WBSU
CBCS Core Course 8: 18th Century British Literature
Group C:
Non-Fictional Prose of the Age of Reason

Joseph Addison, "The Scope of Satire or No. 34" (1711)
Daniel Defoe, "'Introduction' to The Complete English Gentleman/Tradesman" (1729)
Samuel Johnson, "The Laws of Writing not always Indisputable. Reflections on Tragi-Comedy or Essay No. 156" (1751)

The Scope of Satire
Joseph Addison

[Source: Joseph Addison, "The Scope of Satire or No. 34," in *The Spectator* by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Volume 1. 3 Volumes. Edited by Henry Morley (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891),142-43.]

No. 34

Monday, April 9, 1711 Addison

...parcit
Cognatis maculis similis fera...
[From spotted skins the leopard does refrain—]
Juv. *Sat xv. 159*
Tate,

The Club of which I am a Member, is very luckily composed of such persons as are engaged in different Ways of Life, and disputed as it were out of the most conspicuous Classes of Mankind: By this Means I am furnished with the greatest Variety of Hints and Materials, and know every thing that passes in the different Quarters and Divisions, not only of this great City, but of the whole Kingdom. My Readers too have the Satisfaction to find, that there is no Rank or Degree among them who have not their Representative in this Club, and that there is always some Body present who will take Care of their respective Interests, that nothing may be written or published to the Prejudice or Infringement of their just Rights and Privileges.

I last Night sat very late in company with this select Body of Friends, who entertained me with several Remarks which they and others had made upon these my Speculations, as also with the various Success which they had met with among their several Ranks and Degrees of Readers. **Will. Honeycomb** told me, in the softest Manner he could, that there were some Ladies (but for your Comfort, says **Will.**, they are not those of the most Wit) that were offended at the Liberties I had taken with the Opera and the Puppet-Show: That some of them were likewise very much surprised, that I should think such serious Points as the Dress and Equipage of Persons of Quality, proper Subjects for Raillery.

He was going on, when Sir **Andrew Freeport** took him up short, and told him, That the Papers he hinted at had done great Good in the City, and that all their Wives and Daughters were the better for them: And further added, That the whole City thought themselves very much obliged to me for declaring my generous Intentions to scourge Vice and Folly as they appear in a Multitude, without condescending to be a Publisher of particular Intrigues and Cuckoldoms. "In short," says Sir **Andrew**, "if you avoid that foolish beaten Road of falling upon Aldermen and Citizens, and employ your Pen upon the Vanity and Luxury of Courts, your Paper must needs be of general Use."

Upon this my Friend the **Templar** told Sir **Andrew**, that he wondered to hear a Man of his Sense talk after that Manner; that the City had always been the Province for Satyr; and that the Wits of King *Charles's* Time jested upon nothing else during his whole Reign. He then shewed, by the Examples of *Horace, Juvenal, Boileau,* and the best Writers of every Age, that the Follies of the Stage and Court had never been accounted too sacred for Ridicule, how great so-ever the Persons might be that patronized them. "But after all," says he, "I think

your Raillery has made too great an Excursion, in attacking several Persons of the Inns of Court; and I do not believe you can shew me any Precedent for your Behaviour in that Particular."

My good Friend Sir **Roger De Coverley**, who had said nothing all this while, began his Speech with a Pish! and told us that he wondered to see so many Men of Sense so very serious upon Fooleries. "Let our good Friend," says he, "attack every one that deserves it: I would only advise you, Mr. **Spectator**," applying himself to me, "to take Care how you meddle with Country Squires: They are the Ornaments of the *English* Nation; Men of good Heads and sound Bodies! and let me tell you, some of them take it ill of you that you mention Fox-hunters with so little Respect."

Captain **Sentry** spoke very sparingly on this Occasion. What he said was only to commend my Prudence in not touching upon the Army, and advised me to continue to act discreetly in that Point.

By this Time I found every subject of my Speculations was taken away from me by one or other of the Club; and began to think myself in the Condition of the good Man that had one Wife who took a Dislike to his grey Hairs, and another to his black, till by their picking out what each of them had an Aversion to, they left his Head altogether bald and naked.

