1570), he demanded the discipline of the Classics in writing and praised the study of Greek and Latin models. He also advocated the use of classical 'versing' (Prasad 73). The three Cambridge scholars namely Sir John Cheke, Roger Ascham and Thomas Wilson were more concerned with the formation and development of English prose than any other literary problem. This is the first stage of the development of an informal English literary criticism in England.

4.3. Thomas Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553)

Thomas Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553) had obvious influence on the theory of poetry, as it was believed during the Renaissance that one of the functions of Poetry was to move

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the readers. Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric* presents within the late medieval and renaissance theory of knowledge and to contrast Wilson's ideas of literature to modern and contemporary assumptions. The essay argues that Wilson's idea of rhetoric, meaning the art of eloquent and effective language, differs from modern literary thinking along three axes. First, Wilson's theory posits a close connection, indeed a fraternal relationship, between literature and philosophy, especially logic. Second, it assumes that literary discourse is deeply grounded in the praxis of political and social life, not alienated or isolated as a separate domain of experience. And third, Wilson consistently presents literary experience in terms of oral-aural performance rather than written-read text (<http://www.people.vcu.edu/~nsharp/wilsint1.htm>).

4.4. Sir Edward Dyer

Sir Edward Dyer's reputation rests on a small number of ascribed lyrics in which critics have found great dexterity and sweetness. Educated at the University of Oxford, Dyer went to court under the patronage of the Earl of Leicester. Dyer was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney, on whose death he wrote an elegy. His contemporary reputation as a poet was high, but little of his work, published anonymously or under initials in collections, is certainly identifiable. His best-known poem is "My Mynd to Me a Kingdom Is" (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Dyer>).

4.5. Gabriel Harvey

Gabriel Harvey studied at Cambridge and became a fellow of Pembroke Hall. The publication of the *Four Letters* (1592), a scurrilous post-mortem attack on Robert Greene, involved Harvey in the heated Martin Marprelate Controversy, which was terminated in 1599 by the intervention of the government. Much of Harvey's Martinist writings contained personal rebuffs, particularly to Thomas Nashe, who had described Harvey as an arrogant, tactless misfit (<http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/people/harvey-gabriel.html>).

4.6. Edmund Spenser

Edmund Spenser ranks as the foremost English poet of the 16th century. Famous as the author of the unfinished epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, he is the poet of an ordered yet passionate Elizabethan world. Spenser was a man of his times, and his work reflects the religious and

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humanistic ideals as well as the intense but critical patriotism of Elizabethan England. His contributions to English literature—in the form of a heightened and enlarged poetic vocabulary, a charming and flexible verse style, and a rich fusing of the philosophic and literary currents of the English Renaissance—entitle him to a rank not far removed from that of William Shakespeare and John Milton. In 1569 Spenser went to Cambridge and studied Italian, French, Latin, and Greek; read widely in classical literature and in the poetry of the modern languages; and authored some Latin verse (<http://biography.yourdictionary.com/edmund-spenser>).

4.7. Sir Philip Sidney

Sir Philip Sidney joined Christ Church College, Oxford in 1568 and left without degree in 1571. He wrote *Astrophel and Stella* in 1591. He started ‘Areopagus’ in 1577. He wrote *Apologie for Poetrie* in 1595. He was an Elizabethan soldier, poet and critic.

Stephen Gosson dedicated his *School of Abuse* (1579) to Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney’s *Apologie for Poetrie* was written in 1580, but was published in 1595 and was dedicated to Gosson. It was intended as a reply to the *Abuse* because Sidney’s line of defence closely follows Gosson’s line of attack. Gosson had objected poetry on four grounds: i) a man could employ his time more usefully than in poetry, ii) it is the mother of lies, iii) it is the nurse of abuse, and iv) Plato had rightly banished poets from his ideal commonwealth. Sidney’s *Apologie for Poetrie* is a reply to each one of the charges that are leveled against poetry by Gosson. There was neither great poetry nor criticism in England when Sidney fought the battle in defence of poetry (Prasad 78-79).

