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LITERACY CRITICISM AND THEORY

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MA (English) – I Year

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Literary Criticism and Theory

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LITERARY CRITICISM AND THEORY

UNIT ONE

This unit consists of the following two essays in The Classical And Neoclassical Criticism:

Essay No.1. Alexander Pope: An Essay on Criticism
Essay No.2. Samuel Johnson: Preface to Shakespeare

UNIT I

The two essays in this section are John Dryden' *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and Samuel Johnson's *A Preface to Shakespeare*. Before we approach these essays, it would be helpful to have a brief introduction to literary criticism in general, its origins in the west and how it took shape till the seventeenth century which is when the above two essays were written.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. **WHAT THE TWO TERMS LITERARY CRITICISM AND LITERARY THEORY MEAN:**

What is literary criticism and what is literary theory? How are the two related? An attempt to answer these questions will be a good beginning to this subject.

Criticism can be described as a "discourse about literature," in a general way.The study, discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literature is the discourse which is called **literary criticism**. This act of study, discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literature is often guided by literary theory. **Literary theory** is the philosophical discussion of the methods and aims of literary criticism and each literary theory gives its own special way of looking at a piece of literature.**The two - literary criticism and literary theory - perform interrelated tasks. Any school of literary theory concerns itself with literary textsand thus with the act of criticism.**

Literary theory as the two words suggest, conjoins literature with the theory or philosophy about literature. Such a theory based interpretation of literature is the activity of literary criticism. So it is not really possible to separate the concerns of literary theory from literary criticism. It goes without saying therefore that there could be two or more ways of reading a piece of literature depending upon which literary theory is taken as the

window through which the literary text is read. **So the two activities, i.e. literary criticism and literary theory are closely related.**

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERARY CRITICISM AND LITERARY THEORY

Of course as lay readers we do not always look to a literary theory to be able to read a book.Usually we read literature prompted by our taste and our understanding of the values of life and guided by our vision of life. So a literary critic, and we are literary critics when we read sensitively and deeply, need not always be a theorist. This then becomes a particular theory. **Each school of thought and each theory has its own specific understanding of the function of the literary text and all the questions related to the relationship of the text to the author, the reader and to the literary tradition in which it emerges. What a theorist does is to crystallise these aspects and formulate a philosopical argument about it.**

Any kind of discussion on literature simply used to be called by the blanket term "literary criticism" earlier and there was not always a definite theoretical stand behind every act of criticism, nor was a literary critic always a theorist. As was suggested earlier, even though a critic may not have been a theorist still he would quite clearly reflect the temperament of his times, as for example, Coleridge or Wordsworth who reflected the Romantic world vision. But in course of time, especially since the seventies, almost every literary critic aligned his beliefs to one theory or another and there has been a steady emergence of number of theories. Actually since the advent of courses that concern themselves with "theory" started in the seventies the term literary criticism has been almost completely replaced by the term literary theory because acts of literary criticism are now largely theory based. There are many "schools" or types of literary theory, which take different approaches to understanding texts. Most of these theories have emerged from the continent, although they have grown steadily in Britain and the United States.

Literary theory is today a broad field. It includes a wide range of disparate approaches which are used by members of humanities in the exploration of literary texts. It also refers to the teaching of such approaches and practices in the universities, particularly in the departments of English.Texts from a large branch of disciplines such

as linguistics, anthropology, politics, philosophy, psychoanalysis and other such areas are brought to bear upon the exploration of the literary text**.**

3. HOW LITERARY THEORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM STARTED AND DEVELOPED

It is not wrong to say that literary theory has been there as has been literature, though the early Greeks called it **poetics** and it included rhetoric also. In fact this is where it took western literary criticism took its origins. In fact this is where it took western literary criticism took its origins.The discussion of the principles, the theory, and the aesthetics of literature, was formerly discussed as poetics and rhetoric.

Often the critical canons of one age have been discarded in all together and often too, a subsequent age has revived them. So the principles of criticism are as a body of thought the various interpretations of literature or literary activity, advanced from time to time. They are sometimes similar, sometimes dissimilar, and some-times even contradictory.

The discussion of the principles, the theory, and the aesthetics of literature, was formerly discussed as poetics and rhetoric.

In Europe the art of criticism began in ancient Greece. Exactly when it began cannot be said for certain, but the fifth century B.C. is generally located as the starting point. The practice of literary theory became a profession in the 20th century, but it has historical roots that run as far back as ancient Greece. There are several categories of criticism: theoretical, practical, textual, judicial, biographical, and aesthetic.

The ancient Greeks introduced two major types of criticism: **theoretical**, which attempts to state general principles about the value of art as did Plato and Aristotle and **practical,** which examines the particular works, genres, or writers in light of theoretical criteria as did Horace and Longinus.

Before the seventeenth century, there was no clear cut distinction between the two terms critic and critique.Dryden, in the Preface to the *State of Innocence* (1677), said that by criticism, as it was first instituted by Aristotle, was meant a standard of judging well. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) established the term for good.The general tone of

criticism of the neo-classical period was prescriptive and therefore it is called **judicial criticism**. Philip Sydney maintained in his *Defense of Poetry* [1595] that poetry must engage and uplift the emotions of its audience. Dryden, the master critic of Restoration England, upheld neoclassical standards. In his *Essay on Criticism* [1711] Alexander Pope added an important section on the criticism of critics. Also described as legislative criticism this form of critical endeavour lays down rules for the art of writing, largely based on standard works of literature, Greek and Latin. It assumes that the would-be writer has only to be told how to do his work to be able to do it well. It therefore addresses itself to the writer rather than to the reader, whose interests are supposed to be safe in the critic's hands.

Textual criticism is the comparison of different texts and versions of particular works with the aim of arriving at an incorrupt "master version." This has been perhaps most familiar over the centuries in biblical criticism. In English Samuel Johnson and H. H. Furness who employed this to edit Shakespeare and F. J. Furnival who edited early English texts. Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* [1779-81] was the first thorough-going exercise in **biographical criticism**. It was an attempt to relate a writer's background and life to his works.

The revolution from neoclassicism to romanticism was first outlined by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who emphasized the importance of emotion and imagination in literature. In his *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads* [1800], Wordsworth described the lyric as a composition that arose from the emotions of the poet when he recollected them in tranquility, whereas Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria* [1817] defined the workings of the imagination as the repetition in the finite mind of the divine act of creation, rather than as a mere intellectual excercise. This shift in emphasis was furthered by John Keats in his *Letters* and by Percy Bysshe Shelley in his *Defense of Poetry* [1821] with poets being proclaimed as the unacknowledged **legislators** of the world.

Diverse trends marked the criticism of the mid-19th century. The didacticism of Matthew Arnold, who held that the aims of literature should be "high seriousness" and a "criticism of life," was "countered by Edgar Allan Poe in The Poetic Principle [1850], by Walter Pater in Studies in the History of the Renaissance [1873], and by Arthur Symons

in The Symbolist Movement in Literature [1899]. These critics celebrated **art for art's sake. Aesthetic criticism** treats literature as an art-an independent activity having an end of its own, which may or may not coincide with that of religion or morality or science or politics. It therefore probes the nature of the literary art as such and formulates its theories accordingly. Thereafter it is treated more fully by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde in the Victorian age.

The emphasis in criticism of this period on the reaction of the critic to the work under scrutiny led to the use of the term impressionistic criticism. However, as the American critic M. H. Abrams has pointed out in *The Mirror and the Lamp* [1953], all criticism, no matter what its form or type emphasizes one of four relationships:

the mimetic which refers to the work's connection to reality
the pragmatic which refers to its effect on the audience
the expressive which refers to its connection to the author and
the objective which refers to the work as an independent, self-sufficient creation.

The twentieth century has been called the Age of Criticism. Such major disciplines as psychology, anthropology and Marxism, were found to have valid application to works of literature. Freudian analysis became a tool for literary biographers. Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious also became a tool, along with anthropological methodology, for critics like T. S. Eliot in *The Sacred Wood*, 1920 and Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957, who sought to trace similarities of pattern in literature of disparate cultures and ages. I. A. Richards used techniques of psychological measurement to examine reader response with new precision, notably in *Practical Criticism* [1929]. By means of the so-called New Criticism--the technique of close reading--such critics as Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, Lionel Trilling, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren revived the notion of a poem as an autonomous artifact.

4. SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

CRITICISM may be described in the following ways:

1. the act or art of analyzing and judging the quality of something, particularly a piece of literary writing

2. the act of judging, censuring or faultfinding.

3. making a critical comment, article, or essay; critique.

4. any of the various methods of studying texts or documents for the purpose of dating or reconstructing them or evaluating their authenticity,

To criticize means:

1. to judge the merits and defects of a work
2. to point out errors of a work
3. to simply discuss the merits and defects of a work
4. to censure or find fault with, cavil, censure, appraise, condemn, blame.

A critique means

1. an article or essay criticizing a work or reviewing it closely

2. a criticism or critical comment on some problem or subject

The root word is the Greek - *kritik* which refers to the art of criticism

- *kritikós* which refers to being critical or a critic

Criterion means

- a standard of judgment or criticism
- an established rule or principle for testing anything

The root word is Greek - *kritérion* which refers to a standard

- *krit* which refers to separate, to decide or to test;

A critic is

1 person who judges, evaluates, or criticizes.

2. a person who judges the qualities or merits of literary or artistic works, dramatic or musical performances;

3. a person who tends too readily to make harsh judgments.

The root word is Greek *kritikós* which refers to being skilled in the art of judging

5. THE TEXT

In literary criticism the text is the locus where the act of interpretation and evaluation of literature is located. The text exists in a variety of literary forms. The following are the important Literary forms and the authors who employed these forms are also cited in brackets.

Dialogues [Plato, John Dryden],
Verse [Horace, Alexander Pope],
Letters [John Keats]
Essays [Matthew Arnold]
Treatises [Philip Sydney, Shelley]

6. THE CRITICAL METHOD

Literature-poetry, drama, fiction-can be enjoyed in either a simple act of aesthetic pleasure as a lay man enjoys it or methodically as a trained man does. In the one case the impression of its worth could be personal only where as in the other it is a conscious exercise in reading. It is this latter mode of enjoying it that is called criticism. A critic is an ideal reader. He subjects everything to closest scrutiny. His approach is that of scientist-a disinterested application to its subject to understand and interpret it fully. For criticism therefore, as for science, to flourish, intellectual freedom is necessary. It requires an atmosphere in which questioning and inquiry are freely allowed.

INTRODUCTION TO UNIT I
CLASSICISM

Classicism is a term that has several meanings. Originally it was used when referring to the art of ancient Greece produced during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Later it included all works of art created from 600 BC until the fall of Rome. Still later it was used to describe any art form thought to be inspired or influenced by ancient Greek

or Roman examples. Today, classical is used to describe perfection of form, with an emphasis on harmony and unity and restraint of emotion. Usually, it is applied to works

that are representational but idealistic. Classic is used to describe anything which is the epitome of its type.

Classicism is a term used in literary criticism to describe critical doctrines that have their roots in ancient Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, and art. Works associated with classicism typically exhibit restraint on the part of the author, unity of design and purpose, clarity, simplicity, logical organization, and respect for tradition. some examples of literary classicism include Cicero's prose, the poetry of John Dryden and Alexander Pope and the writings of T. S. Eliot.

CLASSICAL FOUNDERS: 1. PLATO

Plato's lived in the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. He was the most celebrated disciple of Socrates. By his time writers like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes had already produced their master pieces. Greek culture was on the decline. Such a decline in national character and the standards of social and public life led philosophers to discuss matters that concerned the citizen and state, applying the test of reason to each Socrates headed them all by his dispassionate quest of truth which often challenged many an established belief and convention. Among these general inquiries the value of literature to society, and its nature and functions was also an important one. Thus the past age of creative activity, gave way in the fourth century B.C to the age of critical inquiry.

Plato's critical observations are scattered in many works. His chief interest was philosophical investigation, which forms the subject of his great work, the *Dialogues* which is so called because it is in the form of questions and answers.

Ideas, Plato says in *The Republic*, are the ultimate reality. Things themselves being imperfect copies of the ideas form which they spring, their reproductions in art must be more imperfect still. They take men away form reality rather than towards it. At best, they are partial images of it. The first is the world of ideas, the second is the world

of phenomenon and the third is the world of art. So art is thrice removed from reality or only third in the hierarchy of existence. Plato therefore called art **mimesis** - the imitative representation of nature and human behavior in art and literature. The term mimesis is derived from the Greek *mimesis*, meaning to imitate. It is often defined as a figure of speech, whereby the words or actions of another are imitated and the deliberate imitation of the behavior of one group of people by another as a factor in social change. Mimicry is defined as the action, practice, or art of mimicking or closely imitating the manner, gesture, speech, or mode of actions and persons, or the superficial characteristics of a thing. Both terms are generally used to denote the imitation or representation of nature, especially in aesthetics, primarily literary and artistic media.

Plato views art as a mimetic imitation of an imitation because art mimes the phenomenological world which mimes an original, "real" world. Therefore the artistic representation is highly suspect and corrupt in that it is thrice removed from its essence. Mimesis is positioned within the sphere of aesthetics, and the illusion produced by mimetic representation in art, literature, and music is viewed as deceptive, and inferior. It does not contribute to the ethical and moral health of the individual and the state. The same concern for the good of the individual and the state marks Plato's pronouncements of poetry.

The concepts of imitation and mimesis theorize the essence of artistic expression. They have been seen as the characteristics that distinguish works of art from all other human activity. The concepts also help us to understand the ways in which we experience and respond to works of art. In most cases, mimesis is defined as having two primary meanings - that of imitation (more specifically, the imitation of nature as object, phenomena, or process) and that of artistic representation.

Plato said that the poet writes because he is inspired. Though the poet's utterances contain a profound truth, but this appears only when they have been subjected to a further test-the of reason. Poetry therefore cannot take the place of philosophy.

Plato's next charge against poetry arises form its appeal to the emotions. Being a product of inspiration, it affects the emotions rather than reason, the heart rather than the intellect. So, for these reasons Plato refuses poetry a place in his ideal republic.

Plato observations apply equally to dramatic writing which formed but a branch of poetry. In order to please his audience the dramatist often introduces quarrels and lamentations in tragedy and imitation of thunder and cries of beasts in comedy. All this arouses their baser instincts which in turn lead to bad taste and laxity in discipline. Such plays therefore, says Plato, will have to be censored.

Sometimes plays act unfavorably on the actors themselves. By constantly impersonating evil characters like cowards, knaves, and criminals, their own nature may be so influenced that it may lead to the detriment of their moral character. Plato admits, however, that when the actor character impersonates men of courage, wisdom, or virtue, the actor stands to gain. By the force of habit, again, the same qualities are stimulated in him. Those tragedies therefore that represent the best and noblest in life are of positive benefit to the community and deserve to be encouraged.

CLASSICAL FOUNDERS: ARISTOTLE

Aristotle lived form 384 B.C. He was the most distinguished disciple of Plato. He is believed to have written nearly half a dozen critical treatises, of which only two are extant-*Poetics* and Rhetoric, the former dealing with the art of poetry and the latter with the art of speaking. *Poetics*, however, deals with may more problems of literature than *Rhetoric*, and has therefore attracted greater attention than the latter.

Poetics is a treatise of about fifty pages, containing twenty six small chapters. It is believed to be a summary of his lectures to his pupils, written either by them or by himself. It is believed to have had a second pert, which is lost. The first four chapters and the twenty-fifth are devoted to poetry, the fifth in a general way to comedy, epic, and tragedy, the following fourteen exclusively to tragedy, the next three to poetic diction, the next two to epic poetry, and the last to a comparison of epic poetry and tragedy. Aristotle's main concern, thus, appears to be tragedy, which in his day was considered to be the most developed form of poetry. Poetry, comedy, and epic come in for consideration because a discussion of tragedy would not be complete without some reference to the other forms of literature.

A poet or an artist is just a grown-up child indulging in imitation for the pleasure it affords. There is also another natural instinct, helping to make him a poet-the instinct for harmony and rhythm, manifesting itself in metrical composition. It is no less pleasing than the first. But the Poet's imitations or pictures of life are not unreal-'twice removed form reality'-as Plato declared. On the contrary, they reveal truths of a permanent or universal kind. To prove this Aristotle institutes a comparison between poetry and history. According to him, the function of the poet is to relate not what has happened as history does, but what may happen according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not merely because one writes in verse and the other in prose. The true difference between them lies in the fact that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher than history. Finally poetry expresses the universal, history the particular.

Aristotle's states in his *Poetics* that it is a natural human inclination to imitate. This characteristic is inherent in man from his earliest days. Man differs from other animals in that he is the most imitative of all creatures and he learns his earliest lessons by imitation. Also inborn in man is the instinct to enjoy works of imitation. Therefore on the strength of these arguments, Aristotle concludes that mimesis is l to man, and the arts and media are natural expressions of human faculties. This is in contradiction to Plato who held that a perception of mimesis and representation is opposed to truth, because it takes man away from real. Aristotle views mimesis and mediation as fundamental expressions of our human experience within the world. Art is a means of learning about nature. Through the imitative experience we get closer to the real, not away from it.

Works of art are encoded in such a way that humans are not duped into believing that they are reality. We recognize features from our own experience of the world within the work of art and this causes the representations to seem valid and acceptable. Mimesis not only functions to re-create existing objects or elements of nature, but also beautifies, improves upon, and universalizes them. Mimesis creates a fictional world of representation. Aristotle views mimesis as something that nature and humans have in common, as natural to the creative process and human nature. Two instincts, the instinct for imitation and the instinct for harmony and rhythm are natural to man and he indulges in them for the pleasure they give.

Aristotle's argument is that art is not an illusory copy of life or thrice removed form reality but an imaginative version of it, seeing the universal in the particular whether the form be the comedy, tragedy or epic. The truths of literature therefore are of a high order, relating literature with life. Thus the artist shows the permanent features of life in the ephemeral, through the work of art. Aristotelian criticism focuses on the form and logical structure of a work, apart from its historical or social context, in contrast to Platonic Criticism, which stresses the usefulness of art.

Longinus' *On the Sublime* is also an often cited early example as is Aristotle's *Poetics*, and the aesthetic theories of philosophers from ancient philosophy through the 18th and 19th centuries are important influences on current literary study. The theory and criticism of literature are, of course, also closely tied to the history of literature.

NEOCLASSICISM

THE RISE OF NEOCLASSICISM :

In the latter half of the seventeenth century and practically the whole of the eighteenth-the Augustan Ages, as they are called-the classics came to exercise a complete hold over English literature. It was even believed that they represented the highest standards of literary beauty which English writers had only to follow to attain perfection in their art. There were two reasons for it. One was the excesses of influence of the French literary modes on the English. The other was the Metaphysical excesses which were the direct consequence of the Elizabethan fondness for liberty in literary matters. Kept within bounds naturally by gifted writers, it degenerated into license in the hands of the lesser writers. To read poetry became a difficult exercise because the conceits made it difficult to understand what was actually said.

It was just at this moment that England for a variety of reason came under the influence of France. French literature since 1630 had been steadily moving in the direction of the classics. It gradually evolved a classical system of its own, to which the name 'neo-classical' is applied to distinguish it form the original creed. It was finally expounded by Boileau in his Art Boutique, published in 1674. It appealed to the English writers for the way out it showed form the Metaphysical confusion and, to some extent, for the encouragement it received form the court, itself dominated by French influence.

The general rules laid more stress on the teaching function of poetry than on the delight-giving or aesthetic, and more, similarly, on training in the art of writing than on natural endowment or genius. Whence proceeded further rules to perfect the poet in workmanship, consisting mainly of those laid down by the ancient, particularly Aristotle. Followed blindly at first out of mere reverence for antiquity. Nothing therefore that failed to satisfy this natural test of reason or good sense was great art; and of this natural test the rules of Aristotle were considered the highest embodiment.

CRITICAL PRINCIPLES OF NEOCLASSICISM

Neoclassical literally means'new-classical'.The Age of Neoclassicism was also known as the Age of Reason in literary criticism, Neoclassicism revived the attitudes and styles of expression of classical literature. In its purest form, Neoclassicism marked a return to order, proportion, restraint, logic, accuracy, and decorum. In England, where Neoclassicism perhaps was most popular, it reflected the influence of seventeenth-century French writers, especially dramatists. Neoclassical writers reacted against the intensity and enthusiasm of the Renaissance period. They wrote works that appealed to the intellect, using elevated language and classical literary forms such as satire and the ode. English neoclassicists included Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, John Gay, and Matthew Prior. The English Neoclassical movement was inspired both from classical and contemporary French models and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711).

Neoclassical principles embodied a concern and practice of the ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, correctness, restraint and decorum. So artists had to model their work and themes of Greek or Roman originals.

Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century, when the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the full emergence of Romanticism. Neoclassicism appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century and lasted up to the late eighteenth century.

Modeling itself on the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, Neoclassicism exalts the virtues of proportion, unity, harmony, grace, decorum, taste, manners, and restraint.

Neoclassicism values realism and reason over imagination and emotion. It rejected individuality and insisted upon conventional imagery, and accurate diction.

Art is defined as something artificed or artificial, made by craft with the aid of scholarship and applying the values of convention and decorum. Rules of art are learnt not devised by the artist. Neoclassicism discouraged innovation and gave sole importance to tradition and reverence for the classics.

The artistic rules of old are described by Pope as "Nature methodized and "Nature and Homer" which are the same in his opinion (*Essay on Criticism* 88ff, 135). This belief in Nature implies a conviction that there is a permanent, universal way in which things are which also demands an ethical commitment to it.

Neoclassicism represented a reaction against the celebratory and enthusiastic Renaissance view of man as a being fundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. The Renaissance believed that the artist was a creator upon earth. Neoclassical theorists, by contrast, held that man imperfect sinful with limited potential. They replaced the Renaissance emphasis on the imagination, on invention and experimentation, and on mysticism with an emphasis on order and reason, on restraint, on common sense, and on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism.

They maintained that art was essentially pragmatic, meant to guide and teach. It was also seen to be a product of the intellect rather than emotion. Hence their emphasis on the choice of a proper subject matter. Art has a didactic function and the writer is a moralist.

Concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace, were employed in the work of art to facilitate the process of delighting, instructing, educating, and correcting man.

The favorite forms in prose literary forms were the essay, the letter, the satire, the parody, the burlesque, and the moral fable. In poetry, the favorite verse form was the rhymed couplet, which reached its greatest sophistication in heroic couplet of Pope of wit and satire through the forms of the ode and verses written in heroic couplets. Wit and

satire through the forms of the ode and verses written in heroic couplets flourished in this period. The theater featured heroic drama, written in verse, and comedies of manners, written in prose. Its popular forms were the melodrama, the sentimental comedy, and the comedy of manners. In the fine arts of painting and sculpture1700s, archaeological discoveries in Greece and Rome revived interest in the study of classical art and literature. As a result, Neoclassicism became a popular art style, especially in France where the heroic, moral themes in classical history were used to inspire the causes of the French Revolution. Art of this time reflected calm, serious subjects presented with simple lines and a sense of order and purpose.

For the sake of convenience the Neoclassical period can be divided into three parts:

1. the Restoration Age (1660-1700), in which Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden were the dominant influences.
2. the Augustan Age (1700-1750), in which Pope was the central poetic figure, while Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett were the chief novelists.
3. the age of Johnson which is also known as Age of Sensibility: The period in English literature between 1750 and 1798, named after the most prominent literary figure of the age, Samuel Johnson. Works written during this time are noted for their emphasis on sensibility. These works formed a transition between the rational works of the Age of Reason, or Neoclassical period, and the emphasis on individual feelings and responses of the Romantic period.

Wit and the Heroic Couplet:

- Wit may be defined as the ability to see and express in originally humorous manner the relationship or similarity between seemingly incongruous or disparate things. A person who is noted for this ability is also known as a wit. These meanings, which gained currency in the age of Dryden and Pope.
- The heroic couplet, lines in iambic pentameter rhymed in pairs, appeared early in English, in Chaucer, and came into vogue in poetic drama in the seventeenth century, but in the eighteenth century, in the hands of masters like Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, it became for many

years the dominant English verse form. The couplet of two lines forms a logical whole.

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(Essay No 1. Alexander Pope: *An Essay on Criticism*)

ALEXANDER POPE : *AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM* (1711)

Alexander Pope (1688 –1744) is the most important poets of the eighteenth century. His first major contribution to the literary world is *An Essay on Criticism*, which was published in 1711 when he was 23. This was followed by *The Rape of the Lock* (1712, revised 1714)., his most popular poem; *Eloisa to Abelard* and *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (1717. From 1715 to 1720, he worked on a translation of Homer's *Iliad.* Encouraged by the very favourable reception of this translation, Pope translated the *Odyssey* (1725–1726) with William Broome and Elijah Fenton. Pope also edited the complete works of Shakespeare and it is held that he regularised the Bard's metre and rewrote his verse in several places. Lewis Theobald and other scholars attacked Pope's edition, incurring Pope's wrath and inspiring the first version of his satire *The Dunciad* (1728), the first of the moral and satiric poems of his last period. His other major poems of this period were *Moral Essays* (1731–1735), *Imitations of Horace* (1733–1738), the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735), the *Essay on Man* (1734), and an expanded edition of the *Dunciad* (1742).

Pope addressed the major religious, political and intellectual problems of his time in all his works. He developed the heroic couplet Pope had a friend and ally in Jonathan Swift. In about 1713, he formed the Scriblerus Club with Swift and other friends including John Gay.

***AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM* (1711)**

Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* is a didactic poem in heroic couplets, begun, perhaps, as early as 1705, and published, anonymously, in 1711. Pope began writing the poem, however, including drafting and revising it, some two or three years earlier when he was twenty or twenty one years old. Between the years 1731 and 1739 he issued a

series of moral and philosophical poetical essays, with satires and imitations of Horace, of which the most popular was is the *Essay on Man*. Although the title of this piece, *Essay on Criticism* calls the composition as essay, it is a long poem on the performance of the poet and the function of the critic. This critical piece summarizes the principles of English neo-classical poetics which reminded the poet / critic of the greatness of the works of the ancients, recognized the necessity to model one's writing upon classical criteria and genres, and desired to see the ancient criteria and genres applied to the eighteenth century English literary works. Therefore *An Essay* on Criticism is an important text in the history of English critical theory.

The listeners of this poet refer to all the people in Pope's period including all the poets and readers. He wrote this poem especially to those poets who emphasized on rhyme and sounds only instead of on sense and content. Pope's tone in this poem was both critical and satirical with a sharp tone of humor, a style he is famous for. Though its premises and aims are those of the entire neoclassic tradition, the poetic essay itself is a statement or summary of the literary beliefs of the neoclassical age rather than an individual argument or analysis.

An Essay on Criticism which is a didactic poem is described by its author, in a letter to his friend John Caryll, written on 19 July 1711, as "a treatise ... which not one gentleman in three score, even of a liberal education, can understand". Pope is here suggesting that the poem is a serious piece of writing, although like a treatise it does not propound a new theory or point of view. It is a wide document that upholds traditional critical thought in an attempt to revitalize the stature of contemporary criticism. The poem is what its title says it is, an "essai", or, as Pope calls it towards the end of the poem, a "short Excursion" (738), into a much debated and contentious topic: the role and function of criticism.

The poetic essay was a relatively new genre, and the "Essay" itself had the following purposes:

- It was an attempt on Pope's part to identify and refine his own positions as poet and critic,

- It his response to an ongoing critical debate which centered on the question of whether poetry should be "natural" or written according to predetermined "artificial" rules inherited from the classical past.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

The age Pope wrote in already accepted the classical principles of composition and criticism of the Greek and Roman masters of the past. In France and England the attempt to revive these ancient models saw the emergence of the neo-classical age or the new age of classicism. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) is a re-statement of the neo-classical principles which were already are wide spread among writers and critics. It an example of the pointed and epigrammatic poetry Pope is acknowledged for. Pope's essay is modeled after the verse epistle of Horace *Art of Poetry* and Boileau's *Art Poétique* (1674) in French, but, unlike them, it does not deal with literature as such. Pope's aim is to educate critics on evaluation, and not writers on composition. He establishes the principles of sound artistic practice according to which poetry is to be judged; so, he focuses on poetry also. According to him only writers qualify for the role of critics. The poem commences with a discussion of the rules of taste which ought to govern poetry, and which enable a critic to make sound critical judgments. Pope then proceeds to discuss the laws by which a critic should be guided, insisting that critics must encourage poets, not attack them. He then provides, by way of example, instances of critics who had erred in one fashion or another. The poem is the nearest thing in eighteenth-century, English writing to what might be called a neo-classical manifesto, although it is never as categorically expounded as the term implies. It comes closer, perhaps, to being a handbook, or guide, to the critic's and poet's art. It is accordingly of value to us today in understanding what Pope and many of his contemporaries saw as the main functions and justifications of criticism in early eighteenth-century England.

The poem is articulated through a series of epigrams. It is built upon a series of maxims, such as “To Err is *Humane*; to forgive, *Divine*,” (525), or “For *Fools* rush in where *Angels* fear to tread.” (625). Pope's ability to sum up an idea memorably in a phrase, line, or couplet, with imaginative clarity makes *An Essay on Criticism* a much quoted essay in ordinary speech and the poem has many formulations that have an independent, proverbial existence.

The text falls into three parts which elaborate at length the various concerns of the poet/critic as has been delineated below, in a brief summary. The poem commences in **Part One** with a discussion of the rules of taste which ought to govern poetry, and which enable a critic to make sound critical judgments.

1. Part one is a lengthy theoretical defense of literary criticism which draws on Nature and the tradition of the ancients.

2. In it Pope insists that the authority of the past masters should be properly recognized and the example of the classical authors who dealt with poetry should be followed.

3. He concludes this section, with an apparent attempt to reconcile the opinions of those that support and oppose the adherence of rules. He argues that the rules of the ancients are in fact identical with the rules of Nature. Poetry and painting like religion and morality actually reflect natural law.

This introduces an ambiguity in the text's argument:

- On the one hand, Pope admits that rules are necessary for the production of and criticism of poetry.
- On the other hand he also says that there are mysterious qualities which he calls "Nameless Graces," with which Nature is endowed, and which permit the true poetic genius, possessed of adequate "taste," to appear to transcend those same rules. So the poet has to follow the model of the ancient masters and at the same time as a genius himself, not blindly follow rules but create his own laws of composition. He must be an inspired writer and not a mere scholar.

This leads the Pope to define then nature of the critic also. The critic, of course, if he is to appreciate that genius, must possess similar gifts. He must have a sound scholarship of the past and at the same time share the quality of genius of the poet in order to be able to appreciate a true work of art.

True Art, in other words, imitates Nature, and Nature tolerates and encourages inventions which are in reality aspects of the divine order of things, because Nature and the physical universe are both divine creations. According to Pope only the Divine can

create and appreciate the harmony of the universe. In the same way, the scholarly and imaginative critic can appreciate poetic harmonies which echo those in nature. It is helpful and necessary for the critic to employ rules which are interpretations of the ancient principles of nature which the ancient masters themselves have employed to guide him because his own intellect and his reason are limited. Moreover his opinions may be inevitably subjective. However he must never be totally dependent upon them.

Pope then proceeds to discuss in **Part Two** the laws by which a critic should be guided. The second part discusses those critical traits that hinder truthful criticism and lead to critical errors of judgment. He insists, as any good poet would, that critics exist to serve poets, not to attack them. They must use their role as critics to encourage the writer and the reader to read literature and not discourage both these groups of people. He then gives examples of critics who have erred in one fashion or another. In Pope's view, whatever seems to be the mistakes of the critic, they are all outlined here. All these critics, each in their own way, betray some flaw or the other.

The final section of the poem, which is **Part Three**, discusses the moral qualities and virtues inherent in the ideal critic. This section presents a picture of the man whom Pope idealizes as a good critic and a great man. In other words the intellectual and moral virtues of the man and those of the critic‘s are equally important to the neo-classical critic, Pope. The principles of neo-classical criticism as these have been delineated in Pope‘s work are also the important principles of Neo-Classical Poetics.

Such a critic is also in Pope’s opinion the ideal man. Pope laments that such an ideal critic who is also an ideal man, no longer exists in the early eighteenth century which he calls a degenerate world.

The essay may be studied in terms of the following subdivisions:

PART I

GENERAL QUALITIES NEEDED BY THE CRITIC (1-200):

The section entitled **PART I** begins with a statement by Pope which is his introduction to what is discussed in this part. Pope provided the following outline for the first part of the *Essay*:

INTRODUCTION. *That it is as great a fault to judge ill as to write ill, and a more dangerous one to the public. That a true Taste is as rare to be found as a true Genius. That most men are born with some Taste, but spoiled by false education. The multitude of Critics, and causes of them. That we are to study our own Taste, and know the limits of it. Nature the best guide of judgment. Improved by Art and rules, which are but methodized Nature. Rules derived from the practice of the ancient poets. That therefore the ancients are necessary to be studied by a Critic, particularly Homer and Virgil. Of licenses, and the use of them by the ancients. Reverence due to the ancients, and praise of them.*

These predominant concepts, given in Pope's own resume regarding neoclassical literary criticism, that are discussed in the first part of Pope's *Essay* are as follows:

- the features of bad writing and criticism
- the greater danger of bad criticism to the public which is misguided
- the rarity of genius and taste in poets and critics
- the damage done to the capacity of critical judgment by unsound education
- the causes for the emergence of a multitude of literary critics which include those who cannot write or judge with refinement
- and the critic's need to know the limits of his genius, taste, and learning in the exercise of criticism.

Two themes stand out above the rest:

- the role of Nature in the art of poetics and
- criticism or the activity of the poet/critics as the exemplars for literary activity.

THE NATURE OF POETRY AND TASTE AND JUDGEMENT IN A CRITIC

Pope begins by declaring that it is hard to say whether greater lack of skill is to be found in bad criticism or bad writing. Bad criticism, however, is a greater danger to the public. It is less offensive to "tire our *Patience*, than mis-lead our *Sense*" (1-8). True taste is as rare to be found, as a true genius (9-18). Critics need to be good judges, but the true taste necessary for good judgement is as rare as the true genius necessary for good poetry (9-18). For if a man wrote badly he makes a fool only of himself, but when a critic makes a wrong judgment many people are misled. Pope states that a great danger

lies in judging other works carelessly. He believes that the practice of judging incorrectly leads to poor writing because the principles of both are closely related.

Most men, says Pope, are born with the seeds of good judgment, and yet good sense is all too frequently spoilt by false education (19-27). Bewildered by a maze of critical theories the critic who may by himself have some good sense becomes blunted in intelligence. Sometimes criticism is also an act of rivalry between poets and critics and literature becomes an arena where personal wars are fought. Therefore a critic should be humble enough to know his own limitations. The critic's word of praise or blame guides the reader. Therefore he must exercise a great deal of caution, because he does greater damage than a bad poet when he propagates writing that is unworthy of being read.

1'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
2Appear in writing or in judging ill;
3But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
4To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
5Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
6Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
7A fool might once himself alone expose,
8Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

Most critics strive to be "Wits", but succeed only in becoming pale copies or "half-learned Witlings" (28-45). True critics, on the other hand, know, and operate within, their "own Reach". They work within the limits fixed by nature rather than launching themselves beyond their own depth.

The awareness of his own limitations helps the critic cultivate a sound critical faculty(46-67). These are crucial lines in this section because in them Pope's fist caution to critics is given. Since the poem is a statement on the art of criticizing a work of art in the best possible manner, his views on what the limitations of the critic form an essential part of the text. The following are the lines which put forth this idea.

46 But you who seek to give and merit fame,
47And justly bear a critic's noble name,

48Be sure your self and your own reach to know,
49How far your genius, taste, and learning go;
50Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
51And mark that point where sense and dullness meet.
52 Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
53And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit:
54As on the land while here the ocean gains,
55In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
56Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
57The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
58Where beams of warm imagination play,
59The memory's soft figures melt away.
60One science only will one genius fit;
61So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
62Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
63But oft in those, confin'd to single parts.
64Like kings we lose the conquests gain'd before,
65By vain ambition still to make them more;
66Each might his sev'ral province well command,
67Would all but stoop to what they understand…

NATURE AND ITS ROLE IN THE ART OF CRITICISM (68-87)

The first great rule for true critics, therefore, is to "follow NATURE". Pope goes on to discuss Nature in its general forms. Pope does two things here. He defines Nature and stresses on the need of both wit and judgment to conceive it. The basis for literary composition and the practice of criticism and the common ground that gives guidance for both, is to be found, according to Pope, in the understanding of the honorific term and concept of NATURE.

68 First follow NATURE, and your judgment frame
69By her just standard, which is still the same:
70Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
71One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
72Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
73At once the source, and end, and test of art.

Nature is the ultimate authority in Pope‘s *Essay*, and is presented here as that canon or standard to which both creative and literary expression which he calls “wit” and critical judgment are to conform.

In literature and criticism, Nature is all-significant as its source, as its aim, and as its test. Good and great art originates from Nature, and is guided by Nature.
What Pope means by this is basic to the eighteenth-century, neo-classical understanding of this doctrine.

The neo-classical understanding of Nature describes the cosmos as regulated and constructed in terms of order and regularity and harmony, which in turn reflects the order and harmony of the divine mind of the Creator. Nature manifests the divine order and reason in the visible creation. Man perceives this order and rule in Nature because he has a rational soul made in the image of the divine.

The word NATURE is emphasized through the use of capitals, repeated at four other points in the poem. Pope's understanding of “Nature” is twofold: it is an appeal both to nature as an empirical reality and to nature as the artist's perception of an ideal order and harmony revealed in the creation of the divine. It refers both to the actual and to the ideal and to the fusion between the two. “*Unerring Nature*” is presented as a fixed point in a turning world, a “*clear, unchang'd,* and *Universal* light”. It is at once “the *Source,* and *End,* and *Test* of *Art*” (74) and is crucial to the spirit and vigour of a work of art, like “th'informing Soul” in “some fair body”. So we have to understand how Pope relates the rules of poetry rules of nature. Just as a tragedian arranges his plot incidents so as to reveal the operation of a universal law about human nature, or at least about a certain group of humans in a certain situation so that the truths of life are revealed in literature so too the critic must look for these truths and laws in the work of art. Nature’s limits on man (ll. 52-66).

Pope therefore recommends to wits and critics alike that it is by Nature that they are to frame their judgments. Nature provides the just and changeless standard which ensures aesthetically successful compositions as well as accurate judgments. The order,

reason and precision that characterize nature must also be reflected in literary composition. For this the writer has to look to the ancients for guidance.

THE RULES OF THE ANCIENTS

The laws of nature have been well reflected in the art and rules of the ancients. The modern writer has only to follow their model.

88Those RULES of old discover'd, not devis'd,
89Are Nature still, but Nature methodis'd;
90Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
91By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

To model themselves upon the principles of ancient literature is the same as drawing them from Nature, because Nature‘s aesthetic principles were embodied in the rules and texts of ancient poets and critics. Such an adherence to the Greek authors would regulate the English poet/critic’s flight’s of fancy. Thus to conform to Nature the poet/ critic must conform to the ancients.

Pope’s conclusions are as follows:

- Homer and Virgil are the models for all literary and critical activity.
- Nature is the source and justification of literary works of art.
- The works of the ancients are the embodiment of Nature.
- Therefore the works of the ancients are the source and justification of art.
  Thus Pope recommends the study of them.

Both the poet and critic must therefore turn to the ancient writers to see how they portrayed the truths of Nature and the mysterious laws of life in their writings. The rules that they followed were devised by them in accordance with their understanding of the laws of life. As such they created a body of literature that stands as a guiding model to all writers of all ages according to Pope.

IMITATION OF THE ANCIENTS, AND THE USE OF RULES (88-200).

In the last section of Part I Pope recommends the imitation of the ancients and the benefits that accrue from such an imitation. He begins this discussion by emphasizing the value of ancient poetry and their criticism as models.

118You then whose judgment the right course would steer,
119Know well each ANCIENT'S proper character;
120His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page;
121Religion, country, genius of his age:
122Without all these at once before your eyes,
123Cavil you may, but never criticise.
124Be Homer's works your study and delight,
125Read them by day, and meditate by night;
126Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
127And trace the Muses upward to their spring;
128Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse;
129And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

Pope says that in the beginning criticism was subordinate to creative writing and thus helped to disseminate good writing. But gradually over a period of time the art of criticism degenerated.

102Then criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,
103To dress her charms, and make her more belov'd;
104But following wits from that intention stray'd;

While recommending the study of the ancients, Pope cautions the poet/critic should not imitate them blindly. He must read them, meditate upon them and then form his judgment.

In the last section of Part One of his *Essay*, Pope praises the ancients.The past masters not only offer a model to the present but also by contrast show the limitations of the present writers, which in line 229 is stated as “an inspiration, and a reproach, to the present”.

Pope then continues his discourse on the now forgotten but eternal glory of the ancient masters of the classical ages:

189Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;
190Immortal heirs of universal praise!
191Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
192As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!
193Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
194And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
195Oh may some spark of your celestial fire
196The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
197(That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
198Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
199To teach vain wits a science little known,
200T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!

Part II

II.PARTICULAR LAWS FOR THE CRITIC (201-559):

Causes hindering a true judgement. Pride. Imperfect learning. Judging by parts, and not by the whole. Critics in wit, language, and versification only. Being too hard to please, or too apt to admire. Partiality--too much love to a sect--to the ancients or moderns. Prejudice or prevention. Singularity. Inconstancy. Party spirit. Envy. Against envy, and in praise of good-nature. When severity is chiefly to be used by critics.

If Part I celebrates the golden ages of the classical masters, Part II of Pope‘s *Essay* documents the fall of literary man. The reason for the fall is pride, which is the source of the degradation both of the human nature and the arts. After the introduction to the essay and comments on the lack of taste and judgment of many critics, the speaker specifically depicts the problems of criticism and writing in part two of the poem. Some of the vices that the speaker points out in his argument include pride, imperfect learning, and partiality. Pope speaks as the critic of critics in his description of the fall of criticism in his own or in any age.

Pope lists the characteristics of misguided acts of criticism. His analysis includes a long list of thirteen faults or the deadly critical sins. Of these pride and envy are the worst. This is followed by the two characteristics that Pope identifies in a good critic, which are i) the rejection of envy and the cultivation of good sense and ii) the restrained use of severity by critics.

The chief critical faults areas follow:

(1) Pride, 201-14;
(2) Limited learning, 215-232;
(3) Judging by parts, not by the whole, 233-288;
(4) Excessive dependence upon wit, 234-304;
(5) Excessive dependence upon language, 305-338;
(6) Excessive dependence upon versification, 339-383;
(7) Given to extremes of being too easy to please, or too hard to admire, 384-393;
(8) Fallacious allegiance/partiality to the ancients or the moderns, 394-407;
(9) Basing criticism on the responses of the people or popular consensus or the identity of the writer and being prejudiced either positively or abusively, 408-423;
(10) Criticizing always contrary to the vulgar masses for purpose of individualism /singularity, 424-429;
(11) Inconsistent and hypocritical criticisms, 430-451;
(12) Parochial or party spirit criticism based on values of the critic‘s own group, 452-465; (13) Criticism based on envy and spite, 466-507;

Pope follows this list of faults with what he identifies as the necessary and desirable qualities in an informed and impartial critic:

THE QUALITIES OFA GOOD CRITIC

(14) The rejection of envy, and the exhortation to good nature and common sense, 508-525;
(15) The proper use of severity by critics, 526-559.

Thus to be a good critic is to be able recognize good and great works of art. To know good and great works is to have read widely and earnestly and appreciated them for their literary value. Adding to the list of vices, the speaker notes that people who are partial to one type of work miss out on other types that may be able to teach them and broaden their intellectual horizon. Partiality "force[s] that sun but on a part to shine" and

neglects all that needs its resources (ln.399). The speaker suggests that studying only one era of literature is as ludicrous as the sun shedding its light on one portion of the world and leaving the rest in darkness. The biases and stereotypes of that period will keep the critic close-minded and hinder his growth as a critic. Any argument increases in validity when both sides have been equally considered and a consensus has been reached after looking at all the evidence. Partiality hinders critics from improvement because they are not willing to learn about other points of view. Such an insulated knowledge leaves the critic ill-equipped to approach all works of art.

The speaker illustrates the problems of many past critics and tells the reader that critiquing poorly leads to bad writing. Since literature is one of the primary sources of knowledge and entertainment, the audience of these writers was influenced by what they read. They believe and act as their mentors instruct. Thus, the speaker warns against faulty criticism which may lead to the multiplication of mediocre and bad writing, which in turn influences the society becomes undesirably. Pride and imperfect learning are the cardinal vices of a critic:

- Pride, 208. The greatest fault of the critic is the fault of pride. Assuming that he is highly learned he may reject a piece of literature or criticize it harshly. Such an attitude may not do justice to the work that is criticized.
- Imperfect learning, 215. The critic may also be imperfect in his learning. If this is the case then the critic may not do justice to a piece of literature.

According to Pope pride is the never-failing voice of fools (Line 204). When a critic is deficient in wit, he hides his deficiency by his pride. Pride is the sign of an incomplete or shallow scholarship. He says,

> 209Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
> 210And fills up all the mighty void of sense!
> 211If once right reason drives that cloud away,
> 212Truth breaks upon us with resistless day;
> 213Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
> 214Make use of ev'ry friend--and ev'ry foe.

Pride breeds envy which is the jealousy of a greater wit. Pope denounces envy by stating that the virtuous man does not rejoice at another man‘s oppression (Never dejected, while another‘s blessed IV. 323-26). Pride is the mark of a writer dominated by self-esteem and jealousy.

These obstructions to good critiquing lead to inferior writing. Since writers are in a position to teach their audience and shed light on new ideas, inferior writing will have a significant damaging impact on the people. As part two of Pope's essay begins, the speaker says that pride is one of the most damaging "never-failing vice of fools" among all those that "conspire to blind… and misguide the mind." (l.201-204) By including pride with all other vices that negatively affect writing and criticism, the poet has deliberately chosen his diction to suggest a deviation from improvement. The pedant who forgets the end and judges by rules, the critic who judges by imagery and metaphor alone, the rhetorician who judges by the pomp and color of the diction and critics who judge by versification only are imperfect critics.

Since vision is one of the primary tools used to learn about the world, the blind have a difficult time learning. The speaker deliberately associates pride with blindness to show that pride makes growth and knowledge harder to attain just as blindness does. The speaker uses this comparison to also suggest that blindness may be a permanent situation but pride can be cast aside. When pride is removed, the writer is more apt to absorb knowledge and the critic is more open to opposing points of view. Therefore, eliminating pride will help both the critic and the writer improve their skills and keep their public well informed. In a similar notion, misguiding the mind is a dangerous thing because it leads to confusion. If an individual is misguided, then the path they seek will be more difficult to find. The speaker specifically uses this diction to suggest that pride "misguides" writers and critics and leads them away from their desired route of public education. Misguiding the mind clouds thought and disables the poet or critics ability to carry out duties. The speaker asks the critic to stay away from pride and "make use of every friend and every foe." (ln.214) A critic who can learn and capitalize on his enemies becomes a better writer. Getting rid of pride will make better writers and critics and keep the society at a well-educated level.

As the reproach of critics and writers continues, the speaker says that the lack of adequate knowledge is also a great deterrent from successful writing. Since obtaining knowledge plays a key role in the writing process, Pope says

215 A little learning is a dang'rous thing;
216Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
217There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
218And drinking largely sobers us again.

The lack of knowledge is dangerous because the people who read the work will also adopt these inferior beliefs. Since the poet is situated in a place of influence and his audience will suffer from his ignorance. An individual in a position of authority must try to learn as much as he can before conveying his thoughts to others. If he has not been properly trained, his work will lack validity and reality and create a generation of these same principles. The same line of thinking follows for critics who have not been properly schooled. Those who are apt to follow the general bandwagon will adopt the opinions critics give wholeheartedly. If these opinions are not founded on a steady base of knowledge, the critic could be responsible for spreading uneducated ideas and in turn creating biases in societies. Thus, the speaker warns the writers and critics that little knowledge is harmful because of the damaging effects it has on their audience. The critic should seek the author's aim and not take undue liberties in judging a text. Judging by parts, and not by the whole is another grave fault of the critic.