While I was thus musing with myself, my worthy Friend the Clergyman, who, very luckily for me, was at the Club that Night, undertook my Cause. He told us, That he wondered any Order of Persons should think themselves too considerable to be advised: That it was not Quality, but Innocence which exempted Men from Reproof; That Vice and Folly ought to be attacked where-ever they could be met with, and especially when they were placed in high and conspicuous Stations of Life. He further added, That my Paper would only serve to aggravate the Pains of Poverty, if it chiefly exposed those who are already depressed, and in some measure turned into Ridicule, by the Meanness of their Conditions and Circumstances. He afterwards proceeded to take Notice of the great Use this Paper might be of to the Publick, by reprehending those Vices which are too trivial for the Chastisement of the Law, and too fantastical for the Cognizance of the Pulpit. He then advised me to prosecute my Undertaking with Chearfulness; and assured me, that whoever might be displeased with me, I should be approved by all those whose Praises do Honour to the Persons on whom they are bestowed.

The whole Club pays a particular Deference to the Discourse of this Gentleman, and are drawn into what he says as much by the candid and ingenuous Manner with which he delivers himself, as by the Strength of Argument and Force of Reason which he makes use of. **Will. Honeycomb** immediately agreed, that what he had said was right; and that for his Part, he would not insist upon the Quarter which he had demanded for the Ladies. Sir **Andrew** gave up the City with the same Frankness. The **Templar** would not stand out; and was followed by Sir **Roger** and the **Captain**: Who all agreed that I should be at Liberty to carry the War into what Quarter I pleased; provided I continued to combat with Criminals in a Body, and to assault the Vice without hurting the Person.

This Debate, which was held for the Good of Mankind, put me in Mind of that which the *Roman* Triumvirate were formerly engaged in, for their Destruction. Every Man at first stood hard for his Friend, till they found that by this Means they should spoil their Proscription: And at length, making a Sacrifice of all their Acquaintance and Relations, furnished out a very decent Execution.

Having thus taken my Resolution to march on boldly in the Cause of Virtue and good Sense, and to annoy their Adversaries in whatever Degree or Rank of Men they may be found: I shall be deaf for the future to all the Remonstrances that shall be made to me on this Account. If *Punch* grow extravagant, I shall reprimand him very freely: If the Stage becomes

a Nursery of Folly and Impertinence, I shall not be afraid to animadvert upon it. In short, If I meet with any thing in City, Court, or Country, that shocks Modesty or good Manners, I shall use my utmost Endeavours to make an Example of it. I must however intreat every particular Person, who does me the Honour to be a Reader of this Paper, never to think himself, or any one of his Friends or Enemies, aimed at in what is said: For I promise him, never to draw a faulty Character which does not fit at least a Thousand People; or to publish a single Paper, that is not written in the Spirit of Benevolence and with a Love to Mankind.

Introduction to The Compleat English Gentleman
Daniel Defoe

[Source: Daniel Defoe, "Introduction" to *The Compleat English Gentleman* by Daniel Defoe. Edited by Karl D. Bulbring (London: published by David Nutt, 1890), 3-5.]

[Note: The Full Introduction is from pages 3-10. Retrieved from Internet Archive. The piece was written in 1729 and first published from the author's Autograph Manuscript in the British Museum in 1890. Here only the section of the syllabus mentioned in the Stephen Copley book has been produced:
Daniel Defoe, "Introduction to The Compleat Gentleman," chapter 1, "The Social Establishment," section 1.7, 41-42 in *Literature and the Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England* edited by Stephen Copley (London: Croom Helm, 1984) now reprinted in (Oxon and New York: Routledge,2020). The full chapter 1 is 22-53.]

That I may begin with the same brevity that I purpose to go on with, I shall onely observe here by way of introduccion that there are two sorts or classes of men who I am to be understood to speak of under the denomination of gentlemen:
1. The born Gentleman,
2. The bred gentleman.
The complete gentleman I am to speak of will take them in both; and neither of them, singly and abstractedly considered, will stand alone in the class of a compleat gentleman without some thing that may be said to comprehend both.

The born gentleman is a valuable man if bred up as a gentleman ought to be, that is, educated in learning and manners suitable to his birth. This I must insist on as a preliminary, that I may not be censur'd and condemn'd unread, and bring upon me a clamour from the numerous party of old women (whether male or female), idolaters who worship escutcheons and trophyes, and rate men and families by the blazonry of their houses, exclusiv of learning or virtue, and of all personal merit.