Sidney’s spirited defence in favour of poetry was logical. He examined poetry both in part and whole. Poetry is the oldest of all branches of learning which enabled people to understand and digest tougher knowledge. “Poetry is superior to philosophy by its charm, to history by its universality, to science by its moral end, to law by its encouragement of human rather than civic goodness” (Prasad 79). There are various forms of poetry. The pastoral by its comments on contemporary events and life pleases life in general, the elegy evokes pity for ‘the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world’ (Prasad 79), the satire by its gentle and pleasant ridicule of folly, the comedy by its ridiculous imitation of the common errors of life, the tragedy

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by its moving demonstration of the uncertainty of the world, the lyric by its sweet praise of all that is praiseworthy, and the epic by its representation of the loftiest truths in the loftiest manner. Thus, poetry in its various forms does not deserve the charges that are leveled against it (Prasad 79).

Sidney refutes the four charges that are leveled against poetry by Gosson as follows:

Gosson's Charges Against Poetry	Sidney's Defense Against the Charges
1. Man might better spend his time than in poetry.	1. Poetry teaches and moves the minds of men so much that nothing in the world can do so.
2. The poet is a liar.	2. To say so is to misunderstand the poet's very purpose. When the poet tells of facts, he has no concern whatever with these. He makes use of them to arrive at higher truths.
3. Poetry abuses men's wit, training it to wanton sinfulness and lustful love. This charge is particularly applied to the comedy and sometimes also to the lyric, the elegy, and the epic, into all of which the love element enters.	3. Love of beauty is a beastly fault which deserves hateful reproach. It is not poetry that abuses man's wit but man's wit that abuses poetry. Because there can be poetry without sinful love.
4. Plato condemns poetry.	4. Plato did not find fault with poetry, which he considered divinely inspired, but with the poets who abused it to misrepresent the gods. Even in their misrepresentation, they gave vent to only popular belief (Prasad 80).

Sidney's *Apology For Poetrie* is the first serious attempt to apply the classical rules to English poetry. He also insists on the observance of the three unities in English drama. He also advocates classical metres (Prasad 81-83). Sidney's concept of poetry is different from that of

Aristotle and he makes poetry what Plato wished it to be (*Classicism*, “England before the Restoration,” 20). The following points prove the statement.

Plato	Sidney
1. Plato found fault with poetry for being an imitation of an imitation (the objects of Nature were an imitation of their ideal patterns).	1. Poetry does not imitate the ideal pattern or copy, but the idea itself (Prasad 84 – 86).
Aristotle	Sidney
2. Poetry is an art of imitation because it imitates nature.	2. To imitate is ‘to teach and afford delight’. So, poetry is not merely an art of imitation but of ‘invention’ or ‘creation’. It creates a new world altogether for the edification and delight of the reader.

Thus, regular criticism in England began over again with Sir Philip Sidney with the same quality of literary inquiry which prevailed at the time of Plato and Aristotle.

4.8. Samuel Daniel

Samuel Daniel, a contemplative poet, marked in both verse and prose by his philosophic sense of history. Daniel entered Oxford in 1581. In 1604, Queen Anne chose him to write a masque, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, in which she danced. She awarded him the right to license plays for the boy actors at the Blackfriars Theatre and a position as a groom, and later gentleman, of her privy chamber.

Spenser praised Daniel for his first book of poems, *Delia*, with *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592). Daniel published 50 sonnets in this book, and more were added in later editions. The passing of youth and beauty is the theme of the *Complaint*, a tragic monologue. In *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) Daniel wrote a Senecan drama. *The Civile Warres* (1595–1609), a

verse history of the Wars of the Roses, had some influence on Shakespeare in *Richard II* and *Henry IV*; it is Daniel's most ambitious work.

Daniel's finest poem is probably "Musophilus: Containing a Generall Defence of Learning," dedicated to Fulke Greville. His *Poeticall Essayes* (1599) also include "A Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius." His *Defence of Ryme*, answering Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, a critical essay, was published in 1603. Fame and honour are the subjects of "Ulisses and the Syren" (1605) and of *A Funerall Poemeuppon the Earle of Devonshire* (1606). He had to defend himself against a charge of sympathizing with the Earl of Essex in *The Tragedie of Philotas*, acted in 1604 (published 1605). His other masques include *Tethys' Festival* (1610), staged with scenery by Inigo Jones, and *The Queenes Arcadia* (published 1606), a pastoral tragicomedy in the Italian fashion. Daniel's last pastoral was *Hymens Triumph* (1615). He also wrote *The Collection of the Historie of England* (1612–18) as far as the reign of Edward III (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Samuel-Daniel>).