233 A perfect judge will read each work of wit
234With the same spirit that its author writ,
235Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find,
236Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;

The act of judging certain parts of something and not considering the whole picture gives the critic and consequently the reader a grievous picture of the text. A critic who bases his opinions on certain parts of a work has more than likely missed the essential underlying message of the entire piece. The speaker shows that it is "the joint force and full result" of beauty that we value and not just "the exactness of peculiar parts [of]… a lip or eye." (ln.245-246). The poet suggests that a certain force is associated

with looking at the whole that does not exist in the sum of its parts. Although pieces of the underlying message may appear in the parts, the entire meaning will not be clear until the work is considered in its entirety.. A critic who does not look at the whole may concentrate only on the parts such as wit, language and versification.

wit : 289 Some to conceit alone their taste confine,
language: 305 Others for language all their care express,
306And value books, as women men, for dress:
307Their praise is still--"the style is excellent":
308The sense, they humbly take upon content.
309Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
310Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.
or versification:337 But most by numbers judge a poet's song;
338 And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong…

Just as the complete face of a person reveals more than just a concentration on the lips, the themes of a whole work carry more meaning than one specific section. Looking at the entire picture helps the critic get a better understanding of the ideas trying to be conveyed in the piece. When the critic does not consider the entire work, he may miss parts of contradiction and meaning to the piece. Learning to be objective in the sense of the big picture helps prospective writers create in similar fashion. By understanding the value of the entire piece, poets will write in a manner that also demands the consideration of their entire work. Thus, an impersonal critiquing of past works, leads to better authorship.

243In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts
244Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
245'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
246But the joint force and full result of all.
247Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome,
248(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!'
249No single parts unequally surprise;
250All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
251No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;
252The whole at once is bold, and regular.

As the poem continues, the speaker warns his audience of the comparison to perfection. The speaker tells the reader that when a person thinks of finding a "faultless piece to see", he thinks of something that "ne'er was, nor is, nor ever shall be." (ln. 253-254) The comparison of a piece to perfection is a pointless task because there has never been nor shall there ever be something that holds the idea of pure perfection. A critique based on perfection will be without foundation. Thus, perfection is the wrong basis on which to critique because nothing will ever compare to something that does not exist. This creates a slight problem for the critic because it brings forth the question of fair comparison. If there is no common basis on which to critique a work, how can you differentiate between pieces? If there is a basis, it will be imperfect and therefore not a good basis of comparison. The critic has the difficult task of working with these opposing situations and coming up with a fair and reliable way of analyzing works. However, the author states that perfection does not exist and anyone who tries to find it will fail in his or her attempts. Thus, the same logic applies to writers who attempt to reach a utopia that does not exist. A writer then shall not try to perfect his work, he should write to best of his ability. Without the need to perfect a piece, the writer can create without limitations and inform his audience of his true ideas. There will always be critics who find faults with a poet's work, but this criticism shall lead to improvements in technique and consequently superior writing. Thus being too hard to please, or too apt to admire is another fault of the critic. The critic may have a partiality for a particular school of thought and may therefore find fault with a work. He may admire the ancients and condemn the moderns because of his partiality.

394Some foreign writers, some our own despise;
395The ancients only, or the moderns prize.
396Thus wit, like faith, by each man is applied
397To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.

Some critics do not have a judgment of their own. Either they imitate popular taste. Or unthinkingly they look at their predecessors who may not be the best judges and repeat their views. Or by merely looking at the name of the author they judge a work without looking at the contents and they either praise or blame the author and not the work. There is yet another brand of critics who fawn upon their patrons and write whatever that is written so that they continue to receive favors.

408Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,
409But catch the spreading notion of the town;
410They reason and conclude by precedent,
411And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
412Some judge of authors' names, not works, and then
413Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.
414Of all this servile herd, the worst is he
415That in proud dulness joins with quality,
416A constant critic at the great man's board,
417To fetch and carry nonsense for my Lord.

The need for tolerance and for aloofness from extremes of fashion and subjective evaluation makes a good critic. Just as the writer not seek praise as the goal of his work so too the critic should not exaggerate the faults of the writers. Earlier on in the essay, the main advice given to the critic is not to set his pride against the author; to try to understand first the author's spirit and then judge accordingly. Defining the intellectual and moral characteristics of the good critic Pope says that the critic must not pay excessive attention to small faults; he must appreciate what is good, irrespective of its being old or new, foreign or national. He must control his obsessions and not sacrifice his judgment, seek to appreciate, rather than to find fault and avoid the extremities of novelty and tradition. According to Pope envy is a destroyer and must be abandoned. The critic must to be quick to recognize the genuine accomplishment in another. However the worst critical fault according to Pope is the critic’s thirst for glory. The critic must refrain from very harsh judgment and not make much of minor faults.

523 Nor in the critic let the man be lost!
524 Good nature and good sense must ever join;
525 To err is human; to forgive, divine.

Just as pride can be the most subtle of the sins that separates man from a true understanding of God, it can stand between the critic and nature, reason, and judgment.

Thus, the practice of poetry and criticism which reached its height in the classical era of Homer, Aristotle, and Virgil has now in Pope's analysis fallen through the capital offenses of pride and envy, it must be cleansed of its defects and restored to its natural capacities and virtues that it might fulfill its aesthetic and social functions. This restoration of the poet/critic is the theme of Part Three of Pope's *Essay*.

Part III

Rules for the conduct and manners in a Critic. Candour. Modesty. Good breeding. Sincerity and freedom of advice. When one's counsel is to be restrained. Character of an incorrigible poet. And of an impertinent critic. Character of a good critic. The history of criticism, and characters of the best critics; Aristotle. Horace. Dionysius. Petronius. Quintiallian. Longinus. Of the decay of Criticism, and its revival. Erasmus. Vida. Boileau. Lord Roscommon, etc. Conclusion.

In this part which is serious and ethical in tone pope gives a description of the ideal critic as seen in the summary given as the introduction by the poet himself. In Part III Pope points out the moral virtues required in the critic who is also the ideal man.

III. THE IDEAL CHARACTER OF THE CRITIC (560-744):

According to Pope knowledge is not sufficient: honesty is needed, too, and humility in putting forward his judgment, taking care not to offend. A good critic must have a sense of proportion, and know when to forbear criticizing a great writer, while foolish critics will assail him with importunities. Throughout this section, Pope refers to ancient writers such as Virgil, Homer, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus. This is due to the neo-classical belief that the imitation of the ancients is the ultimate standard for taste.

Pope then deals with the conduct of manners necessary for a true critic and begins by urging such a person to let truth and candor shine. Pope encourages diffidence and modesty, good breeding and tact, sincerity and freedom of advice.

560Learn then what morals critics ought to show,
561For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.
562'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
563In all you speak, let truth and candour shine:
564That not alone what to your sense is due,

565All may allow; but seek your friendship too.
566 Be silent always when you doubt your sense;
567And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence:

Pope continues the discussion by listing **five fundamental moral virtues of a critic**.

1. truth and candor:

enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candor shine (Lines 561-62).

2. modesty:

Be silent always when you doubt your sense; And
speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence (Lines 566-67).

3. good breeding:

Without good breeding, truth is disapproved;
That only makes superior sense beloved (Lines 576-77).

4. sincerity and generosity of advice:

Be niggards of advice on no pretence;
For the worst avarice is that of sense.
With mean complacence ne‘er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.
Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
Those best can bear reproof, who merit praise (Lines 578-83).

5. restraint:

Tis best sometimes your censure to restrain,
And charitably let the dull be vain (Lines 596-97).

He goes on to indicate occasions, however, when a critic's counsel should be restrained, incorporating an attack on John Dennis, who is cited as an example of a writer too easily moved to anger and described, under the pseudonym of Appius.

This leads into a description of dull poets and “mad, abandon'd” critics, both of whom it is best to ignore. Pope speaks disparagingly about the foolish and arrogant critics whom he admonishes for their ignorant and misinformed nature.

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned lumber in his head (Lines 612-13).

In their arrogance and impetuosity, no poet or playwright is protected from their cavil, for some critics are fools who rush in where angels fear to tread. By contrast Pope gives us a portrait of the ideal critic who has love for praising the goodness of a work and who has reason by his side. Pope's ideal critic is knowledgeable yet humble; learned yet well bred; well bred yet sincere; modest yet bold; humane yet severe;closed yet open; theoretical yet practical; loving yet rational. Then Pope asks a rhetorical question whether such a man exists:

631But where's the man, who counsel can bestow,
632Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know?
633Unbias'd, or by favour or by spite;
634Not dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right;
635Though learn'd, well-bred; and though well-bred,
sincere;
636Modestly bold, and humanly severe?
637Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
638And gladly praise the merit of a foe?
639Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfin'd;
640A knowledge both of books and human kind;
641Gen'rous converse; a soul exempt from pride;
642And love to praise, with reason on his side?

Such an image leads into a history of criticism amongst the Ancients, starting with Aristotle (645-52) and leading through Horace (653-64), Dionysius (665-66), Petronius (667-68), Quintillian (669-74), and Longinus (675-80). However Pope's regret is that this great tradition came to an end in the Dark Ages. The ideal critic, who is also the ideal man, Pope laments, no longer exists in the degenerate world of the early eighteenth century.Pope sees a renaissance beginning under Erasmus (694-704) and Vida (705-8) and spreading to the northern world and particularly France (709-14). In Britain by Lord Roscommon (715-28) and Pope's friend, William Walsh (729-34), whom Dryden had called the best critic.

729Such late was Walsh--the Muse's judge and friend,
730Who justly knew to blame or to commend;

731To failings mild, but zealous for desert;
732The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.
733This humble praise, lamented shade! receive,
734This praise at least a grateful Muse may give:
735The Muse, whose early voice you taught to sing,
736Prescrib'd her heights, and prun'd her tender wing,
737(Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,
738But in low numbers short excursions tries:

Pope says the Muse of poetry no longer flies to great heights but makes only short excursions in the hands of lesser poets and critics. He closes the poem by describing his own aims and aspirations as a poet. He says "Not *free* from Faults, nor yet too vain to *mend"* by which he means that though he is not free of faults he is willing to learn and repair the faults of his poetry and criticism.

Pope concludes the *Essay* on a positive note that the restoration of high art and criticism and might be achieved by the English poets and critics.

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The Classical And Neoclassical Criticicsm
(Essay No 2. Samuel Johnson: *Preface to Shakespeare*)

SAMUEL JOHNSON : *A PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE* (1765)

Samuel Johnson, (**1709 -1784**), often referred to simply as Dr Johnson, was one of **England**'s greatest literary figures: a **poet**, **essayist**, **biographer**, **lexicographer**, and often esteemed the finest literary critic in **English**. Johnson was an English lexicographer or writer of dictionaries. He was the most influential figure in 18th-century eighteenth literary society. His *Dictionary* (1755) served as a model for English lexicography for more than a century. In 1764 he founded, at the suggestion of the English painter Joshua Reynolds, The Literary Club in 1779 , whose members included also the Irish political philosopher Edmund Burke, the Irish dramatist Oliver Goldsmith, the English actor

David Garrick, and Scottish writer James Boswell who was Johnson's own biographer. The Dictionary was completed in 1755. Johnson then turned his attention to Shakespeare and the eight-volume edition appeared ten years later.

Johnson was a great wit and prose stylist of genius, whose **bons mots** are still frequently quoted in print today. His works include biography, criticism, lexicography, prose,essays, pamphlets and periodicals. His important works are *Life of Richard Savage* (1745),*A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765),*A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), *Lives of the English Poets* (1781), and in poetry *London* (1738), "Prologue at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane" (1747), *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) and the play *Irene, a Tragedy* (1749).

Johnson's age saw the beginnings of a new understanding and appreciation of the work of Shakespeare, the development, by Sterne and others, of the novel of sensibility, and the emergence of the Gothic school--attitudes which, in the context of the development of a cult of Nature, the influence of German romantic thought, religious tendencies like the rise of Methodism, and political events like the American and French revolutions established the intellectual and emotional foundations of English Romanticism.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Samuel Johnson wrote no critical treatise, nor is the quantity of his critical or any other work great. But he exerted a greater influence on his age than any English critic had done in the past. His critical work consists chiefly of a dozen papers in the *Rambler*, the remarks on poetry in *Rasselas*, *The Preface to the Play of Shakespeare*, and the *Lives of the Poets*. As criticism in his day vacillated between a blind application of rules and judgment by sheer taste, he first applied himself to defining its true function.

JOHNSON AND NEOCLASSICISM

To the question, then, whether Johnson is a neo-classical critic in the tradition of Dryden, Addison, and Pope, or a deliverer from the 'tyranny' of the neo-classical system, only one answer can be suggested : that if by neo-classical criticism is meant prescriptive or legislative criticism-that which lays down principles to regulate the art of writing-,

Johnson is without doubt a neo-classical critic; but if it merely means a ‘blind reverence’ to authority, ancient or modern, he is not: he is for liberty. In the late seventeenth century, scholars and critics argued over whether the works of the moderns — especially those who lived in the Renaissance and later — could ever compare with the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In France, this was known as *querrelle des anciens et des modernes*, "the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns." By Johnson's day the seventeenth-century quarrel had largely passed, though many still as a matter of principle ranked older works higher than newer ones.

With his publication *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in 1765, Johnson made his contribution to the history of Shakespearean criticism. As with much of his work, Johnson left his own indelible mark on the field. His edition remains relevant today because it continues to affect the way critics approach Shakespeare.

JOHNSON’S VIEWS ON POETRY :

On poetry as such Johnson has but one sentence in his Life of Milton: that it is ‘the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason’. In this definition is contained both the nature of poetic art-that it imitates truth or life-, and its function-that it affords pleasure. In the imitation of truth it is guided by reason, and in affording pleasure by imagination. Truth, to be poetic, has to be pleasure-giving. Although there is not indication here of the moral purpose of poetry, it occupies a higher place in Johnson’s estimation than its capacity to please. ‘The end of writing,’ he says in the Preface to Shakespeare, ‘is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. Johnson’s view of poetry is therefore the one current in his day owing largely to Horace and the French neo-classicists. It is developed more fully in the Preface to Shakespeare. Poetry, in the first instance, is an imitation of life which represents not merely the particular, with which it deals, but, through it, the universal. Johnson finds it remarkable illustrated in Shakespeare’s plays. ‘Shakespeare,’ he says, ‘is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his reader’s faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpracticed by the rest of the world.....they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find.’ Here, with Shakespeare as his immediate subject, Johnson actually explains the meaning of poetic imitation. It is a representation not of what just a few people think,

speak, or do but of what most people in most ages think, speak, or do: of, in a word, ‘general nature’. The truth of poetry therefore is universal truth-an observation that is ultimately Aristotle’s.

Such an imitation of life, in the next place, has a universal appeal: it ‘pleases many and pleases long’. For the reader recognizes in its his own thoughts, words, and deeds: ‘those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated’, language that seems ‘to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation’, and scenes where men ‘act and speak as he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion’. in their new setting they please like a familiar face in a strange place. But Johnson would like them to be edifying too. ‘It is from this wide extension of design,’ he says at one place, ‘that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom.’ But he sees no conscious design on the part of Shakespeare to enforce moral lessons: ‘he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose.’ In his plays, as in the ancient Greek tragedy which Plato condemned, the good is not particularly encouraged, nor evil disapproved : both are treated alike. ‘This fault,’ says Johnson, ‘the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer’s duty to make the world better.’ Here Johnson is, no doubt, following Plato and Horace, but this moral proviso does not quite fit in with his definition of imitation. If a poet is to imitate life as it is in most countries and ages, how can he give its supposed that life itself is organized on a moral basis? As this is not true in all cases, what Johnson means is, perhaps, an imitation of those aspects of life only which satisfy both his requirements-those of verisimilitude and morality. For poetry, to be great according to his standards, must have both and must, at the same time, be pleasure-giving.

JOHNSON’S VIEWS ON DRAMA

Johnson also considered those aspects of the dramatic art that were debatable points in his day: in particular its nature, the unities, dramatic pleasure, and the tragic-comedy. Being a species of poetry, it must, as he said of poetry, hold up ‘a faithful mirror of manners and of life’. It should present ‘human sentiments in human language’. For ‘the value of every story depends on its being true. A story is a picture of either an individual or of human nature in general: if it be false, it is a picture of nothing.’ A great

play is not a story of a few men in one particular age but, through them, of all men in all ages: the actions, thought, and passions, it depicts, are 'in widest commonalty spread'. Shakespeare is great for this reason: 'the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed'. Drama therefore, as much as poetry, is a just representation of human nature both in its working in individuals and in humanity at large.

Johnson was one of the earliest of Shakespeare's editors. Johnson first planned to edit the plays of Shakespeare in 1745, when he published his *Observations on Macbeth* which was a forerunner of the edition that was to follow. **His *Preface to the Shakespeare*** which appeared before the edition of Shakespeare's works in eight volumes **exerted an important influence on subsequent Shakespeare studies since its publication in 1765.** Johnson was not the first editor of Shakespeare; nor was he by any means the last. Though he defended the methodology of his edition itself quite well, its legacy in modern literature is, on the whole, indirect. The critical material that accompanies his edition continues to have a much more direct effect on Shakespeare as he is interpreted today. To use Johnson's own criterion, his Preface and annotation can be called great because "frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favor" (Johnson 9). An understanding of the criticism itself is, of course, necessary to any understanding of its endurance. The notes with which Johnson sprinkled his edition, though indisputably important, are too diverse to be treated with any justice here. Johnson's more comprehensive Preface has retained its influence to the present day.

Samuel Johnson successfully retrieves Shakespeare from the conventional charges of his times that he violated the rules of dramatic composition. Apart from his ***Preface***, Johnson's notes which he appended to the plays of Shakespeare enabled a new insight into the works of the dramatist. In short Johnson is the first of the English critics to recognize the ways in which Shakespeare redefined and used the rules of composition of drama instead of following the bookish rules and writing lifeless plays. With his publication *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in 1765, for which he wrote this ***Preface to the Shakespeare***, Johnson made his contribution to the history of Shakespearean criticism in more then one way. What is unique about this contribution is that the genius of Shakespeare

was brought to the fore. The dramatist's originality had been dismissed by the neo-classical critics as inferior because a writer's value was decided by his adherence to the classical writer's originality and his original innovations were viewed suspiciously.

Johnson's recognition of Shakespeare is also, it should be noted, a critique of the prevailing notions of what makes great drama. As such, Johnson's assessment of Shakespeare is also a revaluation of the notions of English drama. Once and for all, English drama discards the stifling effects that the model of French drama had imposed on it and begins to breathe a new life. That Shakespeare effected this new life was brought out by Johnson whose excellence as a critic was impatient with the way in which English critics had till then quite unimaginatively and uncreatively sought to view drama the way in which the French critics did - keeping only the application of the three unities and the distancing of the comic from the tragic as the indicators of excellence.

It was Ben Jonson who was for a long time rated as the greatest of the Elizabethan playwrights and not Shakespeare, because Ben Jonson followed the three unities of time, place and action meticulously. This was considered as a merit on the part of the dramatist although it made the play artificial and lifeless. So, for example the play would begin and end in the same place, which while upholding the unity of place would do it at the cost of the realism in the play. In other words, the play would be lifeless although the bookish rule was followed. In fact, this argument had already been anticipated in John Dryden's ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*** **(1668).**

Firstly at the time Dryden wrote his essay, Ben Jonson was rated as the greatest of the English playwrights and was considered to have upheld dramatic tradition, especially as he followed by the French dramatists' example of constructing his plays in strict accordance with the three unities.

Secondly it was also the dramatic convention then not to mix the tragic and the comic elements in a single play. A play had to be fully tragic in action and spirit or else it had to be fully comic. Neither critics nor playwrights felt that such a practice distanced the play from embodying life as it was which is really a mixture of the tragic and the comic.

PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE, 1765

Johnson warns against short-sighted estimations of greatness by reminding his contemporaries that all too often ***" praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and…the honours do only to excellence are paid to antiquity".*** He begins the essay by remarking that it is generally the habit of critics and readers to praise what is ancient and to uncritically accept as great all that follows tradition unquestionably.

Johnson is doing two things here. One, he is commenting on the way in which readers and critics accept all that is traditional as necessarily the best and two, the failure of readers and critics to appreciate the originality of Shakespeare whose genius reaches beyond rules to expresses itself.

Johnson proclaimed **Shakespeare's merits** by listing out all those aspects in his plays which show the playwright's genius and originality and on which rely his unique contribution to English literature.

There are four easily distinguished sections in Johnson's Preface.

In the first section, he lists Shakespeare's virtues after explaining what merit, if any, can be determined by the Shakespeare's enduring popularity. Johnson walks the middle ground with his critique of antiquity. At the outset itself Johnson makes it clear that his praise of Shakespeare is not prompted by the fact the poet has survived the test of time. Still, Johnson proclaims Shakespeare's merits. Johnson walks the middle ground with his critique of antiquity. He neither fully embraces longevity as a litmus test of quality nor rejects it as meaningless. Rather, he points out that those works which have withstood the test of time stand out not because of their age alone, but because, with age, those works have "been compared with other works of the same kind" and can therefore be called excellent. He proceeds thence to elevate Shakespeare as the poet of nature. Nothing can please mankind continuously for long but the just representations of the general nature of man and the insights into life that are meaningful to him. It is Shakespeare's realism, Johnson argues, that distinguishes him from other playwrights. However just as one cannot call a river deep or a mountain high without comparing it with other mountains, so too, one has to compare a writer with others to show his greatness.

Although Shakespeare endured through time Samuel Johnson, however, warned against such short-sighted estimations of greatness by reminding his contemporaries that

critics and admirers lavish praise are without reason when the writer is dead because they believe that antiquity is a sign of excellence.

> The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns, and the beauties of the ancients. While, an authour is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best.

He proceeds then to elevate Shakespeare as the poet of nature. Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature". It is Shakespeare's realism, Johnson argues, that distinguishes him from other playwrights. This quality in poetry is described by Johnson as the stability of truth in poetry. Johnson's praise of Shakespeare is directed towards the manner in which the poet succeeds in capturing life as it is in his works. His characters bear resemblance to people in real life and when watching the response of the hero or other characters in a play the audience or the reader is convince that in life this is how people speak and act. So the play is a slice of life and not a lifeless product. So Johnson says

> Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractized by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an

> individual; in those of *Shakespeare* it is commonly a species.

Given the Bard's unimpressive educational background, the quality of his work is astounding. Education alone, however, could not produce Shakespeare's works, which have "a vigilance of distinction which books and precepts cannot offer" (35). It is that observation which makes him the poet of nature, and frees his works from many forms of criticism. Johnson extends his consideration of context to the national level. At a time in which the English had no model of literary excellence, Shakespeare produced just such a model. In his context, then, Johnson purports that Shakespeare's achievement is phenomenal. Johnson's advocacy of Shakespeare in the first section, coupled with his rigorous defense in the third, all but insist that Shakespeare's merits heavily outweigh his faults.

Dramatists generally present exaggerated characters in their plays. But Shakespeare's heroes as well his minor characters are drawn straight from life. That is why Johnson says that the scenes in Shakespeare's plays are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion.

The plays of his time and before, Johnson says, are so artificially constructed that when the characters speak it does not bear any resemblance to real life conversation. So too when the characters act they are made to function in such a consciously constructed and artificial way that no one in real life does behave or act in that way. But the dialogues in the plays of Shakespeare is often determined by the incident which produces it, and marked by ease and simplicity, that it does not resemble a fictive construction, but taken by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences. Even when the writer presents the supernatural the dialogue resembles the dialogues of life. Shakespeare brings the remote close to life and familiarizes the fantastic.The event which he represents seems impossible *(for eg. A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and there is no likelihood of its happening , but if it were possible, its effects would be probably such as he has dramatized them. Besides he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real urgent situations but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed. Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but

because they bring realities to mind. In these words dismissing the theory of stage illusion as untrue, Johnson accounts for the pleasure in drama as the natural human pleasure in imitation, as Aristotle believed it to be. The pleasure in tragedy is also said to be due to the same reason, although it is not explained why it pleases more than comedy.

This is Johnson's praise of *Shakespeare*, that his drama is the mirror of life by reading human sentiments in human language as it is presented by the writer even a hermit who lives away from the world may learn about the ways of the world.

In **the second section of his Preface** Johnson lists Shakespeare's imperfections with the objectivity that marks a true critic. This does not weaken his praise of the writer. Shakespeare's adherence to general nature is the reason, Johnson says for the censure he has received from critics, who form their judgments upon narrower principles and without taking the writer's genius into consideration. Johnson lists out the various critics who have found fault with Shakespeare's habit of staying close to like rather then to rules. Dennis and Rhymer think his Roman plays not sufficiently Roman and betray English references; Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal whereas Shakespeare attempted to look at the man behind the king. Dennis, another critic, is offended by comic interventions on the part of the chief characters like Menenius, a senator of Rome. But Shakespeare always made nature predominate over all other aspects and he never fails to preserve the essential character of mankind through his representations. Although his story requires Romans or kings, he never fails to focus on men.

Johnson looks at Shakespeare's creation of the tragi-comedy in a realistic light that takes into consideration the writer's aim to establish an adherence to life. By the rules of the critics, it is a violation because tradition allowed only the composition of tragedies and comedies as two separate genres. So Johnson says that there is always an appeal open form criticism to nature. Shakespeare found rigid genres untrue to life. There are two natural grounds to justify it: that the alternation of pleasure and pain in a play pleases by its variety; and that life is really a mixture of the happy and the sorrowful.

As practised by Shakespeare, it is a distinct species of the dramatic art. There is no difference between Johnson's approach to the tragi-comedy and Dryden's, but while the latter never declared with conviction that Shakespeare was true to life and in composing the tragic-comedy created a new genre, Johnson, with nature his guide, and recognizing the writer's genius defends him..

> Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous or critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Johnson's final verdict is that since the end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing, the mingled drama succeeds in conveying all instruction of tragedy or comedy as life itself does. Besides Shakespeare wrote when the rules of the ancients were not yet known widely, when the public critical judgment was unformed, with no model or example of such force to imitate, nor critics of such authority who would censure his extravagance. He therefore followed his natural disposition and creative impulse.

Johnson then discusses Shakespeare's success as a writer of tragedy and comedy. In the composition of the tragedy Shakespeare shows laboured effort, but in comedy he to dramatise a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In the tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation and is more successful. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy by incident and action. Johnson, though, sees in the mixture of sorrow and joy a style

which "approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life. Tragedy is his skill, comedy his instinct.

The next charge against Shakespeare is that he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct. The evil are not punished and so the charge is that he seems to write without any moral purpose. He makes no just distribution of good or evil. He carries his persons through right and wrong and at the close of the play, good characters are seen dying or the wicked not punished. The neoclassical age which believed that literature should teach objected to this but Shakespeare himself positions the function of justice according to what one sees in real life.

The next charge is that Shakespeare's plots are often loosely formed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When the play neared its end the playwright shortened his labour not applying his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

One of the major charges against Shakespeare was that he had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another. This was at the expense of possibility. This was the fault of anachronism, as for the mention of a mechanical clock in a Roman play when such clocks were not known. Pope attributed these errors to interpolators or lesser writers who inserted their works into Shakespeare's own.

The critic holds that in the comic scenes Shakespeare's jests are gross and licentious. Although Shakespeare did this to please the groundlings who watched his plays this has been objected to by many critics.

Johnson says that a quibble or was the fatal *Cleopatra* for which Shakespeare lost the excellence of the plays. Shakespeare, according to the critic, never resists the use of a pun and his plays abound in them.

JOHNSON'S DEFENCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S VIOLATION OF THE UNITIES OF TIME AND PLACE:

In the third section Johnson argues in defense of the imaginative violation of rules by Shakespeare. The next important aspect of Shakespeare's work that Johnson discusses is what was commonly charged as the dramatist's neglect of the unities which were held to be the laws instituted and established by poets and critics. Although the French adhered to the three unities sacrificing realism in the play, till Johnson defended Shakespeare's judicious use of this rule, no critic accepted it.

In doing so he is not just discussing Shakespeare's plays but in fact redefining the norms of the criticism for drama. He is retrieving English literary criticism from the fossilization it had set into by applying rules unthinkingly. So in this section Johnson's interest goes beyond Shakespeare although the playwright's works gives him the occasion to do so. Shakespeare never neglects the unity of action. But he finds the unity of time and place very artificial and restricting. All the actions in a play must take place in the same locale and all the actions in a play must take place within the time limit of twenty four hours according to this prescription.

Johnson is the last great critic of the neo-classical shcool. He has a code of conduct both for the woriter and the critic, though one based on nature rather than authority. Rigid neo-classicism made no distinction between rules rooted in nature and rules rooted in mere custom. It declared nature and custom to be the same. To Johnson, however, they stood in the relation of true faith and false, and while he subscribed to the one, he ruthlessly rejected the other. To that extent he may be said to have delivered genius from bondage. It may even be regarded as the first step towards that liberalism in literature which the next generation was to cherish.

At first Johnson states the objection of the critics and then refutes it. He states the case for the critics who hold that

> The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The critics hold it impossible, that an action of

> months and years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours.... From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Media could, in so short a time, have transported him.

Among the unities Johnson found openly the unity of action justified by reason, that is the union of the events of the plot into an inseparable whole. There would be utter chaos if event did not naturally lead to event to the desired end. But he found the grounds for the unities of time and place to be wholly illusory. The truth according to Johnson is that the spectators are always in their senses, and know from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. A lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore we can suspend disbelief when we see their imitation. The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama realistic. But if the play was to follow these rules blindly, then instead of being realistic, the play would, on the other hand become unrealistic. Johnson argues that what Aristotle really prescribed for the play was a proper beginning, middle and end. Shakespeare has preserved the unity of action as Aristotle required, giving the play a beginning, middle, and an end. . By reversing the entire paradigm through which the unities are used, Johnson changes Shakespeare's fault into a praiseworthy asset. The unities of time and place are rejected because of their artificiality and lack of realism.

JOHNSON ON SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES

Shakespeare's plots were generally borrowed from the most popularly legends and stories for his audience could not have followed him otherwise. For the English histories he took from English chronicles and English ballads and for the Roman and other plays he relied on Plutarch's *Lives* which had been translated into English by North.

His plots, whether historical or drawn from fables, are crowded with incidents, that while other writers appeal through particular speeches, Shakespeare makes us

anxious for the event that is to follow that it becomes compelling for the one reads his work to read it through to the end. Johnson puts Shakespeare next to Homer in the excellence of execution. In spite of the lapses in his work, Johnson points out to the extraordinary creative genius of Shakespeare who is according to him a born genius. Shakespeare is not a laboriously cultivated scholar-writer. This is given by Johnson in two picturesque metaphors- the first of a wild forest and the second of a rich mine of treasures.

> The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers; the composition of Shakespeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished unto brightness. Shakespeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in unexhaustible plenty, though clouded by incrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner minerals.

There has always been a traditional belief that Shakespeare had neither regular education, nor much skill in the classical languages of Latin and Greek. But Johnson finds enough proof that Shakespeare was a very diligent reader. Many of the Roman authors were translated, and some of the Greek; the Reformation had brought to England a vast amount of theological learning and English poetry had been cultivated successfully. But Johnson assessment of Shakespeare was that the greater part of his excellence was the product of his own genius. Shakespeare was handicapped in that the English drama and stage was still in its infancy. No critical essay either in tragedy or comedy had been written by which the playwright could be guided by. Neither character nor dialogue had been given critical consideration. It is to Shakespeare's credit to have introduced both character and dialogue in English drama and to have carried them both

to the utmost height. After Chaucer it is Shakespeare that Johnson places in the tradition of English literature.

> Other writers borrow their characters from preceding writers, and diversify them only by the accidental appendages of present manners; the dress is a little varied, but the body is the same. Our author had both matter and form to provide; for except the characters of Chaucer, to whom I think he is not much indebted, there were no writers in English, and perhaps not many in other modern languages, which showed life in its native colors.

In the final quarter of the Preface, Johnson reviews the work of previous editors of Shakespeare, and after critiquing his predecessors, Johnson explains his own editorial methodology. Johnson says that no existing edition is authoritative and that is why he is now editing Shakespeare's works. He states his unhappiness of Shakespeare's complete disregard for the preservation of his plays. Johnson states that Shakespeare made no collection of his works, nor rescued those that had been already published in distorted versions or attempting to give them to the world in their genuine state. Had Shakespeare released an authorized edition of his works during his lifetime, Johnson points out, the negligence and unskilfulness of eighteenth century editors would not have corrupted many passages perhaps beyond recovery. Still, Johnson praises the particular editions of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, and Warburton in the order of their appearance. Johnson praises Pope the most, who he says introduced to readers the true state of Shakespeare's text In doing so, Pope edited the plays heavily, even distinguishing between the legitimate and the forgeries.

As to his own edition, Johnson acknowledges his debt to his five predecessors, saying that each of Shakespeare's editors improved upon the available resources. He also points out that he tended to look before even Rowe's edition in an effort to find the most authoritative text possible. In an effort to maintain plays' integrity, Johnson admits that he limits imagination to the margin, commenting on the text with as little modification as possible. Still, with a multiplicity of available sources, Johnson's work as an editor was still significant. In the end, he released the most comprehensive edition of Shakespeare's works of the eighteenth century.

Considering the passage of time since the writing of Shakespeare's works, Johnson recommends notes which are often necessary, though they are necessary evils. Johnson alsossuggests that those that are yet unacquainted with the works of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, putting aside all the conventional criticism of Shakespeare that does not recognize his genius.

His final statement is that he stands shoulder to shoulder with skilled and unskilled editors and requests that he be judged impartially. But more so he declares only those critics who are learned and competent to do so should judge such an effort.

> Among these candidates of inferiour fame, I am now to stand the judgment of the publick; and wish that I could confidently produce my commentary as equal to the encouragement which I have had the honour of receiving. Every work of this kind is by its nature deficient, and I should feel little solicitude about the sentence, were it to be pronounced only by the skilful and the learned.

Johnson's edition of Shakespeare was greeted with mix of adulation and criticism. Even from the beginning, however, the Preface monopolized critical attention. Between Johnson's time and our own the Preface has been both exalted and condemned, pointing out its truth of argument, good sense, and just criticism. T.S. Eliot praised Johnson's original and critical excellence in identifying Shakespeare's genius. Eliot supported Johnson's rejection for the superficial distinctions through which Shakespeare's plays had been labeled tragic, comic, and historic. Rather, like Johnson he believed that in the interchange of the tragic and comic scenes, Shakespeare produces literature that is true to life

More than any other modern critic, however, Harold Bloom has fully embraced Johnson's approach to Shakespeare and identifies Johnson as the foremost of interpreters and the first among all Western literary critics. As long as Shakespeare is taught and read, Johnson's Preface work will remain an important critical text of reference.

Key Concepts:

Unities:

Action, place, and time, the latter two added to Aristotle's unity of action by Italian and French critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Aristotle described tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" and argued that drama must therefore exhibit "unity of action": an identifiable beginning, middle, and end; a harmonious correlation of whole and parts; a series of events which follow one another inevitably and are related in a causal sequence. Italian and French critics added unity of place -- the dramatic action must be confined to a small geographical area -- and unity of time-it must take place within the confines of a single day.

Character, **Characterization:**

A character is a person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, and characterization is the process by which a writer makes that character seem real to the reader. A hero or heroine, often called the protagonist, is the central character who engages the reader's interest and empathy. The antagonist is the character, force, or collection of forces that stands directly opposed to the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story. A static character does not change throughout the work, and the reader's knowledge of that character does not grow, whereas a dynamic character undergoes some kind of change because of the action in the plot. A flat character embodies one or two qualities, ideas, or traits that can be readily described in a brief summary. They are not psychologically complex characters and therefore are readily accessible to readers. Some flat characters are recognized as stock characters; they embody stereotypes such as the "miserly uncle" or the "mean step mother." They become types rather than individuals. Round characters are more complex than flat or stock characters, and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most real people. They are more fully developed, and therefore are harder to summarize. Authors have two major methods of presenting characters: showing and telling. Showing allows the author to present a character talking and acting, and lets the reader infer what kind of person the character is. In telling, the author intervenes to describe and sometimes evaluate the character for the reader. Characters can be convincing whether they are presented by showing or by telling, as long as their actions are motivated. Motivated action by the characters occurs when the reader or audience is offered reasons for how

the characters behave, what they say, and the decisions they make. Plausible action is action by a character in a story that seems reasonable, given the motivations presented.

Comedy:

A work intended to interest, involve, and amuse the reader or audience, in which no terrible disaster occurs and that ends happily for the main characters. High comedy refers to verbal wit, such as puns, whereas low comedy is generally associated with physical action and is less intellectual. Romantic comedy involves a love affair that meets with various obstacles (like disapproving parents, mistaken identities, deceptions, or other sorts of misunderstandings) but overcomes them to end in a blissful union. Shakespeare's comedies, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are considered romantic comedies.

Tragedy:

A story that presents courageous individuals who confront powerful forces within or outside themselves with a dignity that reveals the breadth and depth of the human spirit in the face of failure, defeat, and even death. Tragedies recount an individual's downfall; they usually begin high and end low. Shakespeare is known for his tragedies, including *Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, and Hamlet*. The revenge tragedy is a well-established type of drama that can be traced back to Greek and Roman plays, particularly through the Roman playwright Seneca (c.3 BC – 63AD). Revenge tragedies basically consist of a murder that has to be avenged by a relative of the victim. Typically, the victim's ghost appears to demand revenge, and invariably madness of some sort is worked into subsequent events, which ultimately end in the deaths of the murderer, the avenger, and a number of other characters. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* subscribes to the basic ingredients of revenge tragedy, but it also transcends these conventions because Hamlet contemplates not merely revenge but suicide and the meaning of life itself. A tragic flaw is an error or defect in the tragic hero that leads to his downfall, such as greed, pride, or ambition. This flaw may be a result of bad character, bad judgment, an inherited weakness, or any other defect of character. Tragic irony is a form of dramatic irony found in tragedies such as *Oedipus the King*, in which Oedipus ironically ends up hunting himself.

Tragicomedy:

A type of drama that combines certain elements of both tragedy and comedy. The play's plot tends to be serious, leading to a terrible catastrophe, until an unexpected turn in events leads to a reversal of circumstance, and the story ends happily. Tragicomedy often employs a romantic, fast-moving plot dealing with love, jealousy, disguises, treachery, intrigue, and surprises, all moving toward a melodramatic resolution. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is a tragicomedy.

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QUESTIONS FOR UNIT I

SHORT NOTES

1. Wit
2. Mimesis
3. Heroic Couplet
4. The moral value of literature
5. Pope on the study of the Ancients
6. Shakespeare's fatal error according to Johnson
7. Johnson on Shakespeare's heroes
8. The unity of place in drama according to Johnson
9. The necessity of notes to Shakespeare
10. Shakespeare's use of nature according to Johnson

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What are the faults of a bad critic according to Alexander Pope?
2. Discuss the literary characteristics of the Neoclassical age.
3. How does Pope attempt to overcome the deficiencies of inferior criticism?
4. Summarize Pope's estimate of the importance of the study of the classicists.
5. Compare and contrast the use of the word 'Nature' by Pope and Johnson.
6. How does Johnson defend Shakespeare's violation of the unities of time and place?
7. What are Shakespeare's merits according to Johnson?

8. What are Shakespeare's defects according to Johnson?
9. How does Johnson evaluate the genre of 'tragi-comedy'?
10. Among the two critics Pope and Johnson, which of the two is more liberal? Give reasons to support your answer.

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(A Central University)

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MASTER OF ARTS

In

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First Year

LITERARY CRITICISM AND THEORY

DDE – WHERE INNOVATION IS A WAY OF LIFE

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Literary Criticism and Theory

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Literary Criticism and Theory

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Selections are from
S.Ramaswamy & V.S. Sethuraman eds. The English Critical Tradition: An Anthology of English Literary Criticism Volumes One and Two. Chennai: Macmillan, 1976.
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LITERACY CRITICISM AND THEORY

(Paper Code: MAEG1004)

MA (English) – I Year

DDE – WHERE INNOVATION IS A WAY OF LIFE

UNIT -I

This unit consists of the following two essays in The Classical And Neoclassical Criticism:

Essay No.1. Alexander Pope: An Essay on Criticism
Essay No.2. Samuel Johnson: Preface to Shakespeare

UNIT I

The two essays in this section are John Dryden' *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and Samuel Johnson's *A Preface to Shakespeare*. Before we approach these essays, it would be helpful to have a brief introduction to literary criticism in general, its origins in the west and how it took shape till the seventeenth century which is when the above two essays were written.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. **WHAT THE TWO TERMS LITERARY CRITICISM AND LITERARY THEORY MEAN:**

What is literary criticism and what is literary theory? How are the two related? An attempt to answer these questions will be a good beginning to this subject.

Criticism can be described as a "discourse about literature," in a general way.The study, discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literature is the discourse which is called **literary criticism**. This act of study, discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literature is often guided by literary theory. **Literary theory** is the philosophical discussion of the methods and aims of literary criticism and each literary theory gives its own special way of looking at a piece of literature.**The two - literary criticism and literary theory - perform interrelated tasks. Any school of literary theory concerns itself with literary textsand thus with the act of criticism.**

Literary theory as the two words suggest, conjoins literature with the theory or philosophy about literature. Such a theory based interpretation of literature is the activity of literary criticism. So it is not really possible to separate the concerns of literary theory from literary criticism. It goes without saying therefore that there could be two or more ways of reading a piece of literature depending upon which literary theory is taken as the

window through which the literary text is read. **So the two activities, i.e. literary criticism and literary theory are closely related.**

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERARY CRITICISM AND LITERARY THEORY

Of course as lay readers we do not always look to a literary theory to be able to read a book.Usually we read literature prompted by our taste and our understanding of the values of life and guided by our vision of life. So a literary critic, and we are literary critics when we read sensitively and deeply, need not always be a theorist. This then becomes a particular theory. **Each school of thought and each theory has its own specific understanding of the function of the literary text and all the questions related to the relationship of the text to the author, the reader and to the literary tradition in which it emerges. What a theorist does is to crystallise these aspects and formulate a philosopical argument about it.**

Any kind of discussion on literature simply used to be called by the blanket term "literary criticism" earlier and there was not always a definite theoretical stand behind every act of criticism, nor was a literary critic always a theorist. As was suggested earlier, even though a critic may not have been a theorist still he would quite clearly reflect the temperament of his times, as for example, Coleridge or Wordsworth who reflected the Romantic world vision. But in course of time, especially since the seventies, almost every literary critic aligned his beliefs to one theory or another and there has been a steady emergence of number of theories. Actually since the advent of courses that concern themselves with "theory" started in the seventies the term literary criticism has been almost completely replaced by the term literary theory because acts of literary criticism are now largely theory based. There are many "schools" or types of literary theory, which take different approaches to understanding texts. Most of these theories have emerged from the continent, although they have grown steadily in Britain and the United States.

Literary theory is today a broad field. It includes a wide range of disparate approaches which are used by members of humanities in the exploration of literary texts. It also refers to the teaching of such approaches and practices in the universities, particularly in the departments of English.Texts from a large branch of disciplines such

as linguistics, anthropology, politics, philosophy, psychoanalysis and other such areas are brought to bear upon the exploration of the literary text**.**

3. HOW LITERARY THEORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM STARTED AND DEVELOPED

It is not wrong to say that literary theory has been there as has been literature, though the early Greeks called it **poetics** and it included rhetoric also. In fact this is where it took western literary criticism took its origins. In fact this is where it took western literary criticism took its origins.The discussion of the principles, the theory, and the aesthetics of literature, was formerly discussed as poetics and rhetoric.

Often the critical canons of one age have been discarded in all together and often too, a subsequent age has revived them. So the principles of criticism are as a body of thought the various interpretations of literature or literary activity, advanced from time to time. They are sometimes similar, sometimes dissimilar, and some-times even contradictory.

The discussion of the principles, the theory, and the aesthetics of literature, was formerly discussed as poetics and rhetoric.

In Europe the art of criticism began in ancient Greece. Exactly when it began cannot be said for certain, but the fifth century B.C. is generally located as the starting point. The practice of literary theory became a profession in the 20th century, but it has historical roots that run as far back as ancient Greece. There are several categories of criticism: theoretical, practical, textual, judicial, biographical, and aesthetic.

The ancient Greeks introduced two major types of criticism: **theoretical**, which attempts to state general principles about the value of art as did Plato and Aristotle and **practical,** which examines the particular works, genres, or writers in light of theoretical criteria as did Horace and Longinus.

Before the seventeenth century, there was no clear cut distinction between the two terms critic and critique. Dryden, in the Preface to the *State of Innocence* (1677), said that by criticism, as it was first instituted by Aristotle, was meant a standard of judging well. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) established the term for good. The general tone of criticism of the neo-classical period was prescriptive and therefore it is called **judicial criticism**. Philip Sydney maintained in his *Defense of Poetry* [1595] that poetry must engage and uplift the emotions of its audience. Dryden, the master critic of Restoration England, upheld neoclassical standards. In his *Essay on Criticism* [1711] Alexander Pope added an important section on the criticism of critics. Also described as legislative criticism this form of critical endeavour lays down rules for the art of writing,

largely based on standard works of literature, Greek and Latin. It assumes that the would-be writer has only to be told how to do his work to be able to do it well. It therefore addresses itself to the writer rather than to the reader, whose interests are supposed to be safe in the critic's hands.

Textual criticism is the comparison of different texts and versions of particular works with the aim of arriving at an incorrupt "master version." This has been perhaps most familiar over the centuries in biblical criticism. In English Samuel Johnson and H. H. Furness who employed this to edit Shakespeare and F. J. Furnival who edited early English texts. Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* [1779-81] was the first thorough-going exercise in **biographical criticism**. It was an attempt to relate a writer's background and life to his works.

The revolution from neoclassicism to romanticism was first outlined by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who emphasized the importance of emotion and imagination in literature. In his *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads* [1800], Wordsworth described the lyric as a composition that arose from the emotions of the poet when he recollected them in tranquility, whereas Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria* [1817] defined the workings of the imagination as the repetition in the finite mind of the divine act of creation, rather than as a mere intellectual excercise. This shift in emphasis was furthered by John Keats in his *Letters* and by Percy Bysshe Shelley in his *Defense of Poetry* [1821] with poets being proclaimed as the unacknowledged **legislators** of the world.

Diverse trends marked the criticism of the mid-19th century. The didacticism of Matthew Arnold, who held that the aims of literature should be "high seriousness" and a "criticism of life," was "countered by Edgar Allan Poe in The Poetic Principle [1850], by Walter Pater in Studies in the History of the Renaissance [1873], and by Arthur Symons in The Symbolist Movement in Literature [1899]. These critics celebrated **art for art's sake. Aesthetic criticism** treats literature as an art-an independent activity having an end of its own, which may or may not coincide with that of religion or morality or science or politics. It therefore probes the nature of the literary art as such and formulates its theories accordingly. Thereafter it is treated more fully by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde in the Victorian age.

The emphasis in criticism of this period on the reaction of the critic to the work under scrutiny led to the use of the term impressionistic criticism. However, as the

American critic M. H. Abrams has pointed out in *The Mirror and the Lamp* [1953], all criticism, no matter what its form or type emphasizes one of four relationships:

the mimetic which refers to the work's connection to reality

the pragmatic which refers to its effect on the audience

the expressive which refers to its connection to the author and

the objective which refers to the work as an independent, self-sufficient creation.

The twentieth century has been called the Age of Criticism. Such major disciplines as psychology, anthropology and Marxism, were found to have valid application to works of literature. Freudian analysis became a tool for literary biographers. Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious also became a tool, along with anthropological methodology, for critics like T. S. Eliot in *The Sacred Wood*, 1920 and Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957, who sought to trace similarities of pattern in literature of disparate cultures and ages. I. A. Richards used techniques of psychological measurement to examine reader response with new precision, notably in *Practical Criticism* [1929]. By means of the so-called New Criticism--the technique of close reading--such critics as Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, Lionel Trilling, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren revived the notion of a poem as an autonomous artifact.

4. SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

CRITICISM may be described in the following ways:

1. the act or art of analyzing and judging the quality of something, particularly a piece of literary writing
2. the act of judging, censuring or faultfinding.
3. making a critical comment, article, or essay; critique.
4. any of the various methods of studying texts or documents for the purpose of dating or reconstructing them or evaluating their authenticity,

To criticize means:

1. to judge the merits and defects of a work
2. to point out errors of a work
3. to simply discuss the merits and defects of a work
4. to censure or find fault with, cavil, censure, appraise, condemn, blame.

A critique means

1. an article or essay criticizing a work or reviewing it closely
2. a criticism or critical comment on some problem or subject

The root word is the Greek - *kritik* which refers to the art of criticism

- *kritikós* which refers to being critical or a critic

Criterion means

- a standard of judgment or criticism
- an established rule or principle for testing anything

The root word is Greek - *kritérion* which refers to a standard

- *krit* which refers to separate, to decide or to test;

A critic is

1 person who judges, evaluates, or criticizes.
2. a person who judges the qualities or merits of literary or artistic works, dramatic or musical performances;
3. a person who tends too readily to make harsh judgments.

The root word is Greek *kritikós* which refers to being skilled in the art of judging

5. THE TEXT

In literary criticism the text is the locus where the act of interpretation and evaluation of literature is located. The text exists in a variety of literary forms. The following are the important Literary forms and the authors who employed these forms are also cited in brackets.

