Principles of Literary Criticism

COURSE CODE: B21EG06DC

Undergraduate Programme
English Language and Literature
Discipline Core Course

meaning

ideology

form

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Principles of Literary Criticism

Course Code: B21EG06DC

Semester - VI

Discipline Core Course
Undergraduate Programme
English Language and Literature
Self Learning Material

(With Model Question Paper Sets)

SREENARAYANAGURU
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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Course Code: B21EG06DC

Semester- VI

Discipline Core Course

BA English Language and Literature

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The undergraduate programme in English Language and Literature has been designed to be on par with the high-quality academic programmes offered at state universities throughout the country. Considerable emphasis has been placed on incorporating the latest trends in the delivery of programmes focused on English Language and Literature. Our aspiration is that this programme will augment your aptitude for comprehending both the language itself and its accompanying literary works. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.   01-01-2025

Contents

Classical and Neo Classical Critical Thought

Unit 1

Plato - Theories of Poetry and Mimesis

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, learners will be able to:

▶ explain the theories of forms as proposed by Plato

▶ explain different aspects of drama and poetry as proposed by Plato

▶ explore the philosophy proposed by Plato

▶ attempt the impact of Plato on the classical and contemporary traditions of criticism

Prerequisites

Plato, born around 427 B.C. in Athens, was one of the most influential Greek philosophers. Initially named Aristocles, he earned the nickname "Platon" due to his broad shoulders. Plato became a devoted disciple of Socrates, and after Socrates' execution in 399 B.C., he traveled to Africa and Italy, where he encountered Pythagorean ideas. In 387 B.C., Plato returned to Athens and founded the Academy, considered the first university. He spent the remainder of his life there, except for brief periods in the 360s.

Plato

Plato's works, primarily dialogues featuring Socratic discussions, tackle a variety of philosophical themes, including epistemology, politics, metaphysics, and art. His famous dialogues include Gorgias, Apology, Phaedo, Symposium, and Republic. Plato's dialogues present Socrates as the central character, whose philosophical inquiries challenge established ideas. Through these dialogues, Plato emphasizes the pursuit of truth through reasoned debate.

Plato's philosophical views were deeply moral. He believed that knowledge existed for the soul's benefit rather than for practical application. He valued mathematics for its ab-

stract nature, separating it from the material world. Plato also argued that poetry should serve a moral or pedagogical purpose, with poets being good only if they teach virtue.

In The Republic, Plato discussed governance, advocating for a just society. He also raised questions about the role of literature in society, such as its potential to influence emotions and its educational value. His critiques of literature remain relevant in contemporary discussions of media and culture.

Key Concepts

Plato's Theory of Forms, Plato's views on Poetry, Plato's views on Drama, Plato's theory of Mimesis

1.1.1 Plato's Theory of Forms

The hypothesis of forms, clarified efficiently in the Phaedo and the Republic, can be summed up as follows. The material world that encompasses us, and that is usually secured by faculties, isn't free and independent. To be sure, it isn't this present reality (despite the fact that the items in it exist), the explanation is that they are reliant upon another type of presence, a domain of thoughts or unadulterated structures. They can be perceived or captured simply by reason and not by natural or substantial faculties.

What is the association between the two domains? The relationship between the two areas can best be addressed using models from math: any triangle or square that we create using genuine instruments will without a doubt be flawed. At most, it can basically harsh the ideal triangle, which is awesome and which is seen not by the resources, yet rather by reason: the ideal triangle is certainly not a genuine thing, but a thought, an idea, a construction. For Plato, the universe of designs, being perpetual and ageless, alone is reality. It is the universe of embodiments, solidarity, and all-inclusiveness, while the actual world is de-

scribed by a never-ending variety and identity.

To which Plato states that what is perceived in the physical domain is actually derived from the ideal form. They exist in a higher realm. Plato even characterises entire objects as having their essence in the ideal Forms; hence, a bed in the physical world is an imperfect copy of the ideal bed in the world of Forms. One can make use of an analogy involving aspects of geometry. The shape of a triangle or a square that we create is bound to be imperfect. The reason is that it is only an approximation of the ideal one that exists in the higher realm.

As literature is an art, like painting, sculpture, and others, what Plato thought of art in general deserves the first consideration. Here, too, Plato makes use of the concept of the ideal. Anything that depends on the ideal can only be a copy. Hence, it is once removed from reality. If an artist tries to recreate that in his medium, it is only a copy of the copy. Thus, we say it is twice removed from reality. According to Plato, art, literature, and sculpture always fall short of their original source of inspiration. Hence, they are all imperfect. They take the reader away from reality rather than towards it.

1.1.2 Plato's Views on Poetry

For Plato, poetry is immoral because it arouses unhealthy emotions. He states that poets cannot be part of the ideal society since their influence can create a deep impact, an evil one, especially among young people. As a moralist, Plato's opinions have been outlined in his dialogues and in the *Republic*. As a moralist, he objects to poetry since it is situated in misrepresentation. He is of the view that the way of thinking is superior to poetry on the grounds that a logician manages thought/truth, while an artist manages what appears to him/deception.

We ought to know why Plato censured poetry and dramatic art. The primary reasons are given below

1. Poetry isn't helpful for social or ethical quality
2. An artist "lies about divine beings" and divine beings and extraordinary legends that are slipped from the divine beings are addressed as bad, exploitative, and likely to all shortcomings and indecencies of normal humankind.
3. Dramatization is considerably more hurtful because producers and artists appeal to men's baser impulses, their adoration for the shocking and the sensational.

Plato has serious doubts about the sudden overflow of emotions that is part of inspiration. He says no one can rely on such expressions. These ideas cannot be subjected to any form of verification regarding truth. Philosophy is a result of discussion and reasoning, whereas poetry relies on impulsiveness. So, poetry cannot create good citizens.

Plato was concerned about the emotional appeal of poetry. According to him, the lives depicted in poetry are far from the truth and cannot be assessed from the angle of reason. Moreover, the emotional appeal that is evident in tragic poetry can negatively influence the spectators. It can lead to unhealthy passions and make us weak when we face a crisis in real life.

Further, Plato considers that poetry lacks morality. He criticises that evil characters often attain happiness, whereas virtuous people suffer. He also points out that the depiction of gods with objectionable attitudes can corrupt the people of the state. Homer and Hesoid project gods in the manner of common human beings with no exalted state or stature. They are represented as deceitful and revengeful. Poetry isn't simply to offer joy. It ought to show a few ethics. A writer ought to likewise be a great instructor. Plato suggests truth as the test of poetry.

Plato writes: *"if we mean our future guardians to regard the habit of quarrelling among themselves as of all things the basest, no word should be said to them of the wars in the heaven, or of the plots and fighting of the gods against one another, for they are not true…. If they would only believe as we would tell them that quarrelling is unholy, and that never up to this time has there been any quarrelling between citizens…… these tales (of epics) must not be admitted into our State, whether they are supposed to have allegorical meaning or not." (https://wikieducator.org/Literary_Criticism)*

Poetry waters and nourishes the baser impulses of men - emotional, sentimental and sorrowful.

Plato says: *"Then the imitative poet who aims at being popular is not by nature made, nor is his art intended, to please or to affect the rational principle in the soul; but he will prefer the passionate and fitful temper, which*

is easily limited .... And therefore we shall be right in refusing to admit him into a well-ordered state, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthen the feelings and impairs the reason ... Poetry feeds and waters the passion instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue." (ibid)

Though Plato has levelled these charges against poets and poetry, one cannot deny the fact that there was huge instability as far as the political climate is concerned. The quality of teaching and learning was utterly disappointing. The status of women was inferior to that of men. There was a general decline in social standards. A sense of disarray prevailed in all circles of life - scholarly, moral, political and instructive. Accordingly, in Plato's time, the writers added to the falsity. Plato viewed artists as raisers of misrepresentation and the art of poetry as the mother of falsehoods. Plato's challenge was to exhibit the sober-minded pervasiveness of reasoning over versification. As a rationalist, Plato went against this convention.