4.9. Thomas Campion

Thomas Campion, a lyric poet, musician, and Doctor of medicine, who, of the three liberal arts that he practised, is remembered now mainly for his poetry, was born about the middle of the sixteenth century. He was living in London all through the period of Shakespeare's mastery of the English stage and survived him only by some three or four years.

A man of taste, in the very finest sense -- cultured, musical, urbane -- his own Latin epigrams alone would show that he had all that social instinct and tact which count for so much in a doctor's career. He was fortunate, too, in finding in London the society best adapted to stimulate his finely intellectual and artistic faculty. The first public sign of his literary art was his book of 'Poemata,' the Latin epigrams referred to, which appeared in 1595, and every copy of which has disappeared. Fortunately, a second series of epigrams, written in mature years, gave him an excuse to republish the first series in connection with them, in the year of his death, 1619.

The second collection of Campion's songs was published, this time under his own name, probably in 1613. It is entitled 'Two Books of Airs': the first, 'Divine and Moral Songs,' which include some of the finest examples of their kind in all English literature; the second book, 'Light Conceits of Lovers,' is very well described by its title, containing many sweetest love-songs. One cannot exhaust the list of Campion's music-books. In 1617 two more, 'The Third & Fourth Books of Airs,' were published in another small folio. His interesting "Observations in the Art of English Poesie" (1602) resolves itself into a naïve attack upon the use of rhyme in poetry, which comes paradoxically enough from one who was himself so exquisite a rhymers, and which called forth a very convincing reply in Daniel's 'Defence of Rhyme.' The 'Observations' contain some very taking examples of what may be done in the lyric form, without rhyme. Campion's musical pamphlet is less generally interesting, since counterpoint, on which he offered some practical rules, and the theory of music, have traveled so far since he wrote. Campion's fame, without doubt, is destined to grow steadily from this time forth, based as it is on poems which so perfectly and exquisitely satisfy the lyric sense and the lyric relationship between music and poetry (<http://biography.yourdictionary.com/thomas-campion>).

4.10. Ben Jonson's Neoclassicism

Ben Jonson (1573 -1637) was a poet, dramatist and critic. Most of his criticism is found in his *Timber or Discoveries Made upon Man and Matter, as they Flowed out of his Daily Reading* (1620-1635, published posthumously in 1640-41) (*Classicism*, "England before the Restoration", 22). The rest of it is contained in his poems, plays, prefaces and dedications to his plays. According to Wimsatt and Brooks, Ben Jonson was the first English critic who exhibited a complete and consistent neoclassicism (181). It is Jonson who preached and practised full-fledged classicism in his writings.

4.10.1. The Influence of the Classical Writers

Ben Jonson was greatly influenced by the classical writers of Greece and Rome. All his plays were modeled on Latin drama—Seneca in tragedy, and Plautus and Terence in comedy. As regards his criticism, he was influenced by Aristotle, Horace, Seneca, Quintilian, Pliny and Petronius. Among these writers, Jonson's favourite was Quintilian. Jonson applied Quintilian's

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observations on the art of rhetoric to the arts of poetry and drama. This made him one of the first important neoclassical critics in English (Prasad 87). He unveils that the ancients are only guides and not the commanders (Prasad 96).

4.10.2. The Drawback in English Literature and Jonson's Wish

In spite of being a neoclassical critic, Jonson did not admit a blind adherence to the ancient classical writers. He had a due regard for the English writings and appreciated whatever was good in them. He found the drawback of the 'excesses' of passion, imagination and expression in English literature. He wanted this drawback to be eliminated. He wished English literature to be raised to the excellence of Greek and Latin writings (Prasad 88).