Dialogues [Plato, John Dryden],
Verse [Horace, Alexander Pope],
Letters [John Keats]
Essays [Matthew Arnold]
Treatises [Philip Sydney, Shelley]

6. THE CRITICAL METHOD

Literature-poetry, drama, fiction-can be enjoyed in either a simple act of aesthetic pleasure as a lay man enjoys it or methodically as a trained man does. In the one case the

impression of its worth could be personal only where as in the other it is a conscious exercise in reading. It is this latter mode of enjoying it that is called criticism. A critic is an ideal reader. He subjects everything to closest scrutiny. His approach is that of scientist-a disinterested application to its subject to understand and interpret it fully. For criticism therefore, as for science, to flourish, intellectual freedom is necessary. It requires an atmosphere in which questioning and inquiry are freely allowed.

INTRODUCTION TO UNIT I

CLASSICISM

Classicism is a term that has several meanings. Originally it was used when referring to the art of ancient Greece produced during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Later it included all works of art created from 600 BC until the fall of Rome. Still later it was used to describe any art form thought to be inspired or influenced by ancient Greek or Roman examples. Today, classical is used to describe perfection of form, with an emphasis on harmony and unity and restraint of emotion. Usually, it is applied to works that are representational but idealistic. Classic is used to describe anything which is the epitome of its type.

Classicism is a term used in literary criticism to describe critical doctrines that have their roots in ancient Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, and art. Works associated with classicism typically exhibit restraint on the part of the author, unity of design and purpose, clarity, simplicity, logical organization, and respect for tradition. some examples of literary classicism include Cicero's prose, the poetry of John Dryden and Alexander Pope and the writings of T. S. Eliot.

CLASSICAL FOUNDERS: 1. PLATO

Plato’s lived in the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. He was the most celebrated disciple of Socrates. By his time writers like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes had already produced their master pieces. Greek culture was on the decline. Such a decline in national character and the standards of social and public life led philosophers to discuss matters that concerned the citizen and state, applying the test of reason to each Socrates headed them all by his dispassionate quest of truth which often challenged many an established belief and convention. Among these general inquiries the value of literature to society, and its nature and functions was also an important one.

Thus the past age of creative activity, gave way in the fourth century B.C to the age of critical inquiry.

Plato's critical observations are scattered in many works. His chief interest was philosophical investigation, which forms the subject of his great work, the *Dialogues* which is so called because it is in the form of questions and answers.

Ideas, Plato says in *The Republic*, are the ultimate reality. Things themselves being imperfect copies of the ideas form which they spring, their reproductions in art must be more imperfect still. They take men away form reality rather than towards it. At best, they are partial images of it. The first is the world of ideas, the second is the world of phenomenon and the third is the world of art. So art is thrice removed from reality or only third in the hierarchy of existence. Plato therefore called art **mimesis** - the imitative representation of nature and human behavior in art and literature. The term mimesis is derived from the Greek *mimesis*, meaning to imitate. It is often defined as a figure of speech, whereby the words or actions of another are imitated and the deliberate imitation of the behavior of one group of people by another as a factor in social change. Mimicry is defined as the action, practice, or art of mimicking or closely imitating the manner, gesture, speech, or mode of actions and persons, or the superficial characteristics of a thing. Both terms are generally used to denote the imitation or representation of nature, especially in aesthetics, primarily literary and artistic media.

Plato views art as a mimetic imitation of an imitation because art mimes the phenomenological world which mimes an original, "real" world. Therefore the artistic representation is highly suspect and corrupt in that it is thrice removed from its essence. Mimesis is positioned within the sphere of aesthetics, and the illusion produced by mimetic representation in art, literature, and music is viewed as deceptive, and inferior. It does not contribute to the ethical and moral health of the individual and the state. The same concern for the good of the individual and the state marks Plato's pronouncements of poetry.

The concepts of imitation and mimesis theorize the essence of artistic expression. They have been seen as the characteristics that distinguish works of art from all other human activity. The concepts also help us to understand the ways in which we experience and respond to works of art. In most cases, mimesis is defined as having two primary meanings - that of imitation (more specifically, the imitation of nature as object, phenomena, or process) and that of artistic representation.

Plato said that the poet writes because he is inspired. Though the poet's utterances contain a profound truth, but this appears only when they have been subjected to a further test-the of reason. Poetry therefore cannot take the place of philosophy.

Plato's next charge against poetry arises form its appeal to the emotions. Being a product of inspiration, it affects the emotions rather than reason, the heart rather than the intellect. So, for these reasons Plato refuses poetry a place in his ideal republic.

Plato observations apply equally to dramatic writing which formed but a branch of poetry. In order to please his audience the dramatist often introduces quarrels and lamentations in tragedy and imitation of thunder and cries of beasts in comedy. All this arouses their baser instincts which in turn lead to bad taste and laxity in discipline. Such plays therefore, says Plato, will have to be censored.

Sometimes plays act unfavorably on the actors themselves. By constantly impersonating evil characters like cowards, knaves, and criminals, their own nature may be so influenced that it may lead to the detriment of their moral character. Plato admits, however, that when the actor character impersonates men of courage, wisdom, or virtue, the actor stands to gain. By the force of habit, again, the same qualities are stimulated in him. Those tragedies therefore that represent the best and noblest in life are of positive benefit to the community and deserve to be encouraged.

CLASSICAL FOUNDERS: ARISTOTLE

Aristotle lived form 384 B.C. He was the most distinguished disciple of Plato. He is believed to have written nearly half a dozen critical treatises, of which only two are extant-*Poetics* and Rhetoric, the former dealing with the art of poetry and the latter with the art of speaking. *Poetics*, however, deals with may more problems of literature than *Rhetoric*, and has therefore attracted greater attention than the latter.

Poetics is a treatise of about fifty pages, containing twenty six small chapters. It is believed to be a summary of his lectures to his pupils, written either by them or by himself. It is believed to have had a second pert, which is lost. The first four chapters and the twenty-fifth are devoted to poetry, the fifth in a general way to comedy, epic, and tragedy, the following fourteen exclusively to tragedy, the next three to poetic diction, the next two to epic poetry, and the last to a comparison of epic poetry and tragedy. Aristotle's main concern, thus, appears to be tragedy, which in his day was considered to be the most developed form of poetry. Poetry, comedy, and epic come in for consideration because a discussion of tragedy would not be complete without some reference to the other forms of literature.

A poet or an artist is just a grown-up child indulging in imitation for the pleasure it affords. There is also another natural instinct, helping to make him a poet-the instinct for harmony and rhythm, manifesting itself in metrical composition. It is no less pleasing than the first. But the Poet's imitations or pictures of life are not unreal-'twice removed form reality'-as Plato declared. On the contrary, they reveal truths of a permanent or universal kind. To prove this Aristotle institutes a comparison between poetry and history. According to him, the function of the poet is to relate not what has happened as history does, but what may happen according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not merely because one writes in verse and the other in prose. The true difference between them lies in the fact that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher than history. Finally poetry expresses the universal, history the particular.

Aristotle's states in his *Poetics* that it is a natural human inclination to imitate. This characteristic is inherent in man from his earliest days. Man differs from other animals in that he is the most imitative of all creatures and he learns his earliest lessons by imitation. Also inborn in man is the instinct to enjoy works of imitation. Therefore on the strength of these arguments, Aristotle concludes that mimesis is l to man, and the arts and media are natural expressions of human faculties. This is in contradiction to Plato who held that a perception of mimesis and representation is opposed to truth, because it takes man away from real. Aristotle views mimesis and mediation as fundamental expressions of our human experience within the world. Art is a means of learning about nature. Through the imitative experience we get closer to the real, not away from it.

Works of art are encoded in such a way that humans are not duped into believing that they are reality. We recognize features from our own experience of the world within the work of art and this causes the representations to seem valid and acceptable. Mimesis not only functions to re-create existing objects or elements of nature, but also beautifies, improves upon, and universalizes them. Mimesis creates a fictional world of representation. Aristotle views mimesis as something that nature and humans have in common, as natural to the creative process and human nature. Two instincts, the instinct for imitation and the instinct for harmony and rhythm are natural to man and he indulges in them for the pleasure they give.

Aristotle's argument is that art is not an illusory copy of life or thrice removed form reality but an imaginative version of it, seeing the universal in the particular

whether the form be the comedy, tragedy or epic. The truths of literature therefore are of a high order, relating literature with life. Thus the artist shows the permanent features of life in the ephemeral, through the work of art. Aristotelian criticism focuses on the form and logical structure of a work, apart from its historical or social context, in contrast to Platonic Criticism, which stresses the usefulness of art.

Longinus' *On the Sublime* is also an often cited early example as is Aristotle's *Poetics*, and the aesthetic theories of philosophers from ancient philosophy through the 18th and 19th centuries are important influences on current literary study. The theory and criticism of literature are, of course, also closely tied to the history of literature.

NEOCLASSICISM

THE RISE OF NEOCLASSICISM :

In the latter half of the seventeenth century and practically the whole of the eighteenth-the Augustan Ages, as they are called-the classics came to exercise a complete hold over English literature. It was even believed that they represented the highest standards of literary beauty which English writers had only to follow to attain perfection in their art. There were two reasons for it. One was the excesses of influence of the French literary modes on the English. The other was the Metaphysical excesses which were the direct consequence of the Elizabethan fondness for liberty in literary matters. Kept within bounds naturally by gifted writers, it degenerated into license in the hands of the lesser writers. To read poetry became a difficult exercise because the conceits made it difficult to understand what was actually said.

It was just at this moment that England for a variety of reason came under the influence of France. French literature since 1630 had been steadily moving in the direction of the classics. It gradually evolved a classical system of its own, to which the name ‘neo-classical’ is applied to distinguish it form the original creed. It was finally expounded by Boileau in his Art Boutique, published in 1674. It appealed to the English writers for the way out it showed form the Metaphysical confusion and, to some extent, for the encouragement it received form the court, itself dominated by French influence.

The general rules laid more stress on the teaching function of poetry than on the delight-giving or aesthetic, and more, similarly, on training in the art of writing than on natural endowment or genius. Whence proceeded further rules to perfect the poet in workmanship, consisting mainly of those laid down by the ancient, particularly Aristotle.

Followed blindly at first out of mere reverence for antiquity. Nothing therefore that failed to satisfy this natural test of reason or good sense was great art; and of this natural test the rules of Aristotle were considered the highest embodiment.

CRITICAL PRINCIPLES OF NEOCLASSICISM

Neoclassical literally means'new-classical'.The Age of Neoclassicism was also known as the Age of Reason in literary criticism, Neoclassicism revived the attitudes and styles of expression of classical literature. In its purest form, Neoclassicism marked a return to order, proportion, restraint, logic, accuracy, and decorum. In England, where Neoclassicism perhaps was most popular, it reflected the influence of seventeenth-century French writers, especially dramatists. Neoclassical writers reacted against the intensity and enthusiasm of the Renaissance period. They wrote works that appealed to the intellect, using elevated language and classical literary forms such as satire and the ode. English neoclassicists included Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, John Gay, and Matthew Prior. The English Neoclassical movement was inspired both from classical and contemporary French models and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711).

Neoclassical principles embodied a concern and practice of the ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, correctness, restraint and decorum. So artists had to model their work and themes of Greek or Roman originals.

Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century, when the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the full emergence of Romanticism. Neoclassicism appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century and lasted up to the late eighteenth century.

Modeling itself on the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, Neoclassicism exalts the virtues of proportion, unity, harmony, grace, decorum, taste, manners, and restraint.

Neoclassicism values realism and reason over imagination and emotion. It rejected individuality and insisted upon conventional imagery, and accurate diction.

Art is defined as something artificed or artificial, made by craft with the aid of scholarship and applying the values of convention and decorum. Rules of art are learnt not devised by the artist. Neoclassicism discouraged innovation and gave sole importance to tradition and reverence for the classics.

The artistic rules of old are described by Pope as "Nature methodized and "Nature and Homer" which are the same in his opinion (*Essay on Criticism* 88ff, 135). This belief in Nature implies a conviction that there is a permanent, universal way in which things are which also demands an ethical commitment to it.

Neoclassicism represented a reaction against the celebratory and enthusiastic Renaissance view of man as a being fundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. The Renaissance believed that the artist was a creator upon earth. Neoclassical theorists, by contrast, held that man imperfect sinful with limited potential. They replaced the Renaissance emphasis on the imagination, on invention and experimentation, and on mysticism with an emphasis on order and reason, on restraint, on common sense, and on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism.

They maintained that art was essentially pragmatic, meant to guide and teach. It was also seen to be a product of the intellect rather than emotion. Hence their emphasis on the choice of a proper subject matter. Art has a didactic function and the writer is a moralist.

Concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace, were employed in the work of art to facilitate the process of delighting, instructing, educating, and correcting man.

The favorite forms in prose literary forms were the essay, the letter, the satire, the parody, the burlesque, and the moral fable. In poetry, the favorite verse form was the rhymed couplet, which reached its greatest sophistication in heroic couplet of Pope of wit and satire through the forms of the ode and verses written in heroic couplets. Wit and satire through the forms of the ode and verses written in heroic couplets flourished in this period. The theater featured heroic drama, written in verse, and comedies of manners, written in prose. Its popular forms were the melodrama, the sentimental comedy, and the

comedy of manners. In the fine arts of painting and sculpture1700s, archaeological discoveries in Greece and Rome revived interest in the study of classical art and literature. As a result, Neoclassicism became a popular art style, especially in France where the heroic, moral themes in classical history were used to inspire the causes of the French Revolution. Art of this time reflected calm, serious subjects presented with simple lines and a sense of order and purpose.

For the sake of convenience the Neoclassical period can be divided into three parts:

1. the Restoration Age (1660-1700), in which Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden were the dominant influences.
2. the Augustan Age (1700-1750), in which Pope was the central poetic figure, while Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett were the chief novelists.
3. the age of Johnson which is also known as Age of Sensibility: The period in English literature between 1750 and 1798, named after the most prominent literary figure of the age, Samuel Johnson. Works written during this time are noted for their emphasis on sensibility. These works formed a transition between the rational works of the Age of Reason, or Neoclassical period, and the emphasis on individual feelings and responses of the Romantic period.

Wit and the Heroic Couplet:

- Wit may be defined as the ability to see and express in originally humorous manner the relationship or similarity between seemingly incongruous or disparate things. A person who is noted for this ability is also known as a wit. These meanings, which gained currency in the age of Dryden and Pope.
- The heroic couplet, lines in iambic pentameter rhymed in pairs, appeared early in English, in Chaucer, and came into vogue in poetic drama in the seventeenth century, but in the eighteenth century, in the hands of masters like Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, it became for many years the dominant English verse form. The couplet of two lines forms a logical whole.

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Unit – I .1

THE CLASSICAL AND NEOCLASSICAL CRITICICSM

(Essay No 1. Alexander Pope: *An Essay on Criticism*)

ALEXANDER POPE : *AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM* (1711)

Alexander Pope (1688 –1744) is the most important poets of the eighteenth century. His first major contribution to the literary world is *An Essay on Criticism*, which was published in 1711 when he was 23. This was followed by *The Rape of the Lock* (1712, revised 1714)., his most popular poem; *Eloisa to Abelard* and *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (1717. From 1715 to 1720, he worked on a translation of Homer's *Iliad.* Encouraged by the very favourable reception of this translation, Pope translated the *Odyssey* (1725–1726) with William Broome and Elijah Fenton. Pope also edited the complete works of Shakespeare and it is held that he regularised the Bard's metre and rewrote his verse in several places. Lewis Theobald and other scholars attacked Pope's edition, incurring Pope's wrath and inspiring the first version of his satire *The Dunciad* (1728), the first of the moral and satiric poems of his last period. His other major poems of this period were *Moral Essays* (1731–1735), *Imitations of Horace* (1733–1738), the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735), the *Essay on Man* (1734), and an expanded edition of the *Dunciad* (1742).

Pope addressed the major religious, political and intellectual problems of his time in all his works. He developed the heroic couplet Pope had a friend and ally in Jonathan Swift. In about 1713, he formed the Scriblerus Club with Swift and other friends including John Gay.

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM (1711)

Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* is a didactic poem in heroic couplets, begun, perhaps, as early as 1705, and published, anonymously, in 1711. Pope began writing the poem, however, including drafting and revising it, some two or three years earlier when he was twenty or twenty one years old. Between the years 1731 and 1739 he issued a series of moral and philosophical poetical essays, with satires and imitations of Horace, of which the most popular was is the *Essay on Man*. Although the title of this piece, *Essay on Criticism* calls the composition as essay, it is a long poem on the performance of the poet and the function of the critic. This critical piece summarizes the principles of English neo-classical poetics which reminded the poet / critic of the greatness of the works of the ancients, recognized the necessity to model one's writing upon classical criteria and genres, and desired to see the ancient criteria and genres applied to the eighteenth

century English literary works. Therefore *An Essay* on Criticism is an important text in the history of English critical theory.

The listeners of this poet refer to all the people in Pope's period including all the poets and readers. He wrote this poem especially to those poets who emphasized on rhyme and sounds only instead of on sense and content. Pope's tone in this poem was both critical and satirical with a sharp tone of humor, a style he is famous for. Though its premises and aims are those of the entire neoclassic tradition, the poetic essay itself is a statement or summary of the literary beliefs of the neoclassical age rather than an individual argument or analysis.

An Essay on Criticism which is a didactic poem is described by its author, in a letter to his friend John Caryll, written on 19 July 1711, as "a treatise ... which not one gentleman in three score, even of a liberal education, can understand". Pope is here suggesting that the poem is a serious piece of writing, although like a treatise it does not propound a new theory or point of view. It is a wide document that upholds traditional critical thought in an attempt to revitalize the stature of contemporary criticism. The poem is what its title says it is, an "essai", or, as Pope calls it towards the end of the poem, a "short Excursion" (738), into a much debated and contentious topic: the role and function of criticism.

The poetic essay was a relatively new genre, and the "Essay" itself had the following purposes:

- It was an attempt on Pope's part to identify and refine his own positions as poet and critic,
- It his response to an ongoing critical debate which centered on the question of whether poetry should be "natural" or written according to predetermined "artificial" rules inherited from the classical past.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

The age Pope wrote in already accepted the classical principles of composition and criticism of the Greek and Roman masters of the past. In France and England the attempt to revive these ancient models saw the emergence of the neo-classical age or the new age

of classicism. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) is a re-statement of the neo-classical principles which were already are wide spread among writers and critics. It an example of the pointed and epigrammatic poetry Pope is acknowledged for. Pope's essay is modeled after the verse epistle of Horace *Art of Poetry* and Boileau's *Art Poétique* (1674) in French, but, unlike them, it does not deal with literature as such. Pope's aim is to educate critics on evaluation, and not writers on composition. He establishes the principles of sound artistic practice according to which poetry is to be judged; so, he focuses on poetry also. According to him only writers qualify for the role of critics. The poem commences with a discussion of the rules of taste which ought to govern poetry, and which enable a critic to make sound critical judgments. Pope then proceeds to discuss the laws by which a critic should be guided, insisting that critics must encourage poets, not attack them. He then provides, by way of example, instances of critics who had erred in one fashion or another. The poem is the nearest thing in eighteenth-century, English writing to what might be called a neo-classical manifesto, although it is never as categorically expounded as the term implies. It comes closer, perhaps, to being a handbook, or guide, to the critic's and poet's art. It is accordingly of value to us today in understanding what Pope and many of his contemporaries saw as the main functions and justifications of criticism in early eighteenth-century England.

The poem is articulated through a series of epigrams. It is built upon a series of maxims, such as “To Err is *Humane*; to forgive, *Divine*,” (525), or “For *Fools* rush in where *Angels* fear to tread.” (625). Pope's ability to sum up an idea memorably in a phrase, line, or couplet, with imaginative clarity makes *An Essay on Criticism* a much quoted essay in ordinary speech and the poem has many formulations that have an independent, proverbial existence.

The text falls into three parts which elaborate at length the various concerns of the poet/critic as has been delineated below, in a brief summary. The poem commences in **Part One** with a discussion of the rules of taste which ought to govern poetry, and which enable a critic to make sound critical judgments.

1. Part one is a lengthy theoretical defense of literary criticism which draws on Nature and the tradition of the ancients.

2. In it Pope insists that the authority of the past masters should be properly recognized and the example of the classical authors who dealt with poetry should be followed.
3. He concludes this section, with an apparent attempt to reconcile the opinions of those that support and oppose the adherence of rules. He argues that the rules of the ancients are in fact identical with the rules of Nature. Poetry and painting like religion and morality actually reflect natural law.

This introduces an ambiguity in the text's argument:

- On the one hand, Pope admits that rules are necessary for the production of and criticism of poetry.
- On the other hand he also says that there are mysterious qualities which he calls "Nameless Graces," with which Nature is endowed, and which permit the true poetic genius, possessed of adequate "taste," to appear to transcend those same rules. So the poet has to follow the model of the ancient masters and at the same time as a genius himself, not blindly follow rules but create his own laws of composition. He must be an inspired writer and not a mere scholar.

This leads the Pope to define then nature of the critic also. The critic, of course, if he is to appreciate that genius, must possess similar gifts. He must have a sound scholarship of the past and at the same time share the quality of genius of the poet in order to be able to appreciate a true work of art.

True Art, in other words, imitates Nature, and Nature tolerates and encourages inventions which are in reality aspects of the divine order of things, because Nature and the physical universe are both divine creations. According to Pope only the Divine can create and appreciate the harmony of the universe. In the same way, the scholarly and imaginative critic can appreciate poetic harmonies which echo those in nature. It is helpful and necessary for the critic to employ rules which are interpretations of the ancient principles of nature which the ancient masters themselves have employed to guide him because his own intellect and his reason are limited. Moreover his opinions may be inevitably subjective. However he must never be totally dependent upon them.

Pope then proceeds to discuss in **Part Two** the laws by which a critic should be guided. The second part discusses those critical traits that hinder truthful criticism and lead to critical errors of judgment. He insists, as any good poet would, that critics exist to serve poets, not to attack them. They must use their role as critics to encourage the writer and the reader to read literature and not discourage both these groups of people. He then gives examples of critics who have erred in one fashion or another. In Pope's view, whatever seems to be the mistakes of the critic, they are all outlined here. All these critics, each in their own way, betray some flaw or the other.

The final section of the poem, which is **Part Three**, discusses the moral qualities and virtues inherent in the ideal critic. This section presents a picture of the man whom Pope idealizes as a good critic and a great man. In other words the intellectual and moral virtues of the man and those of the critic‘s are equally important to the neo-classical critic, Pope. The principles of neo-classical criticism as these have been delineated in Pope‘s work are also the important principles of Neo-Classical Poetics.

Such a critic is also in Pope’s opinion the ideal man. Pope laments that such an ideal critic who is also an ideal man, no longer exists in the early eighteenth century which he calls a degenerate world.

The essay may be studied in terms of the following subdivisions:

PART I

GENERAL QUALITIES NEEDED BY THE CRITIC (1-200):

The section entitled **PART I** begins with a statement by Pope which is his introduction to what is discussed in this part. Pope provided the following outline for the first part of the *Essay*:

INTRODUCTION: *That it is as great a fault to judge ill as to write ill, and a more dangerous one to the public. That a true Taste is as rare to be found as a true Genius. That most men are born with some Taste, but spoiled by false education. The multitude of Critics, and causes of them. That we are to study our own Taste, and know the limits of it. Nature the best guide of judgment. Improved by Art and rules, which are but methodized Nature. Rules derived from the practice of the ancient poets. That therefore the ancients are necessary to be studied by a Critic, particularly Homer and Virgil. Of*

licenses, and the use of them by the ancients. Reverence due to the ancients, and praise of them.

These predominant concepts, given in Pope's own resume regarding neoclassical literary criticism, that are discussed in the first part of Pope's *Essay* are as follows:

- the features of bad writing and criticism
- the greater danger of bad criticism to the public which is misguided
- the rarity of genius and taste in poets and critics
- the damage done to the capacity of critical judgment by unsound education
- the causes for the emergence of a multitude of literary critics which include those who cannot write or judge with refinement
- and the critic's need to know the limits of his genius, taste, and learning in the exercise of criticism.

Two themes stand out above the rest:

- the role of Nature in the art of poetics and
- criticism or the activity of the poet/critics as the exemplars for literary activity.

THE NATURE OF POETRY AND TASTE AND JUDGEMENT IN A CRITIC

Pope begins by declaring that it is hard to say whether greater lack of skill is to be found in bad criticism or bad writing. Bad criticism, however, is a greater danger to the public. It is less offensive to "tire our *Patience*, than mis-lead our *Sense*" (1-8). True taste is as rare to be found, as a true genius (9-18). Critics need to be good judges, but the true taste necessary for good judgements is as rare as the true genius necessary for good poetry (9-18). For if a man wrote badly he makes a fool only of himself, but when a critic makes a wrong judgment many people are misled. Pope states that a great danger lies in judging other works carelessly. He believes that the practice of judging incorrectly leads to poor writing because the principles of both are closely related.

Most men, says Pope, are born with the seeds of good judgment, and yet good sense is all too frequently spoilt by false education (19-27). Bewildered by a maze of critical theories the critic who may by himself have some good sense becomes blunted in intelligence. Sometimes criticism is also an act of rivalry between poets and critics and literature becomes an arena where personal wars are fought. Therefore a critic should be humble enough to know his own limitations. The critic's word of praise or blame guides the reader. Therefore he must exercise a great deal of caution, because he does greater damage than a bad poet when he propagates writing that is unworthy of being read.

1'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
2Appear in writing or in judging ill;
3But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
4To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
5Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
6Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
7A fool might once himself alone expose,
8Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

Most critics strive to be “Wits”, but succeed only in becoming pale copies or “half-learned Witlings” (28-45). True critics, on the other hand, know, and operate within, their “own Reach”. They work within the limits fixed by nature rather than launching themselves beyond their own depth.

The awareness of his own limitations helps the critic cultivate a sound critical faculty(46-67). These are crucial lines in this section because in them Pope’s fist caution to critics is given. Since the poem is a statement on the art of criticizing a work of art in the best possible manner, his views on what the limitations of the critic form an essential part of the text. The following are the lines which put forth this idea.

46 But you who seek to give and merit fame,
47And justly bear a critic's noble name,
48Be sure your self and your own reach to know,
49How far your genius, taste, and learning go;
50Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
51And mark that point where sense and dullness meet.
52 Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
53And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit:
54As on the land while here the ocean gains,
55In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
56Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
57The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
58Where beams of warm imagination play,
59The memory's soft figures melt away.

60One science only will one genius fit;
61So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
62Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
63But oft in those, confin'd to single parts.
64Like kings we lose the conquests gain'd before,
65By vain ambition still to make them more;
66Each might his sev'ral province well command,
67Would all but stoop to what they understand…

NATURE AND ITS ROLE IN THE ART OF CRITICISM (68-87)

The first great rule for true critics, therefore, is to "follow NATURE". Pope goes on to discuss Nature in its general forms. Pope does two things here. He defines Nature and stresses on the need of both wit and judgment to conceive it. The basis for literary composition and the practice of criticism and the common ground that gives guidance for both, is to be found, according to Pope, in the understanding of the honorific term and concept of NATURE.

68 First follow NATURE, and your judgment frame
69By her just standard, which is still the same:
70Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
71One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
72Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
73At once the source, and end, and test of art.

Nature is the ultimate authority in Pope's *Essay*, and is presented here as that canon or standard to which both creative and literary expression which he calls "wit" and critical judgment are to conform.

In literature and criticism, Nature is all-significant as its source, as its aim, and as its test. Good and great art originates from Nature, and is guided by Nature.
What Pope means by this is basic to the eighteenth-century, neo-classical understanding of this doctrine.

The neo-classical understanding of Nature describes the cosmos as regulated and constructed in terms of order and regularity and harmony, which in turn reflects the order and harmony of the divine mind of the Creator. Nature manifests the divine order and

reason in the visible creation. Man perceives this order and rule in Nature because he has a rational soul made in the image of the divine.

The word NATURE is emphasized through the use of capitals, repeated at four other points in the poem. Pope's understanding of "Nature" is twofold: it is an appeal both to nature as an empirical reality and to nature as the artist's perception of an ideal order and harmony revealed in the creation of the divine. It refers both to the actual and to the ideal and to the fusion between the two. "*Unerring Nature*" is presented as a fixed point in a turning world, a "*clear, unchang'd*, and *Universal* light". It is at once "the *Source*, and *End*, and *Test* of *Art*" (74) and is crucial to the spirit and vigour of a work of art, like "th'informing Soul" in "some fair body". So we have to understand how Pope relates the rules of poetry rules of nature. Just as a tragedian arranges his plot incidents so as to reveal the operation of a universal law about human nature, or at least about a certain group of humans in a certain situation so that the truths of life are revealed in literature so too the critic must look for these truths and laws in the work of art. Nature's limits on man (ll. 52-66).

Pope therefore recommends to wits and critics alike that it is by Nature that they are to frame their judgments. Nature provides the just and changeless standard which ensures aesthetically successful compositions as well as accurate judgments. The order, reason and precision that characterize nature must also be reflected in literary composition. For this the writer has to look to the ancients for guidance.

THE RULES OF THE ANCIENTS

The laws of nature have been well reflected in the art and rules of the ancients. The modern writer has only to follow their model.

88Those RULES of old discover'd, not devis'd,
89Are Nature still, but Nature methodis'd;
90Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
91By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

To model themselves upon the principles of ancient literature is the same as drawing them from Nature, because Nature's aesthetic principles were embodied in the rules and texts of ancient poets and critics. Such an adherence to the Greek authors would regulate the English poet/critic's flight's of fancy. Thus to conform to Nature the poet/ critic must conform to the ancients.

Pope's conclusions are as follows:

- Homer and Virgil are the models for all literary and critical activity.

- Nature is the source and justification of literary works of art.
- The works of the ancients are the embodiment of Nature.
- Therefore the works of the ancients are the source and justification of art.

  Thus Pope recommends the study of them.

Both the poet and critic must therefore turn to the ancient writers to see how they portrayed the truths of Nature and the mysterious laws of life in their writings. The rules that they followed were devised by them in accordance with their understanding of the laws of life. As such they created a body of literature that stands as a guiding model to all writers of all ages according to Pope.

IMITATION OF THE ANCIENTS, AND THE USE OF RULES (88-200).

In the last section of Part I Pope recommends the imitation of the ancients and the benefits that accrue from such an imitation. He begins this discussion by emphasizing the value of ancient poetry and their criticism as models.

118You then whose judgment the right course would steer,
119Know well each ANCIENT'S proper character;
120His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page;
121Religion, country, genius of his age:
122Without all these at once before your eyes,
123Cavil you may, but never criticise.
124Be Homer's works your study and delight,
125Read them by day, and meditate by night;
126Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
127And trace the Muses upward to their spring;
128Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse;
129And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

Pope says that in the beginning criticism was subordinate to creative writing and thus helped to disseminate good writing. But gradually over a period of time the art of criticism degenerated.

102Then criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,
103To dress her charms, and make her more belov'd;
104But following wits from that intention stray'd;

While recommending the study of the ancients, Pope cautions the poet/critic should not imitate them blindly. He must read them, meditate upon them and then form his judgment.

In the last section of Part One of his *Essay*, Pope praises the ancients.The past masters not only offer a model to the present but also by contrast show the limitations of the present writers, which in line 229 is stated as "an inspiration, and a reproach, to the present".

Pope then continues his discourse on the now forgotten but eternal glory of the ancient masters of the classical ages:

189Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;
190Immortal heirs of universal praise!
191Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
192As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!
193Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
194And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
195Oh may some spark of your celestial fire
196The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
197(That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
198Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
199To teach vain wits a science little known,
200T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!

Part II

II.PARTICULAR LAWS FOR THE CRITIC (<u>201-559</u>):

Causes hindering a true judgement. Pride. Imperfect learning. Judging by parts, and not by the whole. Critics in wit, language, and versification only. Being too hard to please, or too apt to admire. Partiality--too much love to a sect--to the ancients or moderns. Prejudice or prevention. Singularity. Inconstancy. Party spirit. Envy. Against envy, and in praise of good-nature. When severity is chiefly to be used by critics.

If Part I celebrates the golden ages of the classical masters, Part II of Pope's *Essay* documents the fall of literary man. The reason for the fall is pride, which is the source of the degradation both of the human nature and the arts. After the introduction to the essay and comments on the lack of taste and judgment of many critics, the speaker

specifically depicts the problems of criticism and writing in part two of the poem. Some of the vices that the speaker points out in his argument include pride, imperfect learning, and partiality. Pope speaks as the critic of critics in his description of the fall of criticism in his own or in any age.

Pope lists the characteristics of misguided acts of criticism. His analysis includes a long list of thirteen faults or the deadly critical sins. Of these pride and envy are the worst. This is followed by the two characteristics that Pope identifies in a good critic, which are i) the rejection of envy and the cultivation of good sense and ii) the restrained use of severity by critics.

The chief critical faults areas follow:

(1) Pride, 201-14;
(2) Limited learning, 215-232;
(3) Judging by parts, not by the whole, 233-288;
(4) Excessive dependence upon wit, 234-304;
(5) Excessive dependence upon language, 305-338;
(6) Excessive dependence upon versification, 339-383;
(7) Given to extremes of being too easy to please, or too hard to admire, 384-393;
(8) Fallacious allegiance/partiality to the ancients or the moderns, 394-407;
(9) Basing criticism on the responses of the people or popular consensus or the identity of the writer and being prejudiced either positively or abusively, 408-423;
(10) Criticizing always contrary to the vulgar masses for purpose of individualism /singularity, 424-429;
(11) Inconsistent and hypocritical criticisms, 430-451;
(12) Parochial or party spirit criticism based on values of the critic‘s own group, 452-465; (13) Criticism based on envy and spite, 466-507;

Pope follows this list of faults with what he identifies as the necessary and desirable qualities in an informed and impartial critic:

THE QUALITIES OFA GOOD CRITIC

(14) The rejection of envy, and the exhortation to good nature and common sense, 508-525;
(15) The proper use of severity by critics, 526-559.

Thus to be a good critic is to be able recognize good and great works of art. To know good and great works is to have read widely and earnestly and appreciated them

for their literary value. Adding to the list of vices, the speaker notes that people who are partial to one type of work miss out on other types that may be able to teach them and broaden their intellectual horizon. Partiality "force[s] that sun but on a part to shine" and neglects all that needs its resources (ln.399). The speaker suggests that studying only one era of literature is as ludicrous as the sun shedding its light on one portion of the world and leaving the rest in darkness. The biases and stereotypes of that period will keep the critic close-minded and hinder his growth as a critic. Any argument increases in validity when both sides have been equally considered and a consensus has been reached after looking at all the evidence. Partiality hinders critics from improvement because they are not willing to learn about other points of view. Such an insulated knowledge leaves the critic ill-equipped to approach all works of art.

The speaker illustrates the problems of many past critics and tells the reader that critiquing poorly leads to bad writing. Since literature is one of the primary sources of knowledge and entertainment, the audience of these writers was influenced by what they read. They believe and act as their mentors instruct. Thus, the speaker warns against faulty criticism which may lead to the multiplication of mediocre and bad writing, which in turn influences the society becomes undesirably. Pride and imperfect learning are the cardinal vices of a critic:

- Pride, 208. The greatest fault of the critic is the fault of pride. Assuming that he is highly learned he may reject a piece of literature or criticize it harshly. Such an attitude may not do justice to the work that is criticized.
- Imperfect learning, 215. The critic may also be imperfect in his learning. If this is the case then the critic may not do justice to a piece of literature.

According to Pope pride is the never-failing voice of fools (Line 204). When a critic is deficient in wit, he hides his deficiency by his pride. Pride is the sign of an incomplete or shallow scholarship. He says,

209Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
210And fills up all the mighty void of sense!
211If once right reason drives that cloud away,
212Truth breaks upon us with resistless day;
213Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
214Make use of ev'ry friend--and ev'ry foe.

Pride breeds envy which is the jealousy of a greater wit. Pope denounces envy by stating that the virtuous man does not rejoice at another man‘s oppression (Never dejected, while another‘s blessed IV. 323-26). Pride is the mark of a writer dominated by self-esteem and jealousy.

These obstructions to good critiquing lead to inferior writing. Since writers are in a position to teach their audience and shed light on new ideas, inferior writing will have a significant damaging impact on the people. As part two of Pope's essay begins, the speaker says that pride is one of the most damaging "never-failing vice of fools" among all those that "conspire to blind… and misguide the mind." (l.201-204) By including pride with all other vices that negatively affect writing and criticism, the poet has deliberately chosen his diction to suggest a deviation from improvement. The pedant who forgets the end and judges by rules, the critic who judges by imagery and metaphor alone, the rhetorician who judges by the pomp and color of the diction and critics who judge by versification only are imperfect critics.

Since vision is one of the primary tools used to learn about the world, the blind have a difficult time learning. The speaker deliberately associates pride with blindness to show that pride makes growth and knowledge harder to attain just as blindness does. The speaker uses this comparison to also suggest that blindness may be a permanent situation but pride can be cast aside. When pride is removed, the writer is more apt to absorb knowledge and the critic is more open to opposing points of view. Therefore, eliminating pride will help both the critic and the writer improve their skills and keep their public well informed. In a similar notion, misguiding the mind is a dangerous thing because it leads to confusion. If an individual is misguided, then the path they seek will be more difficult to find. The speaker specifically uses this diction to suggest that pride "misguides" writers and critics and leads them away from their desired route of public education. Misguiding the mind clouds thought and disables the poet or critics ability to carry out duties. The speaker asks the critic to stay away from pride and "make use of every friend and every foe." (ln.214) A critic who can learn and capitalize on his enemies becomes a better writer. Getting rid of pride will make better writers and critics and keep the society at a well-educated level.

As the reproach of critics and writers continues, the speaker says that the lack of adequate knowledge is also a great deterrent from successful writing. Since obtaining knowledge plays a key role in the writing process, Pope says

215 A little learning is a dang'rous thing;
216Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
217There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
218And drinking largely sobers us again.

The lack of knowledge is dangerous because the people who read the work will also adopt these inferior beliefs. Since the poet is situated in a place of influence and his audience will suffer from his ignorance. An individual in a position of authority must try to learn as much as he can before conveying his thoughts to others. If he has not been properly trained, his work will lack validity and reality and create a generation of these same principles. The same line of thinking follows for critics who have not been properly schooled. Those who are apt to follow the general bandwagon will adopt the opinions critics give wholeheartedly. If these opinions are not founded on a steady base of knowledge, the critic could be responsible for spreading uneducated ideas and in turn creating biases in societies. Thus, the speaker warns the writers and critics that little knowledge is harmful because of the damaging effects it has on their audience. The critic should seek the author's aim and not take undue liberties in judging a text. Judging by parts, and not by the whole is another grave fault of the critic.

233 A perfect judge will read each work of wit
234With the same spirit that its author writ,
235Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find,
236Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;

The act of judging certain parts of something and not considering the whole picture gives the critic and consequently the reader a grievous picture of the text. A critic who bases his opinions on certain parts of a work has more than likely missed the essential underlying message of the entire piece. The speaker shows that it is "the joint force and full result" of beauty that we value and not just "the exactness of peculiar parts [of]… a lip or eye." (ln.245-246). The poet suggests that a certain force is associated with looking at the whole that does not exist in the sum of its parts. Although pieces of the underlying message may appear in the parts, the entire meaning will not be clear until the work is considered in its entirety.. A critic who does not look at the whole may concentrate only on the parts such as wit, language and versification.

wit : 289 Some to conceit alone their taste confine,
language: 305 Others for language all their care express,
306And value books, as women men, for dress:
307Their praise is still--"the style is excellent":
308The sense, they humbly take upon content.
309Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
310Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.
or versification:337 But most by numbers judge a poet's song;
338 And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong…

Just as the complete face of a person reveals more than just a concentration on the lips, the themes of a whole work carry more meaning than one specific section. Looking at the entire picture helps the critic get a better understanding of the ideas trying to be conveyed in the piece. When the critic does not consider the entire work, he may miss parts of contradiction and meaning to the piece. Learning to be objective in the sense of the big picture helps prospective writers create in similar fashion. By understanding the value of the entire piece, poets will write in a manner that also demands the consideration of their entire work. Thus, an impersonal critiquing of past works, leads to better authorship.

243In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts
244Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
245'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
246But the joint force and full result of all.
247Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome,
248(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!'
249No single parts unequally surprise;
250All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
251No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;
252The whole at once is bold, and regular.

As the poem continues, the speaker warns his audience of the comparison to perfection. The speaker tells the reader that when a person thinks of finding a "faultless piece to see", he thinks of something that "ne'er was, nor is, nor ever shall be." (ln. 253-254) The comparison of a piece to perfection is a pointless task because there has never been nor shall there ever be something that holds the idea of pure perfection. A critique

based on perfection will be without foundation. Thus, perfection is the wrong basis on which to critique because nothing will ever compare to something that does not exist. This creates a slight problem for the critic because it brings forth the question of fair comparison. If there is no common basis on which to critique a work, how can you differentiate between pieces? If there is a basis, it will be imperfect and therefore not a good basis of comparison. The critic has the difficult task of working with these opposing situations and coming up with a fair and reliable way of analyzing works. However, the author states that perfection does not exist and anyone who tries to find it will fail in his or her attempts. Thus, the same logic applies to writers who attempt to reach a utopia that does not exist. A writer then shall not try to perfect his work, he should write to best of his ability. Without the need to perfect a piece, the writer can create without limitations and inform his audience of his true ideas. There will always be critics who find faults with a poet's work, but this criticism shall lead to improvements in technique and consequently superior writing. Thus being too hard to please, or too apt to admire is another fault of the critic. The critic may have a partiality for a particular school of thought and may therefore find fault with a work. He may admire the ancients and condemn the moderns because of his partiality.

394Some foreign writers, some our own despise;
395The ancients only, or the moderns prize.
396Thus wit, like faith, by each man is applied
397To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.

Some critics do not have a judgment of their own. Either they imitate popular taste. Or unthinkingly they look at their predecessors who may not be the best judges and repeat their views. Or by merely looking at the name of the author they judge a work without looking at the contents and they either praise or blame the author and not the work. There is yet another brand of critics who fawn upon their patrons and write whatever that is written so that they continue to receive favors.

408Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,
409But catch the spreading notion of the town;
410They reason and conclude by precedent,
411And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
412Some judge of authors' names, not works, and then

413Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.
414Of all this servile herd, the worst is he
415That in proud dulness joins with quality,
416A constant critic at the great man's board,
417To fetch and carry nonsense for my Lord.

The need for tolerance and for aloofness from extremes of fashion and subjective evaluation makes a good critic. Just as the writer not seek praise as the goal of his work so too the critic should not exaggerate the faults of the writers. Earlier on in the essay, the main advice given to the critic is not to set his pride against the author; to try to understand first the author's spirit and then judge accordingly. Defining the intellectual and moral characteristics of the good critic Pope says that the critic must not pay excessive attention to small faults; he must appreciate what is good, irrespective of its being old or new, foreign or national. He must control his obsessions and not sacrifice his judgment, seek to appreciate, rather than to find fault and avoid the extremities of novelty and tradition. According to Pope envy is a destroyer and must be abandoned. The critic must to be quick to recognize the genuine accomplishment in another. However the worst critical fault according to Pope is the critic's thirst for glory. The critic must refrain from very harsh judgment and not make much of minor faults.

523 Nor in the critic let the man be lost!
524 Good nature and good sense must ever join;
525 To err is human; to forgive, divine.

Just as pride can be the most subtle of the sins that separates man from a true understanding of God, it can stand between the critic and nature, reason, and judgment. Thus, the practice of poetry and criticism which reached its height in the classical era of Homer, Aristotle, and Virgil has now in Pope's analysis fallen through the capital offenses of pride and envy, it must be cleansed of its defects and restored to its natural capacities and virtues that it might fulfill its aesthetic and social functions. This restoration of the poet/critic is the theme of Part Three of Pope's *Essay*.

Part III

Rules for the conduct and manners in a Critic. Candour. Modesty. Good breeding. Sincerity and freedom of advice. When one's counsel is to be restrained. Character of an incorrigible poet. And of an impertinent critic. Character of a good critic. The history of criticism, and characters of the best critics; Aristotle. Horace. Dionysius. Petronius.

Quintiallian. Longinus. Of the decay of Criticism, and its revival. Erasmus. Vida. Boileau. Lord Roscommon, etc. Conclusion.

In this part which is serious and ethical in tone pope gives a description of the ideal critic as seen in the summary given as the introduction by the poet himself. In Part III Pope points out the moral virtues required in the critic who is also the ideal man.

III. THE IDEAL CHARACTER OF THE CRITIC (560-744):

According to Pope knowledge is not sufficient: honesty is needed, too, and humility in putting forward his judgment, taking care not to offend. A good critic must have a sense of proportion, and know when to forbear criticizing a great writer, while foolish critics will assail him with importunities. Throughout this section, Pope refers to ancient writers such as Virgil, Homer, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus. This is due to the neo-classical belief that the imitation of the ancients is the ultimate standard for taste.

Pope then deals with the conduct of manners necessary for a true critic and begins by urging such a person to let truth and candor shine. Pope encourages diffidence and modesty, good breeding and tact, sincerity and freedom of advice.

560Learn then what morals critics ought to show,
561For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.
562'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
563In all you speak, let truth and candour shine:
564That not alone what to your sense is due,
565All may allow; but seek your friendship too.
566 Be silent always when you doubt your sense;
567And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence:

Pope continues the discussion by listing **five fundamental moral virtues of a critic**.

1. truth and candor:

enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candor shine (Lines 561-62).

2. modesty:

Be silent always when you doubt your sense; And
speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence (Lines 566-67).

3. good breeding:

Without good breeding, truth is disapproved;

That only makes superior sense beloved (Lines 576-77).

4. sincerity and generosity of advice:

Be niggards of advice on no pretence;
For the worst avarice is that of sense.
With mean complacence ne‘er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.
Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
Those best can bear reproof, who merit praise (Lines 578-83).

5. restraint:

Tis best sometimes your censure to restrain,
And charitably let the dull be vain (Lines 596-97).

He goes on to indicate occasions, however, when a critic's counsel should be restrained, incorporating an attack on John Dennis, who is cited as an example of a writer too easily moved to anger and described, under the pseudonym of Appius.

This leads into a description of dull poets and “mad, abandon'd” critics, both of whom it is best to ignore. Pope speaks disparagingly about the foolish and arrogant critics whom he admonishes for their ignorant and misinformed nature.

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
With loads of learned lumber in his head (Lines 612-13).

In their arrogance and impetuosity, no poet or playwright is protected from their cavil, for some critics are fools who rush in where angels fear to tread. By contrast Pope gives us a portrait of the ideal critic who has love for praising the goodness of a work and who has reason by his side. Pope’s ideal critic is knowledgeable yet humble; learned yet well bred; well bred yet sincere; modest yet bold; humane yet severe;closed yet open; theoretical yet practical; loving yet rational. Then Pope asks a rhetorical question whether such a man exists:

631But where's the man, who counsel can bestow,
632Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know?
633Unbias'd, or by favour or by spite;
634Not dully prepossess'd, nor blindly right;
635Though learn'd, well-bred; and though well-bred,
sincere;

636Modestly bold, and humanly severe?
637Who to a friend his faults can freely show,
638And gladly praise the merit of a foe?
639Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfin'd;
640A knowledge both of books and human kind;
641Gen'rous converse; a soul exempt from pride;
642And love to praise, with reason on his side?

Such an image leads into a history of criticism amongst the Ancients, starting with Aristotle (645-52) and leading through Horace (653-64), Dionysius (665-66), Petronius (667-68), Quintillian (669-74), and Longinus (675-80). However Pope's regret is that this great tradition came to an end in the Dark Ages. The ideal critic, who is also the ideal man, Pope laments, no longer exists in the degenerate world of the early eighteenth century.Pope sees a renaissance beginning under Erasmus (694-704) and Vida (705-8) and spreading to the northern world and particularly France (709-14). In Britain by Lord Roscommon (715-28) and Pope's friend, William Walsh (729-34), whom Dryden had called the best critic.

729Such late was Walsh--the Muse's judge and friend,
730Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
731To failings mild, but zealous for desert;
732The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.
733This humble praise, lamented shade! receive,
734This praise at least a grateful Muse may give:
735The Muse, whose early voice you taught to sing,
736Prescrib'd her heights, and prun'd her tender wing,
737(Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,
738But in low numbers short excursions tries:

Pope says the Muse of poetry no longer flies to great heights but makes only short excursions in the hands of lesser poets and critics. He closes the poem by describing his own aims and aspirations as a poet. He says "Not *free* from Faults, nor yet too vain to *mend"* by which he means that though he is not free of faults he is willing to learn and repair the faults of his poetry and criticism.