He is of the view that the way of thinking is superior to verse on the grounds that a rationalist agrees with thought/truth, while an artist manages what appears to him/deception. He accepted that the reality of reasoning was a higher priority than the joy of verse. He contended that the majority of verse ought to be prohibited from the ideal society that he portrayed in the Republic. In this way, Plato assaults verse and dramatization on moral grounds

Summing up, we can say that Plato attacks poetry and poets for the following reasons: (https://literariness.org/2017/05/01/literary-criticism-of-plato/)

- Poetry is twice removed from re-

ality, and it makes men believe in imperfection.

- The poet writes a poem not because he has thought for a long time, but because he is suddenly inspired. This suddenness cannot be truthful. Poetry contains profound truth, but poetry fails in the test of reason. It cannot take the place of philosophy, and it cannot make better citizens.

- Poetry affects the emotions and not the reason. It appeals to the heart and not to the intellect. Emotions are temporary, and they cannot be safe guides for men.

- Poetry is non-moral in character. It treats both virtue and vice alike. It does not teach morals to the readers. It corrupts human beings.

1.1.3 Plato's Views on Drama

Dramatisation, as indicated by Plato, is a category of poetry. Drama is not quite the same as verse in the following ways:

The show is to be organised. Its endorsement and dissatisfaction rely on the crowd. To persuade the crowd, writers utilise a few modest strategies like fights, groans, thunder and hints of creatures. These strategies are a disgrace in our daily lives. Such plays ought to be controlled. Crowd while watching characters who are defeatists, villains and lawbreakers will generally identify with such persons. They lose their singularity. Such characters should not be in a play. A play ought to have great characters.

Plato is against the joy that satire offers. Misfortune offers joy to the crowd. Individuals

are brimming with sentiments like annoyance, dread, distress, and so on; when they are in overabundance, there is joy. In satire, individuals laugh when a crooked person behaves like a genuine person. These characters are not to be chuckled at, yet they feel sorry for. A comic person should be adorable.

By constantly impersonating evil characters like cowards, knaves, and criminals, they may be so influenced by their own nature that it detriments their moral character.

1.1.4 Plato's Theory of Mimesis

For Plato says that all art is an impersonation of life. He accepted that a thought/idea is a definitive reality. Through workmanship, a carpenter emulates a thought/idea, which is an imitation of the real world. He gives an illustration of a craftsman and a chair. The chair originally came from the brain of a craftsman. He gave actual shape to his thought and made a chair. The painter imitated the shape of the woodworker in his image of the chair. Accordingly, the painter's chair is two times removed from the real world. Henceforth, he accepted that art is "two times removed from the real world". (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/)

He calls the tragic poet "an imitator", and he is also producing something which is twice removed from reality. Poets and artists cannot follow the path of truth and cannot teach morality, i.e, what is good for society. They, instead, corrupt the society.

Plato gives prime significance to philosophical discourse since it manages thought, while verse manages deception - things which are two times eliminated from the real world. So too for Plato, reasoning is superior to verse. This view infers that mimetic craftsmanship, like verse, dramatisation, fiction or painting, doesn't work on how we might interpret people and the human world. We note that Pla-

to's perspective on craftsmanship is firmly connected with his hypothesis of thoughts. Thoughts, he says, are a definitive reality, and things are imagined as thoughts before they accept functional shape as things. Yet, one shouldn't miss the central matter here. Art is basically tricky and possibly perilous. The entire point of art is to beguile. Achievement is accomplished when the observer confuses an impersonation with the real world.

It sometimes even teaches immoral lessons, as in Homer's epic *The Iliad*, which tells the story of a war caused by illicit love.

1.1.5 Sample from the Text *The Republic*

"Plato (through Socrates*):……."*.there is none

which upon reflection pleases me better than the rule about poetry.

To what do you refer?

To the rejection of imitative poetry.

What do you mean?

Speaking in confidence, for I should not like to have my words repeated to the

tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe– but I do not mind saying to you,

that all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and

that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them.

Explain the purport of your remark.

Well, I will tell you, although I have always from my earliest youth had an awe

and love of Homer, which even now makes the words falter on my lips, for he

is the great captain and teacher of the whole of that charming tragic company;

but a man is not to be reverenced more than the truth, and therefore I will speak

out.''

………………

"Can you tell me what imitation is?

Let us take any common instance; there are beds and tables in the world– plenty

of them, are there not?

Yes.

But there are only two ideas or forms of them– one the idea of a bed, the other

of a table.

And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use,

in accordance with the idea–that is our way of speaking in this and similar

instances–but no artificer makes the ideas themselves: how could he?''

…………..

"And there is another artist,..'' the maker of all the works of all other workmen.''

... this is he who is able to make not only vessels of every kind, but plants and animals, himself and all other things–the earth and heaven, and the things which are in heaven

or under the earth; he makes the gods also.''

"…….…., there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round–you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants,

and all the other things of which we were just now speaking, in the mirror.''

"……. And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another–a creator of appearances…..If he does not make that which exists he cannot make true existence, but only some semblance of existence; and if any one were to say that the work of the maker of the bed, or of any other workman, has real existence, he could hardly be supposed to be speaking the truth.''

"At any rate, he replied, philosophers would say that he was not speaking the truth.

No wonder, then, that his work too is an indistinct expression of truth. (ibid)

…………..........

Well then, here are three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say–for no one else can be the maker?

………………

There is another which is the work of the carpenter?

And the work of the painter is a third?

……………..

Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them:

God, the maker of the bed, and the painter?

Yes, there are three of them.

……………a tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is

thrice removed from the king and from the truth?

That appears to be so.

Then about the imitator we are agreed…..''.(The Republic, p..461).

In a famous passage in *The Republic*, Plato says, "We must look for artists who are able out of the goodness of their own natures to trace the nature of beauty and perfection, that so our young men, like persons who live in a healthy place, may be perpetually influenced by good. Poetic truth must be the highest truth- ideal forms of justice, goodness, beauty and the like." (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/)

Maybe as a summing up, one can recollect the crucial things Plato had stated. Plato accuses poetry of representing a false picture of life, and hence it is useless. For him, the only reality is the world of ideal forms. The world that we perceive around us is only an imperfect reflection of that ideal, invisible domain. Here,

it may be noted that poetry makes use of this already imperfect material. It is a copy of this reflection. So, it is twice removed from reality. The objects of the world around, though imperfect, serve certain functions in our real life. But what that is represented in poetic description cannot serve any real purpose. Hence, they fail miserably in providing anything of pragmatic value. Such things should not have any profound status or place in this ideal kingdom. This is the position that Plato maintains about poetry. Plato's ideal of poetic art is quite high. It must be characterised by order, restraint, high seriousness and austerity. The popular perception about Plato is that he was not against poetry but the abuse of poetry.