4.10.3. The Function of Poetry

Ben Jonson holds that poetry nourishes and instructs the youth. It delights our age, adorns our prosperity and comforts our adversity. It entertains us at home and keeps us company abroad (Das 2). From Jonson's remark, it is clear that poetry has the function of both instruction and delight.

5.0. The Rise of Classicism during the Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods

During the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, the main advocates of classicism were Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson. Sidney and Jonson preached and practised classicism in their works. However, they did not follow the ancients slavishly. In a strict sense, Sidney and Jonson cannot be regarded as neoclassicists because they did not formulate any critical theory (Prasad 98).

5.1. The Caroline Age

During the Caroline Age, some sort of classicism was found in John Milton, who followed the ancients in his famous works. His adoration of the classics was limited to their form alone. In treatment, he followed the native English tradition (Prasad 98-99).

5.2. The Rise of Classicism

During the second half of the 15th century and till the middle of the 16th century, early classicism had a complete control over English literature. The reasons were:

5.2.1. The Excesses of the Metaphysical Poets

Difficult expressions, conceits and complex metres were used by the metaphysical poets in their works. So, the readers found it difficult to understand their poetry (Prasad 99).

5.2.2. The Influence of the French

England was looking forward for a variety and the excesses and the far-fetched ‘conceits’ in the Metaphysical poetry were due to the influence of France (Prasad 99-100).

5.2.3. The Consequence of the Marriage of Charles I with a French Princess

The princess brought with her many courtiers and wits, and the French language to England (Prasad 100).

5.2.4. The Consequence of the Civil War

There was a civil war between Charles I and the Parliament in England. The king was defeated and killed. Hence, his brother Charles II and many writers of Royalist Sympathies such as Waller, Denham, Davenant, Cowley and Evelyn took refuge in France. Later, they returned to England imbued with French culture (Prasad 100).

5.2.5. The Impact of the French Neoclassicism

There was a tremendous progress in French literature during the regime of Louis XIV. A classical system was evolved in France. The French neoclassicism is chiefly found in Boileau’s *Art Poetique*, Rapin’s *Reflections*, and Bossu’s treatise on epic poetry. It framed a set of rules for poetry and its kinds, ultimately based on those of Aristotle. Rules of tragedy and comedy were also defined. Those rules were discovered to be rooted in reason or good sense. They were also thought to sum up what appealed most in nature (i.e. life), in events, human persons and their language. They became an unquestioned authority. Therefore, it was considered that great art was that which satisfied the natural test of reason or good sense. In other words, great art was the art

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which followed the rules of the ancients, particularly those of Aristotle (Prasad 101). The French neoclassicism had an immense appeal to the English writers, who wanted to get rid of the confusion created by the metaphysical poets. Thus, with a strong influence on the English writers, the French neoclassicism paved the way for the rise of neoclassicism in England.

6.0. Classicism and Neoclassicism

Classicism refers to the arts of ancient Greece or Rome. The term ‘neoclassicism’ signifies the arts of the eighteenth century. In England, neoclassicism began in the last quarter of the seventeenth century with Dryden and it extended to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, ended with Samuel Johnson. The neoclassicists like John Dryden, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson by an indirect reference to the ancients, considered themselves Augustans. Hence, their period is called the Augustan Age, in honour of the emperor Augustus, under whom Roman arts flourished (Danzier and Johnson 117).

6.1. John Dryden (1631-1700)

John Dryden’s *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* (1668), which speaks for Modern English dramatists, is a long single prose work of legislative criticism. The rest of Dryden’s critical output can be found in the prefaces to his creative writings—essays, prefaces, epistles, prologues and epilogues. In his *Life of Dryden*, Dr. Samuel Johnson has called Dryden ‘the father of English criticism.’ It was he who pioneered ‘the historical criticism.’ The epithet ‘Augustan’ was first applied to Dryden by Dr. Johnson, who remarked that Dryden found English poetry brick and left it marble.

6.1.1. Dryden’s support of Aristotle’s Definition of Poetry

Dryden supports Aristotle’s definition of poetry as a process of imitation. Dryden is similar to Sydney, according to whom poetry imitates not only things, which for Plato, are the copies of their ideal pattern, but the ideal pattern itself (Prasad 105 - 106).