Pope concludes the *Essay* on a positive note that the restoration of high art and criticism and might be achieved by the English poets and critics.

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UNIT – I.2

The Classical And Neoclassical Criticicsm

(Essay No 2. Samuel Johnson: *Preface to Shakespeare*)

SAMUEL JOHNSON : ***A PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE*** **(1765)**

Samuel Johnson, (**1709 -1784**), often referred to simply as Dr Johnson, was one of **England**'s greatest literary figures: a **poet**, **essayist**, **biographer**, **lexicographer**, and often esteemed the finest literary critic in **English**. Johnson was an English lexicographer or writer of dictionaries. He was the most influential figure in 18th-century eighteenth literary society. His *Dictionary* (1755) served as a model for English lexicography for more than a century. In 1764 he founded, at the suggestion of the English painter Joshua Reynolds, The Literary Club in 1779 , whose members included also the Irish political philosopher Edmund Burke, the Irish dramatist Oliver Goldsmith, the English actor David Garrick, and Scottish writer James Boswell who was Johnson's own biographer. The Dictionary was completed in 1755. Johnson then turned his attention to Shakespeare and the eight-volume edition appeared ten years later.

Johnson was a great wit and prose stylist of genius, whose **bons mots** are still frequently quoted in print today. His works include biography, criticism, lexicography, prose,essays, pamphlets and periodicals. His important works are *Life of Richard Savage* (1745),*A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765),*A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), *Lives of the English Poets* (1781), and in poetry *London* (1738), "Prologue at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane" (1747), *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) and the play *Irene, a Tragedy* (1749).

Johnson's age saw the beginnings of a new understanding and appreciation of the work of Shakespeare, the development, by Sterne and others, of the novel of sensibility, and the emergence of the Gothic school--attitudes which, in the context of the development of a cult of Nature, the influence of German romantic thought, religious tendencies like the rise of Methodism, and political events like the American and French revolutions established the intellectual and emotional foundations of English Romanticism.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Samuel Johnson wrote no critical treatise, nor is the quantity of his critical or any other work great. But he exerted a greater influence on his age than any English critic had done in the past. His critical work consists chiefly of a dozen papers in the *Rambler*, the remarks on poetry in *Rasselas*, *The Preface to the Play of Shakespeare*, and the *Lives of the Poets*. As criticism in his day vacillated between a blind application of rules and judgment by sheer taste, he first applied himself to defining its true function.

JOHNSON AND NEOCLASSICISM

To the question, then, whether Johnson is a neo-classical critic in the tradition of Dryden, Addison, and Pope, or a deliverer from the 'tyranny' of the neo-classical system, only one answer can be suggested : that if by neo-classical criticism is meant prescriptive or legislative criticism-that which lays down principles to regulate the art of writing-, Johnson is without doubt a neo-classical critic; but if it merely means a 'blind reverence' to authority, ancient or modern, he is not: he is for liberty. In the late seventeenth century, scholars and critics argued over whether the works of the moderns — especially those who lived in the Renaissance and later — could ever compare with the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In France, this was known as *querrelle des anciens et des modernes*, "the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns." By Johnson's day the seventeenth-century quarrel had largely passed, though many still as a matter of principle ranked older works higher than newer ones.

With his publication *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in 1765, Johnson made his contribution to the history of Shakespearean criticism. As with much of his work, Johnson left his own indelible mark on the field. His edition remains relevant today because it continues to affect the way critics approach Shakespeare.

JOHNSON'S VIEWS ON POETRY :

On poetry as such Johnson has but one sentence in his Life of Milton: that it is 'the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason'. In this definition is contained both the nature of poetic art-that it imitates truth or life-, and its function-that it affords pleasure. In the imitation of truth it is guided by reason, and in affording pleasure by imagination. Truth, to be poetic, has to be pleasure-giving. Although there is not indication here of the moral purpose of poetry, it occupies a higher place in Johnson's estimation than its capacity to please. 'The end of writing,' he says in

the Preface to Shakespeare, ‘is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. Johnson’s view of poetry is therefore the one current in his day owing largely to Horace and the French neo-classicists. It is developed more fully in the Preface to Shakespeare. Poetry, in the first instance, is an imitation of life which represents not merely the particular, with which it deals, but, through it, the universal. Johnson finds it remarkable illustrated in Shakespeare’s plays. ‘Shakespeare,’ he says, ‘is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his reader’s faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpracticed by the rest of the world.....they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find.’ Here, with Shakespeare as his immediate subject, Johnson actually explains the meaning of poetic imitation. It is a representation not of what just a few people think, speak, or do but of what most people in most ages think, speak, or do: of, in a word, ‘general nature’. The truth of poetry therefore is universal truth-an observation that is ultimately Aristotle’s.

Such an imitation of life, in the next place, has a universal appeal: it ‘pleases many and pleases long’. For the reader recognizes in its his own thoughts, words, and deeds: ‘those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated’, language that seems ‘to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation’, and scenes where men ‘act and speak as he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion’. in their new setting they please like a familiar face in a strange place. But Johnson would like them to be edifying too. ‘It is from this wide extension of design,’ he says at one place, ‘that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom.’ But he sees no conscious design on the part of Shakespeare to enforce moral lessons: ‘he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose.’ In his plays, as in the ancient Greek tragedy which Plato condemned, the good is not particularly encouraged, nor evil disapproved : both are treated alike. ‘This fault,’ says Johnson, ‘the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer’s duty to make the world better.’ Here Johnson is, no doubt, following Plato and Horace, but this moral proviso does not quite fit in with his definition of imitation. If a poet is to imitate life as it is in most countries and ages, how can he give its supposed that life itself is organized on a moral basis? As this is not true in all cases, what Johnson means is, perhaps, an imitation of those aspects of life only which satisfy

both his requirements-those of verisimilitude and morality. For poetry, to be great according to his standards, must have both and must, at the same time, be pleasure-giving.

JOHNSON'S VIEWS ON DRAMA

Johnson also considered those aspects of the dramatic art that were debatable points in his day: in particular its nature, the unities, dramatic pleasure, and the tragic-comedy. Being a species of poetry, it must, as he said of poetry, hold up 'a faithful mirror of manners and of life'. It should present 'human sentiments in human language'. For 'the value of every story depends on its being true. A story is a picture of either an individual or of human nature in general: if it be false, it is a picture of nothing.' A great play is not a story of a few men in one particular age but, through them, of all men in all ages: the actions, thought, and passions, it depicts, are 'in widest commonalty spread'. Shakespeare is great for this reason: 'the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed'. Drama therefore, as much as poetry, is a just representation of human nature both in its working in individuals and in humanity at large.

Johnson was one of the earliest of Shakespeare's editors. Johnson first planned to edit the plays of Shakespeare in 1745, when he published his *Observations on Macbeth* which was a forerunner of the edition that was to follow. **His *Preface to the Shakespeare*** which appeared before the edition of Shakespeare's works in eight volumes **exerted an important influence on subsequent Shakespeare studies since its publication in 1765.** Johnson was not the first editor of Shakespeare; nor was he by any means the last. Though he defended the methodology of his edition itself quite well, its legacy in modern literature is, on the whole, indirect. The critical material that accompanies his edition continues to have a much more direct effect on Shakespeare as he is interpreted today. To use Johnson's own criterion, his Preface and annotation can be called great because "frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favor" (Johnson 9). An understanding of the criticism itself is, of course, necessary to any understanding of its endurance. The notes with which Johnson sprinkled his edition, though indisputably important, are too diverse to be treated with any justice here. Johnson's more comprehensive Preface has retained its influence to the present day.

Samuel Johnson successfully retrieves Shakespeare from the conventional charges of his times that he violated the rules of dramatic composition. Apart from his ***Preface***, Johnson's notes which he appended to the plays of Shakespeare enabled a new insight into the works of the dramatist. In short Johnson is the first of the English critics to recognize the ways in which Shakespeare redefined and used the rules of composition of drama instead of following the bookish rules and writing lifeless plays. With his publication *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in 1765, for which he wrote this ***Preface to the Shakespeare***, Johnson made his contribution to the history of Shakespearean criticism in more then one way. What is unique about this contribution is that the genius of Shakespeare was brought to the fore. The dramatist's originality had been dismissed by the neo-classical critics as inferior because a writer's value was decided by his adherence to the classical writer's originality and his original innovations were viewed suspiciously.

Johnson's recognition of Shakespeare is also, it should be noted, a critique of the prevailing notions of what makes great drama. As such, Johnson's assessment of Shakespeare is also a revaluation of the notions of English drama. Once and for all, English drama discards the stifling effects that the model of French drama had imposed on it and begins to breathe a new life. That Shakespeare effected this new life was brought out by Johnson whose excellence as a critic was impatient with the way in which English critics had till then quite unimaginatively and uncreatively sought to view drama the way in which the French critics did - keeping only the application of the three unities and the distancing of the comic from the tragic as the indicators of excellence.

It was Ben Jonson who was for a long time rated as the greatest of the Elizabethan playwrights and not Shakespeare, because Ben Jonson followed the three unities of time, place and action meticulously. This was considered as a merit on the part of the dramatist although it made the play artificial and lifeless. So, for example the play would begin and end in the same place, which while upholding the unity of place would do it at the cost of the realism in the play. In other words, the play would be lifeless although the bookish rule was followed. In fact, this argument had already been anticipated in John Dryden's ***An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*** **(1668).**

Firstly at the time Dryden wrote his essay, Ben Jonson was rated as the greatest of the English playwrights and was considered to have upheld dramatic tradition,

especially as he followed by the French dramatists' example of constructing his plays in strict accordance with the three unities.

Secondly it was also the dramatic convention then not to mix the tragic and the comic elements in a single play. A play had to be fully tragic in action and spirit or else it had to be fully comic. Neither critics nor playwrights felt that such a practice distanced the play from embodying life as it was which is really a mixture of the tragic and the comic.

PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE, 1765

Johnson warns against short-sighted estimations of greatness by reminding his contemporaries that all too often***" praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and…the honours do only to excellence are paid to antiquity*"."** He begins the essay by remarking that it is generally the habit of critics and readers to praise what is ancient and to uncritically accept as great all that follows tradition unquestionably.

Johnson is doing two things here. One, he is commenting on the way in which readers and critics accept all that is traditional as necessarily the best and two, the failure of readers and critics to appreciate the originality of Shakespeare whose genius reaches beyond rules to expresses itself.

Johnson proclaimed **Shakespeare's merits** by listing out all those aspects in his plays which show the playwright's genius and originality and on which rely his unique contribution to English literature.

There are four easily distinguished sections in Johnson's Preface.

In the first section, he lists Shakespeare's virtues after explaining what merit, if any, can be determined by the Shakespeare's enduring popularity. Johnson walks the middle ground with his critique of antiquity. At the outset itself Johnson makes it clear that his praise of Shakespeare is not prompted by the fact the poet has survived the test of time. Still, Johnson proclaims Shakespeare's merits. Johnson walks the middle ground with his critique of antiquity. He neither fully embraces longevity as a litmus test of quality nor rejects it as meaningless. Rather, he points out that those works which have withstood the test of time stand out not because of their age alone, but because, with age,

those works have "been compared with other works of the same kind" and can therefore be called excellent. He proceeds thence to elevate Shakespeare as the poet of nature. Nothing can please mankind continuously for long but the just representations of the general nature of man and the insights into life that are meaningful to him. It is Shakespeare's realism, Johnson argues, that distinguishes him from other playwrights. However just as one cannot call a river deep or a mountain high without comparing it with other mountains, so too, one has to compare a writer with others to show his greatness.

Although Shakespeare endured through time Samuel Johnson, however, warned against such short-sighted estimations of greatness by reminding his contemporaries that critics and admirers lavish praise are without reason when the writer is dead because they believe that antiquity is a sign of excellence.

> The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns, and the beauties of the ancients. While, an authour is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best.

He proceeds then to elevate Shakespeare as the poet of nature. Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature". It is Shakespeare's realism, Johnson argues, that distinguishes him from other playwrights. This quality in poetry is described by Johnson as the stability of truth in poetry. Johnson's praise of Shakespeare is directed towards the manner in which the poet succeeds in capturing life as it is in his works. His characters bear resemblance to people in real life and when watching the response of the hero or other characters in a play the audience or the reader is convince that in life this is how people speak and act. So the play is a slice of life and not a lifeless product. So Johnson says

> Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular

> places, unpractized by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of *Shakespeare* it is commonly a species.

Given the Bard's unimpressive educational background, the quality of his work is astounding. Education alone, however, could not produce Shakespeare's works, which have "a vigilance of distinction which books and precepts cannot offer" (35). It is that observation which makes him the poet of nature, and frees his works from many forms of criticism. Johnson extends his consideration of context to the national level. At a time in which the English had no model of literary excellence, Shakespeare produced just such a model. In his context, then, Johnson purports that Shakespeare's achievement is phenomenal. Johnson's advocacy of Shakespeare in the first section, coupled with his rigorous defense in the third, all but insist that Shakespeare's merits heavily outweigh his faults.

Dramatists generally present exaggerated characters in their plays. But Shakespeare's heroes as well his minor characters are drawn straight from life. That is why Johnson says that the scenes in Shakespeare's plays are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion.

The plays of his time and before, Johnson says, are so artificially constructed that when the characters speak it does not bear any resemblance to real life conversation. So too when the characters act they are made to function in such a consciously constructed and artificial way that no one in real life does behave or act in that way. But the

dialogues in the plays of Shakespeare is often determined by the incident which produces it, and marked by ease and simplicity, that it does not resemble a fictive construction, but taken by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences. Even when the writer presents the supernatural the dialogue resembles the dialogues of life. Shakespeare brings the remote close to life and familiarizes the fantastic. The event which he represents seems impossible *(for eg. A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and there is no likelihood of its happening , but if it were possible, its effects would be probably such as he has dramatized them. Besides he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real urgent situations but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed. Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. In these words dismissing the theory of stage illusion as untrue, Johnson accounts for the pleasure in drama as the natural human pleasure in imitation, as Aristotle believed it to be. The pleasure in tragedy is also said to be due to the same reason, although it is not explained why it pleases more than comedy.

This is Johnson's praise of *Shakespeare*, that his drama is the mirror of life by reading human sentiments in human language as it is presented by the writer even a hermit who lives away from the world may learn about the ways of the world.

In **the second section of his Preface** Johnson lists Shakespeare's imperfections with the objectivity that marks a true critic. This does not weaken his praise of the writer. Shakespeare's adherence to general nature is the reason, Johnson says for the censure he has received from critics, who form their judgments upon narrower principles and without taking the writer's genius into consideration. Johnson lists out the various critics who have found fault with Shakespeare's habit of staying close to like rather then to rules. Dennis and Rhymer think his Roman plays not sufficiently Roman and betray English references; Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal whereas Shakespeare attempted to look at the man behind the king. Dennis, another critic, is offended by comic interventions on the part of the chief characters like Menenius, a senator of Rome. But Shakespeare always made nature predominate over all other aspects and he never fails to preserve the essential character of mankind through his representations. Although his story requires Romans or kings, he never fails to focus on men.

Johnson looks at Shakespeare's creation of the tragi-comedy in a realistic light that takes into consideration the writer's aim to establish an adherence to life. By the rules of the critics, it is a violation because tradition allowed only the composition of tragedies and comedies as two separate genres. So Johnson says that there is always an appeal open form criticism to nature. Shakespeare found rigid genres untrue to life. There are two natural grounds to justify it: that the alternation of pleasure and pain in a play pleases by its variety; and that life is really a mixture of the happy and the sorrowful.

As practised by Shakespeare, it is a distinct species of the dramatic art. There is no difference between Johnson's approach to the tragi-comedy and Dryden's, but while the latter never declared with conviction that Shakespeare was true to life and in composing the tragic-comedy created a new genre, Johnson, with nature his guide, and recognizing the writer's genius defends him..

> Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous or critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Johnson's final verdict is that since the end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing, the mingled drama succeeds in conveying all instruction of tragedy or comedy as life itself does. Besides Shakespeare wrote when the rules of the ancients were not yet known widely, when the public critical judgment was unformed, with no model or example of such force to imitate, nor critics of such

authority who would censure his extravagance. He therefore followed his natural disposition and creative impulse.

Johnson then discusses Shakespeare's success as a writer of tragedy and comedy. In the composition of the tragedy Shakespeare shows laboured effort, but in comedy he to dramatise a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In the tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation and is more successful. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy by incident and action. Johnson, though, sees in the mixture of sorrow and joy a style which "approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life. Tragedy is his skill, comedy his instinct.

The next charge against Shakespeare is that he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct. The evil are not punished and so the charge is that he seems to write without any moral purpose. He makes no just distribution of good or evil. He carries his persons through right and wrong and at the close of the play, good characters are seen dying or the wicked not punished. The neoclassical age which believed that literature should teach objected to this but Shakespeare himself positions the function of justice according to what one sees in real life.

The next charge is that Shakespeare's plots are often loosely formed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When the play neared its end the playwright shortened his labour not applying his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

One of the major charges against Shakespeare was that he had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another. This was at the expense of possibility. This was the fault of anachronism, as for the mention of a mechanical clock in a Roman play when such clocks were not known. Pope attributed these errors to interpolators or lesser writers who inserted their works into Shakespeare's own.

The critic holds that in the comic scenes Shakespeare's jests are gross and licentious. Although Shakespeare did this to please the groundlings who watched his plays this has been objected to by many critics.

Johnson says that a quibble or was the fatal *Cleopatra* for which Shakespeare lost the excellence of the plays. Shakespeare, according to the critic, never resists the use of a pun and his plays abound in them.

JOHNSON'S DEFENCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S VIOLATION OF THE UNITIES OF TIME AND PLACE:

In the third section Johnson argues in defense of the imaginative violation of rules by Shakespeare. The next important aspect of Shakespeare's work that Johnson discusses is what was commonly charged as the dramatist's neglect of the unities which were held to be the laws instituted and established by poets and critics. Although the French adhered to the three unities sacrificing realism in the play, till Johnson defended Shakespeare's judicious use of this rule, no critic accepted it.

In doing so he is not just discussing Shakespeare's plays but in fact redefining the norms of the criticism for drama. He is retrieving English literary criticism from the fossilization it had set into by applying rules unthinkingly. So in this section Johnson's interest goes beyond Shakespeare although the playwright's works gives him the occasion to do so. Shakespeare never neglects the unity of action. But he finds the unity of time and place very artificial and restricting. All the actions in a play must take place in the same locale and all the actions in a play must take place within the time limit of twenty four hours according to this prescription.

Johnson is the last great critic of the neo-classical school. He has a code of conduct both for the woriter and the critic, though one based on nature rather than authority. Rigid neo-classicism made no distinction between rules rooted in nature and rules rooted in mere custom. It declared nature and custom to be the same. To Johnson, however, they stood in the relation of true faith and false, and while he subscribed to the one, he ruthlessly rejected the other. To that extent he may be said to have delivered genius from bondage. It may even be regarded as the first step towards that liberalism in literature which the next generation was to cherish.

At first Johnson states the objection of the critics and then refutes it. He states the case for the critics who hold that

> The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The critics hold it impossible, that an action of months and years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours.... From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that

> he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Media could, in so short a time, have transported him.

Among the unities Johnson found openly the unity of action justified by reason, that is the union of the events of the plot into an inseparable whole. There would be utter chaos if event did not naturally lead to event to the desired end. But he found the grounds for the unities of time and place to be wholly illusory. The truth according to Johnson is that the spectators are always in their senses, and know from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. A lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore we can suspend disbelief when we see their imitation. The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama realistic. But if the play was to follow these rules blindly, then instead of being realistic, the play would, on the other hand become unrealistic. Johnson argues that what Aristotle really prescribed for the play was a proper beginning, middle and end. Shakespeare has preserved the unity of action as Aristotle required, giving the play a beginning, middle, and an end. . By reversing the entire paradigm through which the unities are used, Johnson changes Shakespeare's fault into a praiseworthy asset. The unities of time and place are rejected because of their artificiality and lack of realism.

JOHNSON ON SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES

Shakespeare's plots were generally borrowed from the most popularly legends and stories for his audience could not have followed him otherwise. For the English histories he took from English chronicles and English ballads and for the Roman and other plays he relied on Plutarch's *Lives* which had been translated into English by North.

His plots, whether historical or drawn from fables, are crowded with incidents, that while other writers appeal through particular speeches, Shakespeare makes us anxious for the event that is to follow that it becomes compelling for the one reads his work to read it through to the end. Johnson puts Shakespeare next to Homer in the excellence of execution. In spite of the lapses in his work, Johnson points out to the extraordinary creative genius of Shakespeare who is according to him a born genius. Shakespeare is not a laboriously cultivated scholar-writer. This is given by Johnson in two picturesque metaphors- the first of a wild forest and the second of a rich mine of treasures.

> The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers; the composition of Shakespeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished unto brightness. Shakespeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in unexhaustible plenty, though clouded by incrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner minerals.

There has always been a traditional belief that Shakespeare had neither regular education, nor much skill in the classical languages of Latin and Greek. But Johnson finds enough proof that Shakespeare was a very diligent reader. Many of the Roman authors were translated, and some of the Greek; the Reformation had brought to England a vast amount of theological learning and English poetry had been cultivated successfully. But Johnson assessment of Shakespeare was that the greater part of his excellence was the product of his own genius. Shakespeare was handicapped in that the English drama and stage was still in its infancy. No critical essay either in tragedy or comedy had been written by which the playwright could be guided by. Neither character nor dialogue had been given critical consideration. It is to Shakespeare's credit to have introduced both character and dialogue in English drama and to have carried them both to the utmost height. After Chaucer it is Shakespeare that Johnson places in the tradition of English literature.

> Other writers borrow their characters from preceding writers, and diversify them only by the accidental appendages of present manners; the dress is a little varied, but the body is the same. Our author had both matter and form to provide; for except the characters of Chaucer, to

> whom I think he is not much indebted, there were no writers in English, and perhaps not many in other modern languages, which showed life in its native colors.

In the final quarter of the Preface, Johnson reviews the work of previous editors of Shakespeare, and after critiquing his predecessors, Johnson explains his own editorial methodology. Johnson says that no existing edition is authoritative and that is why he is now editing Shakespeare's works. He states his unhappiness of Shakespeare's complete disregard for the preservation of his plays. Johnson states that Shakespeare made no collection of his works, nor rescued those that had been already published in distorted versions or attempting to give them to the world in their genuine state. Had Shakespeare released an authorized edition of his works during his lifetime, Johnson points out, the negligence and unskilfulness of eighteenth century editors would not have corrupted many passages perhaps beyond recovery. Still, Johnson praises the particular editions of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, and Warburton in the order of their appearance. Johnson praises Pope the most, who he says introduced to readers the true state of Shakespeare's text In doing so, Pope edited the plays heavily, even distinguishing between the legitimate and the forgeries.

As to his own edition, Johnson acknowledges his debt to his five predecessors, saying that each of Shakespeare's editors improved upon the available resources. He also points out that he tended to look before even Rowe's edition in an effort to find the most authoritative text possible. In an effort to maintain plays' integrity, Johnson admits that he limits imagination to the margin, commenting on the text with as little modification as possible. Still, with a multiplicity of available sources, Johnson's work as an editor was still significant. In the end, he released the most comprehensive edition of Shakespeare's works of the eighteenth century.

Considering the passage of time since the writing of Shakespeare's works, Johnson recommends notes which are often necessary, though they are necessary evils. Johnson also suggests that those that are yet unacquainted with the works of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, putting aside all the conventional criticism of Shakespeare that does not recognize his genius.

His final statement is that he stands shoulder to shoulder with skilled and unskilled editors and requests that he be judged impartially. But more so he declares only those critics who are learned and competent to do so should judge such an effort.

> Among these candidates of inferiour fame, I am now to stand the judgment of the publick; and wish that I could confidently produce my commentary as equal to the encouragement which I have had the honour of receiving. Every work of this kind is by its nature deficient, and I should feel little solicitude about the sentence, were it to be pronounced only by the skilful and the learned.

Johnson's edition of Shakespeare was greeted with mix of adulation and criticism. Even from the beginning, however, the Preface monopolized critical attention. Between Johnson's time and our own the Preface has been both exalted and condemned, pointing out its truth of argument, good sense, and just criticism. T.S. Eliot praised Johnson's original and critical excellence in identifying Shakespeare's genius. Eliot supported Johnson's rejection for the superficial distinctions through which Shakespeare's plays had been labeled tragic, comic, and historic. Rather, like Johnson he believed that in the interchange of the tragic and comic scenes, Shakespeare produces literature that is true to life

More than any other modern critic, however, Harold Bloom has fully embraced Johnson's approach to Shakespeare and identifies Johnson as the foremost of interpreters and the first among all Western literary critics. As long as Shakespeare is taught and read, Johnson's Preface work will remain an important critical text of reference.

Key Concepts:

Unities:

Action, place, and time, the latter two added to Aristotle's unity of action by Italian and French critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Aristotle described tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" and argued that drama must therefore exhibit "unity of action": an identifiable beginning, middle, and end; a harmonious correlation of whole and parts; a series of events which

follow one another inevitably and are related in a causal sequence. Italian and French critics added unity of place -- the dramatic action must be confined to a small geographical area -- and unity of time-it must take place within the confines of a single day.

Character, **Characterization:**

A character is a person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, and characterization is the process by which a writer makes that character seem real to the reader. A hero or heroine, often called the protagonist, is the central character who engages the reader's interest and empathy. The antagonist is the character, force, or collection of forces that stands directly opposed to the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story. A static character does not change throughout the work, and the reader's knowledge of that character does not grow, whereas a dynamic character undergoes some kind of change because of the action in the plot. A flat character embodies one or two qualities, ideas, or traits that can be readily described in a brief summary. They are not psychologically complex characters and therefore are readily accessible to readers. Some flat characters are recognized as stock characters; they embody stereotypes such as the "miserly uncle" or the "mean step mother." They become types rather than individuals. Round characters are more complex than flat or stock characters, and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most real people. They are more fully developed, and therefore are harder to summarize. Authors have two major methods of presenting characters: showing and telling. Showing allows the author to present a character talking and acting, and lets the reader infer what kind of person the character is. In telling, the author intervenes to describe and sometimes evaluate the character for the reader. Characters can be convincing whether they are presented by showing or by telling, as long as their actions are motivated. Motivated action by the characters occurs when the reader or audience is offered reasons for how the characters behave, what they say, and the decisions they make. Plausible action is action by a character in a story that seems reasonable, given the motivations presented.

Comedy:

A work intended to interest, involve, and amuse the reader or audience, in which no terrible disaster occurs and that ends happily for the main characters. High comedy refers to verbal wit, such as puns, whereas low comedy is generally associated with physical action and is less intellectual. Romantic comedy involves a love affair that meets with

various obstacles (like disapproving parents, mistaken identities, deceptions, or other sorts of misunderstandings) but overcomes them to end in a blissful union. Shakespeare's comedies, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are considered romantic comedies.

Tragedy:

A story that presents courageous individuals who confront powerful forces within or outside themselves with a dignity that reveals the breadth and depth of the human spirit in the face of failure, defeat, and even death. Tragedies recount an individual's downfall; they usually begin high and end low. Shakespeare is known for his tragedies, including *Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, and Hamlet*. The revenge tragedy is a well-established type of drama that can be traced back to Greek and Roman plays, particularly through the Roman playwright Seneca (c.3 BC – 63AD). Revenge tragedies basically consist of a murder that has to be avenged by a relative of the victim. Typically, the victim's ghost appears to demand revenge, and invariably madness of some sort is worked into subsequent events, which ultimately end in the deaths of the murderer, the avenger, and a number of other characters. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* subscribes to the basic ingredients of revenge tragedy, but it also transcends these conventions because Hamlet contemplates not merely revenge but suicide and the meaning of life itself. A tragic flaw is an error or defect in the tragic hero that leads to his downfall, such as greed, pride, or ambition. This flaw may be a result of bad character, bad judgment, an inherited weakness, or any other defect of character. Tragic irony is a form of dramatic irony found in tragedies such as *Oedipus the King*, in which Oedipus ironically ends up hunting himself.

Tragicomedy:

A type of drama that combines certain elements of both tragedy and comedy. The play's plot tends to be serious, leading to a terrible catastrophe, until an unexpected turn in events leads to a reversal of circumstance, and the story ends happily. Tragicomedy often employs a romantic, fast-moving plot dealing with love, jealousy, disguises, treachery, intrigue, and surprises, all moving toward a melodramatic resolution. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is a tragicomedy.

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QUESTIONS FOR UNIT I

SHORT NOTES

1. Wit
2. Mimesis
3. Heroic Couplet
4. The moral value of literature
5. Pope on the study of the Ancients
6. Shakespeare's fatal error according to Johnson
7. Johnson on Shakespeare's heroes
8. The unity of place in drama according to Johnson
9. The necessity of notes to Shakespeare
10. Shakespeare's use of nature according to Johnson

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What are the faults of a bad critic according to Alexander Pope?
2. Discuss the literary characteristics of the Neoclassical age.
3. How does Pope attempt to overcome the deficiencies of inferior criticism?
4. Summarize Pope's estimate of the importance of the study of the classicists.
5. Compare and contrast the use of the word 'Nature' by Pope and Johnson.
6. How does Johnson defend Shakespeare's violation of the unities of time and place?
7. What are Shakespeare's merits according to Johnson?
8. What are Shakespeare's defects according to Johnson?
9. How does Johnson evaluate the genre of 'tragi-comedy'?
10. Among the two critics Pope and Johnson, which of the two is more liberal? Give reasons to support your answer.

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UNIT -II

This unit consists of the following two essays in Romantic Criticism:

Essay No 3. Wordsworth: Preface to Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads

Essay No. 4. S.T.Coleridge: Biographia Literaria, Chapters 14, 16 &17

ROMANTICISM

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Romantic Period (in England, c.1790-1830 which began as a European phenomenon had a tremendous impact upon English thinking and English literature. Rejecting the prescribed rules of classicism, Romanticism aimed at a return to nature that would bring out the goodness of humanity. The glorification of the artist a creator; the development of nationalistic pride and the exaltation of the senses and emotions over reason and intellect combined to make Romanticism was a philosophical revolt against rationalism.

ROMANTICISM IN LITERATURE

Critics agree that the age of Romanticism begins in England from the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads (1798). In the preface to its second edition 1800, Wordsworth stated his two cardinal beliefs: 1) that poetry results from the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, and 2) the relevance of the use of natural everyday diction in literary works. As a romanticist, Coleridge upheld the importance of the poet's imagination and rejected the neoclassical literary rules. The other English Romantic poets like Byron, Shelley, Robert Burns, Keats, Robert Southey, and William Cowper celebrated the individual self. This emphasis is repeated in the prose works of Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt and in Thomas De Quincey's autobiographical *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822). Romanticists like Walter Scott wrote romances and historical novels.

Although the Romantic period, is said to begin in 1798, the year of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge and of the composition of *Hymns to the Night* by Novalis, and ending in 1832, it begins in the 1770's and continues into the second half of the nineteenth century. This extended chronological spectrum (1770-1870) also permits recognition as Romantic the poetry of Robert Burns and William Blake in England, the early writings of Goethe and Schiller in Germany, and the great period of influence for Rousseau's writings throughout Europe.

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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The early Romantic period thus is simultaneous with what is often called the "age of revolutions"--including, of course, the American (1776) and the French (1789) revolutions. It was an age of upheavals in political, economic and social traditions. It was also the age which witnessed the initial transformations of the Industrial Revolution. Romanticism, set out to redefine the theory and practice of poetry and all art, but the very way we perceive the world.

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IMAGINATION

The imagination was defined by the Romantics as the supreme faculty of the mind. This contrasted with the traditional beliefs in the supremacy of reason. The Romantics defined and presented the imagination as a creative power the human equivalent of the creative powers of nature. It is a dynamic and active rather than being a passive power. Imagination is the primary power that creates all art. It is also the faculty that helps man to perceive understand and constitute reality. Coleridge extols the imagination as the

ultimate synthesizing faculty, enabling the human mind to reconcile differences and opposites. The reconciliation of opposites is the highest function of the imagination and the greatest achievement of the mental faculties as far as the Romantics are concerned. In chapter XIII of the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge gives his classic definition of the primary and secondary imagination. He calls the secondary imagination as the essemplastic imagination which is the peculiar gift that the poet has and which makes him a creator.

NATURE

Nature held many meanings to the Romantics. It was presented as a work of art reflecting the powers of the divine imagination. The perspectives on nature were varied. Nature was seen as a healing power, as a source of subject and image, as a refuge from urbanization and the artificial constructs of civilization, including artificial language that lacked spontaneity. Nature was described as an organically unified whole, not fragmented as the scientific or rationalist view saw it or as a system of mechanical laws. Romanticism rejected the rationalist view of the universe as a machine with the image of an organic thing like a living tree or mankind itself. The Romantic poets stressed that natural phenomena should be described accurately. The Romantic theory of poetry is philosophic and recommends a poetry that is meditative in quality.

SYMBOLISM AND MYTH IN ROMANTIC POETRY

Symbolism and myth were in the Romantic conception of art the aesthetic correlatives of nature's emblematic signs and mysteries. The attempt to express the infinite through the language makes the use of the symbol and myth a poetic strategy.

THE ROMANTIC CONCEPTION OF THE SELF IN POETRY

The predominant significance given to the activity of the imagination was supported by an equal emphasis on the importance of intuition, instincts and feelings. This in turn led to recognition of the emotions as superior to logical reason. Wordsworth's definition of all good poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" redefined the conception of poetry once and for all. In Romantic theory, art was not valued as a mirror of the external world, but as a source of illumination of the world within. This is why the shift was from the mirror to the lamp. Lyric poetry written in the first person voice

became the most popular of all forms of poetry, often times a ‘persona’ of the poet. Wordsworth's Prelude is an excellent example of the poetry of this kind. Such poetry was characterized by the theme of interior journey and the development of the self was a recurrent subject material for the Romantic artist. The artist-as-hero is a Romantic ideal that is repeated in both the prose and poetry of this period.

ROMANTICISM AND NEOCLASSICISM

Apart from the two major differences: 1) the rejection of reason and 2) the celebration of the imagination, Romanticism replaced the understanding of art as a mimetic form to an expressive form. Also the neoclassical insistence on the idea that art reflects the general or universal characteristics of human behavior was rejected in preference of individuality and particularity in themes. The Romantics fully believed in the supreme importance of the individual and the unique. The typification of characters that was the hallmark of neoclassical drama was done away with and individuality took its place. Romanticism created new literary types like the rebel and the adventurer. Shelley saw Satan in his act of defiance as the real hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

The style of writing of the Romantics discarded the preceding age's practice of restraint and opted for suggestiveness. The neoclassical ideal of clarity, free experimentation over the rules of composition, genre, and decorum were seen to be inadequate in expressing the artist as creator. In Germany and England there was continued interest in the ancient classics. But mostly the Romantics allied themselves with the periods of literature that the neoclassicists had dismissed. These were the Middle Ages and the Baroque, and they praised and celebrated Shakespeare, a writer whom Voltaire had called a barbarian. The interest in religion and in the powers of faith were not entirely rejected the Romantic period. However the Romantics generally rejected all absolute systems of philosophy and religion, in favor of the idea that each individual must discover his own system of belief.

The differences between the two schools of thought can be summarized thus:

Neoclassical Premises (ca. 1650-1789)

(a) always defined by a broad social commitment: a social ethic
(b) an inclination to categorize experience

(c) uses of satire
(d) importance of probability; thus the use of analogy as a literary figure: the two terms of the comparison both illuminate each other and are kept distinct
(e) the prevalence of moral categories
(f) use of classical precedents
(g) adherence to the rules of English grammar
(h) categorizing the appropriate types of speech for appropriate subjects: thus we use epic for high subjects, lyric for love poetry, etc.
(i) importance of the idea of mirroring nature in art (mimesis)
(j) importance of utile et dulce, that is to say literature must both please and teach, with emphasis on the latter function

ROMANTIC PREMISES

(a) always defined in terms of the Self; not primarily a social ethic
(b) attempts to break down scientific categories of experience; experience is whole (organic): attempts to reunify man with Nature
(c) essentially serious the search for spirituality as its prime feature
(d) defies ordinary probability: presents us with unreal worlds, myth, dream, trance
(e) defies ordinary moral categories
(f) changes the meaning of classical precedent: classics as a myth of origin
(g) suspends normal grammatical expectations (cf. *Lucy* poems)
(h) all speech united in the highest kind of speech i.e. poetry , which is like Scripture
(i) ideal of the artist as creator: art is expression, not mimesis
(j) skepticism about ordinary alienated human language, but belief that in poetry we can recover language which will reintegrate Man, Spirit, and Nature
(k) teaching is less important than leading the reader into an apprehension of Spirit; dulce thus overtakes utile

Romanticism is also at times described as Primitivitism. A primitivist is one who prefers nature, unmodified by human intervention, to cities or artful gardens. In literature and the other arts, the primitivist relies on spontaneity, the free expression of emotion, and the intuitive products of natural genius, as against conformity to artificial forms, rules, and conventions.

Primitivism challenged dominant ideas of eighteenth century Europe. It valorized the natural and the primitive and rejected the rational and the artificial. It based its rejection on the assumption that progress involves degeneration since it leads away from the natural:

Cultural primitivism is the preference of nature and the natural over art and the artificial in any field of human activity. In ethics a primitivist lauds the natural or innate instincts over the dictates of reason and prudence. In literature and the other arts, the primitivist relies on spontaneity and free expression of emotion as against the conformity to artificial forms and conventions. Further the romanticist / primitivist believed that the life and activities of people who live in close communion with nature and isolated from civilization lived a life that was superior to the life and activities of the people living urban locales. Much of Wordsworth's argument that the rustic language is superior to polished, scholarly language is based on this belief. The idea of Primitivism achieved great attention in the eighteenth century largely as a philosophical reaction to the prevailing insistence on the artificiality of the neoclassic period.

In the seventeenth century, the philosopher John Locke put forth a theory of the human mind in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). According to this theory the mind was a blank thing in which ideas came to be written. Also the mind simply reflected whatever man saw and experienced in the world. This was called Empiricism. Empiricism holds that the mind is like non-distorting mirror to outside world. Mental faculties that process ideas received from outside world, including an imagination limited to combining/recombining ideas without interpreting them. It is equipped with a language whose purpose is accurately to communicate ideas and describe things as they are. So both the mind and the language have no mediating or interpretive function. It even suspects literature because it deviates from empirical truth. The only legitimate role of poetry is to tell empirical truth, adding pleasure to instruction:

> True expression, like th' unchanging sun,
> Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon
> It guilds all objects, but it alters none
>
> (Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 1711, II, 315-17)

The Romantics reject this model of relation between mind and outside world. The vital difference between the Enlightenment philosophy and Romanticism in shown in the way the mind is described. From the metaphor of the mirror the mind is described as a lamp that sheds light on what it sees. John Locke's metaphors of mind are white paper, blank slate, waxed tablet, empty room and 'camera obscura'. The Romantic metaphors of mind are lamp, fountain, wind harp, and living plant or organism.

Wordsworth's claim that good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings rejects the idea that the mind is a passive receiver of ideas from outside. The characteristic assumption of Romantic poetry theory is that poetry is born when there is an interaction of the mind and the world.

All the important Romantic theorists commented on the contrast between imaginative and scientific perception. They rejected the development of the scientific perception. Thus based on the concept of the projective and modifying mind we see the most common romantic differentiation between poetic and scientific truth.

REALISM AND EXOTICISM

The sense of social realism that was the hallmark of the realist novel was rejected in favor of the imagination. The eighteenth century celebration of the noble savage had encouraged similar ideals. However artists now turned for their symbols to national myths and to folk legends which were older art forms. The incorporation of the ballad, the use of the language of the common man and not an artificial poetic diction came to signify this new kind of poetry.

Paradoxically as opposed to everyday subjects the Romantics were also fascinated at the same time with realms of existence that were opposed to the ordered conceptions of objective reason. Thus both the everyday and the exotic appeared together. In the *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, Wordsworth and Coleridge divided the subject matter of their poems according to two subject areas, the natural and the supernatural. Wordsworth opted for the familiar, while Coleridge wrote on supernatural themes.

THE ROMANTIC ARTIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIETY

The Romantics poets were ambivalent in the relationship with the world around them. While on the one hand they wrote vehemently on political and social matters reacting strongly to oppression and injustice in the world, they never hesitated at the same time to

distance themselves from the public. At the same time they withdrew from the confines of mundane life. The revolutionary spirit of the Romantic Movement influenced literature and all arts. The seeds of the artist as exile, an idea that grew large in the next period of the Modernists, were planted in this period.

Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (1961) defines at least five distinguishing features of Romantic concerns:

1. a major change in the nature of the relationship between a writer and his readers
2. a different habitual attitude towards the 'public'
3. the production of art was as a specialized kind of production
4. a theory of the superior reality of art, as the seat of imaginative truth
5. the idea of the independent creative writer as the autonomous genius

Thus Romanticism is distinguished by the following aspects that are reflected both in the creative and critical writings of the period :

- an appreciation and sense of adoration nature;
- placing emotion above reason and the senses above intellect;
- the habit of the poet to turn inward upon his self and examining the mysteries of the human personality and its imaginative potentialities;
- a celebration of the poet as a genius endowed with a more than ordinary capacity to think and feel;
- the conception of the artist as a creator;
- rejecting an adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures and spontaneity;
- understanding the imagination as the power that enables transcendent experience;
- a growing interest in new disciplines such as folk culture, ethnic and medieval studies; -a glorification of the exotic;
- subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism; leading a solitary life rather than life in society.

Unit – II.1

Romantic Criticism

Essay No.3. **Wordsworth:** ***Preface to Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads***

William Wordsworth(1770 – 1850) was an important English Romantic poet who, along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge published the *Lyrical Ballads* - the foundational work in the English Romantic movement - in 1798 and launched the Romantic Age in literature. The *Preface to Lyrical Ballads is* considered a central work of Romantic literary theory. In it, Wordsworth discusses what he sees as the elements of a new type of poetry, one based on the real language of men and which avoids the poetic diction of much eighteenth-century poetry. Here, Wordsworth also gives his famous definition of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings from emotions recollected in tranquility.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

The *Preface* was first published in the second edition of Lyrical Ballads in 1800. This came in the place of the Advertisement of the first edition. Wordsworth's poems did not get a good public reception in 1798 when the first edition came out. The preceding age of literature, that is to say the neo-classical age insisted that poetic diction and subject matter must be dignified and formal, befitting serious subject matter. Romantic poetry came as a reaction to the artificial poetry of the neoclassical period. Romantic poetry opposed the rigor of form that was so important to the neoclassical critics. More than that, Romanticism rejected the didactic tone and moralistic themes that were the favorites of the neoclassical writers.

Wordsworth's contention was that poetic matters should befit an ordinary man's taste. This was a totally new concept altogether. The reading public was used to works like *Essay on Man* and *Rape of the Lock*. These texts were based on the knowledge and use of classical literature and philosophy. The inspiration and models were the classical texts. Therefore Wordsworth republished the collection in 1800 with a Preface in which he explained the premises upon which the new poetry of the Romantics was based. His remarks form the foundation of Romantic poetry. In fact the year of publication of the *Preface* is taken to be the start of the age of the English Romantic poetry.

The main point of this preface is to relate Wordsworth's intention to depict the common man, using the common language of man in his poetry. Secondly, he outlines in

the preface how feeling is gives importance to the action and the situation. Thirdly Wordsworth defines poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Wordsworth makes it very clear in his preface that he wants to depict the common man in a selection of language really used by men. Wordsworth uses simple people in their simple settings to illustrate how feeling gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling**.** Wordsworth's poems initiated the Romantic era by emphasizing feeling, instinct, and pleasure above formality and mannerism. More than any poet before him, Wordsworth gave expression to the complex human emotion.

DISCUSSION OF THE ESSAY

The *Lyrical Ballads* represents a landmark in the history of English poetry. It was unlike anything that had been written in English poetry up till that time. As Wordsworth says in the *Preface*, he made it his task to write in the simple language of the common man.

> The first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

The *Preface* opens thus with a preliminary statement that recalls the words of the Advertisement of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. According to Wordsworth, the *Lyrical Ballads* were written as an experiment for a number of reasons. In his *Preface* to the 1798 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth had presented his poetic manifesto, indicating how his and Coleridge's poetry, attempted to break away from the artificiality, triviality or over-elaborate and contrived quality of eighteenth century poetry. A new era of poets known as the Romantics emerged in the early 19th Century. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote poetry that projected what these poets considered as the real emotions of man. Their idea of poetry, in contrast to that of the neo-classical poets, allowed for the free flow of sentiment, encouraging a response from the soul, not the brain. In their poems, the poets were able to create vivid images using simple middle class language, with tasteful descriptions. Their poems, arising from the

same time-period contrast with each other with respect to the subject matter, the form of poetic diction that is used, the mood built up and the images and symbols that are used.

Since this had not convinced the reading public, Wordsworth felt it necessary to write this preface to the second edition. The *Preface* is itself considered a masterpiece of the English prose of the Romantic age. In Wordsworth, this is a reaction against the artificiality of Neoclassicism. He holds a belief according to which emotions are simpler, clearest and purest in the country and among the lower classes: the town and the higher classes are decadent, and are far from the natural poetry which can be heard in the mouth of simple people. Among the higher classes, the passions are restrained by conventionality: among the common people they are less restrained, and so they are more accurately contemplated, and more forcefully communicated. Wordsworth equates the problem of poetic diction to that of urban artificiality, which produces the hackneyed verbal conventions of late Neoclassicism. The preservation of the previous poetic tradition was for Wordsworth a mere instance of social vanity; poetical clichés, personification of abstract entities, etc., are to disappear from the new poetry.

The *Preface* thus presents a number of issues. By asserting the necessity for a place for the *Lyrical Ballads* in the contemporary literary scene, the *Preface* is also at the same time defining the new kind of poetry that had come to replace neoclassical poetry. He rejects the demand for mimetic truth. Instead poetry recreates the experiences of the poet through the heightened power of the poet's imagination.

> The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.

The above statement by Wordsworth made in the opening section of the *Preface* synopsizes the topics discussed in the *Preface* which are as follows:

1. The main objective of the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* he says is to show *by* practice, Wordsworth's conception that poetry must emphasize the natural rather than the urban man. Wordsworth's argument is that such men live much closer to nature and are therefore, are closer to the well-springs of human nature. This comes as a reaction to the artificial portraits of man presented in eighteenth century poetry. The argument is developed when he outlines his reasons for dealing with humble and rustic life.
2. Wordsworth and Coleridge both insist that the choice of subject matter necessarily involves a redefinition of the language of poetry.
3. This leads Wordsworth to define the terms *poetry* and *poem*.
4. This makes raise the question 'What is a Poet?' and to answer it.

WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF POETRY:

Wordsworth's theory of poetry contains two cardinal points ; that all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and that poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. The psychological process of poetic creation undergoes four stages i.e. recollection, contemplation, recrudescence and composition. This implies is that good poetry is never an immediate reaction to the provoking cause, that our sensations must be allowed time to sink back into the common fund of our experience. This happens in the mind in the act of contemplation and then in the process of contemplation the sensations revive. In the next stage when there is the union of the contemplative mind and the receiving sensibility there emerges a unique mode of expression which we call poetry. According to this poetic theory, poetry originated in emotion recollected in a state of tranquility. The poet then surrendered to the emotion, so that the tranquility dissolved, and the emotion remained in the poem. Since a larger part of his poetry is taken from recollection we find most of the poems nostalgic in tone and located in the past.

Poetry should result in more than aesthetic experience. Many critics admire the power of the poet's insight into human nature as presented in his works. In the case of Wordsworth some of his basic beliefs on pantheism, the instinctive goodness of man and

the inspiring goodness of nature can be said to be less realistic. The tragic sense is not given much importance in his poetry. Wordsworth's view of man is idealistic not realistic. He was intensely a subjective and introspective poet, who had received an illumination which is distinctly individual. Abstract personifications and metaphysical ruminations area avoided by the poet. Wordsworth declares that his intention is to capture with great feeling the life of the ordinary man as it is.

> The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and, I hope, are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. I have proposed to myself to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language.

WORDSWORTH'S ON POETIC DICTION:

The development of a poetic diction in English literature concerned poets since the time of Chaucer and the late Middle Ages, when there was a wave of Latinisms in an effort to enrich the English language. Spenser had proposed another solution, the use of archaisms. During the Neoclassical era, the passion for decorum had led to an and cultivated kind poetic diction, which was believed to be apart and above everyday (or "idiomatick") language. The typical eighteenth-century poem is loaded with adjectives which are the heritage of poetic tradition rather than of observation, coupled with a noun in a stock phrase (for instance, "fresh pastures and singing brooks") which has also been criticized by later critics as "neoclassical kenning"; a product of imitation and tradition, the kind of expression you would never find outside poetry. Its very immobility is a sign of the world-view which supports this poetic tradition: a belief in order, conservatism, dogmaticism and cultivated art far removed from life. This existence of a poetic language characterized by special words and expressions was felt by many to be the hallmark of poetry. Wordsworth provides the first thorough-going criticism of poetic diction in English.