On the other hand, the son of a mean person furnish'd from Heaven with an originall fund of wealth, wit, fence, courage, virtue, and good humour, and set apart by a liberall education for the service of his country; that distinguishes himself by the greatest and best actions; is made acceptable and agreeable to all men by a life of glory and true fame; that hath the natural beauties of his mind embellish'd and set off with a vast fund of learning and accquir'd knowleg; that has a clear head, a generous heart, a polite behaviour and, in a word, shews himself to be an accomplish'd gentleman in every requisite article, that of birth and blood excepted : I must be allowd to admit such a person into the rank of a gentleman, and to suggest that he being the first of his race may possibly raise a roof tree (as the ancients call it) of a noble house and of a succession of gentlemen as effectually as if he had his pedigree to show from the Conqueror's army or from a centurion in the legions that landed with Julius Caesar.

Out of the race of either of these, the compleat gentleman I am to describe is to be deriv'd. How to reconcile the antient line to this and bring them, however degenerate, to embrace the modern line, tho' exalted by the brightest virtue and the most valuable accomplishments of a man of honour, is the difficult case before me.

I am resolv'd however to giv antiquity its due homage; I shall worship the image call'd antient lineage as much as possible without idolatry; I shall giv it all the reverence and respect that it can pretend to claim, search for all the glories of birth and blood, and place them in full proportion: no lustre of antient gentry shall be ecclypst by me, onely with this

exception, that I must intreat the gentlemen who are to value themselves chiefly upon that advantage, that they will *stoop so low* as to admit that vertue, learning, a liberal educacion, and a degree of naturall and accquir'd knowledge, are necessary to finish the born gentleman; and that without them the entitul'd heir will be but the shaddow of a gentleman, the opaac, dark body of a planet, which can not shine for want of the sun communicating its beams, and for want of being plac'd in a due position to reciev and reflect those beams when they are communicated and reciev'd.

In condicioning for so small an advance in the favour of true merit, and insisting upon its being, as I said, absolutely necessary, I think we differ upon so small a point, that I can not doubt of reconciling it all in the end of this discourse and bringing the blood and the merit together; so we shall soon produce the best and most glorious peice of God's creation, a complete gentleman; which is the deserv'd subject of the whole work.

I shall begin with the born gentleman. I shall do him all the honour due to his distinguisht quallity and birth; I shall giv him the preference upon all occasions; I shall allow him to be superior because he is prior or seignior in blood, expecting nothing of him in return but this trifle onely, that he be *but equall* in merit, not tying him down, no, not to that claim of his quality that he should *excell* his inferiors in virtue as he does in degree.

No. 156, The Rambler
Samuel Johnson

[Source: Samuel Johnson, "The Laws of Writing not always Indisputable. Reflections on Tragi-Comedy or No. 156" in *The Rambler* by Samuel Johnson. Volume 4. 16 Volumes (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1806) 1-6.]

[Note: Retrieved from the Internet Archive]

No. 156.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1751.

Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapientia dicit. Juv. Sat. xiv. 321.
[For Wisdom ever echoes Nature's voice.]

Every government, say the politicians, is perpetually degenerating towards corruption, from which it must be rescued at certain periods by the resuscitation of its first principles, and the re-establishment of its original constitution. Every animal body, according to the methodick physicians, is, by the predominance of some exuberant quality, continually declining towards disease and death, which must be obviated by a seasonable reduction of the peccant humour to the just equipoise which health requires.

In the same manner the studies of mankind, all at least which, not being subject to rigorous demonstration, admit the influence of fancy and caprice, are perpetually tending to errour and confusion. Of the great principles of truth which the first speculatists discovered, the simplicity is embarrassed by ambitious additions, or the evidence obscured by inaccurate argumentation; and as they descend from one succession of writers to another, like light transmitted from room to room, they lose their strength and splendour, and fade at last in total evanescence.

The systems of learning therefore must be sometimes reviewed, complications analyzed into principles, and knowledge disentangled from opinion. It is not always possible, without a close inspection, to separate the genuine shoots of consequential reasoning, which grow out of some radical postulate, from the branches which art has ingrafted on it. The accidental prescriptions of authority, when time has procured them veneration, are often confounded with the laws of nature, and those rules are supposed coëval with reason, of which the first rise cannot be discovered.

Criticism has sometimes permitted fancy to dictate the laws by which fancy ought to be restrained, and fallacy to perplex the principles by which fallacy is to be detected; her superintendence of others has betrayed her to negligence of herself; and, like the ancient Scythians, by extending her conquests over distant regions, she has left her throne vacant to her slaves.

Among the laws of which the desire of extending authority, or ardour of promoting knowledge, has prompted the prescription, all which writers have received, had not the same original right to our regard. Some are to be considered as fundamental and indispensable, others only as useful and convenient; some as dictated by reason and necessity, others as enacted by despotick antiquity; some as invincibly supported by their conformity to the order of nature and operations of the intellect; others as formed by accident, or instituted by example, and therefore always liable to dispute and alteration.