Recap

- ▶ Plato envisioned an ideal state with ideal citizens
- ▶ Literature must serve morality truth and social usefulness
- ▶ Poetry is suspect as it stems from inspiration
- ▶ The poet creates while being out of mind
- ▶ Imaginative poetry lacks reason balance and sound judgment
- ▶ Plato critiques poetry's distance from truthful representation
- ▶ Art imitates reality and truth is distorted
- ▶ Painter copies bed which copies the ideal bed
- ▶ All artistic creation is inferior to ideal forms
- ▶ Poetry appeals to emotions seen as morally base
- ▶ Emotions are irrational and weaken the noble soul
- ▶ Art imitates life and misleads the audience
- ▶ Literature reflects life but only as imitation
- ▶ Writers are impersonators and not genuine truth-tellers
- ▶ Plato questions literature's value for ethical guidance
- ▶ Forms are perfect eternal models behind physical objects
- ▶ Material things are shadows of the true forms
- ▶ Plato sees poetry as morally and philosophically flawed
- ▶ Literature lacks truth clarity and ethical responsibility
- ▶ Aristotle defends poetry against Plato's harsh criticisms

Objective Questions

1. What was Plato's original name?
2. Who was Plato's teacher and philosophical inspiration?
3. In which city was Plato born?
4. What nickname did Plato receive due to his broad shoulders?
5. In which year did Plato return to Athens and found the Academy?
6. What was written above the doorway to Plato's Academy?
7. What is the name of the philosopher who greatly influenced Plato during his travels?
8. What was the name of the school Plato founded in Athens?
9. How many dialogues are attributed to Plato?
10. Which form of art did Plato consider twice removed from reality?
11. What is the title of Plato's work that focuses on governance and the ideal state?
12. Which philosophical method does Plato follow in his dialogues?
13. What, according to Plato, is superior: philosophy or poetry?
14. According to Plato, what kind of appeal does poetry make: rational or emotional?
15. What is the name of Plato's theory that classifies art as imitation?

Answers

1. Aristocles
2. Socrates
3. Athens
4. Platon
5. 387 B.C.
6. Mathematics
7. Pythagoras
8. Academy
9. Twenty-five
10. Art
11. Republic
12. Dialogic
13. Philosophy
14. Emotional
15. Mimesis

Assignments

1. Discuss Plato's views on art and poetry as outlined in his theory of mimesis.
2. Examine the influence of Socrates and Pythagoras on Plato's philosophical outlook, especially in shaping the foundations of his Academy and teachings.
3. Evaluate the significance of Plato's Academy in the development of Western philosophical thought.
4. Analyze Plato's ideal state as proposed in The Republic.
5. Plato believed that poetry appeals to emotions rather than reason. Critically examine this view and its implications for the role of literature in society.

Suggested Reading

1. Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee, Penguin Classics, 2007.
2. Plato. *Ion*. Translated by Paul Woodruff, Hackett Publishing Company, 1983.
3. Plato. *Phaedrus*. Translated by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, Hackett Publishing Company, 1995.
4. Plato. *Apology*, Crito, and Phaedo of Socrates. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Dover Publications, 1996.
5. Ferrari, G. R. F. *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge UP, 1987.
6. Vlastos, Gregory. *Plato's Universe*. Parmenides Publishing, 2005.
7. Reeve, C. D. C. *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Princeton UP, 1988.
8. Guthrie, W. K. C. *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Volume IV: Plato, the Man and His Dialogues. Cambridge UP, 1975.
9. Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford UP, 1981.
10. Kraut, Richard, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge UP, 1992.

Unit 2

Aristotle - Concepts of Tragedy and Poetic Principles

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ explain Aristotle's works and his life.

▶ explore Aristotle's definition of Tragedy.

▶ attempt a close reading of the text 'The Poetics'.

▶ explain different aspects of literary analysis as proposed by Aristotle

Prerequisites

Aristotle, born in 384 BC in Stagira, Macedonia, studied under Plato in Athens and later tutored Alexander the Great. A polymath, Aristotle wrote extensively on subjects like poetry, logic, ethics, biology, and sociology. His works significantly influenced Western thought in various fields, particularly Poetics and Rhetoric, which shaped literary theory.

Plato and Aristotle

Poetics is a profound study of literature, particularly focused on tragedy. Aristotle approached literature with an inductive method, observing contemporary works and drawing conclusions. While Plato viewed art with skepticism, Aristotle considered imitation in art to be a source of delight. He differentiated between history and poetry, stating that history deals with specific events, whereas poetry explores universal truths through imaginative and creative expression.

Poetics is divided into several sections: comedy, epic poetry, and tragedy. Tragedy is given significant attention, spanning fourteen sections, where Aristotle discusses the structure of a tragedy, the role of characters, and the technicalities of drama. He emphasizes

the importance of catharsis—the emotional release that tragedy provides to the audience. Aristotle argues that poetry aims to present universal truths, not just to reproduce facts, and he contrasts it with history, which is limited to the particular.

Poetics, published posthumously, remains a foundational text in literary criticism, influencing generations of writers and scholars. Aristotle's views on tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry continue to shape discussions in literary theory.

Key Concepts

Theory of Fine arts , Poet, Poetry and History; Poetic Truth,Views on Tragedy: Tragedy as an Imitation,Catharsis or Purgation, Six Parts of Tragedy, Unity of Action, Time and Place, Tragic Hero, Plot: Simple and Complex Plot, Views on Character, Views on Comedy, Views on Epic, Difference between Tragedy and Epic, Moral Goodness of the Heroic Order, Tragedy is Superior to Epic

In *Poetics*, Aristotle responded to his guru Plato but that is not the only matter of importance. There is no direct mention of Plato in the text, nor any reference to his views. He outlined some phenomenal concepts in detail which included tragedy, catharsis, the tragic hero, the three unities, plot, character, thought, language, spectacle and hamartia.

1.2.1 Nature of the Poetic Art

Aristotle first considers the nature of the poetic art. Poetry is a mode of imitation, i.e mimesis. One can safely say, from the words of Aristotle, that the function of the poet is to imitate, through a medium contextually appropriate to the particular form of art, evoking the universal aspects of life impressed on his or her mind by keenly observing the real life around. He agrees with Plato when he calls the poet an imitator like a painter or any other artist who imitates one of three objects: "things as they were or are", "things as they are said or thought to be", or "things as they ought to be". (https://www.slideshare.net/dilipbarad/platos-ob-

jections-to-poetry-and-aristotles-answers)

Yet, Plato neglects to make sense of that workmanship additionally gives something more which is missing in the real. His failure is to understand the craftsmanship of a writer who doesn't just mirror the world outside. Creative writing/response can't be a servile impersonation of the real world. Writing isn't the specific propagation of life in its entirety. It is the portrayal of chosen occasions and characters important in an intelligible activity for the acknowledgment of the artist's motivation. He even glorifies and innovatively reproduces a world which has its own significance and magnificence. He puts a thought of the truth which he sees in an article. This 'more', this instinct and insight, is the point of a brilliant writer. Imaginative creation can't be decently censured on the ground that it isn't the creation in that frame of mind of things and creatures. Hence, it doesn't remove us from reality, and it surely drives us to the fundamental truth of life.

Plato passes judgment on verse first from the instructive viewpoint, later from the philosophical one lastly from the moral one. However, he doesn't want to think about it from its own novel or original point of view. He fails to remember that everything ought to be decided concerning its own points and goals, its own rules of legitimacy and fault. We can't say in a superfluous way that the verse is terrible in light of the fact that it doesn't show reasoning or morals. If poetry, theory and morals had indistinguishable capacity, how is it that they could be various subjects? To upbraid poetry since it isn't reasoning or ideal is obviously quite illogical.

