

THE ENGLISH ENLIGHTENMENT: SCIENCE, POLITICS AND RELIGION IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

Key Words and Related Topics

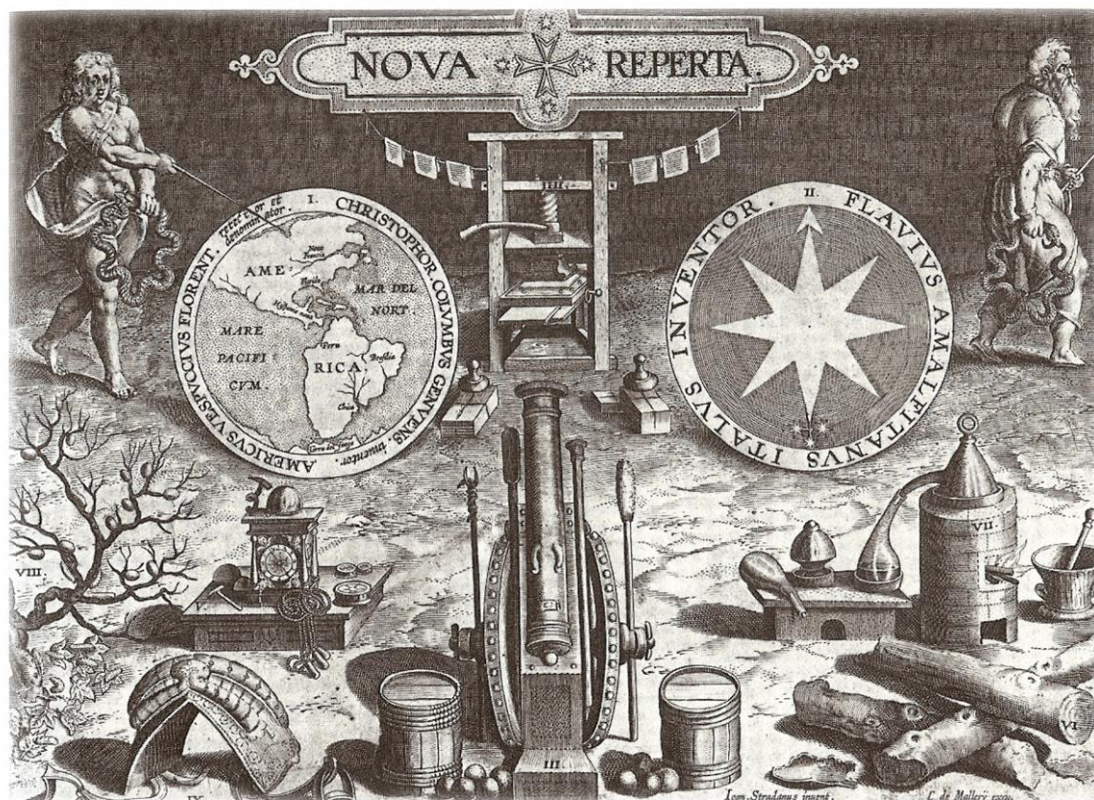
Temario de la Guía Docente: 5. Aspects of English National Identity: The Monarchy, the Protestant Reformation, and Liberalism. 6. The Anglican Church, the Monarchy and Parliament: their historical origin, their evolution and their cultural roles today. 7. The British Empire and the Origins of a Global, English-Speaking Culture

- The Enlightenment: rationalism and scepticism.
- Geographical exploration, globalisation, new science and the Royal Society.
- Scientific and technological development and the Industrial Revolution.
- Empire, slavery, abolitionism.
- The public sphere: the publishing business, coffee-houses, public debate, and the press.
- Translation and the British Empire: the transfer of political and cultural capital from the ancient Roman republic, and the Roman Empire

Introduction:

As text number [1] argues, scientific progress and the ensuing development of new technologies constitute the foundations of the British Empire. These scientific and technological developments also lie at the roots of the Industrial Revolution, and consequently of Britain's economic success during the late 18th and the 19th centuries. Note how, in the early phases of this period, Francis Bacon referred to print (a revolution in communication), gunpowder (a significant improvement in military technology), and the magnet (i.e. the invention of the magnetic compass, a fundamental tool for travel, geographical exploration, and consequently for imperial expansion) as the most important inventions of the age, which "have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world, insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries". One of the most striking paradoxes of the Enlightenment is that, on the one hand, some of its religious and political ideals emphasised individual rights (including the pursuit of happiness) and democracy, while on the other, its scientific and technological developments resulted in imperial expansion, the illegitimate colonisation and exploitation of other peoples and regions, and an industrial revolution that created horrific working conditions. Between the end of the 16th and the early 20th centuries, England (like some other nations in the West) struggled with the fact that the technological, industrial and economic developments fostered by the Enlightenment more often than not ran counter to the political principles that it had also established.

THE NEW WORLDS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT



Jan van der Straet's 1600 portfolio of engravings entitled *Nova Reperta*, or 'New Discoveries', an anthology of contemporary inventions, discoveries and technical innovations.

'Van der Straet's collection is introduced by a title page on which the cartouched "Nova Reperta" appears to be balanced atop a printing press; a line of printed pages hung to dry also depends from the cartouche. To the left, a nude woman, with a cape slung over her shoulders and a duff on her upper right arm, steps forward. She holds a snake that has bent itself into a hoop by biting its own tail, while she points to a circle enclosing a map of the Americas, around which a legend reads: "I. Christophor Columbus Genuens. Inventor. Americus Vespuccius Florent. Retector et denominator." To the right is what appears to be the diagram of a compass (or magnetic wind rose) whose north point is occupied by the Roman number II, and whose south point is designated by a triangle of three stars. Around it reads the legend: "II. Flavius Amalfitanus Italus Inventor." To the right of *that* circle, an old bearded man wearing a long shift and carrying, like the woman, a snake hoop and a pointer (although in opposite hands to her), seems about to leave the plane of representation. Beneath these complementary pairs is an array of inventions and objects: a still; some logs labeled *hyacum*, or guaiacum, a New World tree that when distilled provided a tonic to relieve the symptoms of syphilis; a canon (centrally located) that betokens the invention of gunpowder; a mechanical clock; a saddle displaying stirrups; a mulberry tree with silkworms. (All these inventions, and others, such as the astrolabe and the magnet, are presented individually in the plates that follow.) It is tempting to think of the young woman and the old man in terms of a general cultural schematic, an emergent opposition between new (world) and old, between novelties of manufacture and discovery and the knowledges that they seem to supplant, which are nowhere else represented on the page.'

(Denise Albanese, *New Science, New World*. Duke University Press, 1996: pp. 80-82)

SCIENCE, TRADE AND EMPIRE

TASK. Read text number [1] and answer the following questions:

1. How did modern science begin?
2. Why is Bacon often called the father of modern science?
3. Some of the scientific endeavours of the 17th century had very pragmatic, specific purposes? Can you name at least one of them mentioned in the text?
4. What role did science play in the political agenda of 17th-century England? Can you draw any relevant parallelisms with current situations?

[1]

The universe is a book that *'cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is wandering around in a dark labyrinth.'*

Galileo, *Il Saggiatore*, 1623

Britain and the Rise of Science

By Lisa Jardine (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

By 1700, there was a commitment to science as the firm basis for success in commerce and industry. Britain's rapid industrialisation over the next century and its domination of world trade confirmed the importance of science in driving the economy. Where are the origins of this energetic revolution? Lisa Jardine investigates.

Laying the groundwork at Oxford

Modern science began when mathematical models replaced abstract ideas of 'sympathies' and 'innate virtues' as ways of explaining how the world works, and how we might harness nature to enhance human power over it. In Britain, scientific development reached its zenith in the second half of the 17th century, during the period known as the 'scientific revolution'.

[...]

Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), often called the 'Father' of modern science, made no major scientific discoveries himself, but wrote extensively on empirical scientific method - the procedures by which experimentalists could arrive at general laws governing the natural world. [In his major work] the *Novum Organum* (1623)... he expressed the classic view that only by following the laws of nature could man triumph over his environment: 'The empire of man over things depends wholly on the arts and sciences. For we cannot command nature except by obeying her.'