6.1.2. The Function of Poetry

For Plato, the function of poetry is to instruct, for Aristotle to delight, for Horace to do both, and for Longinus to transport. According to Dryden, the chief function of poetry is to delight. However, he admits instruction in the second place, because poetry instructs as it delights. Dryden is a creator who produces a work of art rather than a copy (Prasad 106-107).

6.1.3. A Contrast between Classical and English Drama

In the classical drama, the unities of time, place and action were carefully observed; the mixture of tragic and comic elements was avoided; and scenes, hateful to sight or putting a heavy strain upon the spectator's power of belief, were reported rather than acted. But in the English drama, the unities were not generally observed. There was a mixture of the tragic and comic elements. The scenes, which were only reported in the classical and French drama, were acted. Therefore, the English drama was considered inferior to classical drama (Prasad 108).

6.1.4. Defending English Drama

Dryden wrote *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* in order to prove the honour of English writers and to defend the English drama. In this work, he affirms that the English drama fulfils this purpose of delighting and instructing mankind (Enright and Chikera 55), though it deviates from the classical rules of drama.

6.1.5. Defending Tragicomedy

Dryden defends tragicomedy written by English dramatists. He admits the scenes of mirth mixed with tragedy because it provides a dramatic relief to us and has the same effect as music. He is proud to say that tragicomedy is the invention of the English (Enright and Chikera 81). However, he insists that there should not be an unnatural mixture of comedy and tragedy.

6.1.6. Supporting Violation of Unities

Dryden advocates violating of the unities of place, time and action on reasonable grounds. He states that strict observance of the unities of time and place will lead to a lack of plot and narrowness of imagination (Enright and Chikera 58-59, 85-86). The plot in the play should be single. The classical writers opposed sub-plots (under-plots). Dryden believed that the addition of

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sub-plots gives a variety and a greater pleasure to the audience. French plays suffer from barrenness of plot because of lack of sub-plots (Enright and Chikera 81-82).

6.1.7. Comment on Chorus and Audience

Dryden finds no use of “Chorus” for English stage. Realizing the importance of audience, he points out that the Greeks and the French wrote plays in accordance with their audience. What pleased the Greeks need not please an English audience. In spite of violating the classical rules, the Elizabethan and Jacobean plays were successful because they pleased their audience. Hence, for the success of a play, the dramatist should take into consideration the age, the climate and the temperament of the people to whom he writes (Prasad 113).

6.2. Liberal Approach to Classicism—No Slavish Adherence to Rules

Dryden emphasized the rules of the ancient writers. However, he did not follow them slavishly (Ramaswami and Sethuraman xii-xiii). This is obvious in his appreciation of the writers like Shakespeare.

6.2.1. Insistence on Adjustment of Classical Rules

Dryden believes that language, temper, taste and other respects vary from age to age, and country to country. Therefore, he insists that the classical rules must be adjusted accordingly (*Classicism*, “Restoration and Augustan Classicism,” 49-51).

6.2.2. The Spirit of the Classics is More Important than Their Rules

In his *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, Dryden upholds a close study of the ancient models but asks not to imitate them blindly. He wants the ancient models to be treated just as a torch to enlighten. To him, the spirit of the classics is more important than their rules (*Classicism*, “Restoration and Augustan Classicism,” 49-51).

In his *Apology for Heroic Poetry*, Dryden states that the business of criticism is not to detect petty faults but to discover the great beauties that make a work immortal. To him, it is not the observance of rules that makes a work great but its capacity to delight and transport always.

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Hence, it is very evident that Dryden is a liberal classicist (*Classicism*, “Restoration and Augustan Classicism,” 49-51).

7.0. Jeremy Collier (1650 -1726)

In his pamphlet, “A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage” (1698), Jeremy Collier attacked the dramatists such as Dryden, Wycherley and Congreve of the Restoration period for having exhibited and promoted immorality. His scathing attack on the Restoration Comedy was based on the facts of morality and religion. He strongly condemned the intolerable smuttiness of expression, swearing, profaneness, abuse of the clergy, making their top characters libertines and giving them success in their debauchery (Hudson 108, 112).