For Aristotle, the most important distinguishing mark of poetry is that it has a higher subject matter than history: it expresses what is universal and not what is particular, i.e. the permanent possibilities of human nature and not a mere representation of the story of an individual life. Creative representation is not the exact reproduction. It is the representation of certain selected events and people/characters necessary in a coherent action/situation for the realization of the artist's purpose. The artist imaginatively recreates a world which has its own sense, contextual meaning and permanent beauty. The medium of imitation is important. Greek poetry makes use of language, rhythm and music (harmony). In the mode of expression, such as dance, rhythm is used. A dramatic form, such as tragedy, makes use of rhythm and language involving lyric. This is evident in choral lyrics. Aristotle states that one who writes on a scientific subject in verse form cannot be considered a poet.

Aristotle does not agree with Plato's view that a poet's imitation is twice removed from reality. Aristotle means that poetic imitation is an imitation of the inner human reality. Imitation results in pleasure, which is the essential function of poetry. According to him, the poet imitates what is past or present, what is commonly believed and what is ideal.

Artistic representation differs from ordinary reality. But it is not close to the concrete situations shown in life because in art, it communicates better when the universal is given prominence.

One can identify a number of statements in the *Poetics* which are clearly indicative of

Aristotle's point of view is that imitation does not mean copying or direct representation. A few are given below:

a. Aristotle states that the characters represented must be "either above our own level of goodness or beneath it, or just such as we are".

b. He says, "The poet being an imitator just like the painter or other maker of likenesses, he must necessarily in all instances, represent things in one or other of three aspects, either as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to be or to have been, or as they ought to be".

c. The poet may invent his plots or take them from history and traditional sources, but he should take only those incidents which may fit his purpose and even change them, if necessary.

d. He states, "A likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility", i.e. it is not the duty of the poet to present what has occurred but what might happen.

e. He states, " Poetry is something more philosophic and of grav-

er import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars". (https://wikieducator.org/Literary_Criticism)

Aristotle holds that poetry can imitate two kinds of action. That is the noble actions of good men or the mean/spiteful actions of bad men.

Illustrating his viewpoint from Greek Classics, he points out that Homer makes men better than they are, Cleophon as they are, and Hegemon and Nicochares worse than they are. From the former was born the epic, and from the latter the comedy/satire.

Aristotle prefers to divide storytelling poems into three categories: poetry mixing third-person narrative with direct quotation of characters; further, poetry where the storytelling is handled throughout either by narrative without quotation of speakers; and finally, by real drama, where actors and 'khoros', without the help of third-person narrative.

Aristotle is also sensitive to the psychology of artistic creation and the ensuing enjoyment of art. According to him, works of art are created because man, by nature, imitates, and he/she has the instinct for rhythm and harmony. The audience watches and enjoys a performance for various reasons

a. There is a kind of pleasure in watching certain things/events being imitated (such as murder) which would be shocking to observe in real life;

b. Learning something new through pleasure;

c. If there is nothing new about it, the notion of recognition works in such a way that he/she already

knew that;

d. The enjoyment of watching technical perfection attained by an artist.

1.2.2 Comparing Tragedy and Epic

While comparing epic and tragedy, Aristotle considers tragedy superior to the epic, having all the epic elements in a shorter duration. Tragedy and epic belong to the same category as they have many things in common. However, the epic is different from the tragedy in its length and its metre. The length of an epic cannot be specified since factors such as narration and incidents can enhance its duration. Epic imitates life by narration and not by dramatic representation. In the expression of epic, it can appeal more to the mind as well as imagination, whereas tragedy depends heavily on the theatrical craft. Hence, Aristotle says that the poet should "prefer probable impossibilities rather than improbable possibilities".

Hence, one can identify the following differences

a. They differ in the manner of imitation, wherein an epic is a combination of direct and indirect narrative, but tragedy leans on direct action;

b. Epic does not have music or spectacle

c. The verse forms used are varied in tragedy, but epic uses dactylic hexameter

d. Compared to tragedy (restricted to one day), epic does not restrict itself to any time span

e. Tragedy is considered to be more complex than the two

Lastly, one who is a good judge of tragedy is also considered a good judge of epic.

1.2.3 Views on Tragedy

According to Aristotle, "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, in the play in the form of action, not of narrative, through pity and fear effecting the proper katharsis or purgation of these emotion". (https://wikieducator.org/Literary_Criticism)

The first part deals with tragedy's subject matter, the second and third parts with its means, and the last part with its effects. One can see that the first part distinguishes tragedy from comedy (the subject is not serious or significant), the second part from the lyric and the popular Greek expression dithyramb, and the distinction is made in terms of epic and narrative structure. Finally, the aspect of feelings is considered seriously.

It may be pointed out that Plato rejected tragedy because it arouses baser, unhealthy emotions such as pity and fear. But Aristotle believes that tragedy can purge these emotions and make men bold and strong.

Aristotle identifies six elements in tragedy: Plot (mythos), Character (ethos), Diction (lexis), Thought (dianoia), Spectacle (opsis) and Song (melos).

- The plot is the imitation of the action, and the arrangement of the incidents is the chief part of tragedy.
- Character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they end up in happiness or just the reverse.
- The plot is the soul of tragedy. Character holds the second place. Tragedy is created to imitate men in action.
- Thought is the faculty of saying what is probable or pertinent in the given context.
- Diction indicates the meaning embedded in words, and it is the quintessence of the power of expression
- Song and spectacle are more of the embellishments that are connected with the art of poetry/ dramatic action. It helps the dramatist to hold the attention of the audience. Spectacle would have involved scene painting, costumes and masks and special effects (gods lowered by crane, 'deus ex machina')

Hence, plot, character and thought make up the matter of tragedy.

There are four parts of tragedy, and they include (1) complex: involving peripety and discovery, (2) of suffering, (3) of character, and (4) of spectacle. All four should be properly combined to achieve the best effort. Homer and Sophocles presented characters of a superior sort in relation to human beings. Sophocles, as a tragedian, presented superior characters, whereas Aristophanes, a comedian, presented inferior characters.

The chorus should play a pivotal role in the play, rather than being a mere add-on to the sequence. *Khoros* ("Chorus") literally means "dance", and this often referred to the performers (dancer-singers) of choral poetry. A "chorus leader" or the *koruphaios* represented the group for direct address, while at other times, the chorus

danced as a unit.

1.2.4 Views on Plot

For Aristotle, plot is the main part of tragedy. The plot must be complete by itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, and the events have to be ordered in a necessary and probable way. By that, he means the structure of the incidents and the arrangements of the things done.

Plot encompasses character and thought. He divides the plot into three parts: peripety (turn of events/reversal of fortune), anagnorisis (discovery/recognition /change from known to unknown), and denouement (falling action/ suffering).

   a. Reversal occurs when the opposite of what was intended turns out

   b. Discovery refers to change from ignorance to knowledge. The visually appealing in a drama is that which arouses pity and fear associated with peripety

   c. Pathos or suffering refers to murder, torture, injury, etc.

Moreover, there must be a major flaw which can be termed as hamartia (error/frailty). We can identify that recognition or discovery is of five kinds. The first type is by means of signs, i.e. congenital marks, birth marks, or scars. The second type is recognition invented by the poet at will, purposefully. It lacks the quality of creative art. The third type depends on memory when the sight of some objects evokes a feeling. The fourth type is by a logical process of reasoning. The last one is that which comes out of incidents themselves or by natural means.

Hamartia or the tragic flaw (which is that of the hero's own problem) is driven home to the spectator as a possibility in human nature itself. This is the weakness of a strong character. That is why we take pity on him. It is not the weakness which is tragic, but, as Oedipus's story would indicate, the weakness of those who should know better. The term Hamartia is adapted from archery, and it means "missing the mark".