It is to Bacon that we owe the strong strand of pragmatism in 17th-century British science. Western scientific progress, he argued, was built upon a foundation of three key technological discoveries, which had changed man's ability to control the natural world. These three were printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. 'For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world, insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries.' (Voltaire, an admirer of Bacon, later added the invention of glass to the three discoveries, as fundamental to the advancement of knowledge.)

[...]

Science took off in Britain with the Restoration of the monarchy. In late 1660, John Wilkins (1614-72), former Warden of Wadham College, Oxford, with a group of talented young

experimental scientists and some gentlemen 'virtuosi' (amateur enthusiasts), founded the Royal Society, and persuaded the new king to be its patron. A driving force behind state encouragement for applied science was a dire cash shortage in the public purse. From its inception, the Royal Society was pledged to research and innovation in all areas of trade and technology.

[...]

In 1675 the Royal Observatory was established at Greenwich, and the talented astronomer John Flamsteed (1646-1719) appointed the first Astronomer Royal. Paid for with military money, the Observatory's explorations of the heavens using state-of-the-art telescopes and instruments were intended to put Britain ahead of France in the race to solve the problem of finding a way of measuring longitude at sea. Among those closely associated with charting the heavens over the next 25 years were Edmond Halley (1656-1742) and Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727).

Newton, who emerged from scholarly near-reclusiveness at Trinity College, Cambridge, in the 1690s, to become Master of the Royal Mint (assuring the reliability of English coinage), and President of the Royal Society in 1703, now stands as a figurehead for British scientific achievement. His *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687), in whose data-collection and computations fellow Royal Society members - including Wren and Halley - played a significant part, set science on its modern course (although few contemporaries understood it).

[...]

By 1700 there were scientific institutions across Britain, and a commitment to science as the firm basis for success in commerce and industry, and for national prosperity, was an established plank in the political agenda. Britain's rapid industrialisation over the next century, and its domination of world trade, confirmed the importance of science in driving the economy.

With the inevitable increasing professionalism of science, the success of the activities of the gentlemen amateurs who had founded the Royal Society, and who had always been regarded with some amusement by the public at large, looked increasingly irrelevant. However, the patterns of group activity, documenting and corroborating experimental results, and public dissemination of outcomes (including publication in science-dedicated journals), which the Society established, set lastingly important standards for scientific practice. In the long run, these standard protocols and procedures may turn out to have left a more lasting legacy than 'discoveries' made by individual scientist-members.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY. SCIENCE AND SATIRE: JONATHAN SWIFT'S PROJECTORS

As the previous article argues, the Royal Society played a very important role in the scientific progress of England during the 18th and 19th century. Today it still continues to be “the oldest surviving scientific body in the world”. The Royal Society is one of those venerable ancient English institutions which still fosters science and research: its journal, *Philosophical Transactions*, first launched in 1665, continues to be published today. However, during its early days, the scientific experiments in which its members engaged were seen as eccentric and somewhat deranged by a public that was not used to this sort of approach to the workings of nature. In text number [3], from *Gulliver's Travels* (first published in 1726), Jonathan Swift (1667 - 1745) parodies the projects of the Royal Academy, through his description of two projects at the Great Academy of Lagado.

TASK. Describe briefly the history of the Royal Society, and summarize the two experiments (or projects, as they were called at the time) described by Swift in this excerpt from *Gulliver's Travels*.

[2]

Royal Society. The oldest surviving scientific body in the world, the Royal Society was founded in 1660 and obtained its first charter in 1662, for the promotion of natural knowledge. Religion and politics were excluded; and the charter brought respectability, and the right to publish. In 1665 Henry Oldenburg, the secretary, began a journal, *Philosophical Transactions*, which evolved from letters to papers, and still continues. Earlier groups had flourished and collapsed, but the Royal Society with its elected president, secretary, treasurer, and council could go on indefinitely. Unlike the Paris Academy of Sciences founded soon after, it was and is a kind of club, and it was not until Humphry **Davy** was president in the 1820s that a majority on council had published any science. Joseph **Banks** reigned for over forty years, 1778 – 1820; but since the mid-19th cent. terms of office have been limited, and entry strictly controlled. Instead of a group of mostly amateur enthusiasts, the society by the 1870s had become a body of distinguished professional scientists, so specialized that in the 1880s the *Philosophical Transactions* was divided into ‘physical’ and ‘biological’ parts. Since the mid-19th cent. the society has received a parliamentary grant to support research, and increasingly it has advised governments about science, so that it has come to function more like an academy. It has a splendid library, but has never had a laboratory.

David Knight, "Royal Society", in *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Ed John Cannon. Oxford University Press, 2009. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universidad de Granada. 12 April 2010
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t110.e3712>>

[3]

“This Academy is not an entire single Building, but a Continuation of several Houses on both Sides of a Street, which growing waste was purchased and applied to that Use.

I was received very kindly by the Warden, and went for many Days to the Academy. Every Room hath in it one or more Projectors, and I believe I could not be in fewer than five hundred Rooms.

The first Man I saw was of a meager Aspect, with sooty Hands and Face, his Hair and Beard long, ragged and singed in several Places: His Clothes, Shirt, and Skin, were all of the same Colour. He had been eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put into Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw inclement Summers. He told me, he did not doubt in eight Years more, he should be able to supply the Governor's Gardens with Sun-shine at a reasonable Rate; but he complained that his Stock was low, and entreated me to give him something as an Encouragement to Ingenuity, especially since this had been a very dear Season for Cucumbers. I made him a small Present, for my Lord had

furnished me with Money on purpose, because he knew their Practice of begging from all who go to see them.

I went into another Chamber, but was ready to hasten back, being almost overcome with a horrible Stink. My Conductor pressed me forward, conjuring me, in a Whisper, to give no Offence, which would be highly resented, and therefore I durst not so much as stop my Nose. The Projector of this Cell was the most ancient Student of the Academy: His Face and Beard were of a pale Yellow; his Hands and Clothes dawbed over with Filth. When I was presented to him, he gave me a very close Embrace, (a Compliment I could well have excused.) His Employment from his first coming into the Academy, was an Operation to reduce human Excrement to its original Food, by separating the several Parts, removing the Tincture which it receives from the Gall, making the Odour exhale, and scumming off the Saliva. He had a weekly Allowance from the Society, of a Vessel filled with Human Ordure, about the Bigness of a Bristol Barrel.”

(Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels*. Ed. A.J. Rivero. London & New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2002, pp. 151-152)

SATIRE, RELIGION AND POLITICS.

JONATHAN SWIFT AND RECENT ENGLISH HISTORY: HIS CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RELIGIOUS STRIFE OVER THE REFORMATION, AND OF THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

One of the most important developments of the Enlightenment (not just in England, but all over Europe) was the growth of rationalism and scepticism. Hand in hand with rationalism and scepticism in philosophy, and with the empirical method in science and research, we find irony and satire in literature and the arts. Jonathan Swift is one of the best representatives of this trend in English culture.

England—and Europe in general—had witnessed over the course of the 16th and 17th centuries a series of bloody wars of religion that had devastated the continent. In the case of England, it had seen how political and religious debate had led to a bloody civil war in which a large portion of the population perished, the monarch was beheaded, and chaos had ruled the country for years.

As science advanced, and as geographical discoveries brought news of alternative civilizations and religions, scholars came to doubt the universalism of Christian beliefs and dogmas. When examined under the critical light of reason, religion appeared as irrational and superstitious. This irrational side of religion became even more apparent when these enlightened scholars examined the role that religious dogmatism had played in recent political and military events. In their eyes, religious fanaticism was responsible for the destruction, death and poverty caused by the recent wars of religion.