8.0. Thomas Rymer (1641-1713)

Thomas Rymer (1641-1713), in his essay, “The Tragedies of the Last Age” (1678), coined the term ‘poetic justice.’ Poetic justice refers to a literary device in which virtue is ultimately rewarded or vice is punished by an ironic twist of fate intimately related to the character’s own conduct (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Rymer>).

9.0. John Dennis (1657-1734)

John Dennis was an English dramatist and critic. His important critical works are *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701), *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704), *The Usefulness of Stage* (1698) and *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare* (1712). Dennis had a great regard for the classics and the ancients. In his plays, he kept very close to the neoclassical standards. In the *Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, Dennis contended that by infusing religion into poetry, the moderns might come to equal the ancients. His insistence upon the importance of passion in poetry led to a long quarrel with Alexander Pope (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Micropedia-III*, 468). Unlike Rymer, Dennis and other extremists like Rapin did not take a narrow view of poetic justice (Prasad 145-146).

10.0. Joseph Addison (1672 -1719)

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Addison endeavoured “to enlighten morality with wit and to temper wit with morality” (Ivan K. Masih 107). Addison adds that the faculty of fine taste is a gift of nature. However, it can be acquired by (i) reading the writings of the great masters, from which we learn what is good and beautiful in literature, (ii) conversation with the men of polite learning, from which we come to know the views of goodness and beauty other than our own, and (iii) being well-versed in the works of the best critics, from which we learn sources of that pleasure which rises in the mind upon the perusal of a noble work (Bond 173-174).

Addison did not admit a mere application of the rules of the classics to all kinds of writing, because the literary craft, according to him, is not a mere matter of rules. He is in want of those authors who enter into the very soul of fine writing and who show us the several sources of that pleasure which rises in the mind upon the perusal of a noble work. Arguing that sometimes rules even hamper fine writing, he maintains that there is more beauty in the works of a great genius, who is ignorant of the rules of art, than the works of a little genius, who knows and observes those rules. Illustrating this point, he says that Shakespeare’s plays, in spite of violating the rules, are appealing more than the works of a modern critic who has observed all the rules (Prasad 133).

11.0. Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

An Essay on Criticism contains Pope’s most considered canons of literary taste. It is divided into three parts. The first part (lines 1-200) deals with the general observations on the art of criticism. The second part (lines 201- 559) gives an account of the causes of wrong criticism. The last part (550-744) lays down the rules for a critic.

11.1. Alexander Pope’s Classicism

11.1.1. True Taste

In his criticism, Pope follows the classical tradition. In *An Essay on Criticism*, he highlights the tenets of the neoclassical school of poetry that began with Waller and Denham, and gained momentum with Dryden and Addison. He defines criticism as ‘true taste’ which is a gift of nature (Prasad 136). ‘True taste’ is the important quality of a critic.

11.1.2. Formation of True Taste

In order to form true taste and thus frame a sound judgment, Pope demands the critic to first follow Nature, and he also urges them to make a study of the works of ancient writers. He says: “Be Homer’s works your study and delight, / Read them by day, and meditate by night” (Enright and Chickera 114). He believes that the rules of the old (i.e. classical rules) are not devised rules. Rather, they have been discovered in human nature by the ancient learned Greeks. This is explicit in his words: “Those RULES, of old discovered, not devised /Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz’d” (Enright and Chickera 113). Hence, Pope insists on developing esteem for the ancient rules (Enright and Chickera 114).

11.1.3. Requirements of Criticism

It can be summed up that study of the ancient models and knowledge of their technique are the two requirements of criticism, because in them is found all that is most natural in the art of writing (Prasad 136).

11.1.4. Lucky License

Rules, according to Pope, are made to promote their end. Therefore, he permits lucky license, which means a slight deviation from rules, in order to promote the end of gaining the heart of the reader i.e. to make the writing appeal to the reader (Enright and Chickera 114-115).

11.1.5. The Critics to be Followed

In Pope’s view, the masters of criticism whom the critic should follow are Aristotle, Horace, Dionysius, Petronius, Quintilian and Longinus among the ancients, and Vida, Boileau, Sheffield, Roscommon and Walsh among the moderns. Among them, Pope prefers Sheffield, Roscommon and Walsh (Enright and Chickera 118).