That many rules have been advanced without consulting nature or reason, we cannot but suspect, when we find it peremptorily decreed by the ancient masters, that only three speaking personages should appear at once upon the stage; a law, which, as the variety and intricacy of modern plays has made it impossible to be observed, we now violate without scruple, and, as experience proves, without inconvenience.

The original of this precept was merely accidental. Tragedy was a monody, or solitary song in honour of Bacchus, improved afterwards into a dialogue by the addition of another speaker; but the ancients, remembering that the tragedy was at first pronounced only by one, durst not for some time venture beyond two; at last, when custom and impunity had made them daring, they extended their liberty to the admission of three, but restrained themselves by a critical edict from further exorbitance.

By what accident the number of acts was limited to five, I know not that any author has informed us; but certainly it is not determined by any necessity arising either from the nature of action, or propriety of exhibition. An act is only the representation of such a part of the business of the play as proceeds in an unbroken tenour, or without any intermediate pause. Nothing is more evident than that of every real, and by consequence of every dramatick action, the intervals may be more or fewer than five; and indeed the rule is upon the English stage every day broken in effect, without any other mischief than that which arises from an absurd endeavour to observe it in appearance. Whenever the scene is shifted the act ceases, since some time is necessarily supposed to elapse while the personages of the drama change their place.

With no greater right to our obedience have the criticks confined the dramatick action to a certain number of hours. Probability requires that the time of action should approach somewhat nearly to that of exhibition, and those plays will always be thought most happily conducted which crowd the greatest, variety into the least space. But since it will frequently happen that some delusion must be admitted, I know not where the limits of imagination can be fixed. It is rarely observed that minds, not prepossessed by mechanical criticism, feel any offence from the extension of the intervals between the acts; nor can I conceive it absurd or impossible, that he who can multiply three hours into twelve or twenty-four, might imagine with equal ease a greater number.

I know not whether he that professes to regard no other laws than those of nature, will not be inclined to receive tragi-comedy to his protection, whom, however generally condemned, her own laurels have hitherto shaded from the fulminations of criticism. For what is there in the mingled drama which impartial reason can condemn? The connexion of important with trivial incidents, since it is not only common but perpetual in the world, may surely be allowed upon the stage, which pretends only to be the mirror of life. The impropriety of suppressing passions before we have raised them to the intended agitation, and of diverting the expectation from an event which we keep suspended only to raise it, may be speciously urged. But will not experience shew this objection to be rather subtle than just? Is it not certain that the tragick and comick affections have been moved alternately with equal force, and that no plays have oftener filled the eye with tears, and the breast with palpitation, than those which are variegated with interludes of mirth?

I do not however think it safe to judge of works of genius merely by the event. The resistless vicissitudes of the heart, this alternate prevalence of merriment and solemnity, may sometimes be more properly ascribed to the vigour of the writer than the justness of the design: and, instead of vindicating tragi-comedy by the success of Shakespeare, we ought, perhaps, to pay new honours to that transcendent and unbounded genius that could preside over the passions in sport; who, to actuate the affections, needed not the slow gradation of common means, but could fill the heart with instantaneous jollity or sorrow, and vary our disposition as he changed his scenes. Perhaps the effects even of Shakespeare’s

poetry might have been yet greater, had he not counteracted himself; and we might have been more interested in the distresses of his heroes, had we not been so frequently diverted by the jokes of his buffoons.

There are other rules more fixed and obligatory. It is necessary that of every play the chief action should be single; for since a play represents some transaction, through its regular maturation to its final event, two actions equally important must evidently constitute two plays.

As the design of tragedy is to instruct by moving the passions, it must always have a hero, a personage apparently and incontestably superior to the rest, upon whom the attention may be fixed, and the anxiety suspended. For though, of two persons opposing each other with equal abilities and equal virtue, the auditor will inevitably, in time, choose his favourite, yet as that choice must be without any cogency of conviction, the hopes or fears which it raises will be faint and languid. Of two heroes acting in confederacy against a common enemy, the virtues or dangers will give little emotion, because each claims our concern with the same right, and the heart lies at rest between equal motives.

It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer to distinguish nature from custom; or that which is established because it is right, from that which is right only because it is established; that he may neither violate essential principles by a desire of novelty, nor debar himself from the attainment of beauties within his view, by a needless fear of breaking rules which no literary dictator had authority to enact.