This sort of irrational, foolish behaviour is satirized in this passage, taken from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (which, by the way, is much more than a book for children). In this passage, Gulliver is told about the history of Lilliput. Swift turns this account of the recent history of Lilliput into a parody of the recent history of England, from the Reformation, through the 17th-century, the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and then the Glorious Revolution. Instead of arguing (as Catholics and Protestants did during the wars of religion) on transubstantiation (for a definition of this concept, see unit 3), Lilliputians argue over the right way to break an egg. As the wars of religion did, this led to “six rebellions raised on that account”; and as happened to Charles I, on account of this controversy over the best way to break an egg “one Emperor lost his Life, and another his Crown”. This controversy led to “civil Commotions”, to the banning of books, to accusations of schism in religion. The confrontation between the empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu, on the other hand, is Swift's parody of the military and doctrinal confrontation between Britain (Anglican, Protestant) and France (Catholic).

TASK. Read Swift's text carefully, and find instances of Swift's satire of recent English history.

[4]

“Besides, our Historys of six thousand Moons make no mention of any other Regions, than the two great Empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu . Which two mighty Powers have, as I was going to tell you, been engaged in a most obstinate War for six and thirty Moons past. It began upon the following Occasion¹. It is allowed on all hands, that the primitive way of breaking Eggs before we eat them, was upon the larger End: But his present Majesty's Grandfather, while he was a Boy, going to eat an Egg, and breaking it according to the ancient Practice, happened to cut one of his Fingers. Whereupon the Emperor his Father published an Edict, commanding all his Subjects, upon great Penalties, to break the smaller End of their Eggs. The People so highly

¹⁴“This potted political allegory jumbles together the struggles between Catholics (Big Endians) and Protestants (Little Endians) in England from Henry VIII who, to solve his marital difficulties, broke away from the Church of Rome; to Charles I, who was executed in 1649 during the Civil Wars between Anglicans and Puritans; to James II, who lost his crown in 1688 because of his Catholicism. Known as Jacobites, supporters of James II and his heirs (or pretenders), based primarily in France and encouraged by the French government, continued to pose a threat to English security and had mounted an ill-fated rebellion in 1715.” (Note 4 to p. 40 in Rivero, ed. 2002)

resented this Law, that our Historys tell us there have been six Rebellions raised on that account; wherein one Emperor lost his Life, and another his Crown. These civil Commotions were constantly fomented by the Monarchs of Blefuscu ; and when they were quelled, the Exiles always fled for Refuge to that Empire. It is computed, that eleven thousand Persons have, at several times, suffered Death, rather than submit to break their Eggs at the smaller End. Many hundred large Volumes have been published upon this Controversy: But the Books of the Big-Endians have been long forbidden, and the whole Party rendred incapable by Law² of holding Employments. During the Course of these Troubles, the Emperors of Blefuscu did frequently expostulate by their Embassadors, accusing us of making a Schism in Religion, by offending against a fundamental Doctrine of our great Prophet Lustrog, in the fifty-fourth Chapter of the Blundecral, (which is their Alcoran.) This, however, is thought to be a meer Strain upon the Text: For the Words are these; That all true Believers shall break their Eggs at the convenientEnd : and which is the convenient End, seems, in my humble Opinion, to be left to every Man's Conscience, or at least in the power of the Chief Magistrate to determine. Now, the Big-Indian Exiles have found so much Credit in the Emperor of Blefuscu's Court, and so much private Assistance and Encouragement from their Party here at home, that a bloody War hath been carried on between the two Empires for six and thirty Moons with various Success; during which time we have lost forty Capital Ships, and a much greater number of smaller Vessels, together with thirty thousand of our best Seamen and Soldiers; and the Damage received by the Enemy is reckon'd to be somewhat greater than Ours. However, they have now equipped a numerous Fleet, and are just preparing to make a Descent upon us; and his Imperial Majesty placing great Confidence in your Valour and Strength, hath commanded Me to lay this Account of his Affairs before You."

(Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels*. Ed. A.J. Rivero. London & New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2002, pp. 39-41)

As mentioned above, this text by Swift illustrates the 18th century as an age of irony. It also exemplifies the kind of scepticism that distrusted religious dogmatism—in particular after the tumultuous 16th and 17th centuries, in which England in particular, and Europe in general, had been torn apart by religious strife. But 18th-century scepticism also distrusted the blind faith that some set in reason during this period. See the following commentaries on this topic from the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

TASK. Read the text and then describe the sources and the shape of scepticism in this period. List some of the sources, the ideas, and the philosophers who contributed to this frame of mind.

[5]

"Perhaps the most widely shared intellectual impulse of the age was a distrust of dogmatism. Nearly everybody blamed it for the civil strife through which the nation had recently passed. Opinions varied widely about which dogmatism was most dangerous—Puritan enthusiasm, papal infallibility, the divine right of kings, medieval scholastic or modern Cartesian philosophy—but these were denounced in remarkably similar terms.... Many philosophers, scientists, and divines began to embrace a mitigated scepticism, which argued that human beings could readily achieve a sufficient degree of necessary knowledge (sometimes called 'moral certainty') but also contended that the pursuit of absolute certainty was vain, mad, and socially calamitous. If, as the commentator Martin Clifford put it in *A Treatise of Humane Reason* (1675), 'in this vast latitude of probabilities', a person thinks 'there is none can lead one to salvation, but the path wherein he treads himself, we may see the evident and necessary consequence of eternal troubles and confusions.

[...]

²⁴A series of **Test Acts**[see unit 5]enacted after the Restoration, obliged those holding public office to take the sacrament in the Anglican Church, thus barring Catholics and Dissenters from government employment unless they followed this prescription. Swift was a vocal supporter of this law" (Note 5 to p. 41 in Rivero, ed. 2002)

Far from inhibiting fresh thinking, however, the distrust of old dogmas inspired new theories, projects, and explorations. In *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes jettisoned the notion of a divine basis for royal absolutism begun from the claim that mere ‘matter in motion’ composes the universe: if not checked by an absolute sovereign, mankind’s ‘perpetual and restless desire of power after power’ could lead to civic collapse. Other materialist philosophies derived from ancient Epicurean thought, which was Christianized by the French philosopher Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655). The Epicurean doctrine that the universe consists only of minuscule atoms and void unnerved some thinkers—Swift roundly mocks it in *A Tale of a Tub*—but it also energized efforts to examine the world with deliberate, acute attention. This new scientific impulse advanced Francis Bacon’s program of methodical experimentation and inductive reasoning formulated earlier in the century”

(S. Greenblatt, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th ed., 2006, vol. I, pp. 2061-62)

DICTIONARIES AND THE NORMALIZATION OF LANGUAGE USE IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

Bacon saw the invention of print as one of those technological developments that had contributed to change the world. As we saw in the unit on “The Reformation, Print, and Translation” (4.1), the invention of print amounted to a revolution in the way knowledge was produced and distributed. Thanks to print, ideas, as well as scientific and geographical discoveries, could now be transmitted very quickly to large amounts of people. Besides mere transfer of knowledge, this also facilitated the creation of national, linguistic, religious, and all sorts of communities, which gained a strong sense of identity by the sort of cohesion provided by all this pooling of knowledge and ideas. An important aspect of the transmission of knowledge—in parallel with the technology of print that increased its impact—was the use of a standard variety of linguistic usage that could be understood by the largest possible percentage of its users. We saw how Luther, in his pamphlets and in his translation of the Bible, used a common variety of German that stood above its regional dialectal differences. The use of this common variety of German provided a sense of community for German Protestants, which came to reinforce their common sense of doctrinal cohesion.

During the 18th century in England, the print revolution led to the emergence of journals, newspapers, and other regular publications that contributed to popularize science, philosophy, politics, and other matters among a growing reading public. The kind of public debate that had originated with the political and religious controversies of the Civil War had already been founded on a growing amount of publications. This tendency increased in the 18th century, creating a public sphere for political, religious, and scientific debate. Publishing became a thriving business, and for the first time, authors could start to rely on their own books and publications to make an independent living.

But for all these texts to circulate properly, the printing business and its authors needed a common standard of linguistic use that could be easily understood by as many people as possible. The Royal Academy had defended the use of clear and transparent language to make the secrets of nature available to all rational minds. Later in the 18th century, Thomas Paine would defend the use of plain style to avoid the obscurity that turned politics and governance into a mystery in the hands of a despotic elite.