In reaction to the gaudy and inane phraseology of the Augustan poetic diction, Wordsworth took upon the ideal of making the incidents of common life interesting by

describing them as far as possible in the selection of language really used by men in a state of vivid sensation. He also maintained the view that there is no essential difference between the words used in prose and in a poem except that in a poem there was the super addition of metre. Coleridge criticised this view of poetic diction and stated that when words are selected and purified from the language of rustics, the language thus purified is not different from the language of educated men. The use of meter which denotes order makes poetry quite distinct from prose. The word *real* should be understood to mean ordinary. Every man's language varies according to the extent of his knowledge, rank, status, thought and emotions. Moreover, the best words are derived from the reflective acts of mind. When an individual has acquired new concepts they cannot be expressed in the language of the rustics. Hence Coleridge objects to Wordsworth's use of the rustic's language. Moreover he questions Wordsworth's view whether it is possible to write poetry effectively always in the language of the common man. Wordsworth redefines the concept of poetic diction altogether. The neoclassical poetic diction was not true to nature.Wordsworth affirms, the language of many sections of good poems differs in no way from that of prose, apart from the question of metre which he asserts thus:

> a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.

The difference between poetry and prose, Wordsworth holds, is that prose works with concepts and poetry with emotions. But this is not a difference in language, he says. The only clear difference in language is meter, and even that is not so clear, if we take into account the rhythm of some kinds of prose.

Wordsworth moreover reiterates that the setting in his poetry is rustic and rural and that the characters he has chosen are the simple peasant folk. His argument in support of his choice was that this life was most representative of the life of man, untouched by urban corruption.

> Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life, our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from these elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.

Wordsworth searched for a suitable form in which he could express his intense moods. One must not interpret too literally Wordsworth's theory on poetic diction. It is not to identify entirely the language of poetry with that of conversation of the rustics or of the people belonging to the middle class. The language that is selected contains words of intense forcefulness corresponding to intense states of consciousness. Their intensity is their distinctive feature and a the same time it is imbibed with simplicity. The theory of an impassioned simplicity of language terminates in sublimity. The poetic expression is simple when compared to the style of the neo- classical writers.

In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge examined the characteristic defects and also the beauties of Wordsworth's poetry. While analyzing the poem '*Resolution and* I*ndependence*' he pointed out the inconsistencies in style. The second defect pointed out by Coleridge was the minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects and the insertion of accidental circumstances in order to give a full explanation of his living characters. Wordsworth revised a number of passages in *The Prelude* after Coleridge gave his views on them. He found in the works of Wordsworth the austere purity of language, the weight and sanity of thoughts and sentiments, the poets own meditative observation, originality of single lines and paragraphs and the gift of imagination in the

heighest and strictest sense of the word. Coleridge placed Wordsworth next to Shakespeare and Milton in imaginative power.

Poetry is an expression of feeling through the medium of words. Wordsworth's opinions about the real language of common people and his view that there can be no essential difference between prose and metrical composition, relate to figurative departures from literal discourse and deviations are justified in verse for psychological reasons. The language of nature is the language of mankind and it is not colored by artificial poetic diction. The earliest poets wrote in a simple way without elaborate expression about their feelings when they lived close to nature. It is an instinctive language and if any modification is made to this language, it results in artificiality.

Wordsworth did not approve of the statement of Pope that 'truth is nature to advantage dressed' and that true expression consists in giving thoughts their appropriate dress or ornament. Wordsworth approved the use of figures only when they are suggested by passion. His criticism rests on his admiration towards the greatness and potentialities underlying the literary models like ballads, songs and stories of the age old tradition. But the justification of metre became a great problem for it stands for convention and artifice. Wordsworth calls it charm which is super- added to natural language giving rise to supplementary pleasure and it does so without interfering with passions. This is why Wordsworth says that in his poems, action and situation gain importance only because of the feeling underlying the themes.

WORDSWORTH'S CONCEPT OF THE REAL LANGUAGE OF MEN IN POETRY AND THE SELECTION OF HUMBLE AND RUSTIC LIFE AS FIT SUBJECTS OF POETRY

Wordsworth argues that poetry should be written in the natural language of common speech, rather than in the lofty and elaborate diction that was then considered poetic. He argues that poetry should offer access to the emotions contained in memory. He also argues that the first principle of poetry should be pleasure, that the chief duty of poetry is to provide pleasure through an expression of feeling--for all human sympathy, he claims, is based on a subtle pleasure principle. Wordsworth's language of ordinary social intercourse among common people is according to him the most conducive to poetic pleasure.

Wordsworth hastens to admit that many contemporary works deal with trivial themes in nondescript language. The *Lyrical Ballads* are different from these productions mainly because they are inspired by a worthy purpose. A host of events, political and social, such as industrialization and urbanization had produced according to Wordsworth, a blunting of the aesthetic sensibility and a craving for sensationalism in arts and letters. Even the works of Shakespeare and Milton have suffered grievous neglect, Wordsworth states, from the reading public whose preference was for the kind of lifeless literature of the neoclassical age. Wordsworth is optimistic that this deterioration in public taste will only be a passing phase.

In the earlier neoclassical age, literature was seen to always function moralistically. Therefore when Wordsworth published his *Lyrical Ballads*, the poems in this collection was so unlike the poetry of the previous times that the readers who were accustomed to the earlier kind of verse, did not accept it. Hence Wordsworth is writing the *Preface* to correct the misconceptions about poetry in his age. Besides he believes that the poetry of this new kind has the worthy purpose of refining the aesthetic sensibility of the English reader. This is what he means when he says that his

> Apart from the distinction that Lyrical Ballads possesses of its having a worthy purpose, it is noteworthy for yet another characteristic: the emotions enshrined in the poems are their raison d'etre, for, after all, the greatest service a poet can render is to enlarge the sensibility of the readers.

Wordsworth asserts that the *Lyrical Ballads* have yet another unique feature. As far as their style is concerned, personifications of abstract ideas as an aid to stylistic embellishment are scrupulously discarded.

A certain amount of hostility from unsympathetic readers and enthusiastic reception by friendly readers encouraged Wordsworth to write the *Preface*. Initially, Wordsworth was reluctant to write a systematic defense of *Lyrical Ballads* in the form of a *Preface*, despite the persuasion of friends, because he feared it would be misunderstood as an attempt on his part to praise his own poems. Hence he says,

> By his very act of writing a poet undertakes to fulfill certain expectations in his readers. No doubt these expectations vary from age to age. It should not appear that in the present case that hope has been belied or frustrated.

> The *Preface* was called for in order to vindicate the poems and to set forth his purposes and to elucidate the rationale of the choice of these purposes. Readers accustomed to the ornamental and vapid phraseology of eighteenth-century verse would find the style of *Lyrical Ballads* radically innovative. In composing the poems contained in *Lyrical Ballads*, two objectives were kept constantly in mind: first, the subject matter comprised incidents and situations from common life; secondly, the language of the poems was a selection of the language of ordinary social intercourse. By the transforming power of the poetic imagination, the ordinary objects of nature were invested with novelty and rendered interesting by illustrating through those poems the elemental passions, emotions and motivations of human nature. Simple and rustic life was preferred because it exhibits emotions with great simplicity and clarity and is derived from the ultimate source of all emotions: human nature.

Wordsworth reiterates that his intention has been to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men. Wordsworth's proposes that poetic diction be modelled on spoken language, and not previous literary productions. He describes the prevailing norm among poets of his time an "inane phraseology" a set of "arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation". He also demands that poetic diction be modelled on primitive, passionate and natural utterance, that which is most spontaneous, the product of emotion. Wordsworth's faith in spontaneous utterance and his appreciation of what is natural and not elaborated may be linked with the key strain of romanticism is linked to idea of mythical thought and to the democratic faith in the people and simple intuition.

This kind of an embellishment he rejects because he believes that they do not form an integral element of poetic composition.

> The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and

> situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way;

Wordsworth's effort has been at the same time to reject the use of poetic diction or the artificial constructions of language, with the aim of making his language come close to common language. By retaining the subjects of rustic life scrupulously and avoiding all falsity of description Wordsworth is able to argue that his poems are written in the real language of men. Consequently the poems are in a simple language and reject the use of words and expressions though the ornamental and beautiful phrases that have been debased by the practice of poetasters and have been reduced to clichés. Wordsworth calls his poems "experiments," and he presents them as models of a new kind of poetry. His aim, he says, is "to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavor to impart". So it is the first experiment in a new poetic diction.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROSE AND POETRY

Wordsworth then turns to making a precise distinction between prose and verse and denies that there is any material difference. A large portion of the language of every good poem will be seen to have no difference from the language of prose, except, of course, the distinction conferred by meter.

> By the foregoing quotation I have shown that the language of Prose may yet be well adapted to Poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. I will go further. I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition…

This is a crucial point of argument in Wordsworth's theory of poetry. A source of guidance given by Wordsworth is Milton. Yet another example given by Wordsworth is Thomas Gray. Supported by these two proofs, Wordsworth proceeds to assert that there neither is, nor can be any difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. The objects of prose and verse are identical. This is emphasized by Wordsworth. Thus any difference between prose and verse is insignificant to Wordsworth. Besides the poet has a noble purpose of imparting inspiration. Thus Wordsworth says,

> Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men… the Poet must descend from this supposed height, and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men….

THE POET

Wordsworth next ponders the question 'What is a poet?' According to Wordsworth's definition, a poet is a man speaking to men. Endowed with more than common sensibility and compassion and above all by the imaginative faculty, the poet possesses greater capacity to articulate his thoughts and feelings.

> Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, I ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind…

However, whatever be the endowments of the poet, however exalted and gifted in imaginative empathy, the poet's medium of expression must fall far short of the language of real-life situations and the emotions and passions of living experiences. Consequently the poet is constrained to select such situations and experiences that contribute to

pleasure. But the poet does not simply pour out emotion: both memory and contemplation come into play. And the poet has had a long training on how to feel before he can be able to convey valuable emotions. These feelings do not come from an ordinary person: the poet has a superior sensibility, and has cultivated it through long and deep thought, creating some habits of mind which, followed produce a description of emotions. The poet is more capable than the average man of seeing difference in similarity, and similarity in difference, a cognitive ability on which our taste and moral feelings depend. The poet has the ability to conjure up passions in himself and to express them.

Wordsworth quotes Aristotle's contention that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing. The object of poetry is universal truth, carrying conviction by the truth of its representation of nature and man. The single rule binding on the poet is that he must endeavour to give immediate pleasure to the reader by appealing to the humanity within him. The poet's obligation to give pleasure ought not to be regarded as a devaluation of his art. On the contrary, it is an affirmation of the value and validity of human life and love.

The poet's task is to produce pleasure by correlating man and nature. Although the scientist and the artist both seek pleasure, the pleasure that the scientist imparts is individual and restricted, while the pleasure that poetry gives is universal. Poetry is quintessential knowledge and the poet unifies the whole of mankind by the compassion and love that pervades existence, which is reflected in nature and consequently in his writings.

The difference between a poet and an ordinary man is a matter of degree and not of kind, as has already been stated. Again, as has been expressed earlier, the poet is able to think and feel without external stimuli and express such thoughts and feelings with greater facility. These passions and thoughts that the poet expresses are linked to our truest natures. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge conceive of poetic experience as an active response of the mind to personal perception and experience. The observer does not merely record what he sees: he transfigures it when moved. In this way, perceiving with emotion, he may disclose the immanent beauty of things which escapes ordinary perception.

The poet's language differs in no essential degree form the language of ordinary social intercourse. Wordsworth then goes on to say why he chose metrical language if he

saw no distinction between the language of poetry and that of daily commerce. He finds no grounds for denying himself the world of nature expressed through metaphor and image which is the special heritage of all poets. Nothing prevents Wordsworth from super adding the charm of metrical language which gives a sizeable part of poetic pleasure. Wordsworth asserts that it is a mistake to assume that poetic pleasure is dependent on poetic ornament. Numerous examples might be cited of poems on simple themes in a simple style which have imparted pleasure to readers from one generation to another. The role of metre is to check the exuberance and over-abundance of the passions. Furthermore, meter affords pleasure in our perception of similitude in dissimilitude.

Wordsworth now elaborates his earlier definition of poetry. Poetry which is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings originates in emotion recollected in tranquility. While the emotion is being contemplated, the tranquility gradually disappears and an emotional state similar to the original situation is achieved. This is the period of successful creativity.

Wordsworth then mentions the defects of his lyrical ballads. It may be felt that his subjects are often unworthy or that his emphasis has been either disproportionate or false. He next quotes Samuel Johnson's celebrated parody which he sets beside a stanza from 'Babes in the Wood'. Though the language of both the poems is that of daily communication, the triviality of subject matter of Johnson's parody makes it contemptible.

Wordsworth makes a final appeal to the judicious reader to be guided by his own judgment while assessing the worth and quality of Lyrical Ballads.

KEY CONCEPTS:

THE REAL LANGUAGE OF MEN

By the real language of men, Wordsworth refers to the language that is spoken by those people who live in the villages, the language spoken by the peasant and the rustic. Wordsworth believes that this language alone is capable of expressing the feelings of human experience in a natural and simple manner. Wordsworth uses the word 'real' several times in the course of the essay. In the chapters XIV and XVI of his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge criticizes Wordsworth's claim that this is the language most suited to the new kind of lyric of the Romantic age. Wordsworth's contention is that by making a judicious selection of words and adding meter to it the rustic's language becomes fit to be used in poetry. This theory is rejected by Coleridge who points out that the mere

addition of meter to the common speech does not make it poetic. Wordsworth's intention was to retrieve English poetry from the pedantic and artificial style of the Augustan age.

Poetic diction

Poetic diction is the term used to refer to the linguistic style, the vocabulary, and the metaphors used in the writing of poetry. In the Western tradition, all these elements were thought of as properly different in poetry and prose up to the time of the Romantic revolution, when William Wordsworth challenged the distinction in his manifesto of Romantic poetics, the Preface to the second(1800) edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Wordsworth proposed that a "language near to the language of men" was as appropriate for poetry as it was for prose. This idea was very influential, though more in theory than practice: a special "poetic" vocabulary and mode of metaphor persisted in 19th century poetry. It was deplored by the Modernist poets of the 20th century, who again proposed that there is no such thing as a "prosaic" word unsuitable for poetry.

Unit – II.2

Romantic Criticism

Essay No. 4 **S.T.Coleridge: *Biographia Literaria***, Chapters 14, 16 &17

S.T. Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 – 1834) was an English poet, critic, and philosopher who was, along with his friend William Wordsworth, one of the founders of the Romantic Movement in England and one of the Lake Poets. He is known for his poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as his major prose work *Biographia Literaria* (1817). His fame as a critic rests on his two monunmental works *Bigraphia Literaria* and his *Lectures on Shakespeare*.

The philosophical distinction between Fancy and Imagination and its relationship bearing on poetry is the central issue of *Biographia Literaria. The Biographia Literaria* is a literary autobiography in two parts. Coleridge refuted the points in Wordsworth's *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* in this book. He followed this with an enquiry into the nature of poetry and the poetic faculty. To Coleridge the distinction of fancy and imagination was a distinction of equal importance both for philosophy and poetry.

Although Chapter XIII is not prescribed for your study it is an important part of Romantic theory and so it will be fruitful to look at it briefly. Coleridge gave his definitions of Fancy and of the primary and secondary Imagination in order to define his notion of both poetry and the poet. Adopting the two levels at which imagination functions in man, the ordinary and the extraordinary or poetic, Coleridge makes the primary imagination the common property of all men, whereby they differentiate themselves, by an unconscious process, from the external world of objects. The secondary imagination Coleridge appropriates exclusively to poets. In other words all men have the primary imagination. But the poet who is especially gifted has the capacity to create art through the essemplastic power of his imaginative mind. In this he is superior to all others. This is a unique contribution made by Coleridge to Romantic Poetics. In Wordsworth's essay the two terms, Fancy and Imagination are used as synonyms. Coleridge's description of these two words as different from each other, gives an insight into the Romantic conception of the poet. Thus Coleridge detects two levels of the imagination.

FANCY AND IMAGINATION:

These are terms used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to distinguish the mechanical and organic processes of literary creation. Fancy, the inferior mental faculty, works according to a mechanistic principle of the association of ideas and merely reproduces and recombines the "fixed and dead" objects given to consciousness through perception and memory. Fancy was used interchangeably with imagination in the eighteenth century but during the Romantic period came to signify the faculty of arranging ideas and images in pleasant combinations, as opposed to imagination which was more profound, intellectual and radically inventive.

Imagination integrates the opposites, finding a balance of contraries. As Wordsworth says in the *Preface* it makes strange what is familiar and familiarizes what is strange. Indeed, this idea was the groundwork for the original plan of the *Lyrical Ballads* to be written in collaboration by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth was to deal with themes of common life whose imaginative heightening would lead to an intuition of the presence of the unknown; Coleridge would develop fantastic themes (*The Ancient Mariner*) imaginatively infusing them with the known so as to produce credibility. In any case, Coleridge says, the work of the poet must join accurate observation with the modifying power of imagination, mixing the old and the new in such a way that the freshness of sensations is always present in the poem.

Imagination, the superior faculty, is creative and organic; it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" as Coleridge says in the *Biographia Literaria.* A mechanical form is a preconceived idea imposed by fancy, whereas an organic form is a vital interdependence of parts and whole created by imagination, a faculty which "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities."

The following is the definition of Fancy and Imagination given by Coleridge in Chapter XIII :

> The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of

> the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its
> operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.
> FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but
> fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phaenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

Included in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* is the very important preface written by William Wordsworth that describes the poetic manifesto of Romanticism.The preface explains the intention of authors Wordsworth and Coleridge, and more importantly, it includes Wordsworth's personal opinion of the definition and criteria of poetry and of what a poet should be. Although there was some disagreement about the proper diction of a good poem, Coleridge, the lesser represented author of the two in the work agrees with Wordsworth in that a poem is to be a structured and carefully planned composition that stirs passionate natural emotions in the reader and that the poet is the force directly responsible for this. To accomplish this, a great poet must possess an intimate knowledge of nature and have close a interaction with all aspects of it.

In the *Preface* Wordsworth does not distinguish between the two terms. Coleridge's distinct use of the two terms as denoting two different faculties defines the extraordinary nature of the poet. Finding a witty pun could serve as a typical operation of fancy. Imagination, however, is a higher and more fundamentally active faculty: it does not deal with fortuitous affinities, but with the essential relationships between objects, their underlying unity. This unity which is not perceived by discursive reasoning, but rather by feeling; imagination is a subjective re-fashioning of appearance. The chapters XIV, XVI and XVII, prescribed for your study are of interest because in these chapters Coleridge 1) disputes Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction and 2) puts forth his own theory of poetry.

Chapter XIV deals with the distinction between poetry and a poem, which Coleridge thinks necessary to analyze before he goes on to criticize Wordsworth's criticism. The word 'poem' refers to the form. A badly written poem will not have any poetic quality in it. Whereas a fine piece of prose could be very poetic. So from this it is clear that just because something is written in the form of a poem it need not be a poem when it is looked at qualitatively. It is a poem in form without the qualities of what makes the poetic. In his essay, *Defense of Poetry,* Shelley says that Plato's *Dailogues* is a good example of poetry. This is a rather ironic example because Plato did not tolerate poets in his ideal Republic. Yet Shelley quotes Plato as an example of giving good poetry, rejecting poetry through poetic prose.

Chapter XIV describes the complementary aims that Wordsworth and Coleridge set for themselves in composing the Lyrical ballads (23 in number in the first edition, 1798). Both aims were subsumed in the symbol of a landscape (standing for the familiar, the ordinary) transformed by the magic of moonlight or a sunset (the supernatural). This is part of a long preamble in which Coleridge vindicates Wordsworth's poetical reputation and asserts his right to attach a preface since the bulk of the contributions came from him. He then explains that a poem contains the same elements as a prose composition. The difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, because the aesthetic aim is different. If the object is said to be memorizing, as in the nursery rhyme about the number of days in the months, where metre is used for this purpose, one may say that metre distinguishes a poem from prose. But no one will say that anything and everything in metrical form is a poem. A proper definition of a poem would be a composition that proposes pleasure as its immediate end, and to distinguish it

from novels and similar compositions one might say that this pleasure from the whole is compatible with pleasure from the parts. The poem then according to Coleridge is an organic whole wherein every part is vitally linked with the other parts to make the whole meaningful as an aesthetic object.

Coleridge then goes on first of all, to enunciate his organic theory of a poem, namely the interdependence of the parts. This excludes a sequence of distichs (couplets) like the compositions of the eighteenth-century poets, where each distich is detachable and autonomous. Coleridge puts forward an organic, as opposed to a mechanical, theory of poetry. A mere narrative interest which hurries the reader to the conclusion out of curiosity to find out what it is, does not give unity to a poem. The reader must feel free to go back and forward at his own pace, pausing to enjoy a passage and then proceeding to the next lines.

The second point on which Coleridge disagrees with Wordsworth is on the application of prose to poetry. He addresses this matter in *Biographia Literia* by quoting from Wordsworth's Preface, where Wordsworth claims that "between the language of prose and that of metrical composition, there neither is, nor can be any essential difference. Coleridge then says that poetry is distinct from a poem, and here he makes no distinction between prose and metrical works. The question what poetry is, he says, is almost the same as what a poet is. Any product of the secondary imagination from those who possess it is poetry. He ends with a conceit in which good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy the drapery, 'motion' (emotion) the life and imagination the soul.

The relevant part of the chapter XIV is as follows:

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA (1817), CHAPTER XIV

> *Occasion of the Lyrical Ballads, and the objects originally proposed--Preface to the second edition--The ensuing controversy, its causes and acrimony--Philosophic definitions of a poem and poetry with scholia.*
>
> And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the

second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.
But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a POEM; and secondly, of POETRY itself, in *kind*, and in *essence*.

A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from composition in prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months;

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of PLATO, and Bishop TAYLOR, and the Theoria Sacra of BURNET, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem
The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a very large proportion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense,
Finally, GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its LIFE, and

> IMAGINATION the SOUL that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

Coleridge refers particularly to Wordsworth's services in condemning poetic diction i.e. the use of stock clichés and threadbare words and phrases of the neoclassical times and praises him for substituting natural turns of expression in the place of archaic ones. (e.g. 'nymph' for 'girl', 'swain' for 'rustic', and 'finny tribe' for 'fish'). Coleridge then states the main point of disagreement between him and Wordsworth namely that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation f men under the influence of natural feelings. Coleridge maintains that this rule applies only to certain classes of poetry in a sense which is self-evident, and that as a general rule it is useless if not dangerous. Coleridge then gives us the reasons that a poet may have for choosing rustic and law life as the province of his poetry. He says that none of these were Wordsworth's reasons and quotes from the *Preface* to support his view. According to Wordsworth the essential passions of the heart find a better expression when they are less under restraint. He further says in the rustic condition of life the elementary feelings of man co-exist in simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated. This is so because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. By systematically analyzing the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* Coleridge shows that this ha not really been the practice by Wordsworth .In Chapter XVII of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge criticizes Wordsworth's rendering of the language of real men, suggesting that Wordsworth 's real men do not sound like real men actually do.

Coleridge criticised Wordsworth's view of poetic diction and stated that when words are selected and purified from the language of rustics, the language thus purified is not different from the language of educated men. The use of meter which denotes order makes poetry quite distinct from prose. The word real should be understood by the word ordinary. Every man's language varies according to the extent of his knowledge, rank, status, thought and emotions. Moreover, the best words are derived from the reflective acts of mind. When an individual has acquired new concepts they cannot be expressed in

the language of the rustics. Hence Coleridge objects to Wordsworth's use of the rustic's language. Moreover he questions Wordsworth's contention whether it is possible to write poetry effectively always in the language of the common man.

CHAPTER XVII

Examination of the tenets peculiar to Mr. Wordsworth--Rustic life (above all, low and rustic life) especially unfavourable to the formation of a human diction--The best parts of language the product of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds--Poetry essentially ideal and generic--The language of Milton as much the language of real life, yea, incomparably more so than that of the cottager.

My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr. Wordsworth's theory ground themselves on the assumption, that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. My objection is, first, that in any sense this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense, as hath never by any one (as far as I know or have read,) been denied or doubted; and lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which it is practicable, it is yet as a rule useless, if not injurious, and therefore either need not, or ought not to be practised. The poet informs his reader, that he had generally chosen low and rustic life; but not as low and rustic, or in order to repeat that pleasure of doubtful moral effect, which persons of elevated rank and of superior refinement oftentimes derive from a happy imitation of the rude unpolished manners and discourse of their inferiors.

> He chose low and rustic life, "because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."
>
> Now it is clear to me, that in the most interesting of the poems, in which the author is more or less dramatic, as THE BROTHERS, MICHAEL, RUTH, THE MAD MOTHER, and others, the persons introduced are by no means taken from low or rustic life in the common acceptation of those words! and it is not less clear, that the sentiments and language, as far as they can be conceived to have been really transferred from the minds and conversation of such persons, are attributable to causes and circumstances not necessarily connected with "their occupations and abode."

THE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE ON POETIC DICTION:

Coleridge states in his *Biographia Literia* that the definition of a legitimate poem, must be one the parts of the poem mutually support and explain each other; all of which in turn harmonizing with and supporting the purpose and influences of metrical arrangement. This illustrates Coleridge's opinion that in order to be a poem, the composition must be properly structured and composed so that all of the sentences create an identifying rhythm while still representing a single purpose. Wordsworth also speaks

of the importance of purpose, stating that in order to be a good poem, it must have behind it a worthy purpose. The two authors believe that a poem must have a definite direction and that the reader should be very clear as to what the poem is actually about. The authors believe that in order for a short metrical composition to be a poem, it must be organized clearly and, according to Wordsworth also thought long and lovingly about.

Passion and emotion were two subjects that typically characterizes the Romantic period. Exemplifying this, Wordsworth and Coleridge thought that the direct purpose of any poem should be to stir passion in the reader. They thought that a poem should also be a work that stirred the same feeling in the reader every time it is read as if it were being read for the first time. After a good poem is read once, the reader should have the desire to read it many times. The passion in the reader should also be a pleasurable one, explained by Coleridge as "immediate object pleasure". The pleasure is illustrated by Coleridge in *Biographia Literia* in the way he speaks of the pleasure in repeating rhymes. He goes on to identify a passionate pleasure as permanent. Wordsworth describes this as the passion that is felt by the reader should be of natural descent because they are "the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men" and that "we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased". The pleasures that Wordsworth was referring to man being "accustomed to" are those experiences that are derived from nature. Nature in this sense may be the emotion of an experience with living nature, such as a majestic observance of a mountain, or it may be in the sense of human nature, such as the natural presence of a mother's love. Coleridge explains that the reader should be carried forward, by the pleasurable activity of the mind excited by the attractions of the journey of the poetic experience itself.

Since the purpose of a poem is to stir passion kindred to nature, it is the duty of the poet to convey that feeling and make it immediately visible in his composition. The poet would therefore have to be capable of being passionate and understanding nature enough to describe it in a sensible literary form. This criterion for a poet is another aspect of which Wordsworth and Coleridge are in agreement with. Coleridge says the poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of a man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, and diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends. This description is of the magnitude of passion that a poet must have in order to

reach the soul through emotion. Wordsworth writes of the poet's duty of producing pleasure with a serious overtone,

The poet writes under one restriction only, that of necessity, of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected of him not as a lawyer, physician, mariner, but as a man. By this statement, Wordsworth is grouping all people together as of mankind, and more specifically as beings of nature. This is a point that Coleridge opposes, however, believing that language differs with occupation. To Wordsworth, the poet is a translator who communicates the passion felt by nature to the conscious mind of the reader.

Passion as described by Wordsworth and Coleridge is derived most naturally from situations from common life. This subject of common life in poetry is of particular importance to Wordsworth. Wordsworth chose the subject of common life because it is what he finds to be in closest association with nature. He says poetry is the image of man and nature and homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man. To Wordsworth, common life was the low and rustic life because the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in that condition, and the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings. In other words, man's feelings were more recognizable and more closely connected with the natural, or instinctive, feelings of man. Coleridge, on the other hand, uses the term ordinary life in his *Biographia Literia* . The different terms indicate the differing feelings of the authors on the subject. The term "ordinary" seems to indicate a more disconnected feeling from nature and seems to be typified more by social standards, while "common" has a much more naturalistic connotation. This point is further clarified by Coleridge in his use of the Latin phrase lingua communis.

It is in their understanding of the concept and use of poetic diction where the controversy between Coleridge and Wordsworth occurred. William Wordsworth thought that the poem should speak directly from common life by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation. It is in this context that he describes his idea of proper poetic diction, which was the complete opposite of what was considered proper in the late 1700's. He in fact says that in the *Lyrical Ballads* very little of what is usually called poetic diction can be found. The diction of a poem is not bound by a set of rules or binding for every poetic composition according to Wordsworth. In his opinion, it is necessary for a poet to choose his own diction because

a poet is a man speaking to men. The language of common life is the language of nature as well, so it is the best way to describe the feelings of nature. This is Wordsworth's argument.

Coleridge, on the other hand, has a more formal idea of what the diction of a poem should be. He says, that his own differences from certain parts of the claim in Wordsworth's theory that the proper diction for poetry comes from the mouths of men in real life under natural feelings. Coleridge does not believe that a common language can be applied to all poetry. He says that his objection is that this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry. He also explains that the common language varies with location, occupation, and culture. Coleridge thought that the proper diction of a poem could not be produced from the vocabulary of common language and had it no place in the consciousness of an uneducated man. This opposition in opinion arises from Coleridge's more formal idea of poetry than Wordsworth had.

The disagreement between Wordsworth and Coleridge was on the point of poetic diction.. Wordsworth says that metre is the only feature separating a good poem from good prose. Coleridge however elaborates on the distinction between poem and prose by explaining that a poem is discriminated by the aesthetic experience of the whole poem, as from each component part. This means that in order for the work to be poetry, it must produce natural and passionate feelings from reading the whole, but must also do so by reading parts of the poem. To Coleridge, poetry is different from prose in that, prose does not produce the emotions that are produced by a poem, and therefore does not deserve to be called poetry. Coleridge defines prose as an ordinary form of written or spoken language without metrical structure. However, to capture the language spoken by men was the chief objective in Wordsworth's poetry. When Wordsworth says that there is no essential difference between the language of prose and of metrical composition, he is speaking of the ordinary language spoken by men. The distinction between poetry and prose discussed by the authors is in agreement that a poem is something better than a work of prose. Coleridge says this by completely separating the definitions of the two while Wordsworth blends the two terms together by saying poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written.

Coleridge and Wordsworth create a definition and criteria for a poem that becomes representative for the ideology of the Romantic era. They thought that a poem should be

a careful composition resulting from the passionate feelings that are experienced through nature. They are in agreement on the criteria of a poem being that it must evoke the emotion of passion each time it is written and that it must be written about nature or of the human experience. The two also believe it is the poet's responsibility to put these emotions into words by being knowledgeable about poetry and, most importantly, having a truly intimate interaction between nature and his own mind. The two poets did seem to disagree on the actual proper structure of a poem, however, they both agreed on a basic purpose and technique that brought about an entirely new kind of poem in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Coleridge questions whether the heroic characters in poems like *The Brothers*, *Michael*, *Ruth* and similar poems are typically rustic. Their excellence is due not to their rusticity but due to other poetic factors. The rustics who are portrayed are small landed proprietors under no necessity of working for others but able to get a simple livelihood by strenuous labour. Their education is the outcome of their familiarity with the Bible and the liturgy or hymn book. Thus their language is limited.

Coleridge's points that

1. one cannot argue from a small group of privileged rustics for the condition of the rustics as a whole, and
2. that Aristotle's view that poetry is essentially ideal in that it deals with the general (or generic), not with the exceptional, is a sound guiding principle.

He next considers *The Thorn* which Wordsworth intended to present as narrated by a retired seaman, or similar person, one with leisure to narrate stories round the countryside, and who would naturally have a longwinded way of retailing facts. But longwidedness is a defect in any narrative poem, perhaps in any kind of poetry according to Coleridge. Coleridge feels compelled to call in question Wordsworth's choice of rustic character a priori (i.e. taken for granted on theoretical or argumentative grounds) and with reference to cases where he tried to practice his theory.

Coleridge next rejects the view that the language of the rustics purified from all provincialism and grossness, such as dialectal crudeness and bad grammar is the best language of poetry. Coleridge claims that these men cannot communicate passions as well as Coleridge claims that they do. The purified rustic language will not differ from that of any man of common sense except in being inferior because it will lack that training in thinking which enables an educated man to pass from facts in isolation to

general inferences, bringing both together in one larger idea. Moreover the rustic's vocabulary is a small collection of terms pertaining to his primary needs, and this situation is not very different from that of the calls which birds and animals use. So Coleridge says:

> The best part of a human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man.

In other words it is the terms and expressions coined, while exercising the thinking faculty at higher levels, which constitute the most efficient and expressive part of a language. It may happen that the rustics sometimes use the words of educated speech, but this is because they have learned them from the pulpit and from other learned sources with which they accidentally come into touch. Thus when Wordsworth offers the rustic language in a purified from as a far more philosophical language than the arbitrary and capricious language of poets, he does not in Coleridge view take these points of drawback into consideration.

Re-stating his objection from another angle Coleridge rejects at the word 'real' in Wordsworth's claim that poetry should be written in 'a selection of the real language of men'. He challenges Wordsworth's statement that between the language of prose and that of metrical composition, there no essential difference. Dealing with this point with in Chapter XVI and XVII, he tries to get at the meaning of 'real' and affirms that there are three concentric areas of language:

- the outermost is what all users have in common, a universal language
- the inner is the language one shares with one's class, profession - registers and dialects
- the innermost is the circle of one's personal and unique use of a language- ideolects - which show our idiosyncracies

According to Coleridge the outermost band is the poorest, the lingua communis, and this is the only are that Wordsworth's 'real language' can refer to: the least productive of poetry.

Last of all, Wordsworth tries to save his case by appending the phrase 'in a state of excitement' to his plea for the 'real language of men' as the best for poetry. Coleridge replies that excitement cannot create new language but can only get the general truths, conceptions and images, and the words expressing them already stored in a person's mind. Excitement cannot invent; it can only cause ferment in what already exists.So the qualification that Wordsworth makes is rejected by him. Hence Coleridge says:

> The distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary….
> Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly said to from the best part of language.

Breaking away from the neo- classical artificiality Coleridge advocated simplicity in poetry. The main aim and object of his poetry is the evocation of the simple and primary feelings of the mind and heart. Closely related to Coleridge's conception of the imagination is his theory of poetry. His distinction between a 'poem' and 'poetry' gives us a clue to his general theory. However Coleridge does not think that distilled simplicity in poetry can be got ready made from the rustic's language. What Coleridge is inquiring into in chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria* are the differentiating qualities of poetry and the reasons for these differentiating qualities o f good poetry.

COLERIDGE'S THEORY OF POETRY:

Coleridge re-states the main Romantic views on poetry. He wants poetry to be based on genius and originality, and to deal with its subject matter in such a way that its language will be organically linked to it; or rather, that the subject-matter is co-extensive with the poem in the works of the truly great poets there is a reason not only for every word, but for the position of every word. Every detail of th epoem's structure of composition matters. Coleridge is a significant English exponent of organicism as a metaphor for the work of art; he opposes organic form and mechanic form in the same way as the German

Romantic, Schlegel. Imagination produces organic forms, fancy merely mechanic forms. The work of art must grow organically from within itself. Its principles of order are finally internal and not imposed from without. There are rules in the work of art, Coleridge admits as he criticises the neo-classicists, but they are not imposed mechanically. The order of the work of art is like that of a living body: each part is connected to the whole, and each is at once the end and the means.

The clue to his general theory is to be found in a distinction he proceeds to make immediately after his definition of a legitimate poem. For Coleridge POETRY is a wider category than POEM and is to be explained in terms of the way imagination functions. Whenever the synthesizing, the integrating powers of what Coleridge calls the secondary imagination are at work, bringing all aspects of a subject into a complex unity, than poetry in this larger sense results.

Coleridge's theory of poetry therefore emerges from his conception of the poet, poetic genius and the poet's secondary imagination. But Coleridge's attitude to poetic language is not the same as Wordsworth's. He criticizes Wordsworth's primitivistic assumptions as well as the implications with respect to poetic language. Coleridge does not share Wordsworth's faith in the intrinsic virtues of the rustics and country life. He believes in the value of culture and education, rather than in untutored minds in contact with nature. He points out that Wordsworth's definition of the language of real life was ambiguous: on one hand, he identified it with the language of the lower classes; on the other, that language was to be a selection. In fact, he says, if you "select" from a particularity (language of peasants) what you obtain is a generality (language of men). Therefore he says that he adopts with full faith the principle of Aristotle that poetry is essentially ideal. Language, for Coleridge, does not spring immediately from nature in the way Wordsworth would have it.

Even allowing that the same words can be used in prose and in poetry, Coleridge claims, the poetic manner of combining words is not that of prose. Coleridge identifies errors in poetry as faults of logic, psychology, good sense and taste: in general, faults against the rules of the Imagination. The criterion to define errors is not to be found in the oposition between the hackeneyed and the new. The same is true for Wordsworth, although he complains that some themes and expressions beautiful in themselves could no longer be used because of their having been so drawn upon by bad poets

For Coleridge, metre is the proper form for poetry. It favours, when it is successful, the most perfect blend of content and form; it must be adequate to the content of the poem and become one with its meaning. The role of metre is to intensify the attention of the reader to every element in the poem, as well as to the whole. However, it is not a necessary element for poetry: only the most suitable form. And this is so because the language of poetry is not the same as the language of prose, even if its vocabulary is the same. It is peculiar to the Romantic era that poetry is defined not only with respect to science, but also with respect to other kinds of literature. Coleridge points out that poetry does not equal rhythmical language nor does it equal literature.

COLERIDGE'S THEORY OF IMAGINATION:

The greatest contribution of Coleridge to literary theory is his theory of Imagination. During the seventeenth century, the terms, Imagination and Fancy had often been used in a vaguely synonymous way to refer to the realm of fairytale or make – believe. It was Dryden, who, in his '*Annus Mirabilis'* prepared for the distinction between then. A certain depth of good feeling and refinement was associated with the term 'imagination' whereas, 'fancy' was considered a light, superficial activity. In the eighteenth century, imagination was judged superior to fancy. As regards the meaning of these two terms it was held that where a work of art imitated the faithfully, it was called a work of fancy, and where a poet substituted something of his own imagination, having a likeness with the original, it was called a work of imagination.

Coleridge's discussion of the theory of imageination is a distinct landmark in the history of literary criticism. In *Biographia Literaria*, chapter XIV, Coleridge describes the birth of his own idea. It came to him, as a direct result of Wordsworth's poetry. Getting the cue from Wordsworth, Colerdige made a philosophical and systematic study of the problem. "Repeated meditation", says Coleridge, "Led me first to suspect that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties of being, according to the general belief, either two terms with one meaning, or at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same".

Primary imagination, according to Coleridge, is the power' to observe things, person, objects which can be preceived with our senses. Everybody is and endowed with the primary imagination. The primary imagination is an unconscious action of the mind.

The secondary imagination, on the other hand, is conscious and voluntary. Primary imagination is confined to mere perception. The secondary imagination involves the exercise of perception, intellect, emotions and a conscious will. Secondary imagination is also known as 'Esemplastic imagination'. 'Esemplastic' etymologically means shaping into one'. The secondary imagination is the active capacity of a creative artist, which represents and recreates this external world in its fuller nature, namely as that which is congenial to the spirit, and actually its own. It can remove the barrier between mind and matter. The distinction between Fancy and Imagination was for Coleridge of equal import for philosophy and poetry. For him this difference is not only observable but describable and of use in many branches of psychology. In fact, his distinction is one of the few which have yet been made that are of use in comparing forms of growth and changes of structure in mind. It is not a distinction introduced and hoc for literary purposes.

Coleridge believes that fancy is not at all a creative power. Fancy aims at the production of pleasure, and is therefore, only a play of mind. "Fancy", he says, "is the faculty of bringing together image dissimilar in the main by some one point of likeness." It is the arbitrary bringing together of things that lie remote and forming them into a unity. Fancy supplies only the decorative and external elements in a work of art. It is related to talent which is acquired while imagination in related to genius which is in born. That is why Coleridge says: "Milton had a highly imaginative, Cowley a very fanciful mind."

COLERIDGE' S CRITIQUE OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY:

The debate between Wordsworth and Coleridge a significant event in English literary history, prepared way for their respective poetic theories. It is part of the first romantic revolt against poetic diction in England and it related to two questions: one genetic- the origin of poetic image – the other critical – the poetic diction- the idiom of poetry.

Though the simplicity and primitivism of Wordsworth's poems and oven more of his theoretical views evoked immediate protect from his rending public, Coleridge was the first to criticize them in his *Biographia Literaria*. Though they had been the joint authors of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge had some fundamental points of difference from Wordsworth and he wanted to clarify his position. He wanted to correct Wordsworth's

views about the language of poetry and his critique in the richest theoretical discussion of poetic diction in English Criticism.

Coleridge joined Wordsworth in condemning the falsity and artificiality of much of neo- classical poetry. But he would not accept Wordsworth's theory that the ideal language of poetry is the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. Wordsworth's contention that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. Coleridge rejects this idea. To him poetry was the best words in the best order. Coleridge along with Longinus stands for sublimity of metre and diction and the ennobling heights of poetry.

Coleridge attempts to prove that there is nothing extraordinarily fascinating in the characters introduced by Wordsworth in his poems where the characters are by no means taken from low or rustic life. Their language and feelings have no necessary connection with their occupation and abode. Another point raised by Coleridge is that the language so much praised by Wordsworth varies from locality to locality owing to various influences.

In his appreciation of Wordsworth's poetic performance, Coleridge noted that Wordsworth suffered the difficulties of a ventriloquist in his undue liking for the dramatic form. The rustic speaker was invested with by Wordsworth with the authority of utterance or a matter- of – factness, circumstantialities, and a downright prosaim which did not suit the character. Coleridge quotes passage after passage in chapter XIV and XXII of Biographia Literaria to disprove of Wordsworth's theory by showing from Wordsworth's own examples how he fails. Finally it can be concluded that Coleridge criticized Wordsworth's poetic theory by citing poetic examples from the *Lyrical Ballads* and not Wordsworth whose genius he admires in the same book in many places.

Key Concepts

Organic form:

A term used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to describe the form that results when imagination -- a superior mental faculty that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" -- generates a work of art. According to Coleridge, organic form "is innate; it

shapes as it develops from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form." The development of a poem, then, is seen to be analogous with the growth of a plant, whose evolutionary energy is drawn from within until, finally, it achieves organic unity or perfect form.

Mechanic form:

A term used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to describe the form that results when fancy, a mental faculty that works according to a mechanistic association of ideas, imposes a prefabricated or predetermined pattern upon a work of art.

Fancy and imagination:

These are terms used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to distinguish mechanical and organic processes of literary creation. Fancy, the inferior mental faculty, works according to a mechanistic principle of the association of ideas and merely reproduces and recombines the "fixed and dead" objects given to consciousness through perception and memory. Fancy was used interchangeably with imagination in the eighteenth century but during the Romantic period came to signify the faculty of arranging ideas and images in pleasant combinations, as opposed to imagination which was more profound, intellectual and radically inventive.

Imagination, the superior faculty, is creative and organic; it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate." A mechanical form is a preconceived idea imposed by fancy, whereas an organic form is a vital interdependence of parts and whole created by imagination, a faculty which "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities."

QUESTIONS ON UNIT II

SHORT NOTES:

1. Metre and diction in poetry according to Wordsworth
2. Wordsworth's definition of 'rustic life'
3. Wordsworth's definition of the poet
4. Wordsworth's reasons for writing the *Preface*
5. Coleridge's concept of a poem
6. Romantic individualism
7. The Romantic poet's view of neoclassicism
8. The coexistence of the mundane and the exotic in Romantic poetry

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What reasons does Wordsworth give to defend his use of the language of common man? How does he define this language?
2. Discuss Wordsworth's definition of the poet.
3. Why does Wordsworth find the existing modes and forms of poetry inadequate? What reasons does he give to support his views?
4. What are Coleridge's reasons for rejecting Wordsworth's use of the real language of men? How does Coleridge interpret the functions of this kind of language?
5. Discuss the Romantic age's conception of the poet.
6. Compare and contrast the Romantic and Neoclassical conceptions of the nature and function of art.
7. How is the poet defined by the poet/critics of the Romantic age?
8. From among Wordsworth's and Coleridge's responses to the nature of the poem and its language, which of the two is more convincing and why?
9. Discuss the role of nature as theorized by the Romantic poet/critics.
10. Discuss Coleridge theory of Fancy and Imagination.

UNIT - III

VICTORIAN AND MODERNIST CRITICISM

ESSAY NO 5. MATTHEW ARNOLD: *THE STUDY OF POETRY, 1853*

VICTORIANISM

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Victorianism was a nineteenth century cultural movement associated with middle-class culture. As a cultural movement of the middle class, Victorianism opposed the extravagance and licentious living of the aristocratic sections of the English society and at the same time critiqued the decandance and squalid ways of life which associated with economically backward sections of the society. The dominant cultures of Great Britain in the nineteenth century put a good deal of emphasis on refinement, propriety, restraint, and prudishness. The expression Victorian is associated with the concept of the puritanical.

The word *Victorian* literally describes things and events in the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). In science and technology, the Victorians were progressive. But in religion, the Victorians experienced doubt and questioned institutional Christianity on a large scale. This doubt is reflected in the literature of the times.

In literature and the other arts, the Victorians attempted to combine Romantic emphases upon self, emotion, and imagination with Neoclassical ones upon the public role of art and a corollary responsibility of the artist. But in spite of this attempt Victorianism neither achieved the emotional emancipation of the Romantics or remained content with the severity of the Neoclassicists

The Victorians innovative and ready for change especially in ideology, politics, and society. Democracy, feminism, unionization of workers, socialism, Marxism, and other modern movements, all began in this period. Darwin, Marx, and Freud were the three important thinkers of this period. Their theories influenced every field of thought in Europe and Britain.

A number of radical movements especially in religion began in this period. The Catholicism of the Oxford Movement, the Evangelical movement, and the rise of Utilitarianism, socialism, Darwinism, and scientific Agnosticism, were all

characteristically Victorian. However Victorianism was most concerned with the quality of life question. This is reflected in the writings of Carlyle and Ruskin and the criticism of Arnold. In sharp contrast to this concern arose the empirical prose of Darwin and Huxley. The works of fantasy of George MacDonald and the realism of George Eliot and George Bernard Shaw added a rather skeptical strain to the writings of this period.

The Victorians defined the life of man in terms of his sense of social responsibility. In this they stand in contrast to their immediate predecessors, the Romantics.

The nineteenth century experienced many intellectual currents like Romanticism and Realism and Marxism. This created an anxiety about how man wasto cope with the rapid change. This and the inevitability of change are two contradictory impulses that appeared in most Victorian writings.

All these changes had in fact begun earlier. The eighteenth century Enlightenment movement had stressed rationalism, toleration, a cosmopolitan worldview, and a respect for science. The nineteenth century continued to promote scientific thinking, even as new scientific evidence came to call into question human rationalism and the orderliness of the universe. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis radically changed the way the mind was understood to work and undermined faith in human rationality through its new methods of study of the mind. In political theory Max Weber emphasized the role of collective groups acting due to forces which were beyond their control, rather than the role of rational individuals as a major driving force in history. This was a blow to the Romantic idealization of individuality.

By the end of the nineteenth century, most of non-Europe had become colonized. The imperialist conquests and economic domination of most of the world valorized Western ideas which also became the most powerful weapon for challenging traditional modes of thought and life around the world.

The first half of the 19th century for Europe was marked by a series of turbulent wars and revolutions, which gradually formed into a series of ideas and doctrines now identified as Romanticism, which focused on individual subjective experience, the supremacy of "Nature" as the standard subject for art, revolutionary or radical extensions of expression, and individual liberty. By mid-century, however, a synthesis of these ideas with stable governing forms had emerged, partly in reaction to the failed Romantic Revolutions of 1848. Called by various names, this stabilizing synthesis was rooted in the idea that what was "real" dominated over what was subjective. It was exemplified by

Otto von Bismarck's *realpolitik*, by "practical" philosophical ideas such as positivism and in general by cultural norms now connoted by the term "Victorian era".