11.1.6. The Function of Criticism

For Pope, criticism is the art of judging aright. In order to accomplish this duty, a critic should be naturally gifted, properly trained and he should know the rules of the ancients (Prasad 137). The chief function of criticism is judging a literary work by rules.

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11.1.7. A Creative Writer as a Better Critic

Pope believes that only an author can be a better critic. It is to be noted that Aristotle, from whom Pope's school of criticism derived its rules, was a critic and not a poet. Therefore, Pope's argument that a creative writer alone can be a better critic cannot be fully accepted (Prasad 138).

11.1.8. Perfect Critic

A perfect critic, according to Pope, is a person, who can bestow counsel, and who is pleased to teach and yet not proud to know.

11.2. Pope's Deviation from Classicism

Pope is aware of the limitations of the neoclassical system to provide for all the beauties of the literary art. He contends that greatness in literature cannot be promoted by a blind imitation of the classical rules. That is, he feels that though the classical rules should be followed, there can be deviation from those rules to gain the heart of the reader. He calls such deviation as lucky license (Prasad 141-142). Only with this spirit, he has exercised his lucky license by writing a mock epic *The Rape of the Lock*.

Like Dryden, Pope affirms that since the tastes differ from age to age, and country to country, the classical rules cannot be applied to all ages and nations. Pope illustrates this view with an example in his *Preface to Shakespeare*. He says, "To judge Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country who acted under those of another" (Prasad 142). Since there are different laws for different countries, a special sanctity cannot be attached to the laws of the ancients.

12.0. Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Dr. Johnson did not write any critical treatise. But he had a greater influence on his age than any other English critic in the past. His criticism is mainly found in a dozen papers in the biweekly *Rambler*, the remarks on poetry in *Rasselas*, the *Preface to Shakespeare* and the *Lives of*

Poets. He is the last critic in the neoclassical school. He framed a new code of conduct for the writer as well as the critic.

12.1. Drawbacks of Criticism in His Day

In Johnson's day, criticism vacillated between a blind application of rules and judgment by sheer taste. Focusing on reason, Johnson expresses his distrust in 'taste' and 'beauty' as test of literary values. He equates unguided taste with caprice and he believes that beauty cannot be the sure test of literary judgment because it is a quality which is vague and undefined, different in different minds and diversified by time and place. Criticism should rest on surer foundations (Prasad 144).

12.2. Function of Criticism

The function or the task of criticism, according to Dr. Johnson, is to free the literary judgments from the anarchy of ignorance and tyranny of prescription, and to assign values on rational grounds.

12.3. The First Endeavour of a Writer

To Johnson, the first endeavour of a writer is "to distinguish Nature from custom or that which is established..." (as quoted in Prasad 145), so that he may not violate the essential principles by a desire of novelty, and at the same time, he may attain beauties in his work within his view, without any fear of breaking rules (Prasad 145).

12.4. Dr. Johnson as a Neoclassical Critic

Dr. Johnson can be considered a neo-classical critic in the sense of laying down rules to regulate the art of writing. However, he has no blind reverence to authority, ancient or modern. He advocates liberty (Prasad 145).

12.5. The Moral Aspect of Poetry

Dr. Johnson emphasizes the moral aspect of poetry. According to him, poetry has to edify or instruct. He says, "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing"

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(Enright and Chickera 137). The drawback of Shakespeare is that he intended more to please than to instruct. In Johnson's judgment, for poetry to be great, it has to instruct and at the same time give pleasure.

12.6. The Unities

Among the unities, Johnson defends only the unity of action. Arguing against the violation of the unities of time and place, the critics claim that an action of months and years cannot be believed to pass in three hours. The spectator, who knows that he sees the first act at Alexandria, can suppose that he sees the next at Rome (Enright and Chickera "Preface to Shakespeare," 144).