Following in the tradition of Renaissance philology, grammarians and lexicographers also sought to come up with norms and rules that could homogenize language. The following texts deal with two important lexicographers, **Samuel Johnson** and **Noah Webster**. Each in their own culture contributed to an increased sense of national and cultural identity by compiling dictionaries and handbooks for language use. As mentioned in previous units, one of the strategies used by cultures in order to build up a sense of common purpose and identity consists in the appropriation (through literal translation, and also through the means and ways of cultural translation) of the linguistic, political, religious and cultural capital of other communities—communities which normally enjoyed a higher degree of prestige and legitimacy than the target culture. Once these processes of transfer / translation of cultural capitals into the target language have taken place, there are other strategies that contribute to consolidate the recently acquired cultural goods: one of the most successful of these strategies is the homogenization of linguistic use, implemented by dictionaries and handbooks. The norms articulated by these dictionaries and grammars provide further cohesion for the users of that particular language, and facilitates communication among them, since now they have a common register.

Samuel Johnson (1696-1772) and his dictionary provided standards of what was proper and correct in language use. These norms are compared in the following article—i.e. text number [6]—to the “statute book”. The statute book is the body of written laws, approved by Parliament, and therefore, through this comparison, Johnson’s dictionary appears as the body of laws that regulate the use of the English language. The importance of a common national norm

in language use was also emphasised by **Noah Webster**, the American patriot, and one of the founding fathers, who compiled several handbooks and an American Dictionary to reassert the recently achieved independence of the United States from its former British metropolis. As linguists and lexicographers, both Johnson and Webster demonstrate that national and political communities gain a sense of common identity through processes that include the appropriation and construction of linguistic capital. And, as we have seen elsewhere in this course, translation is part of this process of transference of cultural, political, literary, scientific and other types of capital into the target language / community.

TASK. Read text number [6] and answer the following questions:

1. How does the text describe the plans and the methods that were put in place for the elaboration and publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*? Is there anything peculiarly English about it, in particular in the age of trade and imperial expansion?
2. How did Johnson compile the information he needed?
3. How could you describe the nature of the dictionary and Johnson's imprint in it?
4. Which was its lasting influence?

[6]

Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (as compared with Noah Webster's)

"A group of booksellers headed by Robert Dodsley perceived the need for a new English dictionary to replace the semi-standard *Dictionarium Britannicum* of Nathan Bailey (1730). They found a receptive ear in Johnson, who had pondered for many years on the absence of an English equivalent to the great continental glossaries sponsored by public bodies and academies. What was envisaged was something quite different, a commercial venture financed by a consortium of leading figures in the trade, Johnson prepared a short prospectus for the undertaking, and then signed a contract on 18 June 1746. The compiler was to be paid 1500 guineas, out of which he had to defray the cost of his copyists, and delivery was due in three years. It seems miraculous today that the job took as few as nine years to complete.

For this task, the Johnsons took a substantial house in Gough Square, which survives today off the north side of Fleet Street as a Johnson museum. The garret was fitted out as workroom for the staff, which amounted to five or six assistants, most of them Scots. Johnson used an interleaved copy of Bailey's dictionary in its 1736 edition; he also consulted a wide range of technical and specialist manuals to expand the range of vocabulary. He sought out illustrative quotations in a huge collection of books, from which his amanuenses transcribed marked extracts. Before the mammoth work was completed, a number of distractions held up its progress. ... It is possible, too, that Johnson revised his editorial methods and made a fresh start about 1750. Ultimately the work appeared in two folio volumes on 15 April 1755, garnished with preliminary matter including a preface of extraordinary dignity and eloquence.

The *Dictionary* left an immense mark on its age. It soon became recognized as a work of classical standing, and in spite of some minor blemishes it has never lost its historical importance as the first great endeavour of its kind. Notable above all for definitions of pith and occasional wit, the dictionary was even more original in the way in which every word, as Johnson put it, had its history. Each entry is organized under the headword to exemplify graduated senses of a term, a procedure which redirected the course of English lexicography. Further, the quotations used to exemplify the usage of a given word combined to form an anthology of moral sayings and helped to define the canon of literature: they show Johnson's taste and piety, for he would not admit extracts from irreligious writers such as Hobbes, Bolingbroke, and Hume. ...For the most part the *Dictionary* was able to demonstrate the fecundity of the language more comprehensively than any of its predecessors. Conscious that his primary role was to record the state of English vocabulary, rather than to legislate for its usage, Johnson registered the entire sweep of words from the crude and demotic to the most rarefied scientific terms and to recent fanciful forms imported from other languages.

The work soon came to be regarded as a standard authority, almost like the statute book. There

were several new printings in Johnson's lifetime, but only the 'fourth' edition of 1773 involved an extensive programme of revision, which he carried out in 1771 and 1772. After Johnson died, the cheaper quarto version continued to appear at regular intervals, while a spate of editors offered variously to augment, abstract, and otherwise improve the original work; from 1818 the main such recension was that of the Revd Henry John Todd. Meanwhile the first American edition appeared at Philadelphia in 1819. By this time the *Dictionary* stood for everything that was correct, proper, and of good report.

Pat Rogers, 'Johnson, Samuel (1709–1784)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14918>, accessed 28 Dec 2011]

The following article deals with Noah Webster's (1758-1843) spelling handbook and dictionary. Note that only the Bible sold more copies than Webster's *The American Spelling Book*. Both volumes provided norms and rules for the proper use of English. Note also how Webster emphasised that one of the purposes of his speller was "to promote virtue and patriotism" (these are two of the virtues that American audiences read in Joseph Addison's play *Cato*, see below). Even today, the standard dictionary for American usage is the Merriam-Webster dictionary (of which you can find an online version here www.merriam-webster.com).

TASK. Read text number [7] and answer the following questions:

1. How did Webster's handbooks try to promote "virtue and patriotism"?
2. Which was, in Webster's opinion, "the surest basis for national greatness"? How did he try to achieve this?
3. How did Webster contribute to the creation of an independent sense of American national and cultural identity?

[7]

"About this time [1782] Webster conceived of a spelling book better suited to American schoolchildren than Thomas Dilworth's *A New Guide to the English Tongue*, the English speller that had served as the standard in America since the 1760s. The result... was a spelling book published in 1783 as the first part of Webster's *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* (the second part was a grammar published in 1784; the third, a reader published in 1785). The speller, which he retitled *The American Spelling Book* in 1787, was intended, Webster declared, not only to correct Dilworth's errors but 'to promote virtue and patriotism' (*Autobiographies*, 79) in the new nation. It constituted his first substantial contribution to the 'common treasure of patriotic exertions' (*ibid.*, 78), and its success must have been gratifying to him. By 1829, when he composed an entirely new edition under the title *The Elementary Spelling Book*, Webster estimated that ten million copies of his speller had been printed. Only sales of the Bible equalled those of *The American Spelling Book* for many of these years. Webster's other publications did not approach the financial or popular success realized by the spelling book, but their underlying assumption was essentially the same: political independence must be coupled with cultural nationalism. His reader, for example, included the Declaration of Independence, ... the speeches of George Washington, and other 'American pieces ... in order to call the minds of our youth from ancient fables ... & fix them upon objects immediately interesting in this country'. The want of 'proper books' to accomplish this was a principal defect which, 'since the Revolution, is become inexcusable'.

Not surprisingly, especially in view of his patriotic programme of education, Webster was an ardent supporter of the proposed constitution in 1787–8. Cultural nationalism and constitutional unionism were two sides of the same coin for Webster. With the American character still unformed, the new republic could ill afford factional contests that were 'liable to all the evils of jealous dispute ... nay, liable to a civil war', he wrote in *Sketches of American Policy* (1785). A more perfect union bolstered by a common American language was the surest basis for national greatness.

[...] Convinced now more than ever that the bonds of national affection were contingent upon a

‘uniformity of language’ (N. Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language*, 1789), he redoubled his efforts at eliminating regional variations of spelling and pronunciation. He commenced working on a dictionary he envisioned as the pinnacle of the American plan of education he had launched in 1783 with the first edition of his speller.