Central to this synthesis, however, was the importance of institutions, common assumptions and frames of reference. These drew their support from religious norms found in Christianity, scientific norms found in classical physics and doctrines that asserted that depiction of the basic external reality from an objective standpoint was in fact possible. Cultural critics and historians label this set of doctrines Realism, though this term is not universal. In philosophy, the rationalist and positivist movements established a primacy of reason and system.

The Victorian glorification of Western civilization and progress as the most supreme in the world was a imperialist ideologue and the Victorians themselves saw themselves as the very essence of civilization, and believed their rational and restrained culture had a good deal to teach the rest of the world.

MATTHEW ARNOLD: *THE STUDY OF POETRY,1853*

Mathew Arnold (1822 - 1888), was not only a critic but also a poet. His criticism therefore is the criticism of a man who had personal experience of what he was writing about. He made his debut as a critic in the *Preface to the Poems* of 1853. In it he follows Dryden's method of critically scrutinizing his own performance and making critical observations suitable to the occasion. He analyzed his own poems critically.

Matthew Arnold was also one of the most important literary critics of his age. From 1857 to 1867 he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford; during this time he wrote his first books of criticism, including *On Translating Homer* (1861), *Essays in Criticism* (1865; Ser. 2, 1888), and *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and *Friendship's Garland* (1871) he widened his field to include social criticism. Arnold's interest in religion resulted in *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877). In the 1880s he gave several lectures in the United States, which were published as *Discourses in America* (1885).

The Study of Poetry was written as a preface to T.H. Ward's selections form the English poets which appeared in a four volume series.

> A collection like the present, with its succession of celebrated names and celebrated poems, offers a good opportunity to us for resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real. I have sought

> to point out a method which will help us in making them so, and to exhibit it in use so far as to put any one who likes in a way of applying it for himself.

Thus Arnold states what his intention is in the essay. His intention is to demonstrate how to form real estimates of the English poets. This he does by putting poets of every age to close scrutiny and comparing them with the classical masters of the past. Such a method is described by Arnold as the 'touchstone method'.

ARNOLD'S LITERARY CRITICISM MAY BE SAID TO FALL INTO TWO BROAD DIVISIONS:

1. on the art of poetry
2. on the art of criticism.

The former, generally speaking, is the earlier phase when the writing of poetry engaged his attention. This phase of Arnold's work preceded his later work of teaching others how to judge poetry as a critic. The latter phase when, the poet being more or less out, the critic was free to apply his mind to the problems of his craft.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

ARNOLD'S CRITICAL PRINCIPLES ON POETRY

T. S. Eliot praised Arnold's objective approach to critical evaluation, particularly his tools of comparison and analysis. The social role of poetry and criticism is reiterated by Arnold throughout his critical works

A concern for the revival of **Classicism** marked the literary criticism of Arnold. His classicism came as a corrective measure against some of the critical trends of the Victorian period. There was a group of poets in the Victorian age that came to be called the Spasmodics. The more prominent among them were P. J. Bailey, Sydney Dobell, and Alexander Smith. Both in the verses they wrote and in their critical pronouncements they held poetry to be the expression of 'the state of one's own mind' in an expressive and highly individualistic language. This led, on the one hand, to an extravagance of thought and emotion and, on the other, to the excessive use of metaphor. The Spasmodics reflected the doubts and fears of their age.

The Spasmodics believed that the ancient subjects had had their day and that it was the business of the modern poet to choose modern subjects. Arnold, painfully aware of the havoc wrought by science and the industrial revolution in his own age, thought otherwise. The business of the poets, he believed was to act as a guide to life. The trend

that the Spasmodics had initiated disturbed conservative thinkers like Arnold who felt it his moral duty as a writer and critic to urge the need for good taste in reading and high ideals for living.

Dissatisfied with the poetry of his age, Arnold directs his attention to the models which might serve it in its hour of need. In this essay, he demonstrates two features:

- The method by which a good and great poet is recognized and
- His own estimation of the English poets in terms of his own prescription

In this seminal essay he says that poetry alone can be our sustenance and stay in an era where religious beliefs are fast losing their hold. Arnold could not conceive of poetry as something apart from life. It was a serious pre-occupation with the art of living itself. **Arnold rejects the attitude that art exits for the sake of art alone.**

To Arnold **poetry was the criticism of life** under the conditions fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. He claims that **poetry is superior to philosophy, science, and religion.** Religion attaches its emotion to supposed facts, and the supposed facts are failing it, but poetry attaches its emotion to ideas and ideas are infallible. Science, in his view is incomplete without poetry. He recalls Wordsworth's view which was stated in the *Preface to the LyricalBallads* that poetry is the breath and finer spirit of knowledge.

Arnold's critic has a duty to society. As a critic Arnold is essentially a moralist, and has very definite ideas about what poetry should and should not be. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas, he says, is a poetry of revolt against life, and is a poetry that is morally indifferent. Arnold even censored his own collection on moral grounds. He omitted the poem Empedocles on Etna from his volume of 1853, whereas he had included it in his collection of 1852. The reason he advances, in the Preface to his Poems of 1853 is not that the poem is too subjective, with its Hamlet-like introspection, or that it was a deviation from his classical ideals, but that the poem is too depressing in its subject matter, and would leave the reader hopeless and crushed. There is nothing in it in the way of hope or optimism, and such a poem could prove to be neither instructive nor of any delight to the reader.

Aristotle says that poetry is superior to history since it bears the stamp of **high seriousness and truth.** If truth and seriousness are wanting in the subject matter of a poem, so will the true poetic stamp of diction and movement be found wanting in its

style and manner. Hence the two, the nobility of subject matter and the superiority of style and manner, are proportional and cannot occur independently.

Arnold took up Aristotle's view, asserting that true greatness in poetry is given by the truth and seriousness of its subject matter, and by the high diction and movement in its style and manner, and although indebted to Joshua Reynolds for the expression 'grand style', Arnold gave it a new meaning when he used in 1851 in his lecture *On Translating Homer* wherein he says:

> I think it will be found that that the grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with a severity a serious subject.

Arnold believed that a modern writer should be aware that contemporary literature is built on the foundations of the past, and should contribute to the future by continuing a firm **tradition.** Quoting Goethe and Niebuhr in support of his view, he asserts that his **age suffers from spiritual weakness because it thrives on self-interest and scientific materialism,** and therefore cannot provide noble characters such as those found in classical literature.

Arnold **urged modern poets to look to the ancients and their great characters and themes for guidance and inspiration**. Classical literature, in his view, possess pathos, moral profundity and noble simplicity, while modern themes, arising from an age of spiritual weakness, are suitable for only comic and lighter kinds of poetry, and do not possess the loftiness to support epic or heroic poetry. Therefore Arnold advocates that it is the social and intellectual duty of the critic to detect the real classic among writers.

> Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character. If he is a dubious classic let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best (fro this is the true and right meaning of the word classic, classical), then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character.

According to Arnold, Homer is the best model of a simple grand style, while Milton is the best model of severe grand style. Dante, however, is an example of both. Even **Chaucer, in Arnold's view**, in spite of his virtues such as benignity, largeness, and spontaneity, **lacks seriousness. Burns too lacks sufficient seriousness**, because he was hypocritical in that while he adopted a moral stance in some of his poems, in his private life he flouted morality.Arnold **rejected the prevailing Romantic view of poetry** and seeks to revive the classical values of objectivity, urbanity, and architectonics. He denounces the Romantics for ignoring the classical writers for the sake of novelty, and for their allusive, metaphoric manner of writing which Arnold describes as suggestive writing that defies easy comprehension.

DISCUSSION OF THE ESSAY

In *The Study of Poetry*, (1888) which opens his *Essays in Criticism: Second series*, in support of his plea for nobility in poetry, Arnold recalls Sainte-Beuve's reply to Napoleon, when latter said that charlatanism is found in everything. Sainte-Beuve replied that charlatanism might be found everywhere else, but not in the field of poetry, because in poetry the distinction between sound and unsound, or only half-sound, truth and untruth, or only half-truth, between the excellent and the inferior, is of paramount importance. There is no place for charlatanism in Arnold’s vision of the nature and function of poetry. To him poetry is the criticism of life, governed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. It is in the criticism of life that the spirit of our race will find its stay and consolation. The extent to which the spirit of mankind finds its stay and consolation is proportional to the power of a poem's criticism of life, and the power of the criticism of life is in direct proportion to the extent to which the poem is genuine and free from charlatanism.

In spite of the Victorian temper of doubt and gloom that marks a large portion of Arnold’s poetry, this essay starts on a note of optimism. Arnold believes that poetry is sure to take the place of religion for it is in poetry that the religious, moral and aesthetic elements coalesce. With the onset of a crisis in faith in religion, thinkers like Arnold firmly believed that poetry would take the place of religion. Arnold envisioned the healing powers of religion. He believed that poetry could inspire man to live a life of high moral and ethical acumen. Thus when every other creed and faith collapses, poetry becomes according to Arnold, the religion of the future. This is reason why Arnold

describes the future of poetry as being immense and greater than poetry. Therefore at the outset of the essay he declares that

> The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But, for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.

Poetry gives us a special kind of knowledge where thought and feeling are fused. Arnold further makes a distinction between 'facts' and 'ideas.' Religion is failing us for it had attached its emotion to historical facts and when the facts come to be questioned the very foundation is shaken. For poetry the idea, the greatest of ideas that thought by mankind, is everything; hence the greatness and importance of poetry.

The Study of Poetry cautions the critic that in forming a genuine and disinterested estimate of the work of the poet under consideration he should not be influenced by historical or personal judgments.

Having established the importance of poetry, he proceeds to warn us against two fallacies in our judgment of poetry - the historic and the personal. Setting aside these two kinds of estimates, the personal and the historical, the poet has to make a real estimate.Thus Arnold outlines **three ways in which poems may have importance to the critic and the reader:**

- **they may count to historically** – leading to the historical estimate
- **they may count on grounds personal to ourselves –** leading to the personal estimate
- **they may count to us really -** leading to the real estimate

THE HISTORICAL ESTIMATE:

This is the error of judgment that takes place when a writer's work is given more importance than it really merits because it is a located as a marker to signify the development of the tradition of literature. In every epoch there are many works of literature. But the greatness of these works has to tested by standards of poetic truth and beauty. A work of literature does not become great because it is historically significant in locating the movement of the body of literature it belongs to. A poem may be regarded as important due to its position in the development of a language--but this does not say anything about its intrinsic merit. Arnold argues effectively against the historical estimate dismissing it is literary dilettantism. Thus Arnold applying this caution to the works of Chaucer does not recognize him a great writer though he is historically significant, demonstrating by example what he means by the real estimate.

THE PERSONAL ESTIMATE:

A poem may appeal to readers for personal reasons which have nothing to do with the intrinsic merit. The critic may praise a poem in an exaggerated manner because he is fond of the writer. This is the fallacy of the personal estimate.

THE REAL ESTIMATE:

For a poem to be of real quality**,** it must possess both a higher truth *and* a higher seriousness. Arnold borrows these two terms from Aristotle. Both the content and the style of the poem must in the view of the classical critic reflect the seriousness with which the poet envisions his responsibility in mediating the truths of life. Thus he says

> But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment.

As examples of erroneous judgments he says that the 17th century court tragedies of the French were spoken of with exaggerated praise, until Pellisson reproached them for want of the true poetic stamp. So too another critic, Charles d' Héricault, said that

seventeenth century French poetry had received undue and undeserving veneration. Arnold says the critics seem to substitute a god like figure instead of the poet with his limitations. Arnold continues the argument by next asserting that the French critic Vitet, who had eloquent words of praise for the epic poem *Chanson de Roland* by Turoldus, (which was sung by a jester, Taillefer, in William the Conqueror's army), saying that it was superior to Homer's *Iliad*. Arnold's view is that this poem can never be compared to Homer's work, and that we only have to compare the description of dying Roland to Helen's words about her wounded brothers Pollux and Castor and its inferiority will be clearly revealed.

THE TOUCHSTONE METHOD

Arnold's criticism of Viet above illustrates his 'touchstone method'; his theory that in order to judge a poet's work properly, a critic should compare it to passages taken from works of great masters of poetry, and that these passages should be applied as touchstones to other poetry. Even a single line or selected quotation will serve the purpose. He became an advocate of touchstones. Even short passages or single lines, will serve the critic quite sufficiently. Some of Arnold's touchstone passages are

From Homer

- Helen's words about her wounded brother,
- Zeus addressing the horses of Peleus
- suppliant Achilles' words to Priam and from Dante
- Ugolino's brave words
- and Beatrice's loving words to Virgil.

From non-classical writers he makes his selection from Shakespeare:

Henry IV Part II (III,i), Henry's expostulation with sleep that begins with the words:

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast . . . ‘

Hamlet (V, ii) 'Absent thee from felicity awhile . . . ‘

From Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book 1: 'Care sat on his faded cheek . . .’

and 'What is else not to be overcome . . . '

High seriousness and the style in which it is clothed cannot be separated and the best way to define poetry is not to do it in the prose of the critic, but to recognize it by feeling it in the verse of the masters. Hence the need for touchstones. The touchstones

have all the characteristics that Arnold values in good and great poetry, solemnity, a sublimity, a deep reflection on life and its transience.

ON CHAUCER

Arnold begins his study of the long line of English poets with an analysis of Chaucer's position. The French Romance poetry of the thirteenth century *langue d'oc* and *langue d'oil* was extremely popular in Europe and Italy, but soon lost its popularity and now it is important only in terms of historical study. But Chaucer was guided by the romance poetry of the French, and influenced by the Italian Royal rhyme stanza. There is an excellence of style and subject in his poetry, which is the quality the French poetry lacks. Arnold quotes Dryden who says of Chaucer's *Prologue* that it has "God's plenty" and that "he is a perpetual fountain of good sense". There is largeness, benignity, freedom and spontaneity in Chaucer's writings. He has a fluidity of diction. Chaucer is also the founder of a tradition. Arnold says that the excellence of Chaucer's poetry is due to his sheer poetic talent. This liberty in the use of language was enjoyed by many poets, but we do not find the same kind of fluidity in others. Only in Shakespeare and Keats do we find the same kind of fluidity, though they wrote without the same liberty in the use of language.

> Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our 'well of English undefiled,' because by the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he marks an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition f the liquid diction, the fluid movements, of Chaucer.
>
> And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics…. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisitive virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

Arnold praises Chaucer's excellent style and manner, but says that Chaucer cannot be called a classic since, unlike Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare, his poetry does not have the high poetic seriousness which Aristotle regards as a mark of its superiority over the other arts. Arnold praises Chaucer's excellent style and manner, but says that Chaucer cannot be called a classic since, unlike Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare, his

poetry does not have the high poetic seriousness which Aristotle regards as a mark of its superiority over the other arts. Since Chaucer lacks high seriousness Arnold does not admit him as a classic although it is with Chaucer that the English poetic tradition is born. Arnold's refusal to admit Chaucer as a classic is an example of the critic's real estimate.

HIGH SERIOUSNESS

Arnold's definition of poetry as 'criticism of life,' as an application of moral ideas to life under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth relies upon Aristotle's SPOUDAIOTES or high seriousness. Aristotle meant by *spoudaiotes* a concern with the depths and heights of man's being. Arnold uses this phrase while discussing the substance of great poetry. The English word serious (meaning 'earnest, mindful of what one says') only suggests the Aristotelian concept in the sense of an occupation with the highest concerns of life. Moreover, the passages cited by Arnold as examples of great poetry (not merely those he recommends as 'touchstones,' but other passages given in illustration of 'natural magic') show that Arnold's takes the concept to mean much deeper in all its implications. For example, the passage from *Paradise Lost* ('Darken'd so…') is an illustration of his admiration for the heroism of a rebel; the passage from Villon is a lament for the transience of youth and beauty but the lament comes from a person who is not moral; even humorous poetry is not excluded, as one of the examples from Burns shows. Thus Arnold's examples are varied.

Such a definition does not accommodate the mystical/inspired poetry that Romantic poet/critics like Shelley or Wordsworth expounded. Arnold wanted poetry to take the place of religion and like Milton he expected poetry to be simple but marked with a seriousness that would exert a transforming influence on man. Therefore Arnold says that though for purposes of analysis we can think of form and content as two different components in great poetry, they are in reality inseparable.

ARNOLD ON MILTON AND SHAKESPEARE

Moving on next to Milton and Shakespeare, Arnold states that they are both great writers whose poetry is marked by high poetic seriousness and high truth of substance. These are ably supported by a style that is elevated and necessary to make the seriousness effective. Therefore Arnold says that these two poets have been universally acclaimed as masters. In his sonnet *On Shakespeare* he says,

Others abide our question. Thou are free.
We ask and ask - Thou smilest and art still,

Out-topping knowledge.

The real estimate is amply illustrated in their poetry because of the high seriousness of substance and the corresponding elevated style. Hence Arnold moves on to the neo-classical age without further ado. He summarizes this section thus:

> For my present purpose I need not dwell on our Elizabethan poetry, or on the continuation and close of this poetry in Milton. We all of us profess to be agreed in the estimate of this poetry; we all of us recognize it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics. The real estimate, here, has universal currency. With the next age of our poetry divergency and difficulty begin. An historic estimate of that poetry has established itself; and the question is, whether it will be found to coincide with the real estimate.

ON THE AGE OF DRYDEN AND POPE

The age of Dryden,is regarded as superior to that of the others for 'sweetness of poetry'. Arnold asks whether Dryden and Pope, poets of great merit, are truly the poetical classics of the 18th century. He says Dryden's post-script to the readers in his translation of *The Aeneid* reveals the fact that in prose writing he is even better than Milton and Chapman.

> For my present purpose I need not dwell on our Elizabethan poetry, or on the continuation and close of this poetry in Milton. We all of us profess to be agreed in the estimate of this poetry; we all of us recognize it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics. The real estimate, here, has universal currency. With the next age of our poetry divergency and difficulty begin. An historic estimate of that poetry has established itself; and the question is, whether it will be found to coincide with the real estimate.

Just as the laxity in religious matters during the Restoration period was a direct outcome of the strict discipline of the Puritans, in the same way in order to control the dangerous sway of imagination found in the poetry of the Metaphysicals, to counteract 'the dangerous prevalence of imagination', the poets of the eighteenth century introduced certain regulations. The restrictions that were imposed on the poets were uniformity, regularity, precision, and balance. These restrictions curbed the growth of poetry, and encouraged the growth of prose

Hence we can regard Dryden as the glorious founder, and Pope as the splendid high priest, of the age of prose and reason as indispensable eighteenth century. However when the real estimate is applied to them they do not have the high poetic truth and poetic style like Milton and Shakespeare. Their poetry was that of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Arnold says that Pope and Dryden are not poet classics, but the 'prose classics' of the 18th century.

> Admirable for the purposes of the high priest of an age of prose and reason. But do you ask me whether such verse proceeds from men with an adequate poetic criticism of life, from men whose criticism of life has a high seriousness, or even, with out that highs seriousness, has poetic largeness, freedom insight, benignity?
>
> I answer: It has not and cannot have them; it is the poetry of the builder of an age of prose and reason. Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

As for poetry, he considers Gray to be the only classic of the eighteenth century. Gray constantly studied and enjoyed Greek poetry and thus inherited their poetic point of view and their application of poetry to life. But he is the 'scantiest, frailest classic' since his output was small. However Arnold says that Gray “lived with the Greeks” by which he means that the poet shared the same qualities of high seriousness of style and diction

that writers like Homer had. Gray wrote in the age of prose and reason and his greatness was overshadowed by the predominance of Dryden and Pope. Still Arnold declares that Gray was a classic and he shows the reader by his own critical example the critic should retrieve poets from the historical fallacy. Arnold's praise of Gray is an example of the rejection of the historical estimate.

> Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age; the position of Gray is singular, and demands a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who, coming in times more favorable, have attained to an independent criticism of life. But he lived with the great poets, he lived, above all, with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner…He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.

ARNOLD ON BURNS

Although Burns lived towards the close to the nineteenth century his poetry reflects the qualities of the eighteenth Century life. According to Arnold Burns is more talented in his native language than in English. His poems deal with Scottish dress, Scottish manner, and Scottish religion.

According to Arnold, when Burns moralizes in some of his poems it also sounds insincere, coming from a man who disregarded morality in actual life. But, like Chaucer, Burns lacks high poetic seriousness, though his poems have poetic truth in diction and movement. Sometimes Burns's poetic genius is unmatched by anyone. He is even better than Goethe at times and he is unrivalled by anyone except Shakespeare. In spite of listing out these qualities, Arnold does not rate Burns as a classic. He admits however that Burns has written excellent poems such as *Tam O'Shanter, Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad,* and *Auld Lang Syne*. Here Arnold rejects the personal estimate of Burns which was widely accepted in his times.

> Burns, like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work.

ARNOLD ON THE ROMANTIC POETS

Arnold then moves on to evaluate the Romantic poets. His opinion is that the Romantic poets are too close to his age to be evaluated impartially. The dominant responses to the Romantic poets is that they were worthy of the greatest praise. According to Arnold, the estimate of the Romantic poets tends to be personal. While the Romantic poets themselves were vehement in their reaction to the lingering influences of Neoclassicism, Arnold like the conservative critics representing Victorianism is in his turn unaccomodative of the excessive insistence on individuality. Thus he says,

> But we enter on burning ground as we approach the poetry of times so near to us—poetry like that of Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth—of which the estimates are so often not
> only personal, but personal with passion

Arnold's position as an eminent critic cannot be disputed. Eliot says that Arnold was one of those critics who arrive from time to time to set the literary house in order. Eliot named Dryden, Johnson and Arnold as some of the greatest critics of the English language. In Arnold independent critical insight and the authority of the humanistic tradition are united. The Renaissance humanistic faith in good letters as the teachers of wisdom, and in the virtue of great literature, and above all, great poetry was repeated by Arnold. He saw poetry as a supremely illuminating and ethically fortifying aid in the difficult endeavor to become or remain fully human.

Arnold's method of criticism is comparative. Steeped in classical poetry, and thoroughly acquainted with continental literature, he compares English literature to French and German literature, adopting the disinterested approach he had learned from Sainte-Beuve. Arnold's objective approach to criticism and his view that historical and biographical study are unnecessary was very influential on the new criticism. His emphasis on the importance of tradition also influenced F. R. Leavis, and T. S. Eliot.

Eliot is indebted to Arnold for his classicism, and for his objective approach which paved the way for Eliot to say that poetry is not an expression of the writer’s individual personality but an escape from personality, because it is not an expression of emotions but an escape from emotions.

Although Arnold disapproved of the Romantics' approach to poetry, he also shows his appreciation the Romantics in his *Essays in Criticism*. Assessing Wordsworth

he says that “Nature herself took the pen out of his hand and wrote with a bare, sheer penetrating power”. Arnold also valued Wordsworth's poetry for its strong ideas on the role of Nature in man’s life.

In an age when populist literature satisfies the taste of the common man, there is the danger that the classics will become insignificant. Arnold however is sure that the supremacy of the classics will be preserved in the modern age, not because of conscious effort on the part of the readers, but because of the human instinct of self-preservation.

> Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worth while to continue to enjoy it by oneself. But it never will lose currency with the world, in spite of momentary appearances; it never will lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world[‘s deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper, — by the instinct of self preservation in humanity

In the present day with the literary tradition over-burdened with imagery, myth, symbol and abstract jargon, it is refreshing to come back to Arnold and his like to encounter central questions about literature and life as they are perceived by a mature and civilised mind.

KEY CONCEPTS

HIGH SERIOUSNESS:

Arnold uses this phrase while discussing the substance of great poetry. To say that ‘high seriousness’ consists in a tragic view of life is perhaps to the unfair both to Aristotle and to Matthew Arnold. Aristotle meant by SPOUDAIOTES a concern with the depths and heights of our being. The English word serious (meaning ‘earnest, mindful of what one says’) cannot be said to define the Aristotelian concept accurately in as much as the latter means an occupation with the highest concerns of life.

Classical:

This term has come to have several meaning. Originally it was used when referring to the art of ancient Greece produced during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Later it included

all works of art created from 600 BC until the fall of Rome. Still later it was used to describe any art form thought to be inspired or influenced by ancient Greek or Roman examples. Arnold uses the word in this sense. Today, the word classical is used to describe perfection of form, with an emphasis on harmony and unity and restraint of emotion. Usually, it is applied to works that are representational but idealistic. The word classic is used to describe anything which is the epitome of its type.

Unit - III

VICTORIAN AND MODERNIST CRITICISM

Essay No 6. T.S.Eliot: *Tradition & Individual Talent*

MODERNISM

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Modernism is a cultural movement that includes the progressive art and architecture, music, literature and design which saw its emergence a little before 1914. It was a movement of artists who rebelled against late nineteenth century academic and historicist traditions, and embraced the new economic, social and political aspects of the emerging modern world.

The Modernist Movement first took root in the mid-nineteenth century in France and was established in the idea that traditional forms of art, literature, social organization and daily life were no longer relevant and that it was necessary to reject them and reinvent and redefine culture. So Modernism re-examined almost every aspect of existence, from commerce to philosophy. The aim was to find what the obstacles to progress were. Therefore better ways of reaching the same end were suggested. In short, Modernism declared that the new realities of the twentieth century had come to stay. What was changing had to be accepted and the world view had to change accordingly so that what was new was also seen and accepted to be good and beautiful.

Modernism in literature is a term used to describe the characteristic aspects of literature and art between World War I and World War II. It was heavily influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God, Karl Marx's view of human consciousness as a product of socio-historical factors, Sigmund Freud's view of the unconscious as the determinant of motivation and behavior, and the dislocating effects and devastation of the war. Modernism became synonymous with a lack of faith in Western civilization and culture, its humanism and rationalism. In poetry, fragmentation, discontinuity, allusiveness, and irony abound; in fiction, chronological disruption, linguistic innovation, the stream-of-consciousness device, and point-of-view narration; in art and theater, expressionism and surrealism. Modernism is one of the most intense and powerful movements in English and European literature.

From the 1870s onward, the views that history and civilization were inherently progressive, and that progress was inherently amicable, were doubted. The warning issued by the thinkers of the time was that increasing progress would lead to increasing isolation of individuals detached from social norms and their fellow men. So too, increasingly, it began to be argued not merely that the values of the artist and those of society were different, but that society was antithetical to progress itself, and could not move forward in its present form. Literature of this period constantly repeated that the artist was an exile in his society.

Two of the most disruptive thinkers of the period were, in biology, Charles Darwin and, in political science, Karl Marx. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection undermined religious certainty of the general public, and the sense of human uniqueness of the intelligentsia. The notion that human beings were driven by the same impulses as lower animals proved to be difficult to reconcile with the idea of man as the most noble and supreme being in creation. Karl Marx gave a political version of the same problem: that problems with the economic order were not transient, the result of specific wrong doers or temporary conditions, but were fundamentally contradictions within the capitalist system. Both thinkers inspired defenders and schools of thought that became decisive in establishing modernism.

In the arts and letters, two ideas originating in France exterted a great influence. The first was Impressionism, a school of painting that initially focused on work done, not in studios, but outdoors (*en plein air*).

The second school was Symbolism,which said that language is expressly symbolic in its nature, and that poetry and writing should follow whichever connection the sheer sound and texture of the words create.

Simultaneously social, political, and economic forces resulted in radical ways of approaching art and thinking. European civilization, which, till that point regarded itself as having a continuous and progressive line of development from the Renaissance began to suffer a series of changes that shook its foundatinal beliefs. In the first decades of the twentieth century many writers and thinkers, broke away from traditional means of organizing literature and the arts. This paralleled to the change in organizational methods in other fields. The argument was that if the nature of reality itself was in doubt,

then so too all the guiding principles of human activity in all fields, including art have to radically change. Freud's doctrine of the unconscious attacked the idea that people's impulses in breaking social norms and taboos were not the product of bad morals but were an essential part of the nature of the human animal. So too the ideas of Darwin tha man had evolved from the lower animal challenged the image of the greatness of man.

Leading figures in literary side of this Modernism include Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Valery, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, William Faulkner, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, Max Jacob, Pierre Reverdy, Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, Jean Cocteau, Paul Eluard, Gertrude Stein, Wyndham Lewis, H.D., Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams and Franz Kafka. Modernism manifested the disruption and a rejection of simple Realism in literature and art. Modernism saw traditional forms and traditional social arrangements as hindering progress and so the artist performed as a revolutionary. In his 1891 essay "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", Oscar Wilde one of the famous supporters of the ‘art for art’s sake’ movement wrote:

> A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be considered as an artist

Modernism of the 1930s began to focus on the realities of popular culture which was not derived from high culture, but instead from its own realities, particularly of mass production. The clash between high culture and populist culture was also reflected in the literature of the times. Modernist writers tended to see themselves as an avant-garde disengaged from bourgeois values, and disturbed their readers by adopting complex and difficult new forms and styles. Modernist writing is predominantly cosmopolitan, and often expresses a sense of urban cultural dislocation, along with an awareness of new anthropological and psychological theories. Its techniques of juxtaposition and multiple points of view challenge a coherence of meaning from fragmentary forms.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERNIST LITERATURE

- Perspectivism: This term refers to locating the meaning of a text from several viewpoints. These include 1)the viewpoint of the individual 2) the use of narrators located within the action of the fiction, experiencing from a personal, particular as opposed to an omniscient and objective perspective 3) the use of many voices, contrasts and contestations of perspective and 4) the ensuing disappearance of the omniscient narrator, especially as 'spokesperson' for the author.
- Impressionism: This term refers to an emphasis on the process of perception and knowing. It refers particularly to the use of formal, linguistic and representational devices, to present as closely as possible the texture or process of knowing and perceiving.
- Another feature is the re-structuring of literature and the experience of reality it re-presents. Since art always attempts to 'imitate' or re-present reality, our understanding of what constitutes reality will depend to a large extent on how it is represented. How that reality can best be re-presented, presented to the mind and senses most fully, in its multiplicity of truths was a major concern of the Modernists.
- Modernist literature is especially characterized by a break with the sequential, cause-and-effect presentation of the 'reality' of realist fiction. It moves on the other hand towards a presentation of experience as allusive and discontinuous. So there is a recurrent use of motif, symbol and allusion to show this fragmentation of experience.
- Language as a transparent vehicle that captures reality is no longer accepted. Language is seen as a complex and subtle arena where the writer constructs a reality, rather than language capturing a static reality faithfully. Language is not denotative but connotative. Its elusiveness and multiplicity of meanings for every word aid sin the complex, cultural and artistic construction of reality.
- Modernism celebrated experimentation in form in order to present, the structure, the connections, and the experience of life in its complexity. Another aim was to create a sense of art as artifact, art as 'other' than the reality we know. When art is seen as 'high', it is seen as opposed to popular culture.

- Modernism also supported the representation of inner, psychological reality, including the 'flow' of experience, through devices such as stream of consciousness, as did Virginia Woolf.
- Modernism used structural approaches to experience as such psychoanalysis, myth and the symbolic apprehension and comprehension of reality.
- Modernism excelled in the use of interior or symbolic landscape. The world of experience is shifted inside the character's mind and depicted symbolically or metaphorically. This opposes both the Romantic conception of the interaction with transcendent forces through the exterior world of Nature and the Realist representations of the exterior world as a physical and historical site of experience. (David Lodge suggests in *Modes of Modern Writing* that the realist mode of fiction is based on metonomy, or contiguity, and the modernist mode is based on metaphor, or substitution.)
- Time is moved into the interior just as space or world is moved within. Time is not a real time but a psychological time as experienced inside the mind. It is a symbolic time rather than a historical reality, not the time of realism. Time is used as a structuring device to relate disparate events in a piece of writing.
- Modernism gives 'open' or ambiguous endings to texts, a strategy that is seen to be closer to reality as opposed to 'closed' endings, in which problems are solved.
- Modernism shows the search for a symbolic basis for reality, especially through the device of 'epiphany' in Joyce, through 'inscape' in Hopkins and the 'moment of being' in Woolf. This relates to the move to move experience inwards, and to explore the structural aspects of experience while adding a density to form.
- The important themes in Modernist literature include questioning the reality of experience; a search for meaning in a world without God; the critique of the traditional culture; the loss of meaning in life and hope in the modern world and a search for the means to cope with this loss.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO T.S.ELIOT

Eliot, who is a classicist and who values scholarship stands for orderliness both in art and in criticism. Each is a striving for order; art seeks it in life and criticism in art. Each therefore must be orderly according to the critic. The creed of 'Art for art's sake' was very popular when the Victorian age came to a close with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. There was a return to the Romantic principles of poetry in literature. In opposition to this Eliot emphasized the importance of classicism in learning and discipline in composition. According to him Keats and Wordsworth were only apprentices and not full-fledged poets in terms of the perspective he had about what makes a poet. Classicism and propriety as opposed to Romanticism were seen by him as the difference between health and disease. He rejected individualism and valued tradition though at the same time he opposed some of the ideas of neo-Humanism. Humanism says that every man is essentially good; Eliot believed in the original sin. He followed the French Symbolist La Forge in use of symbols to convey personal and emotional experience through extreme condensation of ideas. Eliot was also inspired by Pound who was the great inaugurator of modern poetry.

Eliot rejected the Romantic concept that poetry is an expression of personality. He defined poetry as an escape from personality through his theory of impersonality. The Romantic poets believed that art is the expression of the artist's personality and the poem was likened to in dream-work. Eliot ridiculed the belief in the inner voice of the poet. He compared the mind of the poet to a shred of platinum which acting as a catalyst would enable the use of artistic feeling in the composition of the poem. The feelings and emotions of the poet would then be incorporated into the poem through the appropriate use of poetic devices. In other words the poet would objectively correlate situations which may be real or imaginary with his aesthetic emotions using poetic devices. The term objective correlative was not coined by Eliot but by Allston who described it as a set of objects, a situation and a chain of events which may function as the formula of the particular emotion which the poet wants to express. So Eliot did not accommodate the personal emotions of the poet into the poem. Rather he cautioned that the emotions expressed in a work of art are different from those experienced in one's personal life. Even if the poet emphasized emotions they were only those emotions that were justified within the context of the poem and its idea. So Eliot did not encourage the intrusion of the poet as person into the poem. Thus he upheld the traditional creed as opposed to the Romantic creed.

Eliot believed that criticism was secondary and inferior to art. Thus he rejects the view that criticism can be equal to creative writing. Eliot says that poet-critic is the best critic and this view invited the charge that Eliot ignores the philosopher and literary theorist. Eliot called New Criticism the "lemon-squeezer" school of criticism because he felt convinced that there is no objective meaning to a work of art; the meaning is what the poet means to different sensitive readers.

T.S. ELIOT: *TRADITION AND INDIVIDUAL TALENT*, 1919

INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

This essay which occupies an important position in the critical the writings of T.S. Eliot was first published in 1919 in the *Times Literary Supplement*. It embodies Eliot's important tenets on critical creed and practice.

The essay is divided into three parts:

The first part of the essay elaborates Eliot's concept of tradition.

The second outlines his theory of impersonality in poetry.

The third is a summing-up.

Eliot's most significant contribution to the criticism of poetry is the impersonal theory of poetry. He asserts that the poet and the poem are two separate things and that the feeling, or emotion, or vision, resulting from the poem is something different from the personal feeling or emotion or vision in the mind of the poet. This he discusses by examining, first the relation of the poet to the past and, next, the relation of the poem to its author. The past, he says, is never dead; it lives in the present. According to Eliot if we approach a poet with an open mind, we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the literary masters of the past assert their influence in the most pronounced manner. Similarly his work, if he is a great poet, alters theirs in a considerable manner. Thus the poet asserts his individuality in his writings while at the same time incorporating the influence of the great poets of the past. Since the poet has to acquaint himself with a long line of the illustrious masters of the past, he has to submit to a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. That is why the critic says that the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. The past and the present fuse in it into a new compound which is synoptically indicated in the title which announces the two key ideas of the essay that are discussed, namely tradition in the first part and, the poet's individual talent in the second part.

PART I: ELIOT'S IDEA OF TRADITION

Eliot begins his essay by pointing out the general opposition that is held between criticism and creativity. This was earlier discussed elaborately by the Victorian critic Matthew Arnold in his essay *"The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"*. In that essay, Arnold had called for a new spirit of critical thinking. Like Eliot he was also intolerant of what he felt was the emotional immaturity of the Romantics.

> In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence. We cannot refer to "the tradition" or to "a tradition"; at most, we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of So-and-so is "traditional" or even "too traditional." Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure.

Critics, therefore, were in the habit of using the notion of tradition only to describe something quaint and archaic. Such a critical habit creates an understanding among the readers and general public that good poetry is not at all related to anything that has been done before. Besides it also creates the expectation that it must instead be something entirely new and if it is new all the other faults in its composition can be overlooked and the poem can be accepted as good.

> Certainly the word is not likely to appear in our appreciations of living or dead writers. Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius.

Eliot believes that the contemporary views of what the word tradition meant are incorrect. Eliot points out that normally we tend to consider the word tradition in a negative light. So much so that when we describe a work of art as traditional what we mean is that the work bears close resemblance to an ancient work and that is its only merit. So Eliot's charge is that the English as a nation have disregarded tradition. On the other hand the French as a nation are greater because they have always valued tradition.

Moreover the English pride themselves on the fact that they are more creative than the French whereas they accuse the French of being less creative.

> We know, or think we know, from the enormous mass of critical writing that has appeared in the French language the critical method or habit of the French; we only conclude (we are such unconscious people) that the French are "more critical" than we, and sometimes even plume ourselves a little with the fact, as if the French were the less spontaneous.

Eliot finds it imperative to expose certain fallacies that many people hold concerning tradition before discussing the modern artist's responsibility to tradition. He points out that tradition is almost always associated with censure.

Having pointed out that there is and absence of a clear meaning of the term tradition Eliot thus attacks the critical prejudices of the English.

> One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man.

Therefore Eliot gives an elaborate description of the term tradition in order to clarify his understanding of the term tradition, because it is on this that the whole of his argument rests.

Eliot uses the word tradition to speak of the great body of literature that has been produced not only in England but in Europe also. This is so because the literature of England is influenced by the literature of the whole of Europe starting from the ancient times.

> Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged.

Thus tradition is not simply a blind or timid adherence of the ways of the immediate generation before us for success, as it has wrongly understood, but something more than that. If tradition is this kind of unthinking adherence then, says Eliot it should

be positively discouraged. Not only that. If blind imitation is tradition then novelty that lacks all scholarship is better than repetition.

This misconception was harmful because it caused people to ignore the influence of great writers of the past upon contemporary ones. It causes yet another critical fault. Thereader and the critic tend to look for what is original in a piece of work if it appeals to their liking, and so attention is not paid those elements in the work that are not traditional. In other words the critical approach in such cases is subjective and prejudiced.

Eliot says when we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of a writer's work may be those in which the influence of the great line of the poets of the past, who are the writer's literary ancestors, assert their living presence most vigorously. The task of the modern critic when studying a piece of a work should not be limited to finding out how a poet is different, but also in finding out how he is like the writers that came before him. By doing so it should be discovered that there is continuity in literature. So he says that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists''.

Tradition involves the historical sense. Any writer who wishes to write past his twenty fifth year of life must according to the critic develop the historical sense. The historical sense involves a perception of both the pastness of the past, but the presentness of the past. Such a historical sense compels a man to write not merely of his generation but for the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and the whole literature of his own country. It has a simultaneous order and compasses a simultaneous existence.

> …the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.

Eliot proceeds to further elucidate the meaning of tradition. Tradition does not mean considering the past as an indiscriminate lump. Nor do personal admirations of a particular writer of the past can help the poet to cultivate a sense of the tradition. Just as the critic cannot be subjective in his assessment of a piece of writing so too when the

poet sets out to cultivate his knowledge of his literary tradition he must be above personal and subjective assessments. Thus a sense of tradition implies a total consciousness. This may not necessarily flow through the most popular names. For example according to the critic Matthew Arnold, Thomas Gray who is not famous in his age is really as great as Homer in the high quality of excellence in his poetry. Thus the historical sense is the main current linking the past and the present, being complete and yet ever changing, at the same time. It is a development that does not abandon anything en route.

> This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.

All these aspects together give an author the inheritance of tradition. To be precise, for an author to be traditional, he should not simply follow what has been said before him.

In this complete significance of tradition, a poet cannot offer a complete meaning of his own. He becomes significant only when his individual genius partakes of the qualities of tradition also. Therefore, instead of asserting his individuality, the necessity arises that be shall conform to tradition of the past. All the time he is fully conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity in the long line of poets as being related meaningfully to the past works of worth and success.

But this idea of conformity to tradition must be understood properly. This conformity is not one sided. It is not as if the poet must always conform to an unchanging past. The past body of literature becomes altered by the present whenever a new work of great merit joins it.

> We say: it appears to conform, and is perhaps individual, or it appears individual, and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other.

Just as the past directs and guides the present, so the present alters and modified the past. Thus not only is the present changed by the past but the past is also changed by the present.

> Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities…. In a peculiar sense he will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past.

Here Eliot clarifies that tradition is not something fixed or static but that it is a dynamic mode and constantly changing and growing. The present writer by conforming to the literary tradition seeks to gain from all that is valuable in the past. When a work of art is created, if it is really new and original, the whole existing order gets altered, however slightly it might be.

The existing monument of the literary tradition forms an ideal order by itself. This is modified by the introduction of the new work of art among them. Of course it must be remembered that the new work is not identified by prejudice or subjective means. Two important ideas here:

i) the idea of tradition as a kind of organic and growing entity in itself and

ii) the idea that the literature of the present can add and modify the literature of the past.

Such an dynamic conception of tradition will enable a poet to see the mind of the whole of Europe, the mind of his own country and his own private mind forming a single organic unit that is complete, yet ever changing.

It may be objected that such a doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition. But it must be borne in mind that some can absorb knowledge almost effortlessly, while those that are not so naturally skilled must work very hard. Tradition cannot be simply inherited, but can only obtain by great labor on the part of the poet who has to read the

past masters. Eliot gives the example of Shakespeare who could absorb and conceive of history from his reading of Plutarch's *Lives* of the Roman kings than others could ever obtain from the vast resources of the British museum. Thus according to Eliot a good poet is also a scholar- poet.

> Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

Eliot here insists upon the responsibility of the poet to develop the consciousness or the past and continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career. A modern writer, however, should not limit himself to the imitation of his predecessors. Without ignoring the past, he should endeavor to create something new. He can only do this by acquiring a historical sense, or in other words, if he wants to be a writer whose works stand the test of time, he can not ignore the fact that the time that he is living in, and the subject matter that he chooses to write about, did not evolve in a vacuum. There is a definite foundation that he is building upon, if indeed he is a good writer.

Thus in this first section of the essay Eliot gives a detailed and elaborate definition to the term tradition and has clearly stated the means by which an author can develop the historical sense. Eliot defines individual talent as the fusion with the tradition. Towards the end of the first section Eliot says that one's personality should be sacrificed to progress as an artist. This argument forms the basis for the second section where he speaks about his theory of impersonality in poetry. Eliot tries to explain this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition through the analogy of a chemical process.

> There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I shall, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes

> place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

A certain chemical action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.This action becomes possible only because the shred of platinum enabled the oxygen and the sulphur to react with each other.

This idea is elaborated in the second section.

PART II ELIOT'S 'IMPERSONAL THEORY OF POETRY':

From this it follows that there is no connection between the poet's personality and the poem. A poet is great not because he puts his personality into his work, not because he is more interesting or has more to say, but because he functions like the catalyst or the shred of platinum enabling the artistic emotions or very varied feelings to enter into new combinations. Since these feelings are not his own because he is creating a work of art and not writing about himself even the emotions of others will serve him well for the purpose of creation. For example, to write a war poem the poet need not go to the battle field and become a warrior and yet he may write a very moving poem about the experiences of the war. This is so because his mind is a medium in which a new shape combines itself. So Eliot says that the man who suffers and the mind which creates are separate in the poet.

> The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poet's work, and those which become important in the poet's work may play quite a negligible part in the man's life and personality.

If this is so, then quite logically Eliot concludes that poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion because the poet does not display his personal

emotions. The poem is not the expression of his individual personality but a distancing from it.

Thus the emotion of art is impersonal not personal emotion. It has its life in the poem and not in the personal life of the poet. So honest criticism and sensitive appreciation of the works of art, both of which are objective and above prejudice, is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry.

> …my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.

Further elaborating his concept of the relationship between the poet and his art, Eliot remarks that the mind of the poet is a receptacle or a vessel. In this receptacle numberless feelings, phrases and images are stored which remain in an unorganized form. During the process of poetic composition these feelings, phrases and images unite to form a new compound. It is also that the poet is a particular medium in which impressions and experience combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experience which are important for the man may take no place in his works of poetry, and those which become important in his works of poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality. The poet's mind is regarded as a medium in which the poem is composed. The poem is a combination of experiences. What must be noted here is the pressure under which the combination takes place. This pressure is related to the poet's consciousness of the past. The line of argument by Eliot emphasizes that by relating himself to the past, the poet knows that the mind of Europe and of his own country is far more valuable than his own. He must therefore not use his mind to compose poetry out of his own personality but on the contrary, he must let the mind act as a medium in which experiences are fused into a poem.

Art emotions are according to the critic not actual emotions at all. Therefore rejects Wordsworth's definition of poetry as the outcome of emotion recollected in

tranquility. The poetic process is not that of a conscious recollection. The poetic emotions or art-emotions are not life-emotions, but life-emotions transmuted into a new compound, even when they are not experienced directly by the poet.

> It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat…. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him.

Thus the poem becomes a point of view from which we find the past changed and it is also a point of view from the impact of the past on the present is seen. Thus the mind of the poet with such a consciousness of the relation between the past of the present and the present of the past is identified as the ideal example where both tradition and individual talent combine. The practitioner in such a relation must know that the mind of the civilization to which he belongs is far more important than his own mind. This is what Eliot means when he says that the poet must surrender himself or extinguish himself.

It means, in the poet, an understanding that the mind of Europe and that of its own country is different from his own private mind. Hence according to Eliot the priority is for the former and not the latter.

> Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.

The poet will then know what must surrender his own mind to and also know that the promptings of his private mind must be disregarded. This surrender is described by Eliot as the extinction of personality. The two aspects of what Eliot calls the impersonal theory of poetry are in the first place the relation of the past to the poet and in the second, the relation of the poet to his poem.

The poet must be willing to form his mind and for the sake of continuing the tradition. To feel the point of contact between what he says and the past, he has to study the various minds of the poets who make up the literary achievements of the past. He has to approach

them as if he is looking into a living order of these achievements. When Samuel Johnson compares Shakespeare to Homer he is looking at two writers in terms of their quality as writers and is not.

> There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him "personal."

Thus the two errors committed by a bad poet is to be unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors lead him to failure as an artist. This is so because both errors give greater importance to his individual emotions and ignores a) tradition and b) confuses personal emotions with aesthetic emotions. Thus Eliot stresses the need for the poet to negate his personality in the artistic process.

Thus in the first section, Eliot discusses the necessity for the poet to subordinate himself to tradition. In the second section, the poet is subordinated, this time to the disinterested, aesthetic emotions of art. Eliot's reference to the aesthetic emotions relate to those emotions that are experienced when contemplating art. The aesthetic sense is unrelated to both immediate utility and all personal emotions.

Further, having made a distinction between art emotions and life-emotions he has also elucidated how the artistic process is more important than the personal emotions and feelings of the poet, disproving by the logic of his argument the concept of poetry as theorized by the Romantics.

A poem produced in the manner discussed by Eliot will be a result of arduous discipline as well as feeling and knowing what is important. The condition for producing a poem is that of emancipation from the personal emotion and one's own personality. Under the impact of past on him the poet will gradually sense the insignificance of his personal emotions and his own personality. Eliot has defined what kind of mind must one have in order to be a poet. Eliot is condemning poets and critics who make a claim for worthless poetry which is produced by minds that neither have a sense of the poem's relation to the tradition to which it belongs as well as those works which do not differentiate between the emotions of real life and the emotions of art. So he recommends that the critic should learn to locate a great work of art by recognizing the synthesis of artistic excellence and impersonal emotions.

PART III CONCLUSION

In the third and final section of the essay he sums up his argument with the emphatic statement that the emotion of art is impersonal and not personal. He cautions that the poet cannot achieve this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done.

> There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is expression of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal.

For this to happen successfully he has to be aware that he lives not merely the present literary tradition, but also in the present moment of the past. So he is conscious not of what is dead but of what is living through art.