12.7. Johnson's Argument

Johnson has no regard for the unities of time and place. He asserts that "the unities of time and place are not essential to a just drama...They are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties of variety and instruction" (Enright and Chickera "Preface to Shakespeare," 147). Objecting to the critics' argument mentioned above, Johnson says that if a spectator can imagine himself at Alexandria at the opening scene, and if he can imagine that his walk to the theatre is a journey to Egypt and that he lives in the days of Antony and Cleopatra, he can imagine more. Hence, Johnson believes that a spectator who can suspend his disbelief in matter of place can equally suspend it in matter of time also. Thus, he supports the violation of unities of time and place.

13.0. Conclusion

It is universally acknowledged that critics prescribe the rules to creative writers and creative writers either follow or don't follow them. Even though literary criticism is considered a branch of creative writing, literary critics are not considered creative writers in true sense of the phrase because they do not undergo the trials and tribulations of employing the rules and regulations laid down by the critics in their creative writing. So, the creative writers tend to deviate from or violate the prescribed rules. The neoclassical creative writers-cum-critics advocate violation of rules of writing on reasonable grounds because strict adherence of rules will lead to lack of plot and narrowness of imagination. They do not admit a mere application of the rules of the classicists to all kinds of writings, because the literary craft, according to them, is not a mere

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matter of rules. They argue that sometimes strict adherence to rules even hamper fine writing. They underscore the fact that there is more beauty in the works of a great genius, who is ignorant of the rules of art, than the works of a little genius, who knows and observes those rules. In order to illustrate this point, they say that Shakespeare's plays, in spite of violating the rules, are appealing more than the works of those who have observed all the rules (Prasad 133).

For example:

a) The neoclassicists defend tragicomedy by stating that in nature joy and pain are close to each other. The natural mixture of mirth with melancholy provides a dramatic relief to the audience/ reader (Enright and Chikera 81).

b) The neoclassicists support the idea of adding sub-plots to the main plot because it gives a variety and a greater pleasure to the audience/reader. They say that French plays suffer from barrenness of plot because of lack of sub-plots (Enright and Chikera 81-82).

c) The neoclassicists take the side of the French critics and argue against Aristotle and find epic superior to tragedy. They find fault with Aristotle by stating that he has failed to do justice to epic (Prasad 118).

d) Though the neoclassicists respect and emphasize the rules of the ancient writers, they neither follow nor recommend others to follow the rules slavishly. They try to vindicate the freedom of the creative writers against the rules of the ancient and persuade the readers to accept and appreciate the writers' works (Ramaswami and Sethuraman xii-xiii).

e) Since language, culture, temper, and taste vary from the perspectives of time, age, nation, and culture, the classical rules must be adjusted accordingly (Prasad 121).

f) They uphold a close study of the ancient models, but they advocate not to imitate them blindly. They want the ancient models to be treated just as a torch to enlighten. For them, the spirit of the classicists is more important than their rules (Prasad 122).

Therefore, it is made very clear that the objective of criticism is not to detect petty faults, but to discover the great beauties that make a work immortal. It is not the observance of rules that makes a work great, but its capacity to delight and transport the minds of the audience/readers (Prasad 122). Before the advent of neoclassicism, criticism in England was theoretical. The

neoclassicists made it practical. Thus, the neoclassicists are not anti-classicists, but rational and practical classicists. The neoclassicists practised in their writings the poetics of the classicists in spirit and not in letter. They also attempted to make the art of criticism as respectable as the art of creation because most of the neoclassical critics were creative writers too. Though, the literary tastes and opinions were divided sharply among the intellectuals and the reformers of neoclassical English literary criticism, they set a new vogue of literary criticism and creative writing in England. In this context, it would be appropriate to recall to one's mind the fact that hens lay eggs which can be fertile or not. Eggs are fertilized when a rooster mates with a hen. Even though the rooster fertilizes the eggs, only the hen which lays the egg can understand the pain of laying it. Similarly, it is easy to find fault with one's creative writing for not having followed certain canons of writing. But it is very difficult to implement the canons of writing in the process of creative writing. At this juncture, it is appropriate to recall to one's mind Alexander Pope's argument that a creative writer can be a better critic who can fully account for what he/she has said or written (Prasad 138). Thus, the arguments placed forth in the research paper do justify the title of the paper.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **18:1 January 2018**

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