That most American schoolchildren continued to rely on dictionaries compiled in Britain was unacceptable. ‘New circumstances, new modes of life, new laws, new ideas ... give rise to new words’, Webster announced in an advance advertisement of his work; hence it was essential that ‘we should have *Dictionaries of the American Language*’. His first compilation, *A Compendious Dictionary of the American Language* (1806), contained over 40,000 entries, of which some 5000 were of American or Native American derivation. Even before its completion, however, Webster began compiling what he hoped would be the most comprehensive English-language dictionary ever produced. The final product did not disappoint. *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, published in two volumes in 1828, was an instant success. Containing 70,000 words, it was almost universally acclaimed to be the best English dictionary extant. By differentiating between American and English usages, including colloquial and idiomatic expressions that were peculiarly American, and incorporating lessons on morality and patriotism into its definitions, the dictionary also advanced Webster's idea of weaning Americans away from British authorities. Adopted by congress, state legislatures, the courts, and classrooms throughout the nation as the new standard for spelling and pronunciation, it went a long way towards making Webster's name synonymous with dictionary in the United States.”

Melvin Yazawa, ‘Webster, Noah (1758–1843)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/68670>, accessed 28 Dec 2011]

THE TRANSLATION / TRANSFER OF POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND MORAL CAPITAL FROM CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY TO BRITAIN FIRST, AND THEN THE UNITED STATES. THE CASE OF JOSEPH ADDISON'S *CATO*: ROMAN REPUBLICAN HEROES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND AMERICA.

We have just read that one of Noah Webster's aims in compiling his handbooks and dictionaries was to "promote virtue and patriotism". The protagonist of Joseph Addison's play, Cato, embodies the ideals of republican virtue, and self-sacrifice for the good of the country, against the imperialist tyranny of Julius Caesar. In the context of the play, the lines "The generous plan of power delivered down / From age to age, by your renowned forefathers" refers to the ancient Roman republican liberties and the political system that was about to be destroyed by Julius Caesar. But among Addison's early 18th century audiences in Britain, this referred to the "ancient rights and liberties" that had been traditionally invoked to oppose monarchical absolutism and the legal / political tradition that hailed from the Middle Ages (starting with Magna Carta). These "ancient rights" had always been invoked in times of political change: they had been used by those who executed king Charles I, and they were also used as the foundation for the new political establishment that resulted from the Glorious Revolution.

But this reference to classical Roman republicanism also appealed to the recently created United States of America: the US had just become an independent republic, freed from the imperial rule of Britain, and they liked to see themselves as a sort of republican experiment (founded on the Roman model), transported or translated across the Atlantic. In this regard, the United States became the site where the European republican ideals of the Enlightenment could finally be implemented, away from the aristocratic and monarchical systems of the Old World.

Like Swift, Addison was a typical 18th-century man of letters. He was involved in politics and political controversy, and he was also a journalist. Some of his most important essays were published in the periodicals of the time—which exemplify that the thriving public sphere in 18th-century England was founded on the printed word and the debate it generated. Addison took pride in the fact that his essays had contributed to popularize science and philosophy, taking this previously arcane knowledge out of the hands of university and scientific elites, and making them available for public scrutiny: "in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses", as he declared himself. In this, he was a typical Enlightened man of letters.

Addison and Swift are part of the so-called Augustan Period or Augustan Age in English cultural, literary and political history. The adjective Augustan comes from the name of the Roman emperor Augustus, under whose rule the Roman empire enjoyed one of its most prosperous periods. If Cato was a source of inspiration for republican-minded 18th-century Englishmen, emperor Augustus and his period provided a model for the thriving British Empire. From architecture to literature, Roman neoclassicism was the rage in 18th-century England: another case of what we have come to call the artistic, literary, cultural and political appropriation of the prestigious capital enjoyed by the Roman republic, and the Roman empire. This significantly coincided with the period during which the British Empire was busy expanding its own areas of influence around the globe. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the late 17th and the 18th centuries were also a golden age for translation in England: poets like Dryden, with his translation of Virgil's works (*The Works of Virgil*, 1697) and Alexander Pope, with his translation of Homer (1715-1726), were busy transferring the literary capital of these great Roman and Greek poets into the thriving British Empire.

TASK. Read texts [8] to [10] and answer the following questions:

1. What is the great principle that inspires Cato in his speech?
2. What kind of topics and ideas did Addison popularize with his journalistic essays?

3. According to text number [10], which ideas were available that could be used to inspire the young American republic? Were they really useful? Justify your answer.
4. Which American leaders found *Cato* inspiring? How did they use the text of the play? What kind of values did they read in it?
5. How can you compare the values embodied by Cato with those associated with emperor Augustus?

[8]

Meanwhile we'll sacrifice to liberty.
 Remember, O my friends, the laws, the rights,
 The generous plan of power delivered down,
 From age to age, by your renowned forefathers,
 (So dearly bought, the price of so much blood,
 Oh let it never perish in your hands!
 But piously transmit it to your children.
 Do thou, great liberty, inspire our souls,
 And make our lives in thy possession happy,
 Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence...

Cato, Act III, scene v, lines 72-81.

[9]

Addison, Joseph (1672–1719). Essayist, educated at Charterhouse with Richard Steele and at the Queen's College, Oxford, and Magdalen, of which he became a fellow. In late 1704 he published *The Campaign*, a poem celebrating the victory at the battle of Blenheim. He was appointed under-secretary of state in 1705, and was elected to Parliament in 1708. In 1709 he went to Ireland as chief secretary to Lord Wharton, the lord lieutenant, losing office when the Whigs fell in 1710. He was a prominent member of the Kit-Cat Club. From 1709 he contributed to Steele's *Tatler* and joined him in the production of the *Spectator*. For this he wrote several important literary essays: on *Paradise Lost* (5 January to 3 May 1712), on *Imagination* (21 June to 3 July 1712) and on traditional ballads. In the tenth issue Addison declared, 'I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses.' He popularized the ideas of John Locke, and introduced a polite decorum to essays of social comment. His neo-classical tragedy *Cato* (1713) was a hit, but his opera *Rosamund* (1707) failed and his comedy *The Drummer* (1715) met with only modest success. He resumed political office in 1714, but retired in 1718. Addison was buried in Westminster Abbey; his works were edited by Thomas Tickell (1721). See Peter Smithers, *The Life of Joseph Addison* (1968); *The Letters of Joseph Addison*, ed. W. Graham (1941).

The Oxford Companion to English Literature. Edited by Dinah Birch. Oxford University Press Inc. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universidad de Granada. 17 February 2011 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t113.e50>>

[10]

"The formation of the American republic was such a farfetched undertaking that, when it was done, many could regard it as a heaven-sent miracle. The winning of independence on the field of battle was monumental enough, but that was just half the task. The other half was to establish a regime that would provide a maximum of liberty consistent with the public safety. Compounding the problem was that Americans were undeservedly committed to a republican form of government, and no extant models of that kind of government were available.

The more educated and better informed citizens looked in every conceivable place for guidance, and they found but little. There was the Bible—which almost everyone read—but its only

political advice was that monarchy was bad, and Americans had already reached that conclusion. Political theorists abounded, but the dicta of Locke and Montesquieu were not applicable to American conditions, nor were those of Plato or Aristotle. The Scotsmen David Hume and Adam Smith were relevant but far from adequate. By default, that left the history of the ancient Roman republic, and all educated Americans were familiar with that history, but its essence was a tragic tale of decline into tyranny.

Ordinary people knew about ancient Rome, too, not from books but from an enormously popular play by Joseph Addison, *Cato*. It was first performed and published in London in 1713. It was soon republished in Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Göttingen, Paris, and Rome; at least eight editions were published in the British-American colonies by the end of the century. The play was also performed all over the colonies, in countless productions from the 1730s until after the American Revolution.

That most of the founding generation read it or saw it or both is unquestionable, and that it stuck in their memories is abundantly evident. Benjamin Franklin, as a young and aspiring writer, committed long passages from it to memory and then attempted to write them out, in hopes that Addison's writing style would rub off on him. ...

Cato was the favourite play of George Washington, who saw it many times and quoted or paraphrased lines from it in his correspondence over the course of four decades.