Key Concepts

Aestheticism:

A literary movement in the nineteenth century of those who believed in “art for art’s sake” in opposition to the utilitarian doctrine that everything must be morally or practically useful. Key figures of the aesthetic movement were Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. Art for Art's Sake is a movement that released the writer from the tyranny of meaning and purpose. From a progressive modernist's point of view, it was a further exercise of freedom. It was also a defiance of the high culture which demanded art with meaning or that had some purpose such as to instruct, or delight or to moralize. A progressive modernist painter like James Abbott McNeill Whistler, for example, blithely stated that his art satisfied none of those things.

Decadents:

The followers of a nineteenth-century literary movement that had its beginnings in French Aestheticism. Decadent literature displays a fascination with perverse and morbid states; a search for novelty and sensation — the "new thrill"; a preoccupation with mysticism; and a belief in the senselessness of human existence. The movement is closely associated with the doctrine Art for Art's Sake. The term "decadence" is sometimes used to denote a decline in the quality of art or literature following a period of

greatness. Major French decadents are Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud. English decadents include Oscar Wilde, Ernest Dowson, and Frank Harris.

Perspectivism:

This term refers to locating the meaning of a text from several viewpoints. These include 1)the viewpoint of the individual 2) the use of narrators located within the action of the fiction, experiencing from a personal, particular as opposed to an omniscient and objective perspective 3) the use of many voices, contrasts and contestations of perspective and 4) the ensuing disappearance of the omniscient narrator, especially as 'spokesperson' for the author.

Impressionism:

This term refers to an emphasis on the process of perception and knowing. It refers particularly to the use of formal, linguistic and representational devices, to present as closely as possible the texture or process of knowing and perceiving.

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QUESTIONS FOR UNIT III

SHORT NOTES

1. The Touchstone Method
2. Historical Fallacy
3. Personal Fallacy
4. The Real Estimate
5. Tradition
6. Classicism
7. High Seriousness
8. Higher Truth
9. Arnold on Chaucer
10. Arnold on Gray

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What are the two kinds of fallacies that Arnold cautions a critic about?
2. How does Arnold estimate the poets of the neoclassical age?
3. How does Arnold demonstrate the use of the Touchstone Method?
4. Compare and contrast Arnold's sense of Classicism with that of Eliot's.
5. Discuss Eliot's theory of Impersonal Poetry?
6. How does Eliot define Tradition and Individual talent?
7. Discuss Arnold's concept of "High Seriousness" and " Higher Truth".

8. Are the arguments of Arnold and Eliot regarding the need for scholarship convincing ? If so, why?
9.Compare Arnold's notion of the function of poetry with that of the Romantic poet's notion of poetry.
10. Discuss Arnold and Eliot as classicists.

UNIT -IV

This unit consists of the following two essays in Practical And The New Criticism:

Essay No.7 I.A. Richards: Four Kinds of Meaning
Essay No.8 Cleanth Brooks: Irony as Principle of Structure

PRACTICAL AND NEW CRITICISM
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The New Criticism was the powerful movement in English and American literary criticism of the early twentieth century, from the 1920s to the early 1960s. The term New Criticism became established as the name of the School after John Crowe Ransom, one of its founders, published a collection of essays bearing that title, in 1941. In one of them, "Wanted: An Ontological Critic", he announced that it was time to identify a powerful intellectual movement which deserved to be called "a new criticism". The intention implicit in this name is suggestive of what the school stood for. The New Critics felt it was time to do away with the traditional approaches, which laid emphasis only on the historical, social, biographical or psychological contexts, on the moral or philosophical implications, or still on the textual-linguistic specific factors. In other words the traditional critics took into account extra-textual considerations and/or separated the form of the art object from its meaning, refusing to regard the work as an integrated art-form. Its proponents emphasize close reading and attention to texts themselves and reject all criticism based on extra-textual sources, especially biography.

New Critics admit only information that is contained in the text which they study and do not include biographical information on the author. Also studying a passage of prose or poetry in New Critical style requires close scrutiny because no other information source is accepted. Such close readings look at the text as a solid, immutable entity, shielded from any external influences and was described as "auto telic". Immanent reading or close reading is the fundamental tool of literary criticism for this. Such a reading places great emphasis on the particular over the general, paying close attention to individual words, syntax, and the order in which sentences and ideas unfold as they are read. They look at, for example, theme, imagery, metaphor, rhythm, meter, etc. This technique pioneered by the New Critics is now a fundamental method of modern criticism.

In literary criticism, close reading describes the careful, sustained interpretation of a brief passage of text. Such a reading places great emphasis on the particular over the general, paying close attention to individual words, syntax, and the order in which sentences and ideas unfold as they are read. Close reading is sometimes called *explication de texte*, which is the name for the similar tradition of textual interpretation in French literary study, a technique whose chief proponent was Gustave Lanson.

The New Critics were first the members of an informal group of literary discussion, around the poet-scholar J. C. Ransom and his students Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks. Ransom was editing The Fugitive, a poetry magazine which published mostly traditionally-patterned verse, and championed a conservative ideology, later on to be defined as Southern Agrarianism. In the 1930s other critics associated with them (such as T. S. Eliot,I. A. Richards, W. Empson,R. P. Blackmur, R. Wellek, W. K. Wimsatt, K. Burke, Y. Winters), while the New Critical principles spread in most universities, in literary circles and journals.

The New Critics felt it was time to do away with the traditional approaches, which laid emphasis only on the historical, social, biographical or psychological contexts, on the moral or philosophical implications, or still on the specific textual factors. In other words the traditional critics took into account extra-textual considerations and/or separated the form of the art object from its meaning, refusing to regard the work as an integrated art-form. To them the meaning of the work of art lies inside the text alone and not in any other source.

From the outset of the New Critics' activity, their formalism never got an extreme, pure and hard nature, but was always infused with broader humanistic concerns and never severed all connections with what is outside the form of the literary text.

The moderately revolutionary spirit of the New Criticism is not a pure product of the formalist 20th century. Some of its roots lie in the aesthetics of Coleridge, which was based on a theory of imagination emphasizing the concepts of harmony and poetic wholeness. The student can recall here an earlier lesson on chapter XIII of the *Biographia Literaria* wherein Coleridge describes the organic form of a work of art. Coleridge emphasizes that a work must have the aesthetic qualities of harmony and poetic wholeness. Coleridge propounded the organic principle as the constitutive definition of the poem: the whole is in every part, and every part can be found in the whole. The poem is that species of composition characterized, unlike works of science, by the immediate purpose of pleasure, and also by special metric and phonetic

arrangements; it produces delight as a whole and this delight is compatible with the distinct gratification generated by each component part, which harmonizes with the other elements. The idea of organicism had been first highlighted in Aristotle's *Poetics* though in English literary criticism it is Coleridge who discusses this elaborately.

The New Critics borrowed from Coleridge's poetic is contextualism which was another important principle. The English poet viewed the poem as a product that had an independent existence, within the organic system of mutual relationships among the terms that made up the context of the poem. The poem existed in itself. Thus the poem was regarded outside any and all non-poetic contexts.

The early development of the New Criticism was mostly influenced, from among the recent critical ideas, by the theories of I. A. Richards who was responsible for expanding Coleridge's contextualist thought. Richards's emphasis on metaphor as a constitutive element of language, and on the determining role of irony and tension in poetry was also extremely influential with the New Criticism. High poetry is characterized, according to him, by a balanced poise - an equilibrium of opposite factors always in a state of tension; irony, for instance, brings them into the poem as contending, complementary impulses. When in 1930 Richards's disciple, William Empson, published *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, this study, which apparently established the essential formalist strategies, was taken as a model by the American New Critics.

Likewise T. S. Eliot's "impersonal theory of poetry', as he himself called it in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", had an important impact on the New Critical thought. In the writing of poetry, Eliot contends, there is a great deal which must be conscious and deliberate. In that essay he asserted that "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." However, there is one way of expressing emotion in the form of art: it is by finding an "objective correlative", that is, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which will become the formula of that particular emotion. So, when these relevant images and metaphors are presented in the work of art, the emotion is immediately evoked. The well-known New Critical concept of "fallacy", referring to the traditional critics' erroneous emphasis on ***what the author intended and what has to be interpreted*** i.e. intention vs. interpretation, and not on the text as such, owes a great deal to Eliot's views.

What is the literary work as an art form? What is the relationship between its structural components and its meaning (if it has any)? Can one speak about the content as

distinct from the form of the poem? What is the best method to probe the essence of the literary text? These are a few of the questions the New Critics raised and discussed, establishing a kind of critical canon for about two generations. Practical or the New Criticism rejected the Biographical, Psychological, Marxist and Historical criticisms. According to this school of thought all meaning is contained within the text.

The texts taken for study by the New Critics were comparatively shorter poems and the approach employed by the New Critics was a detailed close reading. Attention was paid to what the text says and how it says it. What was favored precision and tightness, a discourse that employs irony and ambiguity. A poem contains everything that is needed for its interpretation, and critics are at fault if they resort to arguments which take into account extraneous elements in their arriving at the meaning of a text. Every word in the text is significant, not only through its denotative, but also through its connotative force. The words in the poem by themselves may supply important cues for the understanding of the work. Lost senses of the words, shades of meaning, rhetorical figures are all significant guidelines for the understanding of the literary object. Thus the poem was described as a "verbal icon" or a verbal artifact. The meaning of a literary text cannot exist, outside and without an artful arrangement of words.

The New Critics therefore listed out what should be excluded from criticism. Many fallacies and heresies were listed out by Ransom, Tate, Brooks and the others. As early as 1937, in *The World's Body,* J. C. Ransom had compiled a list of exclusions, setting out from the idea that it is easier to assert what criticism is not according to Practical and New Criticism which insisted on the close reading of the text.

The list of Exclusions:

1. Apart from the works of historical scholarship which R. S. Crane had put on the negative list, Ransom first excludes personal registrations that are declarations of the effect the art-work has upon the critic as reader. This is what Matthew Arnold called the "personal fallacy" in his essay 'On *the Study of Poetry'*. According to Ransom, criticism should be objective and should cite the nature of the object rather than its effects upon the subject. In other words the reader or the critic should not elaborate why he or she likes a poem on personal grounds of judgment or why it appeals to him or her. Similarly, the moving, exciting, pitiful and admirable vocabulary is actually uncritical, because it reflects the feelings of the reader- subject and not the qualities of the literary text W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley called this the "affective fallacy" in an essay of the same title in 1949.

2. The second exclusion from criticism is that of synopsis and paraphrase. In the last chapter of his book The Well Wrought Urn, 1947), Cleanth Brooks opposed the notion of "content" or "subject matter" to that of "structure", on which the value of a literary work actually depends. He said that the reader or critic should not summarize the content of a text. This implies that the critic is ignoring or overlooking its form. Such an exercise of paraphrase is equal to literary and critical heresy according to Brooks. One cannot know a text through its summary. The text is independent and is an artistic composition. The meaning of the text is contained within the text and can be detected through the various items that structure the text. However the two ideas structure and form are quite different in this purview of things. Structure is more than mere form.

For example, the structure of Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock* will not be described in terms of the heroic couplet nor by the mock-epic. This concept of structure cannot be equated with form. Brooks described structure as a kind of envelope which contains the content. It is not visible like the external form of the poem but it emerges through the items that make the poem. It is not only the material that counts, but also the ordering of the material when seen in this light.

IMPORTANT WORKS IN NEW CRITICISM

Brooks, Cleanth. The Well-Wrought Urn. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947.

Brooks, Cleanth and Robert Penn Warren, eds. Understanding Poetry. New York: Holt, 1938.

Empson, William. Seven Types of Ambiguity. New York, 1955.

Lentriccia, Frank. After the New Criticism. See chapter 6.

Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. See chapter 1.

Jefferson, Anne and David Robey. Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction. See chapter 3.

Ransom, John Crowe. The New Criticism. New York: New Directions, 1941.

Richards, I. A. Practical Criticism. London: Routledge & Paul, 1964.

Wimsatt, W. K., and Monroe C. Beardsley. The Verbal Icon. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1954.

Winters, Ivor. In Defense of Reason. Denver: Swallow P, 1947.

NEW CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS:

- The critic's job is to help us appreciate the technique and form of art and the mastery of the artist.
- The closer that a text comes to achieving an ideal unity, where each element contributes to an overall effect, the more worthy it is of discussion, according to the New Critics.
- The critic's work is to guide the reader to appreciate the technique and form of art and the mastery of the artist.
- The basic belief is that the western critical tradition has an unbroken, internally consistent set of artistic conventions and traditions going back to ancient Greece and continuing up to this day, and that good art participates in and extends these traditions.
- Similarly, the responsibility of criticism is to uphold these traditions. Therefore the critic has to preserve these conventions of good art.
- The closer that a text comes to achieving an ideal unity, where each element contributes to an overall effect, the more worthy it is of discussion. Such a text is an artistic success.
- Studying literature is an intrinsically edifying process. It develops the sensibilities and discrimination of the readers.
- There is a firm and fast distinction between "high" art and popular art.
- Good art reflects unchanging, universal human issues, experiences, and values.
- Technical definitions and analyses are vital to understanding literature.
- The text's relationship to a world that extends beyond it is of little interest to the New critic.
- The literary text is an independent thing in itself. It has a meaning that is within it and need not be sought outside of it.
- The emphases on technique, unity of effect, and the autotelic status of art works best on the lyric poem.
- However with larger forms like the novel such a close reading is not possible.

RICHARDS AND CAMBRIDGE 'NEW CRITICISM':

The study of English literature undergoes a significant change of emphasis with the early work of 1.A. Richards, work which is a source of one of the major critical currents of

twentieth-century English studies: New Criticism. The influence of New Criticism extends through the work of associates and disciples of 1.A. Richards. F. R. Leavis and others into the teaching and writing of many teachers of English around the world today. It also shapes the critical viewpoint of various reference works, such as the *Pelican Guide to English Literature.* Richards's work superimposes new perspectives on the existing framework of study provided by Arnold's approach. But in addition to noting this continuity, it is also important to note changes, since in many contemporary accounts of the history of studying English literature (especially ones written from a post-structuralist viewpoint). Arnold and Richards are compressed together into what are referred to simply as 'traditional' approaches.

Thus Richards concludes that:

Every text has an intention. No text is meaningless. A text, for it to be a text must hold an intention and a meaning.

The occasion of every text decides the method of communication.

The listener also is an important factor that guides the speaker in selecting the method of communication.

Gestures form an important part of the signs used for communication. They are as expressive if not more expressive than words.

Some items of communication are used only for the sake of protocol. For example, when we say, "Hullo! How are you?" we are only greeting a person and not really asking a question about the other person's health or anything else. Here the words are meaningful in themselves, but they are not really ***intented*** to convey anything particular than just a polite greeting.

By the logic of what has been said just now it does not mean that words that are spoken in such situations are always meaningless. When a greeting is made, words are spoken that are fully meaningful and yet their function is purely social. Meaning is indicated in a spoken or a written text by Sense, Feeling, Tone and Intonation.

All the four may function together in a text when meaning is conveyed. Sometimes one or the other of these items guides the speaker in the selection of the tools used for communication.

Typical characteristics of academics in the literary field in Richards' time:

Pre-war scholars	Post-war scholars
Upper-class backgrounds	Lower-middle-class backgrounds

A.C. Bradley: Dean of Westminster	Leavis: father a musical instrument maker
Few had experience of the war	Many had experience of the war
Generally classicists by training	Leavis: as a medical orderly Many came from other fields (e.g. Leavis- History; Richards- Mental and moral sciences)

I.A.RICHARDS: *FOUR KINDS OF MEANING,1935*

DISCUSSION OF THE ESSAY

This essay was originally written in 1935 as part of *Practical Criticism*. The original difficulty is the problem of making out the meaning of what we read. The essay begins with Richards proposing a number of questions like What is meaning? The essay discusses the problem of understanding meaning when we listen to or read a text. What are we doing when we endeavor to make it out? How will the application of these unlock the chambers and corridors of meaning? Richards also points out that some are able to grasp the meaning of a poem instinctively. To others it is not so. There are several kinds of meanings whether in literature or in any other kind of communication. Language has several tasks to perform which can be best understood by studying the differences between functions.

Language performs four types of functions or has four kinds of meaning. They are

1. Sense
2. Feeling
3. Tone and
4. Intonation

SENSE

We use words to direct our hearer's attention upon some state of affairs, to present to some items for consideration and to excite in them some thoughts about these items.

FEELINGS

We use words to convey some state of affairs. We have some feelings, some attitude, some special direction, bias, interest or coloring of feeling. To express these feelings or interest we use language.

TONE

Normally the speaker has an attitude towards his listener. He chooses or arranges his words as his audience varies, in recognition to them. The tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of his relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing. However there are exceptions of a speaker dissimulating an attitude which he is not desirous of expressing. The author's attitude toward his or her audience may be deduced from the tone of the work. A formal tone may create distance or convey politeness, while an informal tone may encourage a friendly, intimate, or intrusive feeling in the reader. The author's attitude toward his or her subject matter may also be deduced from the tone of the words he or she uses in discussing it.

INTENTION

The speaker's aim, conscious or unconscious, is the intention of his words. This purpose modifies his speech. Unless we know what he is trying to do we can hardly estimate the measure of his success.

The speaker's intention operates and satisfies itself in a combination of other functions. It governs the stress laid upon points in an argument, controls the plot and is at work whenever the author is "hiding his head". Thus the influence of his intention upon language is inseparable from the other three influences and its effect cannot be considered apart.

One or other of the functions become predominant. Richards makes the possible situations clearer through a brief review of certain typical forms of composition. From this we understand the nature of meaning:

- A scientist will place sense above all other functions and will subordinate his feelings. His tone is set for him by academic convention. His intention will be confined to the clearest and most adequate statement of what he has to say.

- Intention however becomes the primary function when an occasion arises, especially for a thesis for PhD where he has to direct attention to new aspects or to encourage or discourage certain methods of work or ways of approach.
- When a writer has to popularize some results and hypothesis of science he will have to depend on tone.
- In public utterances made in the middle of general election, intention is unmistakably predominant. Its instruments are feelings-the feelings expressed about causes, policies, leaders and opponents. Tone helps in establishing favorable relations with the audience and attitudes towards things and people.

Some statements may sometimes be belied by their very form and manner eg. diplomatic exchanges such as “Pleased to meet you” or “Thank you”. In psychological analysis also feeling is given priority. Feeling may take charge of and operate through sense. Statements may appear for the sake of their effects upon feelings, not for their own sake.

Therefore to challenge their truth would be to mistake their function. Statements are a means to express feelings, not as contribution of any kind of doctrine. In narrative poetry there is little scope for mistakes but in psychological or meditative poetry there is the danger of confusion. Some people take the statements of poetry seriously and find them silly. A poet uses metaphors, distorts statements, and includes objects logically irrelevant and which sound silly or trivial. But if he conveys his professed aim then, no reader can say anything against him.

I.A.Richards had great faith in the function of literature as helping us to integrate our activities and resolve thoughts.

Key Terms:

Close reading:

Close reading is a close and detailed analysis of the text itself to arrive at an interpretation without referring to historical, authorial, or cultural concerns. Interpretation begins with close reading. In this process, you note specific uses of language, such as imagery, symbols, repeated terms, patterns of expression, the tone of the speaker, and the main ideas [themes] the writer introduces. Whether close reading takes the form of writing, discussion, or silent observation, it should be based on a careful questioning of the text.

Practical criticism:

Applied criticism; explication de texte; the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of particular works and writings. In the New Criticism, practical criticism involves the close reading of individual texts with particular attention to their intrinsic verbal texture and structure. In *Practical Criticism* (1929), I. A. Richards analyzes the responses of his students to poems unfamiliar to them in order to point out characteristic errors in interpretation: mnemonic irrelevances, stock responses, doctrinal adhesions, technical presuppositions, general critical presuppositions, and so forth.

Biographical Criticism:

According to Biographical Criticism, real life experience can help shape (either directly or indirectly) an author's work. Its features are:

1. Understanding an author's life can help us better understand the work.
2. Facts from the author's life are used to help the reader better understand the work; the focus is always on the literary work under investigation.

Historical criticism:

According to Historical criticism investigates the social, cultural, and intellectual context that produced it. This investigation includes the author's biography and the social milieu. Its features are:

1. Historical criticism often seeks to understand the impact of a work in its day, and it may also explore how meanings change over time.
2. Historical criticism expolores how time and place of creation affect meaning in the work.

Psychological Criticism:

According to Psychological Criticism**,** the critics of this school hold the belief that great literature truthfully reflects life and is a realistic representation of human motivation and behavior.Psychological critics may choose to focus on the creative process of the artist,

the artist's motivation or behavior, or analyze fictional characters' motivations and behaviors.

Marxist (Sociological Criticism)

1. These critics examine literature in its cultural, economic, and political context; they explore the relation between the artist and the soceity--how might the profession of authorship have affected what's been written?
2. It is concerned with the social content of literary works, pursuing such questions as: What cultural, economic or political values does the text implicitly or explicitly promote? What is the role of the audience in shaping what's been written?
3. Marxist critics assume that all art is political.

Marxist critics judge a work's "ideology"--giving rise to such terms as "political correctness.

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Unit – IV.2

Practical And The New Criticism

Essay No 8. Cleanth Brooks: Irony as Principle of Structure, 1951

CLEANTH BROOKS AND NEW CRITICISM: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. The notion of ambiguity is an important concept within New Criticism. Several prominent New Critics have been enamored above all else with the way that a "text" can display multiple simultaneous meanings. In the 1930s, I.A. Richards used the term over determination to refer to the multiple meanings which he believed were always simultaneously present in language. To Richards, claiming that a work has only one true meaning is an act of superstition.

2. In 1954, William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley published an essay entitled "The intentional fallacy", in which they argued strongly against any discussion of an author's intention, or "intended meaning." For Wimsatt and Beardsley, the

words on the page were all that mattered; importation of meanings from outside the text was quite irrelevant, and potentially distracting. This became a central tenet of New Criticism. The major figures of New Criticism include I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, Cleanth Brooks, David Daiches, William Empson, Murray Krieger, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, F. R. Leavis, Robert Penn Warren, W. K. Wimsatt, R. P. Blackmur, Rene Wellek, Ausin Warren, and Ivor Winters.

3. Cleanth Brooks was most widely known as the quintessential New Critic: his ideas, critical studies, and textbooks embodied everything that New Criticism stood for in practice and pedagogy.

Works by Cleanth Brooks (1906-1994)

Understanding Poetry, 1938. The authors' textbook, applying the principles of the New Criticism to the interpretation of poetry, revolutionizes the teaching of literature on American campuses. Arranged by aesthetic categories rather than by author or chronology, with sample analyses and questions to prompt students' similar efforts, the book helps shift the emphasis to text-oriented criticism, which fosters close reading and structural analysis in literary assessment.

Modern Poetry and the Tradition, 1939. Established Brooks' reputation as one of the leading practitioners and theorists of the New Criticism.

Understanding Fiction, 1943. The authors' companion volume to Understanding Poetry (1938) applies to prose works the principles of the New Criticism--eschewing biographical and historical approaches for a close analysis of language and structure.

Understanding Drama, 1945. The application of the principles of the New Criticism to dramatic works.

The Well-Wrought Urn. 1947. In an influential application of the methods of the New Criticism, Brooks establishes his reputation as one of the leading critical voices of the period.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY : *IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURE*

In the essay *Irony as a Principle of Structure*, Cleanth Brooks argues that meanings of universal significance which literature encodes in texts are suggested through the device of irony which the poet shows in the structure of a poem. This emphasis on structure as a

device to convey for meaning is important. In ancient classical criticism Aristotle placed a great deal of importance on the structure of plot. It is through the element of structure that unity is created in a work of art through which ideas expressed. The text as an auto telic artifact, something complete with in itself, written for its own sake, unified in its form and not dependent on its relation to the author's life or intent, history, or anything else. The formal and technical properties of work of art matter most. Brooks therefore argues that the overall unity of parts creates ironic tensions. This underlying structure is invisible but is the actual structure of the poem and not the divisions of stanza.

Brooks states that poetry has an organic quality which produces ironies and explains this by means of an analogy. He suggests poetry is like a plant, with a fixed and definite organization (roots, stalk, leaf), a structure which is complete and useful. A poem, like a plant, relies on all its component parts for life; there is a fundamental arrangement within a poetic creation which depends upon interrelationships. Words are the individual building blocks of a poem, and like the cells of a plant, each must be considered individually as being important to the structure. Each word is understood according to the words which surround it. It is the relationship between each of these words which creates a context out of which meaning evolves. Brooks terms the relationship between the component parts of a poem as the pressures of context. Just as the cells of a plant rely on adjoining cells for water, nutrients and energy, so in poems, words rely on surrounding words for their meaning. It is the structural, organic unity of the parts which allows for the production of meaning. This is brought about through the pressures of context.

The significance of words to the structure of poetry in Brooks' essay finds a counterpart the importance of the elements of plot. In order to be significant, a work must be whole, that is, it must have a beginning, middle and an end according to Aristotle. These parts are akin to the words in a poem in Brooks' theory because in a likewise manner they display a unity. For example right from the beginning of the poem the meaning of the whole depends on the deliberate placement of each of the elements of poem and the organic relationship between those parts.

Brooks claims irony is produced by the pressures of context and proceeds to explain these pressures in a poem. These pressures define the relationship between the components of a poem which are the words that produce of meaning. Irony is a tension

between multiple meanings of a word, meanings which are pressured by the presence of surrounding words and the situation in which they are said. Brooks compares poetry to drama in order to describe how pressures of context produce irony: i.e. what is said is said in a particular situation and by a particular dramatic character. Because there is always a speaker who narrates a poem, and in a setting for that narration, words will never exist in isolation, and must be considered in relation to, as affected by, their context. For Brooks, context forces ironies, which are the key to meaning. A successful poem has its structure dependent on the tensions produced by context. It is in these fusions that harmony exists and it is in the tensions that meaning exists.

Therefore meaning is the product of contextual pressures in Brooks'view. Context which is really the relationship between the parts of the poem creates the unity of the poem through its pressures. The end (blossoms) of the action should grow naturally out of the beginning (roots) and middle (stalk) if we continue to understand the argument in terms of Brooks' plant metaphor that affirms the organic nature of poetry.

Brooks finds specific, concrete particulars a must for the form of a poem. The particular become the units or metaphors and references. Brooks claims that metaphors, even as they risk obscuring larger themes, are absolutely necessary because direct statement lends to abstraction and threatens to take us out of poetry altogether whereas indirect statements appeal in a poem. Brooks finds poetry an effective vehicle for conveying meaning instead of concrete language the poet creates metaphors which instead of giving us abstract thoughts leads us to ideas in an indirect manner. Poetry takes human beings as its subject (if for no other reason than because language which is its structural element is a human device. It attempts to make explanation of the human condition in terms of causes and effects of human actions.

Thus the elements of structure are metaphors and symbols which make the meaning in a poem according to Brooks. Irony and plot function similarly to create meaning through indirection; both refuse direct statement of abstract ideas. Both rely on an organic unity of parts to produce universal truths. So meaning is inherent to the structure of the artifact.

DISCUSSION OF THE ESSAY *IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURE,1951*

Brooks begins the essay by stating that the modern poetic technique is a rediscovery of the metaphor. The metaphor is so extensively used by the poet that it is the particular through which he steps into the universal. The poet uses particular details to arrive at general meanings. But these particulars must not be chosen arbitrarily. This establishes the importance of our conventional habits of language.

Now the question that can be raised is cushy the poet does not say things directly. It is as if he is taking a risk by not saying things directly but only through metaphoric language, indirectly.

Direct statements take the reader out of the zone of poetry. A metaphor says things partially and obscurely, yet it makes the text poetic rather than a direct statement which makes the text unpoetic.

Therefore metaphor means indirection, an principle. It is a principle of poetic writing, there is a vital relationship between, an organic relationship between particular images and statements.

This king of a relationship between the idea and the metaphor is described by Cleanth brooks as an ‘Organic relationship’. That is to say the poem is not a collection of poetic images and beautiful passages, but a meaningful relationship between object and idea.So by merely arranging many poetic images one after another do not result in a poem. Brooks says that all the elements of a poem are related to each other, not as blossoms lying next to each other in a banquet, but as blossoms related to other parts of a growing plant. The wholeness of the poem through its details is the flowering of the whole plant.

Giving another example, brooks says that a poem is like a drama. The total effect proceeds from all the elements in the drama. So also in a good poem the total effect proceeds from all the elements of the poem. There are no superfluous parts in a good poem.

Therefore the parts of the poem are related to each other organically and related to the total theme indirectly. From this we can conclude that context is very important. So it is not just the idea and the metaphor being related organically and the whole poem linked internally through all its elements, but the contest in which the connection between the idea and the metaphor or analogy is made. What is said in a play, as in a poem, is said in a particular contest and it is this context that gives the words their particular meaning. Here Brooks takes the escapee of two sentences form Shakespeare’s King Lear. The first line that he quotes is “Ripeness is all.” Brooks says such a

philosophical statement gathers import because of particular contest in which the dramatist places it. So also when lean repeats the world "Never!" again and again five times, the same word said over and over again, having the same meaning, nevertheless becomes especially significant because the playwright places them is a context where the words gather richness of meaning. The context endows the particular word or image or statement with significance. Statements which are so charged with meaning become dramatic utterances. Images charged with incoming become symbols. This is how context makes an impact upon the meaning of words. In other words, the part or particular element of a poem is modified by the pressure of the context. For example, if you meet friend who has won a lottery prize and say "What a rain of fortune!" in the particular context of the situation, the words have a specific meaning Now brooks extends the argument further file says that Cohen a statement becomes obviously, visibly, strong warped and changed by the context, then such an instance may be called 'irony'. For example, when everything in a situation has gone wrong and the person says, "This is a fine state of affairs!" What he really means is quite the apposite of what is being said. The actual state of affairs is very bad. But by sarcastically saying, "This is a fine state of affairs!" and perhaps with the use of a particular tone of vice a ironic statement is uttered. Even if the tone is not changed in any particular way, the mere words "This is a fine state of affairs!" when everything is at its worst, results in heavy irony.

A Discussion of the concept of Irony in the essay

Irony takes many forms. In irony of situation, the result of an action is the reverse of what the actor expected. Macbeth murders his king hoping that in becoming king he will achieve great happiness. Actually, Macbeth never knows another moment of peace, and finally is beheaded for his murderous act. In dramatic irony, the audience knows something that the characters in the drama do not. For example, the identity of the murderer in a crime thriller may be known to the audience long before the mystery is solved. In verbal irony, the contrast is between the literal meaning of what is said and what is meant. A character may refer to a plan as brilliant, while actually meaning that the person thinks the plan is foolish. Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony.

Brooks gives another example to explain irony from Gray's *Elegy*:

Can storied urn or animated best
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust?

Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?

The questions that are all asked are rhetoical, because the answers are suggested in the questions themselves. The gist means that breath cannot come into a stone statue fume nor can honour make life come back dust nor flattery soothe and evoke life from the coldness of death. Yet in order to make the whole thing dramatic, the philosophic statements are given in the form of questions. Although the form is that of a question, the way in which it has been asked shows that it is no question at all. All the examples given so for are obvious instances of irony. Brooks says that many of Horde's poems and nearly all of Houseman's poems are full of irony to here we can see how the context pressing upon meaning and symbol creates irony in a poem.

Irony is of many kinds: Tragic – irony, self – irony, playful, mocking as gentle irony. Irony may be defined as the conflict of two meanings which has a dramatic structure peculiar to itself: initially, one meaning, the appearance, presents itself as the obvious truth, but when the context of this meaning unfolds, in depth or in time, it surprisingly discloses a conflicting meaning, the reality, measured against which the first meaning now seems false or limited. By encompassing this conflict in a single structure, irony resolves it into harmony or unity.

There are other statements which hold their meaning as it is, in spite of the context in which they occur. For example, "Two plus tow is four." In any situation this statement would mean the same. The Sentence denotes a meaning; it has denotative value.

On the other hand, can notations are important in poetry, even philosophical generalizations bear the pressure of the context. Their relevance, their rhetorical force and meaning cannot be divorced from the context in which they are embedded. This is the reason, why according to Brooks, modern critics tend to use the term irony so much when they discuss poetry. To Brooks irony is an important structuring principle which holds the meaning of the poem together. Reading a line in a poem in its proper context gives it its particular meaning, its ironic content. Again Brooks underlines the importance of the pressure exerted by context. To make the point, he vice one more example. The critic takes a line from Mathew Arnold's 'Dover Beach'. The speaker says that the world "Which seems to lie before us like a lard of dreams . . . hath really neither joy nor love nor light". Now this may seem a statement of truth for many readers and they would have no difficulty in grapping its meaning as they see it.

As an example, Brooks mentions King Lear's awful statement "never, never, never, never, never." The fuller passage spoken by King Lear in Act V is as follows

> And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!
> Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
> Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
> Look there, look there!
>
> (Act V, Scene iii)

Brooks' point here is that the ordinary denotative meaning of "never" does not enter the. The word's meaning stems from what has gone before it in the play: Lear's language has become progressively impoverished down to the level of single words and even silence. When Lear says "never" five times, he is using that sparseness of language in the service of the recognition for the protagonist in King Lear and of clarifying what he has done and what his actions have done to others. The context of the scene is what makes the words meaningful.

Brooks says that the most straightforward irony amounts to the obvious warping of a statement by the context." But since it is a principle of structure that makes poetic coherence possible, it must be capable of somewhat more subtlety. The pressures of the context may not always be obvious or crude, but still, says Brooks, we are dealing with the informing principle of irony. I'll leave it for you to go over the more subtle degrees of contextual pressure Brooks analyzes in the short poems of Wordsworth. In sum, "irony" in the sense of "pressures of the context" is for Brooks the main way in which a literary object dynamically develops its own structure, its own "meanings, evaluations, and interpretations" without the need for aid from ordinary or "denotative" language, history, biography, or other outside sources of meaning.

However some other readers may consider it false. If we try to prove it we will only end up rising very perplexing philosophical questions. This will lead us away from the poem. For, the lines are justified in the poem in terms of its context. The speaker is standing with his beloved and looking out of the window at the sea. The moonlight has thrown a deceptively white sheet of colour over everything. Listening to the rear of the waves as they ebb and flow the speaker makes this philosophical observation. This is the

only way that the state4ment can be validated. The brut of the statement cannot be validated by a committee of experts in sociology as physical scientists or philosophers.

Brooks raises the question how the statement can be validated. He answers it in the following way. He suggests that the reader remember the advice of T.S. Eliot who says that we should samisen the question whether the statement seems to be that which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature and founded on the experience outlined within the poem. In other boards we have to raise the question if the statement grows properly out of the context I which it is said, whether it is ironical and loaded with contextual meaning or whether it is merely sentimental, affected and shallow.

Brooks says that Eliot's text is what I.A.Richards describes as 'Poetry of Synthosis' this kind of a synthesis shows a stable context on which meaning plays in many ways. Irony and possibilities of meaning depend on Context. Context does not grow out of irony.

Brooks analyses three poems, the first by Shakespeare, the second and third by words worth. He concludes that irony which is the acknowledgement of the pressures of context is to be found in poetry in every period and even in lumped lyrics poetry. However, he says that it in the modern times that this pressure reveals self most strikingly. Brooks says there are a number of reasons as to why modern poetry uses irony as its special and characteristic strategy.

Brooks lists out a number of reasons for the use of irony in modern poetry:

- There is a general breakdown in belief and to the modern mind does not accept universal statements of truth.
- There is depletion and corruption of language itself.
- The growing consumption of popular arts has corrupted both belief and taste.
- The modern poet is burdened with the task of rehabilitating a drained and tired language.
- The task of qualifying and modifying a language in burdened upon the poet.

Brooks contains the critic to remember that the modern poet is addressing a public who have already developed a taste for popular and commercial art. So by using irony the modern poet succeeds in bringing both clarity and passion into his evoke of art or the poem. Here Brooks gives the example of Randall Jarell's poem 'English Air Force' as an example of success of this sort. This poem is full of many possible meanings. Each meaning is voted and no one meaning cancels out another meaning. This

poem which is about the Air force men holds apposing meanings in the context of the poem. On the one hand the poet talks about the essential justness of man and on the other he uses the image of Pontius Pilate who washes hands in blood:

……. Shall I say that man
Is not as men he said a wolf to man?
Men wash their hands, in blood, as best they can:
I find no fault in this just man.

The poem dramatizes the situation of the fighters during the ever so accurately, both as puppies and woolens as stanza show that the poem goes behind the eloquent presentation by the poet to the very matrix or source from where all our understanding and beliefs begin. This function is in Brooks' opinion, what good poetry does.

Finding its proper symbol, defined and redefined by the participating metaphors, the theme becomes a part of the reality in which we live, an insight growing out of a concrete experience. Without making any abstract generalization the poem makes a statement of truth.

So we many conclude that statements in poetry qualified by the context in which they occur. In poetry therefore statements get their viable by virtue of their context.

SOME KEY TERMS IN NEW CRITICISM

Affective fallacy:

A term used by W K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley to describe the "confusion between the poem and its result (what it *is* and what it *does*)." According to them, the critic should regard a poetic structure as formally self-sufficient and not commit the error of considering its emotional or pragmatic effects upon a reader. Affective Fallacy is confusing the meaning of a text with how it makes the reader feel. A reader's emotional response to a text generally does not produce a reliable interpretation.

Affective Fallacy is also known as Sympathetic Fallacy. It is an error in judging the merits or faults of a work of literature. The error results from stressing the importance of the work's effect upon the reader — that is, how it makes a reader feel emotionally and what it does as a literary work — instead of stressing its inner qualities as a created object, or what it "is." The affective fallacy is evident in Aristotle's precept from his *Poetics* that the purpose of tragedy is to evoke "fear and pity" in its spectators.

Intentional fallacy:

A term used by William K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley to describe the error of interpreting a work in terms of its author's professed intention in creating it. Unless intentions are realized and implied by the autonomous verbal structure itself, they are irrelevant and immaterial. From this point of view, biographical facts, authorial testimonies, and other data extrinsic to the text itself have no bearing on interpretation unless they pertain to concretely dramatized elements. The belief that judgments of a literary work based solely on an author's stated or implied intentions are false and misleading. Critics who believe in the concept of the intentional fallacy typically argue that the work itself is sufficient matter for interpretation, even though they may concede that an author's statement of purpose can be useful. Intentional Fallacy equates the meaning of a poem with the author's intentions.Analysis of William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* based on the observations about Poetry he makes in his "Preface" to the second edition of that work is an example of the intentional fallacy.

Ambiguity:

A non - pejorative term for the capacity of language to sustain multiple meanings. Also called pluri-signation (multiple signifiers) or polysemy, ambiguity arises from what William Empson calls "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language." In literary parlance, ambiguity is not a mistake in denotation to be avoided, but a resource of connotation to be exploited. In *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), Empson argues that the richness, complexity, and concentration of literary language derive from the seven types of ambiguity he discusses. The notion that ambiguity is the root condition of all literary discourse, a notion that arises from I. A. Richards's distinction between the scientific (referential or denotative) and the poetic (emotive or connotative) uses of language, is an integral aspect of the New Critical view that irony, paradox, and tension are definitive aspects of the work of art.

Heresy of Paraphrase is assuming that an interpretation of a literary work could consist of a detailed summary or paraphrase.

Image:

An image is a concrete representation of an object or sensory experience. Typically, such a representation helps evoke the feelings associated with the object or experience itself. Images are either "literal" or "figurative." Literal images are especially concrete and involve little or no extension of the obvious meaning of the words used to express them. Figurative images do not follow the literal meaning of the words exactly. Images in literature are usually visual, but the term "image" can also refer to the representation of any sensory experience.

Irony:

It is the recognition of the difference between real and apparent meaning. Verbal irony is a rhetorical trope wherein "x" is uttered and "not x" is meant, as when Mark Anthony says that Brutus is an honorable man. Dramatic irony occurs when characters say something and the auditors know more than they do. In the New Criticism, irony, the poet's recognition of incongruities, was thought to be the master trope in that it was essential to the production of paradox, complexity, richness, and ambiguity.

That context is just as important as form to understanding a work of art. Irony may be defined as the conflict of two meanings. The initial meaning is the obvious meaning of the word or the obvious truth about the word. However, there is yet another meaning which arises in the context of the text. This meaning unfolds discloses a conflicting meaning or a conflicting reality which has to be seen against the first meaning which can now be seen to be limited. Irony therefore is s a dramatic means of bringing two meanings into conjunction. So by placing two meanings in a single structure, irony resolves it into harmony or unity. Irony shifts the reader’s attention from the logical content of a word or statement to the implied but often times opposed contextual meaning. The Greek rhetoricians developed many theories on the concept and use of irony.

The initial discussion of irony was during the time of Socrates. It was referred to by the word *eironeia.* It is recorded by Cicero that Socrates was always pretending ignorance and seeking the help of this pupils for information while at the same time voicing his admiration for the wisdom of his companion. Socrates' pupils were annoyed

with him for teasing them in this way because they knew that Socrates really knew all the answers though he acted as if he was ignorant. So they called him *eiron*. The fox was the symbol of the *eiron*. It was a term of reproach. It referred to sly deception with overtones of mockery. Thus to say one thing and mean another was the beginning of the discussions of the concept of eironeia in literature. Aristotle said that under-statement was *eironeia*. Demosthenes and Theophrastus also continued the discussions on irony. Irony was also described as blame through praise and praise through blame. Cicero and Quintilian were two other important contributors who developed the idea of irony in literature. They located irony in isolated figures of speech in a discourse. The abstract definition of irony as saying the contrary or opposite of what one means, was the most popular formula given by Cicero and Quintilian. It led the theoreticians and others to define the meaning of irony as referring to logical contraries or logically opposed meanings.

In the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth Defoe, Swift, Pope and Fielding pamphleteers and periodical writers used irony or fallacious argument through the genre of parody, burlesque, and the fiction. All these literary modes involved caricature.The author often presented his characters with mock sympathy through an elevated language.Such ironic strategies were used full length in fictional narratives such as Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad* and Henry Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* and *Joseph Andrews.*

Metaphor:

A figure of speech that expresses an idea through the image of another object. Metaphors suggest the essence of the first object by identifying it with certain qualities of the second object. An example is "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?". It is the east, and Juliet is the sun, in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* Here, Juliet, the first object, is identified with qualities of the second object, the sun.

Paradox:

A statement that initially seems to be illogical or self-contradictory yet eventually proves to embody a complex truth. In the New Criticism, the term is extended to embrace any complexity of language that sustains multiple meanings and deviates from the norms of ordinary language use. Hence Cleanth Brooks's claim that "the language of poetry is the language of paradox."

QUESTIONS FOR UNIT IV

- I.A.RICHARDS' FOUR KINDS OF MEANNG &

- CLEANTH BROOKS' *IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURE*

Short Notes:

1. Irony
2. Ambuiguity
3. Paradox
4. Image
5. Metaphor
6. Tone
7. Feeling
8. Attitude
9. Close Reading
10. Sense

Essay Questions :

1. How does a listener or reader arrive at the meaning of a text that is spoken or written, according to I.A.Richards?
2. What are the four kinds of meaning in any form of communication?
3. How does the intention of the speaker affect the meaning in a text?
4. Would you agree with the statement that meaning of a text is determined by factors outside the text? If so, give examples to support your answer.
5. Discuss the basic principles of New Criticism as you have understood from the two essays prescribed in this section.
6. Does the method of close reading as recommended by the two critics you have studied in this unit reduce the overall experience of poetic pleasure or does it enhance it?
7. How does Cleanth Brooks define the principles of irony through examples?
8. The New Criticism has been described by T.S.Eliot as the "lemon- squeezer" school of criticism because of its insistence on close textual reading. Do you agree with this view? If so, give reasons.
9. What do you think the reasons are for the gradual unpopularity of The New Criticism ?
10. Compare and contrast The New Criticism with Psychoanalytic criticism.

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UNIT- V

This unit consists of the following two essays in Psychological & Marxist Criticism

Essay No. 9.Sigmund Freud: Creative Writers & Day Dreaming
Essay No. 10. Raymond Williams: Realism and the Contemporary Novel

Unit – V.1

PSYCHOANALYTICAL CRITICISM

SIGMUND FREUD: ***CREATIVE WRITERS AND DAY-DREAMING, 1908***

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalytical criticism approaches a literary or cultural work as always being structured by complex and contradictory human desires. That is, it analyzes the interiority of the self and of the self's kinship systems. By analyzing the formation of the individual, however, psychoanalysis also helps us to understand the formation of general social and cultural practices at large. It is because of this reason, psychoanalysis has become very influential as a critical school. Psychoanalysis analyzes the innermost psychological forces within the individual while other schools like Marxist criticism analyzes public power structures outside, in the public domain in terms of the culture as a whole.

WHAT PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LITERATURE HAVE IN COMMON AND WHAT PSYCHOANALYSIS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO LITERATURE:

Psychoanalytic theory is the science that refers to the psychological ideas of Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, the human psyche may be divided into three components:

the **id or** the unconscious reservoir of instinctual or libidinal desires and impulses that seek gratification and follow the dictates of the pleasure principle

the **super ego** or the moral censor that internalizes the given rules of social order and its ethical proscriptions and

the **ego** or the conscious self that tries to mediate between the conflicting demands of id and super ego through accommodation, repression (denial of unconscious desires and impulses), or sublimation (translation of these desires and impulses into "higher" aims). Despite its mastery of the defense mechanisms of repression and sublimation, the ego is perpetually in a state of conflict, according to Freud.

Freud sees literature as the wish fulfillment or fantasy gratification of desires denied or prohibited by moral codes. These unconscious libidinal desires find symbolic expression in art as they do in dreams. Art is thus sublimation, the translation of instinctual desires into higher aims. The goal of psychoanalytic criticism is to reveal the latent content of the work that underlies and determines its manifest or external content. In other words Psychoanalytical criticism attempts to unravel how these hidden and repressed desires are located in the text and how the writer gives expression to them consciously or unconsciously.

Condensation and displacement are the two common methods and resources of symbolism:

- Condensation -- this comes through images in the text. The image is more than itself, a fusion of unconscious desires.
- Displacement -- the image as other than itself. The image in the text is really not what is referred to but something other than that. It is a substitution of the socially acceptable for the socially unacceptable.

Freud's impact on the criticism and theory of literature has been enormous. Ernest Jones, uses the notion of the Oedipus complex -- the desire of a boy to possess his mother and supplant his father -- as an explanatory model for Hamlet; Harold Bloom uses it as an analogy for the relationship between a strong poet and his literary predecessors. Jacques Lacan develops a linguistic interpretation of Freud, arguing that the unconscious is structured like a language. Norman N. Holland applies psychoanalytic concepts to reader-response criticism. Feminist critics deconstruct Freud's patriarchal assumptions. Moreover, psychobiography, a genre that uses data from the real events of an author's life and the fictional events dramatized in his literature, is a product of

psychoanalytic theory. In short, the analysis of literary symbolism is heavily indebted to Freudian theory.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF APPLICATION TO THE TEXT:

- Language and narrative are in Sigmund Freud's view a psychoanalytic re-narratization of the writer's innermost mind.
- This is the reason why sub-texts and all kinds of metaphoric allusions become important indicators to the psychoanalytical critic.
- Psychoanalysis deals with motives, especially hidden or disguised motives; as such it helps clarify literature on two levels, the level of the writing itself, and the level of character's action within the text.
- A complementary act to the act of writing is the act of reading.Both reading and writing respond to motives not always available to rational thought, are illumined by psychoanalytic thought.
- Psychoanalysis deals with many basic elements which we might think of as poetic or literary, including metaphor and metonymy; Freud deals with these particularly in his work on the interpretation of dreams because metaphor and metonymy are fundamental clues to the workings of the psyche, according to psychoanalyists.
- Psychoanalysis opens the nature of the subject: who it is who is experiencing, what our relationships of meaning and identity are to the psychic and cultural forces which ground so much of our being. This understanding, is very important in contemporary understandings of reading, meaning, and the relation of literature to culture.
- Psychoanalysis examines the articulation of our most private anxieties and meanings to culture and gives us a perspective on them as cultural formations through the literary text. In other words psychoanalysis looks to culture as informative of our deepest psychic levels.
- Psychoanalysis constitutes one approach to the questions of good and evil, and especially of suffering and error, by attempting to resolve the mind-body split and by giving a scientific explanation of their working together.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAY

Creative Writers and Day Dreaming was originally delivered as a lecture in 1907 and printed in the following year. As he did in many of his works here too, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) challenged prevailing notions of human nature and human development by arguing that we are driven by motives and emotions about which we are largely unaware and that we are shaped by our earliest experiences in life, especially those of our childhood. Freud compared the imaginative writer with the daydreamer. Both writers and day-dreamers enter into and inhabit a fantasy when they create a piece of work. This 'creative trance' represents a conscious balance between waking and dreaming consciousness. This state is similar to dreaming at night, in which the dreamer wakes up inside the dream and can participate in the events of the dream which he also observes. In both states, the unconscious is consciously accessed and the individual enters it and acts there.