A well-conceived plot must be complete, i.e. have the qualities of beginning, middle and end. It must contain a powerful appeal to the emotions of pity and fear. The change of fortune should not progress from bad to good, but reversely from good to bad. The tragedy should not ensue out of vice but of some frailty in a character. It must be neither too long nor too short. The audience must be able to comprehend the sequence in a single memory span.

A sad, bitter ending is the only right ending, for it is the most tragic in its effect. A rapturous ending may please us more, but it will not afford the true tragic pleasure often aroused by the emotions of pity and fear. Thus, the ideal tragic plot must be complex and arouse pity and fear. Pity means what we feel when someone suffers more than he deserves for his faults. Fear means what we feel when suffering and agony happen to someone who is like us.

The worse plots are those that are episodic in nature. In this type, the sequence of events will have no dramatic causation. The best plots will express things powerfully with all factors linked together logically i.e. by cause and effect relation.

For Aristotle, a dramatist is not a simple historian dealing with facts. He is a creative artist. His duty is to project something to the audience, a series of events that can be considered credible or inevitable. His option is to imitate rather than report. His obligation is to the craft. He imitates what is generally considered ideal or universal and, along with that, what is typical.

1.2.5 On Character

The Tragic Hero plays a significant part in the discussion of tragedy. Aristotle does not want the hero to be a virtuous man, nor should he be completely a vice one. He must be a man of certain qualities, and when tragedy strikes in his life (partly because of his frailty), his misfortune should evoke pity and fear among the audience. No other character in the scheme of things needs to be answerable for what has happened to him.

Regarding the most important character, Aristotle thus outlines the following aspects;

   a. He/she must pass from happiness to misery,

   b. He/she must not be perfectly virtuous and just, but basically of good character,

   c. His/her downfall must not result from wickedness and baseness,

   d. His/her downfall should ensue because of a flaw of character and error in judgment,

   e. He/she must belong to a family of higher status so that the downfall will be greater.

Regarding the formation and concept of character, Aristotle identifies four important to focus on:

   a. Good at performing the functions expected of them

   b. True to life or realistic

   c. True to type

   d. It should be unified and consistent

Hence, the character should reflect the true inner nature, and he/she should be wholesome. Aristotle is against the technique of *dues ex machina*. Even if it is employed, their role is to explain events beyond the knowledge of the characters.

1.2.6 Three Unities

Aristotle considers the unity of action the first requirement of a tragedy among the three unities viz., action, time, and place. In invoking the idea of unity of action, Aristotle considers the actions directly relevant to the life of the hero the most significant. At the same time, there must be a structural union of parts that have direct bearing on the action evolving out of the plot.

Regarding unity of time, Aristotle mentions the conformity between the time taken by the events of the play and that taken in their representation on the stage.

Unity of place is almost like unity of time, though it does not find a direct mention in the discussion. It considers the importance of restricting the reference to the place where the action unfolds. Generally, critics opine that the unities of time and place have only a derivative value. A unified plot presents an organically connected event with one theme, as is evident in the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad*.

1.2.7 Notion of Catharsis

For Aristotle, the notion of Catharsis is important. While discussing tragedy, he says that the proper function of tragedy is to affect the proper catharsis of these emotions through pity and fear. He considers that it has a purgatory function. It provides a safe outlet for disturbing emotions/passions, and once those are released, the mind becomes better and healthier. Critics like Butcher consider the idea of catharsis and its interpretation as a 'medical metaphor' based on the concept of homoeopathy – curing emotion by means of an emotion like in kind but not identical. Critics like F.L. Lucas have famously observed that "the theatre is not a hospital" In this context, we can identify two major meanings, namely purification and purgation. The former is used

in a religious sense, whereas the latter is used in the clinical or psychological sense. Tragedy affects purgation of pity and fear by its administration of these very emotions, either because they tend to be in excess.

Several theories are identified based on his analysis. They include;

a. Medical theory: (i.e. pathological release of impure emotions which are in excess)

b. Vicarious experience theory: (i.e. emotions based on observing fictitious scenes without being harmed)

c. Sadistic theory: (realizing that it is only a play and comparing ourselves with the character who suffers, then deriving pleasure because we are superior to them or being happy that such problems have not haunted us)

Though Aristotle provides a detailed analysis of Tragedy, he does not speak much about comedy. The rest of the Poetics, now lost, seems to have mostly concerned comedy. Comedy involves the imitation of lower types of men whose faults are ridiculous. This is often equated with ugliness, directly connecting with the faults and deformities of certain characters. These experiences do not project pain or trauma. He equates comedy to satire. The genre of comedy ridicules general vices. The characters/actors provoke laughter, but without any malice. "Tragedy represents men as nobler than they are; in the meantime, comedy represents men as worse than they are". Moreover, comedy does not focus on individual frailties but on collective, universal types or categories.

1.2.8 Views on Poetic Diction

Aristotle is quite clear about the words that are being used in poetry. From the point of view of the structure of the literary piece, he stipulates simple or complex; in meaning, it can be ordinary, foreign, metaphorical, or ornamental; in form, it can be coined, lengthened, shortened, altered or poetic. Further, there must be clarity. There should not be any vulgarity by mixing ordinary and unfamiliar language. Quality depends on moderation, i.e. no excessive use of metaphors and foreign words.

The significant point to be emphasized is based on the key question. Which is the higher and more dignified form of imitation? Since tragedy appeals to the common masses, the argument will be that it is vulgar. But the factor which contributes to its degraded value is not due to the dramatist but the overacting of performers. A careful reading can help us to realize that.

In summary, we can say that all critics, ancient or modern, are directly indebted to Aristotle for his acumen and analysis. By a detailed scientific analysis of Greek literature, Aristotle unearthed unique features of writing and came up with some general principles based on them. He followed a whole body of strategies to unlock the creative spirit, be it historical, inductive, or psychological.

His guru Plato must have seen literature from a moral perspective with a spirit of social reform, but Aristotle came up with a scientific method and a formal strategy for reading the text and the mind of the audience. This is a clear indication that Aristotle's relevance and his claim to original thinking are still applicable to modern times.

As we can perceive, Poetics proceeds from the then dramatic practices and from different forms of poetry. The specimens taken up for discussion are well known to the author. The theory evolves out of his familiarity with the subject. The general aim is to explain and not to prescribe. Rather than telling how to write,

he opted to classify and code what was being written.

As Laila Gross (1971) puts it, there are six main influential concerns and implications to be seen in Poetics.

1. The work of art is an imitation of nature. An important implication here is that imitation requires an imitator artist;

2. The concern with form and unity;

3. Emphasis on probability rather than real life or history, i.e. universal rather than the particular, should be stressed;

4. There is an implication of the pleasure principle in art;

5. We see the concern with language-specifically what words do and how they are effectively used;

6. The concern with the emotional effect of a work of art.

1.2.9 Comparing Plato and Aristotle

Plato's views	Aristotle's views
▶ His concept of mimesis looks at art as degrading ▶ It is part of his moral perception ▶ Imitation is far removed from reality ▶ Concept based on unrealised ideals ▶ Impressionistic ▶ Condemns poetry for presenting an inaccurate picture of life	▶ For him, art is an imaginative recreation ▶ Views that as an aesthetic function ▶ Art fulfils the job of nature ▶ Based on Greek literary masters and dramatists ▶ Inductive ▶ Defends poetry on many grounds

1.2.8 Tragedy and Epic: Likeness and Differences

Likeness	Differences
▶ Must be whole and possess unity of action ▶ Types are the same: simple, complex, character and the intensity of suffering ▶ Have the same parts ▶ Make use of peripety and discovery ▶ Employs thought and diction	▶ Epic is longer than tragedy ▶ Epic meter is solely dactylic hexameter ▶ Objectivity of epics ▶ Narrative and speeches in drama ▶ Makes use of the improbable in epic