The impact of the play upon Washington and others is illustrated by the fact that, during the dreadful winter at Valley Forge, he had it performed for his troops to inspire them with determination, despite a congressional resolution condemning stage performances as contrary to republican principles. Moreover, in 1783, when his officers encamped at Newburg, New York, threatened to mutiny—as *Cato*'s troops had done in the play—Washington appeared before them and quite self-consciously shamed them into abandoning the enterprise essentially by rehashing *Cato*'s speech.

At first blush, *Cato* would scarcely seem to offer much consolation to Americans in their efforts to establish a durable republic. The story recounts *Cato*'s noble but vain efforts to save the remnants of the Roman republican Senate from the usurping arms of the all-conquering Caesar, 'who owes his greatness to his country's ruin'. In the end, *Cato* commits suicide, and the republic perishes as well.

Yet one of the subplots of the drama offered a ray of hope, at least for the more sanguine of the founders, for it provided a means of escaping a dilemma. Both classical and modern theorists of republics held that their actuating principle was public virtue—virtue in the sense of selfless, full-time, manly devotion to the public weal.”

(Forrest McDonald, "Foreword" in Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy, and Selected Essays*, ed. by C.D. Henderson & M.E. Yellin, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, pp. vii-ix)

[11]

Augustan age. A term derived from the period of literary eminence under the Roman emperor Augustus (27 BC–AD 14), during which Virgil, Horace, and Ovid flourished. In English literature it is generally taken to refer to the early and mid-18th century, though the earliest usages date back to the reign of Charles II. Augustan writers (such as Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, and Richard Steele) greatly admired their Roman counterparts, imitated their works, and themselves frequently drew parallels between the two ages. Oliver Goldsmith, in *The Bee*, in an 'Account of the Augustan Age of England' (1759), identifies it with the reign of Queen Anne, and the era of William Congreve, Matthew Prior, and Bolingbroke.

The Oxford Companion to English Literature. Edited by Dinah Birch. Oxford University Press Inc. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universidad de Granada. 5 January 2012
<<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t113.e428>>

TOM PAINE, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND THE TRADITION OF DISSENT

Tom Paine brings together some of the main leitmotifs in this class: the anti-absolutism of radical Protestants (see for instance the paragraphs on George Buchanan vs King James I in unit 4.1), and the political radicalism that sustained the process leading to the independence of the United States. Paine's radicalism also belongs in the dissenting tradition of the Levellers and the Diggers, and many of his proposals became part of the political reforms of England in the 19th century (see unit 8). Paine occupies a central place in the Anglo-American tradition of political liberalism. Note also that the kind of language and the kind of prose style Paine used were very important for him (see text [13] below). In his opinion, tyrannical governments relied on "mysteries" to exploit and deceive the masses. A proponent of education for all, Paine thought that the language of politics should be simple and direct, so that everyone could have access to it.

Text [16] emphasises how Paine went beyond the elitism of Whig "republicanism" (for instance, the kind of republicanism that we can find in Addison's *Cato*) to elaborate a new more democratic theory of republican governance. Note how the article also emphasises that Paine's originality lies more in the language and style of his pamphlets and books rather than in the message itself—part of which hailed from pre-existing sources.

Paine was a keen controversialist, but the most famous of his public debates he sustained with Edmund Burke, who attacked the French Revolution in a volume titled *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke had defended the spirit of the politics that led to the independence of the American colonies, but he attacked the radicalism of the French revolutionaries. He defended the importance of traditional values—for instance the ancient English traditions embodied in the limited monarchy, the role of Parliament, and the status quo of the Anglican church. Burke did so in a spirit of empirical pragmatism against Paine's more radical proposals, which were founded on the application of abstract reason. This application to political thought of abstract universals like reason is considered by some to run counter to a perceived inclination of the English character towards tradition and empirical pragmatism, hand in hand with gradual reform: these features are another strand in the narrative of English identity.

Text [16] also emphasises how in order to be successful and gain a favourable audience among the masses of English patriots, the political leaders who succeeded Paine got rid of his more radical proposals, which evoked the French Revolution and were consequently perceived as foreign. They emphasised instead that their proposals were founded in the well-established tradition of English anti-absolutism and individual rights. These naturalized followers of Paine played, as we shall see, an important role in the political reforms implemented in England during the 19th century (see unit 8).

TASK. Read text [12] to [16] and answer the following questions:

1. Explain Paine's ideas about government and society, and compare with Buchanan's distinction (see text [4] in unit 4.1)
2. Paine and Locke shared some ideas about America: explain in some detail.
3. Which were Paine's ideas concerning the language of politics? Compare with some of the ideas discussed in the introduction to unit 4.1.
4. In the newly independent America (i.e. the United States), according to Paine: "the law is King" (see text [15] below). Compare this with King James I's defence of monarchical absolutism, and his idea that the king is the law³ (see again unit 4.1). Write a brief paragraph describing Paine's

³ "The kings therefore in *Scotland* were before any estates or ranks of men within the same, before any Parliaments were holden, or lawes made: and by them was the land distributed (which at the first was whole theirs) states erected and decerned, and formes of government devised and established: And so it followes of necessitie, that **the kings were the authors and makers of the Lawes, and not the Lawes of the kings.**" (James I, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*)

opinion in contrast with James I's doctrine of monarchical absolutism, and the role of law in these two different theories.

5. On which terms did Paine sustain his controversy with Burke?
6. Paine was in some respects a political thinker whose proposals were ahead of his own times: name a few of them.
7. What did Thomas Paine think about organised religion? In which of his works did he address this question?
8. How did Paine's followers implement his ideas after his death? How did they combine the principles of reason and natural law with the ancient traditions of English law and governance?

[12]

“‘Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil’, wrote Paine in *Common Sense*. With this formula Paine distils the essence of liberal social theory and in turn reveals the flaw that limits his and any radical vision operating within the confines of liberalism. From Locke through Paine and even unto Milton Friedman, the liberal sees civil society as peopled by self-reliant individuals. Such a society is benignly innocent, self-regulating and harmonious. Government is pernicious, the source of threats to individual freedom; it, along with its ally the established Church, is in essence tyrannical. Coercion and abuse are the fruits only of government, never of the social and economic institutions of civil society.

[...]

Poverty, for example, according to Paine, is a direct result of governmental interference with ‘the great laws of society’, the ‘laws of nature and reciprocal interest. [...]

Paine's preoccupation with government as the source of all coercion, his conviction that civil society is the realm of true freedom, is nowhere better revealed than in his obsession with taxation... Monarchy, aristocracy and taxes were all of a piece in Paine's mind. [...]

America represented for Paine ‘a revolution in the principles and practice of governments’. He meant by this its repudiation of monarchy and the hereditary principle and its commitment to representative government. In addition, America represented liberal Utopia, the triumph of civil society over government. Like Locke, who had claimed that ‘in the beginning all the world was America’, Paine contended that ‘the case and circumstances of America present themselves as in the beginning of a world’. Paine was struck with how well revolutionary America performed with little central direction: ‘A little more than what society naturally performed was all the government that was necessary’. [...] . What little government there was in America was simple, local and understandable. The Americans put into practice Paine's maxim that the ‘sum of necessary government is much less than is generally thought’. In America, ‘the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. Industry is not mortified by the splendid extravagance of a court rioting at its expense. There taxes are few.’ In England, men were envious of America, and calls for change were coming fast, Paine wrote in 1792, because ‘the enormous expense of government has provoked men to think’”

(“Editor's introduction: The life, ideology and legacy of Thomas Paine”, in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, ed. Michael Foot & Isaac Kramnick. London: Penguin, 1987, pp. 7-36, pp. 23-25)

[13]

“[Paine] also changed the language of politics. He wrote in the plain style of common speech, avoiding references to classical authors and learned philosophers. The stylized conventions of the humanist essay written for gentlemen and the cultural élite were replaced by Paine with the language of ordinary life used by the common men to whom he addressed his writings. Paine developed and was the first master of democratic prose, which is as important in explaining his appeal to a mass readership as is the content of his arguments. Jefferson, himself a master of political prose, saw the unique strength of Paine's, writing in 1821 that ‘No writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language.’”