Every child at play behaves like a creative writer when he creates a world of his own or rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him. The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. The creative writer does the same thing as the child at play: he creates a world of fantasy which he takes very seriously. As people grow up, they cease to play, and they seem to give up the yield of pleasure which they gained from playing. The growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of playing, he now fantasizes. People's fantasies are less easy to observe than the play of children. The adult is ashamed of his fantasies and hides them from other people. A child's play is determined by wishes: by a single wish, one that helps in his upbringing, the wish to be big and grow up. The motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality. A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience from which there proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory.

A. The German title of this essay was: "*Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*" *Der Dichter* meant --poet and related to poeticize, but also to make dense, condense. Freud's states that condensation was the underlying principle of dreams *und das* meant -- 'and the'

Phantasieren meant -- imagination, fantasy and creative thought. So the word has multiple meanings which 'day-dreaming' in the English translation does not suggest.

Freud starts the essay by positing the following idea: He says that we have always been curious to know the following aspects about writing and about the creative writer:

1. What is the *source* on which the creative writer bases her fictions? Where does he derive his material from?

2. Why does this material have such a powerful *effect* on us as readers? How can we explain the *reception* of literature and the pleasure people (continually) derive from it?

Our interest in the matter is heightened by the fact that even when we ask him, the writer has no satisfactory explanation to offer.

Therefore, Freud says that it will be fruitful to analyze and find out the answers to these questions. He justifies his research by saying that creative writer themselves like to lesson the distance between themselves and us by their constant assurance that everyman is a poet at heart and that the last poet will not perish till the last man dies.

1. Child's play

As he does always, Freud begins his search by locating that first traces of imaginative activity in early childhood. The child's most loved activity is play or games. Every child at play behaves like a creative writer. He creates a world of his own or rather rearranges the things of his world in a new way that pleases him.He takes his play seriously, spends a lot of emotion on it. So it would be wrong to think that he does not take his play seriously.

The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. That is why in spite of all the emotion that the child puts into His play, he distinguishes it quite well from reality. He likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the visible things of the real world. This linking differentiates the child's play from fantasying.

Freud says that what the creative writer does in similar to what the child does at play. He expends a lot of emotion in the world of fantasy which he creates, which he separates from reality. In essence Freud equates the function of creative writing with the

motive force of dreams: the work of art, like a dream, involves the disguised wish fulfillment of a suppressed or repressed wish. He defines the artist as an egotist shaping infantile fantasies into acceptable adult form. The creative writer resembles the child at play, who

> creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously – that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion – while separating it sharply from reality.

Language has preserved this relationship between children's play and poetic creation. The German word for imaginative writing is "*spiel*" which means play. Thus there are words like

"*Lustspiel*" for comedy,

"*Trancruspiel"* for tragedy and the two words literally meaning "Pleasure – play" and "Mourning – pay".

Yet another word "*Schauspider*" literally means show – players.

Freud says that the greatness of art lies in its element of fantasy. It is this which given enjoyment, because things that are real cannot give enjoyment, in fact they can cause distress if depicted as they are. Through a writer's work these realities can become a source of pleasure.

There is yet another consideration on this contrast between reality and play. When the child grows up he ceases to play. He labors to understand reality through decades. By envisaging the realities of life he is once more able to see the difference between play and reality. He looks back at his childhood when he carried on his childhood games with intense seriousness. Thus positioned from the present moment he is able to see the difference between play and reality, and he throws off the heavy burden imposed on him by reality and enjoys the high yield of pleasure afforded by humor.

2. Adult's at play

As people grow up they cease to play and they aim to give up the yield of pleasure, which he once enjoyed. But man never really gives up anything that he once enjoyed. Freud says we never really give up anything. We only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be renunciation is really the formation for substitute or surrogate. The break from childhood and the entry into adulthood is complete when one accepts the need to accept the reality of life. From now on, the imagination is not longer free. It must

find means of self-expression. Artistic creation is one of these, as is fantasy, dream, and humor.

In the same way the growing child when he stops play never really stops playing. Instead of playing, he now fantasies. He builds castles in the air which is what we call day-dreams. Freud says that most people fantasize at on time or another in their lives. The fantasies of adult people are less easy to observe than the play of children. The child plays by himself or forms a closed psychical system with other children while playing. Though at times he my not play in front of grown ups, he does not conceal it from them.

The child is able to distinguish the boundaries between play and reality, and can readily link imagined objects to tangible reality. Unlike the child at play, however, adults tend to be ashamed of their fantasies and secret wishes. Constantly they mask or conceal them because they may conflict with or be impermissible in the social world. Yet, as Freud observes, sources of pleasure are only reluctantly and incompletely renounced. Creative writing becomes a substitute or surrogate for this childhood play and the writer plays out his fantasies through writing and by creating his characters. Just as children construct alternative worlds to fulfill their wishes, so writers play out their latent desires in fictional form.

The adult unlike the child is always ashamed of his fantasies and hides it from others. He cherishes his fantasies as his most intimate possession. As a rule he would rather confess his misdeeds than tell anyone his fantasy. This may be because he believes that he is the only person who invents such fantasies and has no idea that creations of this kind are wide spread among other people. This is how Freud differentiates between a person who plays and a person who fantasizes.

A child's play is determined by his wishes. His wish is to be big and grown up and in his games he imitates what he knows about the lives of his elders. With the adult it is different. He knows he is not expected to go on playing any longer, but that he must act in the real world. Also some of his wishes which given rise to his fantasies are of a kind which it is essential to conceal. Thus he is ashamed of his fantasies as being childish and impermissible.

Freud them raises a question. If people conceal their fantasies, how is it that we know so much about it? Freud answers the question by saying that the stern goddess, Necessity makes it known to us.

Those that are afflicted by nervous illness tell their fantasies to their doctors by whom they expect to be cured. Actually according to Freud's analysis, these patients never reveal anything that we might not also hear from others who are healthy people. The patients themselves do not know that many of their fantasies are common.

Freud then goes on to point out some of the characteristics of fantasy:

- First of all, we may begin by the assumption that a happy person never fantasizes, only an unsatisfied person fantasizes.
- The motivating force behind fantasies is unsatisfied wishes.
- Every single fantasy is the fulfillment of an unsatisfied wish, a disconnection from unsatisfying reality.

These motivating wishes vary according to the sex, character and circumstances of the person who is having the fantasy. However they fall into two main groups:

-- they are either ambitious wishes which elevate the subject's personality

-- or they are erotic ones.

Freud says that the fantasies of young men lean towards ambition whereas the fantasies of young women are predominantly erotic. However he goes on to say that we cannot make a clear cut opposition between the two, for they are often united. Freud goes on to say that the well brought up young woman does not allow herself more than a minimum of erotic desire and the well brought up young man learns to suppress the excess of his self-regard and ambition which is projected through fantasy.

Freud says

> Let us make ourselves acquainted with a few of the characteristics of fantasying. We many lay it down that a happy person every fantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied whishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality. These motivating wishes very according to the sex, character, and circumstances of the person who is having the fantasy; but they fall naturally into two main groups. They are either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones. In young women the erotic wishes predominate almost exclusively, for their ambition is a rule

> absorbed by erotic trends. In young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones.

Freud then goes on to say that we must not conclude that fantasies and day-dreams are stereotyped or unalterable. Fantasies change with the subject's shifting impressions of life, change with every change in his situation. These spots of change are described by Freud as '*danemark*'. Thus the relation between time and fantasy in general is very important. Fantasy hovers between the three moments of time which our ideation involves the past, present and future. Freud describes this process as follows:

--Mental work is linked to some current impression or same provoking occasion in the present.

--From here it harks back to a memory of an earlier experience, usually an infantile one. According to Freud it is one in which this wish was fulfilled.

--It now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish.

--What it thus creates is a daydream as a fantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the creation which provoked it from the memory.

Freud then goes on to give an example of the day-dream of a poor orphan boy. When he is given the address of some employer where he may find a job, he begins to day-dream that he is given a job, gets very close to the employer, marries the latter's charming daughter, then becomes the director of the business, first as partner then as his successor. He thus regains what he possessed in the happy childhood of the past, the protection of a home and his loving parents. Thus using he occasions of the present he reconstructs a pattern of the past and a picture of the future.

When fantasies become over-powerful, the conditions are laid for an onset of neurosis or psychosis. The person then slowly moves away from reality and falls into permanent state of fantasy. All activities in the rational world stop.

Fantasies are also the immediate precursors of distressing symptoms. They lead to physically signaled mental diseases. That is to say, excess of fantasies may result in physical disorders.

Fantasies are also related to dreams. Our dreams at night are nothing other then fantasies and this we can demonstrate form the interpretation of dreams. That is why we describe fantasies as daydreams.

At night all those wishes we are otherwise ashamed of arise through the mode of dreams. These are wishes we try to conceal from ourselves and so they are usually repressed and pushed into our unconscious. Repressed wished come to the surface in a very distracted and disjointed form. Night dreams are wish fulfillments in just the same way as day-dreams or fantasies during the period of waking. Adult reality is unsatisfying and there is constant effort to alter the reality if it is not possible in life, then through fantasy. Seen in this light, Freud's theory is that what is repressed does not go away but gets transformed into dreams and fantasies and the adult ability to fantasize or daydream becomes an important substitute mechanism for the dissatisfied.

Having thus analyzed daydreams and night – dreams, Freud now goes on to study the creative writer. He raises the question whether it is possible to compare the imaginative writer with the dreamer in broad daylight. He feels that it is a valid comparison and that it bears a lot of truth.

> But when a creative writer presents his plays to us or tells us what we are inclined to take to be his personal day-dreams, we experience a great pleasure, and one which probably arises from the confluence of many sources. How the writer accomplishes this is his inner most secret; the essential arE petica lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between two of the methods used by this technique. The riter softens the character fo his egoistic day-dreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by the purely formal – that is, aesthetic – yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his fantasies. We give the name of an incentive bonus, or a fore pleasure, to a yield of pleasure such as this, which is offered to us so as to make possible the release of still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources. N my opinion, all the aesthetic pleasure which a creative writer affords us has the character of a fore pleasure of this

> kind, and our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds. It may even be that not a little of this effect is due to the writer's enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame. This brings us to the threshold of new, interesting, and complicated inquiries; but also, at least of the moment, to the end of our discussion.

3. Art as wish-fulfillment is a substitute for the child's play

Freud emphasizes the continuity between the work of the unconscious in dreams, private reveries in everyday life and the imaginative work of art: these various forms of fantasy are distinguished merely by different degrees of disguise and distortion. The imaginative writer is a dreamer in broad daylight, bringing repressed material into the literary text. The creative writer, like the child, creates a world of fantasy which he takes very seriously--that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion--while separating it sharply from reality. The child is quite serious about his involvement in the fantasy world that he has created. Creative writers, too, know that they are creating fictions and yet are able to take pleasure in their art. Neither the writer not the reader can enjoy literature if is a representations of life as it is.

Freud makes an initial distinction between two kinds of writers. The first kind are the ancient authors of epics who take material ready-made and the second who originate their own material.

Freud restricts his discussions to writers of the second kind: those who originate their own material. Again here, Freud does not prefer to take the examples of writers who are highly esteemed but takes the less popular authors of romances and short stories who have a wide circle of readers.

In the works of these writers there is invariably a hero who is at the centre of the work and who tries to win our sympathy by every possible means. The author places this central character in the text under a special providence. This hero comes through every adventure miraculously. The writer makes his hero invulnerable. Through this characteristic of the hero we can recognize the ego of the writer which Freud calls "His

Majesty the Ego." In other words he is the hero of daydreams and every story. He is the writer's and then the reader's hero also.

There are other typical features that characterize such stories.

--All the women characters fall in love with the hero.

-- Moreover the characters are sharply divided into good and bad.

-- The bad characters are the enemies or rivals of the ego which is personified as the hero of the story.

Even in psychological novels only one person that is the hero is described from within. Freud says that the author sits inside his mind as it were and looks at the other characters from outside.

Also the psychological novel is the exercise of the writer to split his ego into many part-egos and so to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes. Each wish fulfillment takes the form of one or the other of the characters. There are also other models of the psychological novel where the ego functions only as the spectator as it happens in the novels of the French novelist Emile Zola.

Freud therefore finds it fruitful to compare the imaginative writer with the daydreamer and the act of poetic or literary creation with the daydream.

Keeping all the foregoing points in view, Freud tries now to study the connection between the life of the writer and his works. He reminds the reader of his analysis of daydreams as of wish fulfillment and how it relates simultaneously to the past, present and future.

Freud uses the same formula of analysis. A strong experience in the present awakens the memory of an earlier experience, usually of childhood form which proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in creative work. Such a way of looking at creative writing is according to Freud, very fruitful.

> A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work.

Then Freud argues that to make his or her daydreams acceptable to others, the writer carefully controls the wish expressed in the work of art. The real hero is the personified character of the author's ego. The special nature of the psychological novel is due to "the inclination of the modern writer to split up his ego, by self-observation, into

many part-egos, and in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes." The aesthetic and stylistic devices that the writer disguise fantasies and when the reader enjoys he also comforts himself by telling himself that he is only enjoying an aesthetic experience and not a work that records his own fantasy.

> The writer softens the character of his egoistic day-dreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by the purely formal – that is, aesthetic – yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his phantasies

Freud also says that "our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tension in our minds." The hero is the writer or reader. Thus it goes by the same logic that the reader is also indulging in a kind of a day-dream. Although Freud does not separate form from content as openly, his emphasis on the therapeutic and tension-relieving role of literature gives him a significant place among literary thinkers.

As for works which refashion ready-made and familiar material, derived form folk-takes and legends and myths the author gives another explanation. Freud says that myths are distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies of whole nations.

Now Freud turns his attention to the means by which the creative writer achieves the emotional effects in us that are aroused by his creations.

Freud begins this discussion by saying that we will get no pleasure if the writer were to disclose his fantasies as they are but if he gave it is in the form of a play it affords us great pleasure. But using certain techniques he evokes certain emotional effects in us. We can guess two of the methods used by his technique according to Freud which he points out as used by the writer.

In this essay, Freud consistently links fiction with playing and imagination. He reminds us that children and artists alike "play" with real enthusiasm, even seriousness. But before we get to fiction, we must examine what Freud says about the more general activity of daydreaming. While children, of course, play openly and with real objects dolls and toy trains and often orient their play towards the roles they will take on with adulthood, the adult, while not renouncing play, must exchange the child's openness and real objects for a more shadowy kind of activity—fantasizing. The writer presents the central character through whom egoistic day-dreams are released.

> A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory.

This exchange must be made partly because in the adult world, play is seen as something abnormal if the adult actually played. What is most important is that because of the nature of the underlying fantasies in the mind of the adult they cannot be openly expressed in play. Adults are already taught to feel a sense of shame about their fantasies. So they learn to conceal these fantasies and distort them.

This appeals to the repressed desires in the reader's mind also and as such causes a release which yields pleasure to us. In making us accept their own fantasies in a pleasantly distorted form, writers bring about in us a liberation of tensions. That liberation is the true value of art because the writer's work makes us realize, however indirectly, that it is still acceptable for us adults to exercise our imagination, to fantasize, to daydream. Art therefore is primarily an imaginative domain where play and fantasy dominate. Wordsworth believed that poets have the capacity to bind together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society.

Our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tension in our minds. Thus the writer enables us to enjoy our daydreams without shame or self-reproach.

The following are the conclusions that Freud arrives at in this essay:

- The text is a symbolic statement of unconscious fantasies that the artist [and reader] could not otherwise admit.
- The text reveals the unconscious fantasies of the author, reader, critic, and even those of the fictional characters in the text. Value is in how the reader can defend against or come to terms with a very disturbing fantasy by displacing it into less threatening symbolic terms. Authors work through unconscious fantasies through creating more manageable versions.

- The text is studied by this school as an expression of the author's unconscious fantasies. Ex. Analyzing the Oedipal Complex as worked out in Hamlet can reveal how Shakespeare worked that out. The reader's and audience's response reveals how the reader comes to terms with it. It can thus psychoanalyze characters, authors and readers.

- Hence misreading of a text are as or more significant than an obviously correct one. This school works on the assumption that authors, characters, and readers may be unaware of the reasons for their readings and writings.

- By suggesting profoundly personal reasons for writing and reading literature, it analyses the psychological health of writers and readers.

KEY CONCEPTS

Repression:

Every human has to undergo a repression of the pleasure principle by the reality principle; for some, even whole societies, repression may become excessive and make us ill. The paradox at the heart of Freud's work is that we come to be what we are only by massive repression of the elements that have gone into our making. A vital conception in Freud's thought is that that which is repressed will 'return' in some way --- among the ways are parapraxis and psychic disorders.

Dream interpretation:

The aspects of a dream are condensation (focusing various meanings in one referent), displacement (something like the use of tropes, allusions), regressive transformation (replacing ideas and feelings with images), secondary revision (making everything fit into a story): all concepts which can easily be transferred to the function of literature.

Unconscious:

Produced through repression, the unconscious peaks in the world through dreams, through parapraxes (slips, ways in which the unconscious speaks despite the vigilance

of our conscious selves). The unconscious is powered by libidinal drives, and is an inevitable force in our lives.

Some Excerpts from the Essay: *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming, 1908*

Let us make ourselves acquainted with a few of the characteristics of fantasying. We many lay it down that a happy person every fantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied whishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality. These motivating wishes very according to the sex, character, and circumstances of the person who is having the fantasy; but they fall naturally into two main groups. They are either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones. In young women the erotic wishes predominate almost exclusively, for their ambition is a a rule absorbed by erotic trends. In young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones.

But when a creative writer presents his plays to us or tells us what we are inclined to take to be his personal day-dreams, we experience a great pleasure, and one which probably arises from the confluence of many sources. How the writer accomplishes this is his inner most secret; the essential arts poetica lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between two of the methods used by this technique. The writer softens the character of his egoistic day-dreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by the purely formal – that is, aesthetic – yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his fantasies. We give the name of an incentive bonus, or a fore pleasure, to a yield of pleasure such as this, which is offered to us so as to make possible the release of still greater pleasure arising form deeper psychical sources. In opinion, all the aesthetic pleasure which a creative writer affords us has the character of a fore pleasure of this kind, and our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds. It may even be that not a little of this effect is due to the writer's enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame. This brings us to the threshold of new, interesting, and complicated inquiries; but also, at least for the moment, to the end of our discussion.

UNIT – V.2

Psychological & Marxist Criticism

Essay No 10. Raymond Williams: *Realism and the Contemporary Novel*

MARXIST LITERARY CRITICISM

RAYMOND WILLIAMS : *REALISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY NOVEL,1961*

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Karl Marx (1819-83) gave his name to Marxism. But Marxism is the developing summation of many people's ideas, positions, and practical actions, not all of which are compatible. Karl Marx was the first Marxist literary critic, the nineteenth-century German philosopher best known for *Das Kapital* (1867; *Capital*). He wrote critical essays in the 1830s on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and William Shakespeare. Even after Marx met Friedrich Engels in 1843 and began collaborating on overtly political works such as *The German Ideology* (1846) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), he continued to maintain a keen interest in literature. In *The German Ideology,* Marx and Engels discuss the relationship between the arts, politics, and basic economic reality in terms of a general social theory. The revolution hoped for by Marx and Engels took place in 1917, in Russia, long ruled by despotic czars but also enlightened by the works of powerful novelists and playwrights including Anton Chekhov, Alexander Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Russia produced revolutionaries like Vladimir Lenin, who shared Marx's interest in literature. Lenin also shared his belief in the ultimate importance of literature to shape a society. Leon Trotsky, Lenin's comrade in revolution, was also deeply interested in literary matters. His *Literature and Revolution* (1924) is still viewed as a classic of Marxist literary criticism.

What is common to Marxist analyses of society and culture is the idea of **interconnection between different levels of society**. Someone who is a Marxist believes in the inseparability between economic structures and relationships, often called the **base** or **infrastructure**, and the means through which those structures and relationships are represented or expressed: the superstructure. Base refers to: products, producers, laborers, materials, owners, processes of distribution etc. Superstructure refers to: language, arts, literature, rituals, law, politics, philosophy, religion, ideas, institutions such as school, police etc. In *The German Ideology,* Marx and Engels discuss the relationship between the arts, politics, and basic economic reality in terms of a general social theory. Economics, they argue, provides the *base,* or *infrastructure,* of society,

from which a *superstructure* consisting of law, politics, philosophy, religion, and art emerges. In short they are describing the idea interconnection between economic structures and relationships, often called *base,* or *infrastructure* and the means through which those structures and relationships are expressed, that is superstructure. Of course you have exceptions such as science where the base i.e. Technology and the superstructure i.e. the knowledge of technology cannot be divided as two separate entities.

Base or infrastructure	Superstructure
what things get made, who works on making them, who owns the land, tools and materials through which production takes place, how the fruits of such production are distributed among people	language, the arts, literature, rituals, religion, ideas, institutions (e.g. police, schools, etc.)

This separation of materials practice from ideas runs into some problems, particularly in dealing with science, which is both part of the base (by creating and using technologies) and of the superstructure (as a collection of ideas).

MARXISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Marxists are concerned to promote and carry through **social change**, especially through analyzing the processes of social development using critical methods of, **dialectical materialism and materialism,** both of which enable in literary analysis a relating of literary texts to the materials basis a relating of literary texts to the materials basis of a society (whether capitalist, feudal, communist, etc.) and the conditions of production of those texts (e.g. the existence of libraries and copyright laws). By providing a way of assessing the relationship between a text and a society, the methods of materialism can be used to promote social change by distinguishing between progressive and non-progressive texts.

Progressive texts are those which contribute to social change towards an egalitarian (socialist) society; **non-progressive texts** are those which do not. Working on

the basis of the distinction of this sort. Marxists promote progressive texts, and expose, in non-progressive tests, the limits of the particular world-view represented in them.

There has always been disagreement among Marxist critics, nevertheless, about precisely what a progressive work of literature is. There kinds of text which have been proposed are:

1. SOCIALIST REALIST TEXTS:

These investigate and offer insights into the underlying network of social forces in a society. There are different views on what kind of texts enable this. On one view, these texts must provide an accurate surface description of society. An example is Upton Sinclair's The *Jungle* (1906): its critical representation of the Chicago meat-packing industry contributed to making possible the introduction of progressive food legislation in the USA (and so could be said to have led, through social analysis and critique, to progressive social change). Another view (associated particularly with George Lukacs) includes as socialist realism texts by writers who have no overt commitment to social change, but who nevertheless by a profound intuition reveal in their texts the underlying forces in society.

2. NON-REALISTIC DISTANCING TEXTS:

These present representations of society to an audience or reader by using 'alienating' devices which *destroy* any illusion of reality; instead, these texts emphasize the represented, 'theatrical' or 'artificial' nature of what is being seen or read. The aim of this 'alienating' technique is to prevent an audience from uncritical emotional engagement ('wallowing') in the represented world, and instead enable the audience to reflect on, and so understand, social forces. Bertolt Brecht (German, 1898-1956) is the major theorist of, and influence on, this kind of work; Dennis Potter's television series and film *Penies From Heaven* is a recent example.

3. FORMALLY EXPERIMENTAL TEXTS:

This includes much modernist work (by Stein, Woolf, Eliot, Joyce, Pound, etc.). Sometimes these texts have been claimed as socialist, though this is controversial among Marxists (historically, the modernist writers were affiliated across the whole political spectrum; Pound, for example, supported the Italian Fascists.). The argument for considering these texts as progressive – which is related to the argument in favour of distanciating text – goes like this: work which disturbs orthodox reading processes forces readers into exploring new and often contradictory kinds of relationship between parts of the text. Reading constructs a set of relations between text, society and reader which are

exposed for analysis by experimental texts; and by implication these destabilizations extend into the reader's broader perceptions of social relation.

NON-PROGRESSIVE WORKS:

These are all other texts. A Marxist response to them exposes how they lead to or reinforce non-socialist social structures. Marxist criticism of literature seeks to enable readers to see through literature's chosen images to its connections with the economic and political base. In doing this, Marxist criticism seeks to show that the applauded 'human achievements' of great literary works can often be traced back to a fabric of *inhumane* social relations which produced them, but which they choose not to represent: Walter Benjamin (German, 1892-1940). one of the members of the Frankfurt School, asserts that works of culture 'owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries': and he concludes, 'There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism' ('Theses on the Philosophy of History', in the collection *Illuminations*, 1955).

MARXISM AND THE STUDY OF IDEOLOGY

Collectively, Marxist approaches to texts are attempts to expose the way ideas, images and beliefs (collectively, **ideology**) function. Ideology is a socially constructed network of ideas and images which functions to represent underlying economic and political forces, and covers up contradictions, inequalities and exploitation in the society by mystifying them, or making them seen 'natural'. In an early work, Marx himself, for example, suggests that the religious 'holy family' in Christianity is a socially needed, constructed image which reflects actual, human families – rather than, as Christianity suggests, the other way round. The mystification of social realities silences dissent and makes it possible for existing social relations to remain as they are (to 'reproduce themselves').

How ideology is thought to achieve this varies between different periods and directions within Marxism.

Ideology's connection with the infrastructure	
Ideology **reflects** (and is derived from) the economic base.	When the economy of a society changes, there will be a direct effect on the forms of culture of that society. History goes through a sequence of feudal culture,

	capitalist culture. Literary forms correlate with modes of production, and undergo changes which coincide with changes in the economic base (e.g. if the novel and blank verse enter society with capitalism, they should cease or change, when capitalism is superseded).
Ideology involves the **hegemony** of a particular way of seeing the world.	Antonio Gramsci (Italian, 1891-1937) suggests that economic relations are mediated in societies by complex, interlocking representations which collectively produce an overall, controlling balance or 'common sense' (which is nevertheless unstable and changing) in favour of a particular class or alliance of classes; these classes rule through apparent consent made possible by the body of interwoven images and alliance relationships.
Ideology is **determined in the last instance** by the economy.	Louis Althusser (French, b. 1918) suggests that considerable variation and autonomy can exist in ideological forms, but that *finally* they derive from underlying realities of the economy. The superstructure is made up of **repressive state apparatuses** (e.g. the army, the police) and **ideological state apparatuses** (e.g. education, the Church, literary criticism, etc.): RSAs are only used by the state when ISAs fail to do their job of reproducing existing social

	relations.

In the case of analyzing texts which are made of language in particular, investigations of ideology face an additional question: whether language is part of the base, or part of the superstructure, or neither. One line of development in recent Marxist criticism (in opposition to, for example, the view of the Soviet leader Josef Stalin (1879-1953), and leading into post-structuralist and psychoanalytic developments), suggests that the material which provides the building blocks of language (the words and possible sentence structures) determines our thoughts and pleasures, and that people are formed ('cut out') from language or 'constructed' by language as language-using beings. Our linguistic existence and behaviour become things which can be analysed from a Marxist materialist perspective.

RAYMOND WILLIAMS (1921–1988)

Williams was a pervasively influential twentieth-century thinker. In more than thirty published books, and in hundreds of articles, Williams addressed questions of culture, communication, politics, literature, and drama. Working outside mainstream communication research agendas, two of Williams's books, *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961), became foundational texts in the development of a new political and intellectual tradition known today as British cultural studies. The definitive work among his later books is *Marxism and Literature* (1977), preceded by *Keywords* (1976), an original and successful study of social and cultural terms important in contemporary use, and followed by *Politics and Letters* (1979), a collection of interviews about his life and work by the staff of the journal *New Left Review* to which he was a frequent contributor. He also published *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980), *Culture* (1980), *Towards 2000* (1983) and *Writing in Society* (1983).

In the 1970s and 1980s Williams discussed issues relating to feminism, ecology, Welsh nationalism, and the armed struggle against imperialism in the Third World. From the mid-1960s Williams was constantly concerned with issues such as culture, language, politics, and society. Williams wrote in a simple and colloquial style for audiences of a common kind, the working-class, a literary characteristic that he shared with D. H. Lawrence and which influenced many of his own contemporaries.

The literary theory called ‘cultural materialism’ derives its name, principles, and politics from the work of Raymond Williams. Raymond Williams developed this approach to which he himself gave the name 'cultural materialism' in a series of books: *Culture and Society* (1958), *The Long Revolution* (1961), *Marxism and Literature* (1977). Cultural materialism promotes a socialist vision for Britain using the tools of literary and cultural criticism. Cultural studies, a wider application, use the theories and methods of literary criticism to probe the depths of culture both through literary study and through the study of other "texts" of society. It gives simultaneous and equal attention to all forms of art. Through this criticism, cultural studies aspire to be in its opposition to the social mainstream of which it is critical. It believed that cultural production is itself material, as much as any other human activity and because of this reason culture must be understood both in its own terms and as part of its society. Hence, culture is always political to such a critic. Rather than being a specialized area in which we see reflections of the political processes governing society, culture is the whole way of life which makes up society; political analysis is a specialized framework which can be used to understand it.

Raymond Williams’ works display an unceasing concern to elucidate the modern concept of ‘culture’ as the expression, in both high and popular modes, of life in contemporary Britain. Within that field, the press and television, the traditional forms of novel and drama, speech, language, education and political discourse all received his thorough attention.

DISCUSSION OF THE ESSAY

This essay was first published as part of *The Long Revolution*, 1961.Williams begins the essay by saying that realism is not an object to be identified and printed down. It is a way for describing certain methods and attitudes. He says that he has three aims in the essay. The first is the set down the existing variations of the term. The second is the set down his views in which the modern novel has developed. The third is to find out a possible new meaning of the term.

The simple technical use of the term ‘realism’ has been from the beginning made to refer to or describe the precision and vividness of a rendering in art of some observed detail. So realism was seen as a way of describing as opposed to idealization or caricature.

The most ordinary definition of the term ‘realism’ meant: ordinary, contemporary, every day reality as opposed to traditionally heroic, romantic or legendary solicits. Following the Renaissance, the support of this kind of ordinary, everyday reality has been normally associated with the rise of the middle class. So in the beginning such literature was called domestic and bourgeois. Later it comes to be called ‘realistic’. In other words the ways of descriptions in literature was directly related to the rise of a new consciousness.

Also there was now an attention paid to the unpleasant, the exposed and the cordial, Earlier such facets of life did not feature in literature. Thus a common adjective that was used with the term ‘realism’ was ‘startling’, along with other words like ordinary contemporary, everyday reality.

So when realism appeared in literature, it as really a svelte against the bourgeois view of the world. The realists were selecting those materials which the bourgeois artists had ignored all along. Thus realism in literature can be seen as a part of the progressive and revolutionary movement.

Parallel to the emergence of realism was the emergence of ‘naturalism’. Naturalism in literature associated with Emile Lola and this was again concerned with ordinary everyday reality. Infant in 1881, the newspaper Daily News dismissed the naturalistic movements as the unnecessary portrayal of offensive incidents. One of the masters of naturalism was Strindberg who stated that naturalism was opposed to supernaturalism. The difference between the two terms naturalism and socialism lay in this: Naturalism meant the simple technical reference, while realism related to the description of subjects and attitudes to subjects.

Williams then gives on to defining the term realism in four different ways: Narodnost, tipichnost, Ideinots and partinost.

1. Naradnost :Though this term refers to the expression of the spririt, in literature it means the requirement of popular simplicity and traditional clarity.
2. Ideinost and partinost: both refer to the ideological content and the partisan affiliations of such realism. As such they refer to the revolutionary attitudes. The particular political party that the writer belongs to will influence his way of perceiving and representing reality. This is what is called ‘Socialist Realism’. This is opposed to the earlier forms of ‘Bourgeois realism’ with its ordinary adherence to Narodmost realism. Tipichnost: According to Williams, the problem of defining ad understanding the term ‘Tipichnost’ is most problematic.

Williams now quotes Engel's' view of 'realism', According to Engel's, realism meant typical characters in typical situations'. Engel's' definition was inspired by Marxist thinking. According to Soviet thinkers, the term 'typical' should not be confused with what is frequently encountered. Rather it refers to the comprehension of laws and perspectives of future social development, so typical realism means the understanding and depiction of the principles by which certain situations devour. So it is not just the reproduction of observed reality. It is a principled selection.

> The 'realist' novel divided into the 'social/ and the 'personal', and the 'social novel', in our time, has further divided into social documentary and social formula.

Usually the term 'typical' is understood as the most deeply characteristic human experience, both in the individual and in society. So this is hat is usually called 'convincingly real' in literature.

It is generally held that the nineteenth century European fiction falls within the tradition of 'realism' and that the novel of realism has also seen its end. Williams looks at this point closely.

The ordinary criterion of realism still holds with reference to most novels. It is only that in the twentieth century novels there is still concentration on contemporary themes as a result of the disappearance of certain taboos. The contemporary novel has number of elements in it which are startling and offensive. In this ordinary sense therefore the contemporary novel is realistic.

Also most description is still realistic because writers continue to describe the object as it actually appears. So Williams says that although this practice of describing object's as it actually appears continues, what is held by critics is that the realistic novel has been replaced by the psychological novel.This is so because the direct study of certain states of consciousness and newly understood psychological states has been a primary feature o modern literature, especially fiction.

Everyday, ordinary reality still continues to hold the attention of novelists. It is just that it is now differently conceived, differently understood. But the question that is raised is that does the newly developed techniques of describing reality, have wholly realistic intentions.

Williams has in mind the impact of the discipline of psychology upon novelists and horn it influences their modes of perception and description. So between using the

principles of psychology for perception and description f life events and objects o the one hand and the focus and intention of realism on the other, Williams sees a gap. In the next, section of the essay Williams attempts to resolve this problem.

To begin with, Williams says, that the novel is not just a literary form. It is a whole literature in itself. Williams refuses to define the term novel in terms of only one king of prose work. According to Williams, the novel means a whole body of literature. It strange is wide and its central interest is life itself.

> There are certain immediate clarifying factors. The realist novel needs, obviously, a genuine community: a community of persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship-work or friendship or family-but many, interlocking kinds. It is obviously difficult, in the twentieth century, to find a community of this sort.

Williams says that when he thinks of the realist tradition in fiction, he refers to the kind of novel which describes and whole way of life in terms of the qualities of the persons diffracted.

The novel also means the individual who composes it, It includes therefore, the society, the novelist or the individual, the elements of composition – all of these without anyone of these becoming more important than the other. The society is not a back ground against which personal relationship are studied, nor are the individuals mere illustrations of aspects of the way of life described. In a novel of realism, every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life and the general life is seen in completely personal terms. The individual human person is the most important paint of focus in the purviews of the novel. This does not mean any one isolated person in the bowel, but the human individual as such.

Therefore the realist tradition is the apprehension of the relation between individuals and society. Williams points out that the English novel arrived to this position from the eighteenth century and this is the sign of its growth and maturity.

In the light of this conclusion, Williams says that if we say that the realist tradition has broken down, it really men's that this nature perception of the a) the apprehension of the redaction between individuals and society and b) the relationship of the individual to society as depicted in novel – both these important aspects of realism have given way to a mode of writing that is prompted by the pressures of particular expedience.

Realism is not detailing events and places, like describing shops or waiting – some of stations. They may be included as elements of action, but such descriptions alone do not constitute realism. In other words, Williams does not consider the description of objects and events as constituting realism. Realism is more incisive than this. It refers to the way in which the writer depicts the individual in his society, keeping himself as a part of the society described.

The understanding of realism as meaning to include all details down to the last item, actually led to the disrepute of the realist novel. Writers like Virgime work, therefore located most of the novels actions within the landscape of the character's mind and landscape of feeling rather than in the world of objective details, such a tendency as in wolf, is according to Williams an equally damaging unbalance.

Williams says that it is quite possible to write the history of the modern novel in terms of these polarizations of style or extreme modes of composition. Williams locates the year 1900 as the period when the realist novel split into two repartee lends of novel; he 'social' novel and the 'personal' novel.

The social novel may give an accurate description and observation of general life or the aggregate whereas the personal novel may give an accurate description and observation of persons or unit who farm the society. According to williams, both these types of novel lack a dimension because the way of life is neither the aggregate nor the unit.

Williams now divides the social novels into two categories:

The first in the descriptive social novel, the documentary. It creates the general way of life, a particular social or working community. So if we want to know about life in a mining town or aim a university, for example, this is the kind of novel we will turn to Williams says that such documentary novels should go on being written with a wide.

There may be a variety of settings. But still what we finally get is limited. The character may be mines or teachers or in other words, illustrations of a way of life, although this kind of a novel comes closest to the realist novel it is primarily, social – descriptive in function another kind of social novel that is gaining popularity according to Williams is that kind of novel where the emphasis is not in description but on finding and stating of a formula bout society. A particular pattern is abstracted from the sum of social experience and a society is created from. This pattern, this results in future stories. A pattern is taken from the contemporary world and materialized as a whole in another time or place. Science fiction falls under this category. These novels contain conceptions

of individuals who are virtuous against a vile society. Experiences of isolation, of alienation and of self – ensile form an important part of these novels. Williams calls these formula novels.

Williams divided the realist novel into social and personal novels which was further divided into social documentary and social formula.

Williams admits that some of the best novels of the contemporary times are personal novels, which describe in a careful and subtitle manner, selected personal relationships. Williams refers to Foster's *A Passage to India* as a good example where a society is there in a highly personalized landscape, set in India. To too the novels of Graham Prune which are sit in England, west Africa, Mexico or Indo-China. In these cases the setting becomes meaningful in so far as they relate to the needs of the characters and to the emotional patterns of the writer/narrator. They do not give you a picture of the kind of life and a vision f what underlies these societies in these settings. Williams next gives the example of the French existentialist novelist Kafka where the landscape and detail are described and sundered as prompted by the feelings and moods of and life events of the individuals in the novel.

Hence in the social descriptive novel the characters are aspects of the society. In the personal novel, the society and setting are aspects of the characters. Both, according to Williams are incomplete renderings.

Williams is of the opinion that no matter how this selection of detail has been done in the two kinds of novels mentioned above the choicer and restriction is simply a failure of consciousness, a failure on the part of the writer to realize the extent to which the substance of a general way of life actively affects the closest personal experience.

Williams feels that these novels emphasize people as people first and not as social units. The difference between these writers and the great realist is the letter's ability to apprehend the common substance.

The two kinds of novels described earlier show people whose personality is valued inside the group. Outside of the circle of then novel, they are nothing. These novels show the failure of the novelist to realize the nature of the general social elements.

In spite of its limitations, the personal – descriptive novel is, according to Williams, a substantial achievement. However its inherent tendencies seem to break it down into another kind, the novel of the personal formula. Just as the social-descriptive novel extracts social formulas this novel, i.e. the novel of personal formula extracts formulas about individual lives. His kind of fiction is dismissed by Williams as 'fiction

of special pleading'. Such novels take only one person seriously. For example, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has the personal formula s the main emphasis. A whole world is actualized on one man's senses, actualized on one's man's senses. In *Ulysses*, Joyce actualized the world through three characters, Stephen, Bloom Molly, which together composed one world.

However, Williams sees a limitation in this kind of a novel. Such novelists (like Joyce) start with real personal feelings, yet, says Williams, their final version of reality is practice and farcical. Though such novelists are the live list novelists in their works the gap between our feelings and social observation is very wide.

Another point that Williams makes about this 'fiction of special pleading' is that it takes one person's feelings and needs as absolute and creates other persons in these sole terms. It usually flourishes in the first person narrative which is used for the purpose mentioned just now.Williams then goes on to gives number of examples like *Huckleberry Finn* and *Catcher in the Rye.*

Now all these novels exist the central character decides the point of view and the descriptive realism is in terms of this central character. Also what is worse is, according to Williams much of the personal fouling is the expedience of breakdown.

Thus for Williams has offered a four fold classification: Social – description, social – formula, personal – description and personal – formula. These offer according to him a contrast to the realist tradition which these kinds of novels have replaced. However Williams does not blame these writers as fully turning away form a great tradition of novel writing. The reasons are according to him mere complex.

According to Williams, the realist novel needs a genuine community, not just a community linked by work a friendship or family – but of an interlocking kind.

The intensely personal relationships and the single, temporary and discontinuous nature of links between person as shown in the contemporary next has a lot to do with the nature of the society as such and the change in it which is also reflected din the literary form.

The characteristic experience of the society of our times is asserting d preserving individuality rather than the nineteenth century experience of finding a place and setting down.

The Victorian novel ends with making engagements and relationship and settlements, whereas the ordinary twentieth century novel ends with a many going away

on his own, extricating himself form a dominant situation and finding himself while doing so.

Such a breakaway from the old to a continuously new mode has to be continually made. However according to a new definition of realism has to be explodes. So we may be led to conclude that only a different society could resolve our literary problems.

Williams then proceeds to diagnose the cause. He says that the division between the society and the individual as absolutes is at the heart of the matter. But in the highest realism society is seen in fundamentally personal terms and person through relationships. This has to be recorded within the structures and substance of the realist novel.

The earlier mode of realism depended upon what was taken for granted a a natural way of seeing. Now, says Williams, we know that at was erroneous to believe that we has to simply open our eyes to see a common world. We new know that we create the world we see and this human creation is necessarily dynamic and active.

Art, according to Williams is more than a personal response. Art is a particular kind of active response, it is more than perception. It is not an individual's passive perception. It is a perceptional and communication, a practical inter action of what is personally seen.

Since the world he is watching is changing and being changed, new acts of perception, interpretation and organization are not only possible but also necessary. The individual's effort to communicate what he has learned is a sign of human growth. He has to match it with known reality and by work and language to make it anew reality.

Reality is continuously established, by common effort and art is one of the request forms of this process. So Williams concludes that a new form of realism is necessary in order that we remain creative.

Key concept in this essay: Realism

Realism as a term in literary criticism came by the 1850s to denote a genre usually related to the novel and an aesthetic sensibility uniting Romantic individualism with social determinism. Its earliest exponents were the French thinkers. Its component "real" stems from the Latin *realis* ("relating to things") which itself originates from *res* ("thing") and was first used in Middle English as a legal term for property such as land and buildings, as in the modern "real estate", as opposed to money or mobile property.

The realists presented everyday characters, situations, dilemmas, and events in as accurate or realistic manner possible. Realism was a reaction to romanticism, which represented life idealistically in literature. Realists rejected theatrical drama and classical forms of art and in their place depicted commonplace or realistic themes. French novelist Émile Zola and Gustave Flaubert were two leading writers of realism. Realism has been chiefly concerned with the commonplaces of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where character is a product of social factors and environment is the integral element in the text. George Eliot introduced realism into England, and William Dean Howells and Henry James introduced it into the United States and this was later developed by Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner.

In works where realism predominates the details of environment, of motivation, of circumstance, become the context for the exploration of human values and fate. The emphasis of realism tends to be on the individual, in his or her social environment. Realism emphasizes the importance of the ordinary person and the ordinary situation. It rejects the heroic and the aristocratic and embraces the pedestrian and the middle class.

The ant-iliterary thrust of realism asserts the power of the real over the imagined, and hence of a determined world. It has also been described as the assertion of the variety of life as the enclosing and determining forms of art.

Realism in the novel portrays characters with psychological insight and shifts attention from heroic world-historical figures to ordinary persons whose spoken language was also captured by the novelist to represent the various social classes. Thus the rigorous analysis of reality by the realist artist has the capacity to give voice to the lowest in social rank, ranging from women and children to domestic workers, rural and urban proletarians, slaves and social outcasts and all other marginalized groups who were generally never portrayed in high literature.

SOME EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY *Realism and the Contemporary Novel*

The most ordinary definition was in terms of an ordinary, contemporary, everyday reality, as opposed to traditionally heroic, romantic, or legendary subjects. In the period since the Renaissance, the advocacy and support of this ‘ordinary, everyday, contemporary reality’ have been normally associated with the rising middle class, the bourgeoisie.

A common adjective used with ‘realism’ was ‘startling’, and within the mainstream of ‘ordinary, contemporary, everyday reality’ a particular current of attention to the unpleasant, the exposed, the sordid could be distinguished. Realism thus appeared as in part a revolt against the ordinary bourgeois view of the world;

The main twentieth-century development in has been curious. In the West alongside the received uses, a use of ‘realism’ in the sense of ‘fidelity to psychological reality’ has been widely evident, the point being made that we can be convinced of the reality of an experience, of its essential realism, by many different kinds of artistic method, and with no necessary restriction of subject matter to the ordinary, the contemporary, and the everyday.

There are four of these elements: narodnost, tipichnost, ideinost, and partiinost.

There is a perfectly simple sense in which ‘socialist realism’ can be distinguished from ‘bourgeois realism’, in relation to these changes in ideology and affiliation. Much Western popular literature is in fact ‘bourgeois realism’, with its own version of ideinost and partiinost, and with its ordinary adherence to narodnost. It is in relation to the fourth element, tipichnost that the problem broadens.

Engels defined ‘realism’ as ‘typical characters in typical situations’, which would pass in a quite ordinary sense, but which in this case has behind it the body of Marxists thinking. Tipichnost is a development of this definition, which radically affects the whole question of realism. For the ‘typical’, Soviet theorists tell us, ‘must not be confused with that which is frequently encountered’; the truly typical is based on ‘comprehension of the laws and perspectives of future social development’.

The major tradition of European fiction, in the nineteenth century, is commonly described as a tradition of ‘realism’.

Yet realism as an intention, in the description of these states, has not been widely abandoned. Is it merely that ‘everyday, ordinary reality’ is now differently conceived, and that new techniques have been developed to de4scribe this new kind of reality, but still with wholly realistic intentions?

When I think of the realist tradition in fiction, I think of the kind f novel which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons.

Within this realist tradition, there are of course wide variations of degree of success, but such a viewpoint, a particular apprehension of a relation between individuals and society may be seen as a mode. It must be remembered that this viewpoint was itself

the product of maturity; the history for the novel form the eighteenth century is essentially an exploration towards this position, with many preliminary failures.

We now commonly make this distinction between ‘social’ and ‘personal’ novels; indeed in one way we take this distinction f interest for granted. By looking at some examples, the substantial issue may be made clear. There are now two main kinds of ‘social’ novel. There is, first, the descriptive social novel, the documentary.

A very lively kind of social novel, quite different from this is now significantly popular. The tenor, here, is not description, but the finding and materialization of a formula about society. A particular pattern is abstracted, form the sum of social experience, and a society is created from this pattern. The simplest examples are in the field of the future-story.

The ‘realist’ novel divided into the ‘social/ and the ‘personal’, and the ‘social novel’, in our time, has further divided into social documentary and social formula.

There are certain immediate clarifying factors. The realist novel needs, obviously, a genuine community: a community of persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship-work or friendship or family-but many, interlocking kinds. It is obviously difficult, in the twentieth century, to find a community of this sort.

The contemporary novel has both reflected and illuminated the crisis of our society, and of course we could fall back on the argument that only a different society could resolve our literary problems. Yet literature is committed to the detail of known experience, and any valuable social change would be the same kind of practical and responsible discipline.

Reality, in our terms, is that which human beings make common, by work or language. Thus, in the very acts of perception and communication, this practical interaction of what is personally seen, interpreted and organized and what can be socially recognized, known and formed is richly and subtly manifested. It is very difficult to grasp this fundamental interaction, but here, undoubtedly, is the clue we seek, not only in our thinking about personal vision and social communication, but also in our thinking about the individual and society.

The achievement of realism is a continual achievement of balance, and the ordinary absence of balance, in the forms of the contemporary novel, can be seen as both a warning and a challenge. It is certain that any effort to achieve a contemporary balance will be complex and difficult, but the effort is necessary, a new realism is necessary, if we are to remain creative.

QUESTIONS FOR UNIT IV

SHORT NOTES

1. Repression
2. Fantasy
3. Id
4. The nature of the child's play
5. The nature of the adult's play
6. Conscious and Unconscious play
7. Ideology
8. Karl Marx
9. Base
10. Superstructure

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. How does Freud distinguish between the child at play and the adult at play?
2. What are links that Freud establishes between day and night dreams?
3. How does the adult's relationship to his wishes and fantasies differ from the child's relationship to his wishes and fantasies?
4. Why does the act of fantasizing take place and what are the two kinds of wishes?
5. How is fantasy related to time--to past, present, and future?
6. Who is the real hero of most popular romances, novels, and short stories?
7. Discuss the relationship creative work and an author's present experience.
9. What is the nature of the relationship between day and night dreams?
10. What is the relationship between aesthetic pleasure and fantasy in a work of art?
11. Discuss Raymond Williams' concept of realism.
12. What are the types of novels that depict realism according to Williams?
13. How have the twentieth century trends in writing affected the depiction of realism?
14. Compare and contrast the ways in which Freud and Williams approach a text.
15. Compare and contrast the hero of the novel as analyzed by Freud and Williams.