A typical tragedy has the following structure:

- ▶ prologue
- ▶ parodos (chorus entry number)
- ▶ episode (a scene with actors)
- ▶ stasimon (choral song between episodes)
- ▶ additional episodes and stasima
- ▶ kommos (lament)
- ▶ exodos (finale, chorus exit)

Recap

- ▶ Aristotle accepts that poetry is an imitation. But for him, it is good because it provides something more than reality, and it gives pleasure by appealing to our emotions
- ▶ Poetry can represent men on a grand or heroic scale through action, larger-than-life
- ▶ Aristotle emphasizes medium, subject matter and technique
- ▶ Comedy deals with trivial aspects and represents men worse than they are in real life
- ▶ Plot consists of Subject, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Melody
- ▶ Action should be one and complete
- ▶ In tragedy, the factor that appeals to the audience is the hero's passage from prosperity to misery, through some inherent mistake or flaw in his character.
- ▶ The plot must have probability. A complex plot is preferred over a simple plot.
- ▶ Peripety is the change from one state of things to its opposite. Discovery is a change from ignorance to knowledge
- ▶ Catharsis is the purgation or purification of the feelings of pity and fear
- ▶ Epic requires many factors, as we have in tragedy: peripety, discovery, thought, diction, melody, spectacle
- ▶ Epic differs from tragedy in length and metre
- ▶ Improbable events can happen in epic

Objective Questions

1. What does Aristotle define tragedy as?
2. What is the purpose of tragedy according to Aristotle?
3. What term does Aristotle use for a tragic hero's flaw?
4. What are the three essential parts of a plot according to Aristotle?
5. Which genre is the counterpart to tragedy in Aristotle's Poetics?
6. How does Aristotle distinguish between tragedy and epic poetry?
7. What is the meaning of hamartia?
8. What does Aristotle mean by lexis in tragedy?
9. What is the effect of tragedy on the audience?
10. What is the principle of unity of action in tragedy?
11. What emotions should tragedy evoke in the audience?
12. What is anagnorisis?
13. What is the most important element of a tragedy?
14. How should the language of a tragedy be used?
15. What kind of plot does Aristotle prefer for tragedy?

Answers

1. Imitation
2. Catharsis
3. Hamartia
4. Beginning, middle, end
5. Epic
6. Duration
7. Flaw
8. Style
9. Catharsis
10. Coherence
11. Pity, fear
12. Recognition
13. Plot
14. Clarity
15. Complex

Assignments

1. Discuss Aristotle's definition of tragedy and explain how it differs from other literary genres.
2. Examine the role of hamartia in Aristotle's concept of the tragic hero.
3. Analyse the principle of catharsis in Aristotle's theory of tragedy.
4. Explain Aristotle's concept of anagnorisis (recognition) and its function in the tragic plot.
5. Evaluate the importance of plot, character, and language in Aristotle's Poetics.

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Early Modern and Enlighten-ment(British) Criticism

Apology for Poetry
-Philip Sidney

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ become aware of the Elizabethan conception of poetry
- ▶ define poetry in terms of its content and form
- ▶ compare poetry with history and philosophy.
- ▶ study how poetry differs from the other art forms.

Prerequisites

"There have been many most excellent poets that have never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets"-Sidney

Philip Sidney

The primary provocation to Sidney's writing the essay in defence of poetry was Stephen Gosson's "The School of Abuse", published in 1579, in which he questioned the significance and morality of poetry as a form of literature. Sidney's 'Apology' is much more than a reply to Gosson. He went further to argue and establish the permanent value of poetry and its social significance as well. Gosson was a sour puritan, and so he described his work, 'The School of Abuse', as a pleasant invective. He calls poets 'Whetstones of wit'. Sidney's defence of poetry is more of a moral one than aesthetic. At one glance, Sidney's apology may appear to be Horatian, but he goes beyond Horatian principles of teaching and delighting. He admires poetry for its power to move us to perfection. Poetry, like scriptures, makes us virtuous. In English literature, Sidney is the first goodwill ambassador to poetry. He wrote his defence of poetry in 1580, but published it after he died in 1595. He says in his defence that poetry combines both the life of history and the ethics of philosophy. Poetry moves men to virtues. Poetry has a superior force of communica-

tion. Poetry, to Sidney, is an act of imitation intended to teach and delight the readers. According to him, poetry has the power to produce an ideal world of imagination. Stephen Gosson wrote his 'School of Abuse' and dedicated it to Sidney. Stephen Gossen levels charges on poetry as follows:-

1. Poetry is a waste of time.
2. Poetry is the mother of lies.
3. It is the nurse of abuse.
4. Plato had banished poets from his ideal Republic.

Gosson says poetry corrupts people, and so it is a waste of time. Sidney replies that poetry is a civilising force and no other learning teaches and moves us to virtues like poetry does. Poetry is the most relevant source of education. Poets were looked upon with reverence in Greek society. So, poetry is not a waste of time, but the wealth of society.

To the second allegation, Sidney argues that the poet never claims his fiction to be true and so never lies. Poetic truth is universal truth, and, therefore, Poetry does not produce lies. Poetry cannot be the mother of lies.

Sidney also thwarts Gosson's idea that poetry is a source of abuse. He says poetry never abuses, but it is history and philosophy that nurture abuses. History and philosophy recount battles, deaths, bloodshed, violence and murders. The antithesis is that poetry preaches the principles of peace and morality. Moreover, it sheds light on knowledge. Sidney holds the view that Plato himself was poetic in his dialogues. Plato wanted to banish the abuse of poetry, not the poets, from his Republic. He wished for banishing inferior poetry that miserably fails either to instruct or to inspire. Plato takes art for the slavish imitation of nature, whereas Sidney views it as the creative imitation. Nature is dull and imperfect. Art adds colour and beauty to nature. Artists paint the raw nature gloriously with their imagination and creative potential. The purpose of art is to amuse, delight and instruct us. Poetic justice of rewarding the good and punishing the wicked is possible only in the ideal world of poetry. Poetry is universal and timeless. Of the many forms, like lyric, elegy, satire, comedy, etc., epic is the most sublime, for it portrays heroic deeds and inspires heroic virtues. Philosophy imparts virtues through abstract examples, and history teaches virtues through concrete instances. But poetry instructs virtues through an amalgamation of both precept and example (blend of abstract and concrete). Poetry has the power to move men to virtues. So, poetry is superior to history or philosophy.

Key Concepts

Apology, defence, imitate, seer, maker, communicator, renaissance

2.1.1 Summary

"Ana Apology for Poetry" is Sidney's best endeavour to restore poetry to its rightful place among other arts. Many of his contemporaries looked down upon poetry in Elizabethan England. Sidney says that poetry is, in fact, the monarch of all arts.

Sidney articulates an anecdote about horse riding. He says he will not dwell so much upon writing poetry as the appreciation of it. He, being a poet, it is his bounden duty to regain the reputation of poetry. In his defence of poetry, Sidney confirms that poetry is the first of all other arts and that poetry is superior to either history or philosophy. Even Plato and Herodotus were poetic in their dialogues or chronicles, respectively. He examines the epithets in Latin and Greek, like 'vates' and 'poeites', that were used to refer to poets. Vates means 'seer' or 'prophet'. In the classical period, poetry expressed its power of prediction. It conveyed knowledge about the future. Poietes means 'maker'. Poets were deemed to have possessed the power to create the ideal world of imagination.