(“Editor’s introduction: The life, ideology and legacy of Thomas Paine”, in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, ed. Michael Foot & Isaac Kramnick. London: Penguin, 1987, pp. 7-36, p. 32)

[14]

“In all cases they [i.e. the defenders of the traditional monarchy] took care to represent government as a thing made up of mysteries, which only themselves understood; and they hid from the understanding of the nation, the only thing that was beneficial to know, namely, *That government is nothing more than a national association acting on the principles of society*”

(*The Rights of Man*, in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, ed. Michael Foot & Isaac Kramnick. London: Penguin, 1987, p. 270)

[15]

“But where says some is the King of America? I’ll tell you Friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal—of Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honours, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the King is law, so in free countries the law *ought* to be King; and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is. A government of our own is our natural right”.

(Tom Paine, *Common Sense*, in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, ed. Michael Foot & Isaac Kramnick. London: Penguin, 1987, p. 92)

[16]

Thomas Paine: Citizen of the World

By Professor John Belchem (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

Thomas Paine was a driving force in the 'Atlantic-Democratic revolution' of the late 18th century, personifying the political currents that linked American independence, the French Revolution and British radicalism. Professor John Belchem analyses the life of an inspirational radical who died in miserable circumstances.

Common Sense

An inveterate pamphleteer, Thomas Paine broadcast the merits of reason, republicanism and radicalism in a series of writings perhaps more innovative in their popular tone and language than in their message. His origins were humble and his education limited. Born in Thetford in 1737, he was apprenticed to his father's trade of corset-making, but tried a number of other occupations before sailing for America in 1774.

In America Paine made his name with a pamphlet, *Common Sense* (1776), which, in advocating complete independence for the American colonies, argued for republicanism as the sole rational means of government. Relishing the freedom of the new world (and its potential for commercial progress) Paine readily cast aside the restrictive and gentlemanly conventions of British politics, not least the exclusive tone of Whig 'republicanism'.

In the Whig paradigm of 'civic humanism', premised on glorified models of classical antiquity and selective memories of 17th-century constitutional struggles, political primacy was accorded to independent landowners. As guardians of the constitution, it was their duty to resist imbalance and corruption in the polity through civic virtue, by active participation in political affairs.

Paine, however, was altogether more democratic. Looking beyond the trivia of piecemeal constitutional renovation, he sought an end to executive tyranny and what we would now call

'sleaze' through the 'virtue' and common good of representative democratic republican government.

Rights of Man

On Paine's return to England in 1787, this democratic republicanism reached its most influential expression in his two-part *Rights of Man* (1791-2), prompted by the need to refute Edmund Burke's critical *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. For citizen Paine the French Revolution represented a much-needed new beginning, an age of reason in which universal and natural rights (at least for men) were no longer denied by privilege and the past, by spurious argument premised on dubious history, bogus constitutionalism, invented tradition or inherited superstition. A talented writer, Paine deployed his 'intellectual vernacular prose' to render natural rights and rational republicanism accessible, uncompromising and all-embracing, including the 'swinish multitude' disparaged by Burke.

But it was not just the style that accounted for the remarkable success of the *Rights of Man* which, even by the most conservative estimate, sold between 100,000 and 200,000 copies in the first three years after publication. As Part Two evinced, Paine was much more than a talented popularizer of advanced ideas, a megaphone for the enlightenment project against kingcraft, lordcraft and priestcraft. An original thinker far ahead of his time, he sought to redress poverty (seemingly endemic in advanced European societies) through an interventionist programme of welfare redistribution, including old-age pensions, marriage allowances and maternity benefits.

[...]

Inspired by Paine, radicalism reached a new audience in the early 1790s, a mass expansion into 'members unlimited' which soon prompted the moderate reformers, the patrician 'Friends of the People', to draw away and apart from the democratic radicals, the plebeian 'Friends of Liberty'.

Paine was held in reverence by those new to the radical cause. This was perhaps best expressed in the song, 'God Save Great Thomas Paine', the alternative national anthem, as it were, of British republicans:

God save great Thomas Paine / His 'Rights of Man' explain / To every soul. / He makes the blind to see / What dupes and slaves they be, / And points out liberty, / From pole to pole.

Thousands cry 'Church and King' / That well deserve to swing, / All must allow: / Birmingham blush for shame, / Manchester do the same, / Infamous is your name, / Patriots vow.

As the second verse indicates, however, with its reference to 'Church and King' mobs in the midlands and the north-west, Paineite radicals did not carry all before them in the 1790s. Indeed, as historians now acknowledge, 'Painophobia' - the reaction against Paine - proved stronger in the short term than the radicalism he excited.

Compelled to answer the democratic Jacobin challenge, conservative opponents of reform developed a convincing defence of the existing order: indeed, it was the conservatives who won the battle for the popular mind in the 1790s. Burke had already set the tone, recapturing the language of nationalism for the conservative cause in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Vindicated by the subsequent course of events in France, Burke's prescient pronouncements duly confirmed the supremacy of the accumulated wisdom of precedent and prescription over the wild (and un-English) fanaticism of Paineite abstract reason.

Age of Reason

By cruel irony Paine's own fate strengthened the conservative case. Having fled to France to avoid arrest for treason in 1792, he gained election to the National Convention but ceased to

attend after opposing (to some people's surprise) the execution of Louis XVI and the fall of the Girondins, after which he himself soon fell victim of the Terror.

During imprisonment, he began work on his *Age of Reason* (two parts, 1794-5), an ill-timed deist attack on organised religion. Already denigrated as spoliators - enemies of commercial civilisation who would thrust society back to poverty and primitivism - his followers in Britain were now stigmatised as infidels as well. In the crusade against godless republican levellers, loyalists deployed every media and resource, from parish pulpit to national organisation (Reeves Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers was the largest political organisation in the country), to spread the patriotic conservative message in popular and homiletic form among the lower orders. While radicals struggled to gain a public hearing, loyalists chose to treat the crowds to an increasing number of patriotic demonstrations to celebrate royal anniversaries and victories over the French.

[...]

Many of the new radical 'corresponding' societies of the 1790s fell victim to this conservative onslaught: those that survived judiciously excised the offending Paineite vocabulary of rational republicanism with its alien and revolutionary stigma. Henceforth radicals adapted to the national tenor, contesting the conservatives on their own territory. Presenting themselves as the true defenders and guardians of the constitution, radicals sought to legitimise their programme of democratic parliamentary reform not by natural right but through patriotic evocation of people's history, the glorious struggle against absolutism in Britain.

Admittedly in ultra-radical counter-culture there were a number of devoted and purist Paineite ideologues, but for those involved in mass agitation - in the populist 'spin' of radical politics - republicanism was seldom mentioned. While never denying the inspiration provided by 'immortal' Thomas Paine, popular radical leaders ensured that his memory was preserved within a patriotic pantheon in which the universal rights of man were subsumed within the historic and constitutional rights of the freeborn Englishman, the charter of the land. The citizen of the world was honoured as British patriot.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759-1797), *A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN* (1792).

Mary Wollstonecraft was part of the circles of radical philosophers, artists, and political thinkers of which Thomas Paine was a member too. Virtually 100% of the members in these radical circles came from some type of dissenting background or another—they included publishers like Joseph Johnson (which again emphasises the importance of print in the spread of ideas), poets and artists like William Blake or Henry Fuseli, or radical philosophers like William Godwin (who would become Mary Wollstonecraft's husband). Paine's controversial pamphlets inspired in part her own defence of the rights of women, in parallel with Paine's defence of the rights of man. Feminism thus grew out of the principles of the Enlightenment.

See the following excerpts, taken from *A Vindication of the Rights of Roman*, where the key general principles are reason and virtue, and from them Wollstonecraft proceeds to proclaim that women naturally enjoy the same rights as men. They both belong in the same category of citizens, i.e. individuals with full rights. In her emphasis on Reason and Experience, virtue and knowledge, to combat prejudice she proves to be a child of her own time.