Sidney defines poetry as an art of imitation that has the power to amuse and instruct. So poetry is both delightful and deductive. Poetry embodies irresistible images. Sidney clarifies that he is not interested in religious or philosophical poetry, but in right poetry. The ideal form of poetry must be both instructional and inspirational. That must create perfect examples of virtue. Poetry is a more effective communicator than either history or philosophy. Poets can create virtues through compelling word pictures of characters and stories, which are more pleasurable to read and easier to understand, like Aesop's Fables, than in history or philosophy. Like Aeneas in Virgil's "Aeneid", poetry possesses the potential to move us to virtuous actions. Sidney concludes his Apology by warning the read-ers that just as poetry has the power to immortalise people in verse, so also does it have the power to condemn them to be discarded altogether.

2.1.2 Sidney's Definition of Poetry

"Poetry therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture with this end, to teach and delight."

Sidney follows Aristotle and Horace in his endeavour to define poetry. He focuses on the power of poetry to teach and delight the readers. It is the Horatian notion that poetry must teach and delight. Poetry inspires us to refine ourselves. Poetry is an art of imitation. It does not imply mere reproduction of nature, reality or facts. It means representing or transmuting the real. The phrase 'speaking pictures' is significant in this context. Aristotle and Plato drew a parallel between poetry and painting. In 'Ars Poetica' Horance mentions it as 'Ut picture Poesis". Following Horace, Sidney defines poetry as 'Speaking picture'.

2.1.3 Three Different Kinds of Poetry / Division of Poetry

Sidney says there are different kinds of poetry – sacred poetry, philosophical or didactic poetry and the right kind of poetry. Sacred poetry teaches religion, and sacred poets are theologians. Philosophical or didactic poetry depends on material facts or external sources. So both kinds of poetry have their limitations. The third one is the right kind of poetry. The third group of poets are the "real makers". Shelley calls them the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

Verse is the outer skin and not the flesh and blood of poetry. Verse is just an ornament and

not essential to poetry. It means that rhyme and metre are not essential for poetry, but they harmonise the language and help to memorise the lines.

2.1.4 Poetry is Superior to History or Philosophy

He studies history and philosophy in relation to poetry. Hence, he opines that poetry is superior to either history or philosophy. History depends on example, and philosophy on precept. Poetry is peerless because it performs both (example and precept). And poetry is superior to either history or philosophy in teaching the essential human values. Sidney follows Aristotle in defining poetry as an art or craft. So poetry is superior to all. Sidney holds the view that poetry has the power to move men to virtuous actions. Poetry acts beyond mere teaching or preaching. Philosophy is theoretical and teaches virtues by precept. History teaches practical virtue by drawing concrete examples. Philosophy, being based on abstractions, cannot forcefully communicate. In a way, history is founded upon empirical facts. Above all, poetry creates speaking pictures of virtue that communicate more effectively than either history or philosophy. Virtue is rewarded and vice is punished in poetry so that poetic justice may be meted out. So poetry is superior to either history or philosophy.

2.1.5 Sidney's Review of Poetry and Drama

Sidney reviews the state of contemporary poetry of Renaissance England. He uses the term 'poetry' in its original Greek sense. It denotes not only poetry but all genres of literature, including drama. He strikes at the degradation of English poetry of that time. Those poets wrote poetry uninspired. The tagline is to be repeated: a poet is born and not made.

Sidney observed that there were few poets worthy to be called poets after Chaucer. He mentioned Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde". But he discards Chaucer's magnum opus "The Canterbury Tales". He recounts Sackville, Surrey and Spencer. Strangely enough, he ignores Langland's "Piers Ploughman" or Tottel's "Miscellany".

Sidney opined that the comedy of the time degenerated into farcical or immoral. Very often, comedy was confused with coarse. Sidney underlined the point that comedy should aim at transformation through delightful teaching, but not mere vulgar amusement.

Lyric poetry sank into artificial eloquence. It was degenerated into servile imitation. Far-fetched images were used. So he was rarely hopeful of the lyrical poetry of his times. At the same time, he was proud of the English language as the best-suited medium of poetry. He said that English is flexible and adaptable for both ancient and modern systems of versification. So he rightly opined that the contemporary poets were inferior men with mercenary motives. They lacked the genuine fire of poetry. They also lacked the perseverance and practice necessary for meritorious poetry.

2.1.6 The Renaissance Criticism

A renewed interest in the arts and learning led to the rediscovery of the Ancient Greek and Roman classics. This triggered the Renaissance, an era of enquiry and discovery between the 14th and 16th centuries. This age was hallmarked by the paradigm shift from religion to humanism. It was a transitional movement from the medieval to the modern age. It was a reawakening and rebirth. It was the revival of the classical arts and literature. It was also the beginning of modern science. That trend influenced not only classical arts, architecture, and literature but also vernacular literature across Europe. It also led to the

flowering of novel ideas, critical insights and new life.

In the 1580s, there were charges of degradation of poetry and drama. They charged that poetry was becoming morally substandard. Several critics believed that mixing tragic and comic scenes violated Aristotelian principles of the three unities of time, place, and action. Some scholars argued that deviation from classical rules was inappropriate. Controversy after controversy ensued. Several writers denounced profane writing, while others defended poetry.

Stephen Gosson was a prominent Puritan critic of contemporary poetry. "The School of Abuse" was his pleasant invective against poets. In subsequent pamphlets, Gosson attacked tragedies for their evil themes and setting. He also denounced comedies for their bawdry and immorality, for the characters being drawn from among cooks, knaves, and parasites.

Gosson had dedicated his book to Sir Philip Sidney. Provoked by this, Sidney wrote "Defence of Poetry ", also known as Apology for Poetry, in 1585. To Gosson's charge that poetry is corruptive, Sidney replies that poetry is a civilizing force and it moves men to virtue. He argues that poetry is not the mother of lies because poetic truth is universal truth. And poetry never breeds contempt and violence. Instead, it sings the songs of peace and morality.

2.1.7 The Apology as an Epitome of Renaissance Criticism

Sidney's " Apology for Poetry" is a work of genius. It is a rare and valuable critical document. His greatest achievement was the introduction of Aristotelianism into England. That was the result of the direct influence of

the Italian critics upon him. His "Defence of Poetry" is a veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance. Truly, it was imbued with the Renaissance spirit. For the general theory of poetry, its sources were the critical treatises of Minturno and Scaliger. His ideas and expressions were not novel, but the unity of feelings is original, and the temper is ideal. So Sidney is the Harold of Neoclassicism in England. Wimsatt and Brooks emphasise the note of romance in the Apology. Wimsatt and Brooks write that the sources of Sidney's Defence were classical, but the spirit was not sternly classical. His joyous fireworks were of the Italian Renaissance. His colours were enthusiastic, Neoplatonic, and dual purple and gold. He was essentially a theorist of exuberant imagination. Sidney's Apology is a synthesis of the critical doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Scaliger, Minturno and a host of other writers and critics. He brings together, interprets and comments upon all the theories of literature current at the time.

Sidney's Defence is the earliest attempt to deal with the poetic art. His judgments on contemporary literature show ample good sense and sound scholarship. Judgements are not empty or abstract theorising, but of the practical kind. He says, "The power of poetry is to move to virtuous action ". His appreciation of literature is concrete. Sidney's practical criticism is constructive. He calls attention to literary excellencies. He has enthusiasm for Biblical literature. He also appreciates Chaucer. Sidney inaugurated a new era in the history of English literary criticism. More truly than Dryden, he is the father of literary criticism in England. His Apology is an epitome of Renaissance criticism. His manner of presentation is fresh and vigourous. His style has dignity, simplicity and humour. Apology is an illuminating piece of literary criticism.