TASK. Write a few paragraphs summarising and commenting on M. Wollstonecraft's main ideas. Support the contents of your essay with quotations from her own texts (text number [17]), and from the essay by J. Todd (text [18]).

[17]

"IN the present state of society it appears necessary to go back to first principles in search of the most simple truths, and to dispute with some prevailing prejudice every inch of ground. To clear my way, I must be allowed to ask some plain questions, and the answers will probably appear as unequivocal as the axioms on which reasoning is built; though, when entangled with various motives of action, they are formally contradicted, either by the words or conduct of men.

In what does man's pre-eminence over the brute creation consist? The answer is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in Reason.

What acquirement exalts one being above another? Virtue; we spontaneously reply.

For what purpose were the passions implanted? That man by struggling with them might attain a degree of knowledge denied to the brutes; whispers Experience.

Consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness, must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively."

(From Chapter I, "The Rights and Involved Duties of Mankind Considered")

"It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are, in some degree, independent of men...

[...]

The laws respecting woman, which I mean to discuss in a future part, make an absurd unit of a man and his wife; and then, by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cypher.

[...]

But what have women to do in society? ... Women might certainly study the art of healing, and be physicians as well as nurses. ... They might, also, study politics, and settle their benevolence

on the broadest basis... Business of various kinds, they might likewise pursue, if they were educated in a more orderly manner, which might save many from common and legal prostitution. Women would not then marry for a support ... The few employments open to women, so far from being liberal, are menial; and when a superiour education enables them to take charge of the education of children as governesses, they are not treated like the tutors of sons...

[...]

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves”

(From Chap. IX, “Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society”)

“To render mankind more virtuous, and happier of course, both sexes must act from the same principle; but how can that be expected when only one is allowed to see the reasonableness of it? To render also the social compact truly equitable, and in order to spread those enlightening principles, which alone can meliorate the fate of man, women must be allowed to found their virtue on knowledge, which is scarcely possible unless they be educated by the same pursuits as men. For they are now made so inferiour by ignorance and low desires, as not to deserve to be ranked with them; or, by the serpentine wriggings of cunning they mount the tree of knowledge, and only acquire sufficient to lead men astray.

It is plain from the history of all nations, that women cannot be confined to merely domestic pursuits, for they will not fulfil family duties, unless their minds take a wider range, and whilst they are kept in ignorance they become in the same proportion the slaves of pleasure as they are the slaves of man. Nor can they be shut out of great enterprises, though the narrowness of their minds often make them mar, what they are unable to comprehend.”

(From Chap. XII. “On National Education”.)

[18]

Mary Wollstonecraft: A 'Speculative and Dissenting Spirit'

By Professor Janet Todd (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

Mary Wollstonecraft made a powerful case for liberating and educating women; at the same time she lived out her theories. Often reviled by her contemporaries, today she is considered a 'modern' heroine. Biographer Janet Todd analyses Wollstonecraft's contribution to women's rights and recognises an enduring spirit.

The dissenter

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published at the end of the 18th century - a century marked by the emergence of the philosophical spirit and the concept of 'enlightenment', by the gradual erosion of monarchical authority (which reached its apex with the French Revolution in 1789), and by the birth of democracy. While the question of the rights of men engendered lively debate at that time, a woman's lot remained unconsidered. Wollstonecraft, however, was determined to change this and to add a dissenting female voice to the chorus debating political emancipation.

[...]

She founded a small school in the progressive Dissenting community of Newington Green. (The Dissenters were people committed to combining reason with piety, and who looked forward to a

more just and egalitarian future brought about by individual effort.) The following years saw much intellectual growth for Mary.

[...]

The school collapsed in 1785... . Mary had little choice but take up work as a governess, and she took a post with the daughters of Lord and Lady Kingsborough in Ireland. 'I by no means like the proposal of being a governess,' she wrote, 'I should be shut out from society - and be debarred the imperfect pleasures of friendship'. She had made a similar point in the book she had just written, a stern advice manual *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), in which she spoke movingly of the horror of intelligent women being subject to rich fools.

[...]

The main legacy from this period was her loathing for Lady Kingsborough. In Mary's eyes, as she developed her feminist philosophy, her employer came to stand for all that was wrong in women - their coquetry, their exaggerated weakness, their corrupt manipulating power and their dependence on men for identity.

After a year of suffering depressive illness, and of surviving prickly encounters with Lady Kingsborough, Mary was dismissed in 1787. Then occurred the most momentous event in her life: her radical London publisher, Joseph Johnson, took her on as an editorial assistant, writer - and later reviewer - for his new magazine, *Analytical Review*. Declaring herself 'the first of a new genus', she embraced this new life, and in Johnson's vibrant intellectual circle her ideas developed rapidly.

As she grew intellectually, Mary saw that her problem was not her family history, nor a God-given sense of dissatisfaction, but a response to a general social situation in which some improperly privileged and educated men systematically denied education and autonomy to women. She became more sure of her own intellectual gifts; despite having to suffer the social stigma associated with being a spinster, she felt that unthinking married women were her 'inferiors'.

During this time Mary wrote her two polemical works, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (published anonymously in 1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), both public letters in angry reaction to texts by men whom she considered powerful and wrong-headed. The first answered Edmund's Burke's nostalgic and conservative *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which argued for the status quo because human nature could not take too much change or reality, and the second responded to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's educational work *Emile*, which proposed that a girl's education should aim at making her useful to and supportive of a rational man.

Mary's loathing for Lady Kingsborough emerges in the latter work, where the aristocratic lady is portrayed sitting at the corrupt apex of the class and gender systems. She is a failed mother, typifying the trivial sexualised female, obsessed with appearance and living an empty self-gratifying life aimed at male admiration. In this woman, 'the wife, mother, and human creature, were all swallowed up by the factitious character which an improper education and the selfish vanity of beauty had produced.' Reason, through education, independence and the need to struggle, were the antidotes to this thoughtless existence, and Mary argued for equal educational opportunities as a right, while she continued to insist on the importance of motherhood in a woman's life.

As she was insisting on reason over the sensibility she had earlier embraced, Mary conceived an unacknowledged passion for the married painter and philosopher Henry Fuseli. When her feelings threatened to overwhelm her, she left for France to join other English intellectuals, such as Thomas Paine, in celebrating the French Revolution.

[...]

Letters from Sweden [one of her works] was admired by William Godwin, the political writer and novelist, whom Mary had met when she first entered the circle of Joseph Johnson. Then he had found her and *The Rights of Woman* strident and unprepossessing. Now, in 1796, he was impressed with her grief-induced mellowness. They became close friends and, soon, lovers. It was a fulfilling, less fraught and romantic relationship than the one with Imlay; it resulted quickly in a second pregnancy.

[...]

Death came tragically to Mary. She gave birth to a second daughter, named for herself, who would grow up to be Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. The birth was followed by complications, and Mary Wollstonecraft died ten days later. She was 38.

[...]

Throughout her life, Mary Wollstonecraft grappled with the complexities of women's lot: their emotional neediness as well as their wish for independence; their anxiety over motherhood as well as their enthusiasm for it; and their desire for romance, which they might theoretically despise. She believed in getting to truth through investigating personal experience - so her mode of writing was in the main intensely personal. And honest, for she would not repudiate her own experience. So in her novels she was candid about female passion, and would not reward it with a man or money. In her letters she constantly referred to her body, nerves and depressions, while in her early published works she demanded response only to her intellect.

[...]

With a few changes of language, she could be a 1970s American feminist or an ambitious and self-obsessed post-modern woman demanding fulfillment on all fronts.

Mary Hays, a close friend in the last days, wrote: 'Vigorous minds are with difficulty restrained within the trammels of authority...it is to speculative and enterprising spirits, whom stronger powers and more impetuous passions impel forward, regardless of established usages, that all great changes and improvements in society have owed their origin.' Probably Mary, and certainly Godwin, when he revealed her life to the public, misjudged the price she would pay for her unconventionality. But, although she was in many ways foiled by her own flaws, and even more by the shifts of cultural fashion, she tried - almost uniquely for the times - to be true to her sense of common female needs: for education and for legal and political significance, as well as for sex, affection and esteem.