2.1.8 Flashcards of definitions of poetry

Definitions	Authors
Poesy is a speaking picture with the end of teaching and delighting	Sir Philip Sidney
Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings	William Wordsworth
Poetry is emotion put into measure	Thomas Hardy
Poetry is what gets lost in translation	Robert Frost.
Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting with the gift of speech	Simonides
Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion. It is not an expression of personality, but an escape from personality	T.S. Eliot.
Poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth	P. B Shelley
Poetry is the criticism of life by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.	Matthew Arnold.
The breath and finer spirit of all knowledge	William Wordsworth

Recap

- ▶ Historical background of the controversy between Gosson and Sidney
- ▶ Gosson's Abuse or Charges of Poetry
- ▶ Sidney's defence of poetry
- ▶ Antiquity and universality of poetry
- ▶ Sidney's definition of poetry
- ▶ Poetry is superior to history or philosophy
- ▶ Various kinds of poetry
- ▶ Four chief objections to poetry
- ▶ Review of English poetry and drama
- ▶ Degeneration of poetry
- ▶ Sidney reviews Chaucer, Sackville, Surrey and Spencer

- ▶ Renaissance criticism
- ▶ Violation of classical rules
- ▶ Apology as an epitome of Renaissance criticism

Objective Questions

1. Sidney, in his work "An Apology for Poetry ", cites Aristotle, who said that the goal of teaching is not gnosis and praxis. What do "gnosis" and "praxis" mean?
2. Name the book by Stephen Gosson to which Sidney wrote his "Apology for Poetry" as a reply.
3. In which year was Sidney's "Apology for Poetry" published?
4. When was *School of Abuse* published?
5. At the beginning of the essay "Apology for Poetry," Sidney uses an anecdote with an exordium. What is an exordium?
6. In which year did Shelley write "A Defence of Poetry"?
7. Who is known as the father of English Criticism?
8. What, according to Sidney, was "hard of utterance and mystery to be convinced" when compared to poetry?

Answers

1. Knowledge and action
2. School of Abuse
3. 1595
4. 1579
5. Introduction
6. 1821
7. John Dryden
8. Philosophy

Assignments

1. Quote and explain Sidney's definition of poetry.
2. How is poetry superior to history or philosophy?
3. Discuss "Apology for Poetry" as a typical specimen of Renaissance criticism.
4. How did Sidney react to "Gosson's School of Abuse"? Why was it necessary for Sidney to defend poetry?
5. Describe briefly Sidney's views of poetry. Are Sidney's views original?
6. Why did Romans call poets prophets?
7. Why did Sidney opine that every country has its poets?
8. How, according to Sidney, does poetry create nature and man anew?
9. List the limitations of Sidney's criticism.
10. What were the impacts of Italian criticism on Sidney?
11. Compare imitation and invention in Sidney's Defence of Poetry.
12. Critically evaluate Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" based on Sidney's Defence of Poetry.

Suggested Reading

1. Arnold,Mathew. *Essays in Criticism*. (1865).
2. Eliot, T.S. *Tradition and Individual Talent*. (1919).
3. Hatfield,Andrew. *The English Renaissance,1500-1620* (2001).

Romantic and Victorian Criticism

Unit 1

Wordsworth - Poetic Language and Diction

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ define and explain the concept of poetry

▶ analyse the role of poetic diction and language

▶ evaluate William Wordsworth's contribution to the evolution of poetic language

▶ interpret selected poems by Wordsworth

Prerequisites

What makes poetry truly powerful? Is it the grand themes of kings and battles, or is it the simple beauty of a daffodil swaying in the breeze? Can poetry speak to the commoner in the language of everyday life yet still move the soul? These were the revolutionary questions that William Wordsworth dared to ask and answer.

England in the late 18th century was a world of turmoil. The French Revolution had set fire to new ideas of freedom and democracy, and the industrial age was beginning to replace pastoral landscapes with factories and smoke. In the midst of all this, a young Wordsworth found himself drawn to nature, to the rhythm of the rivers and the whisper of the wind. Unlike poets before him, who celebrated aristocrats and myths, he turned his attention to the ordinary, to the unnoticed beauty of everyday life.

But how did this young man go on to transform English poetry forever? A turning point came in 1795 when he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Together, they created *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collection of poetry that broke every poetic convention of the time. No flowery language. No lofty subjects. Instead, they wrote about beggars, wanderers, and solitary reapers, people often ignored by society. This was poetry for the people, in the language of the people.

Yet, their work was so groundbreaking that Wordsworth felt the need to explain it. Enter the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1800, expanded in 1802), one of the most influential essays in literary criticism. Here, he declared that poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," a living, breathing force drawn from real human experience. Gone were the rigid rules of the past; Wordsworth's poetry was raw, emotional, and deeply personal.

His legacy did not stop there. Over the years, he penned some of the most beloved poems in the English language – "Tintern Abbey," "The Solitary Reaper," "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Of course, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," a poem that continues to bring to life the simple joy of nature's beauty. He was crowned Poet Laureate in 1843, not just as a writer but as a literary giant who had redefined poetry itself.

So, what makes Wordsworth's ideas still relevant today? Why do his poems continue to resonate, centuries later? As we explore his contributions to literary criticism, we'll discover how he didn't just write poetry; he changed the very way we see and understand it.

Key Concepts

Romanticism, Imagination, Nature, Emotion, Poetic Diction, Common Man, Recollection in Tranquillity

3.1.1 Discussion

Romanticism was a literary and artistic movement that emerged in Western Europe roughly between 1785 and 1832. It arose in response to the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the social, political, and economic transformations that followed the Augustan Age. Romanticism marked a departure from traditional approaches to literature.

Primarily, it can be seen as a revolt against Classicism. The Classical school of literature upheld strict rules, teaching writers to "think naturally and express forcibly." Alexander Pope described it as "Nature methodised." However, the followers of Pope and Dryden eventually rebelled against the Classical ideals of order and restraint. The new generation of writers emphasised imagination and nature as sources of insight, rejecting an empirical, materialist worldview. They expressed a deep reverence for nature and believed that intuition, emotion, and imagination were more instructive than empiricism and reason. Walter Pater famously defined Romanticism as "the addition of curiosity to the desire of beauty."

Romantic literature is characterised by several key elements: a celebration of nature, a focus on the individual and spirituality, an appreciation of isolation and melancholy, an interest in the commoner, the idealisation of women, and the use of personification. Prominent Romantic writers include John Keats, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Shelley.

3.1.1.1 Summary

William Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, first published in 1800 and expanded in 1802, is one of the most significant manifestos of English Romantic poetry. It outlines Wordsworth's poetic principles, emphasising his definition of poetry, the importance of poetic diction and language, the role of the poet, and the function of poetry in society. This preface serves as a critical response to 18th-century neoclassical poetry and sets the foundation for Romantic literary ideals.

Wordsworth's Definition of Poetry

Wordsworth defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" that "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." This definition presents his belief that poetry should emerge from genuine emotions and experiences. However, he also emphasises that poetic composition is not merely an impulsive act but involves reflection and deliberate craftsmanship. The poet recalls past emotions in a state of calmness, allowing them to be shaped into art that resonates with readers.

Wordsworth's definition contrasts with the neoclassical emphasis on reason and structured expression. He insists that poetry should stem from deep emotional engagement with life rather than rigid adherence to literary conventions. His approach marks a departure from the mechanical and formulaic poetry of the 18th century, instead prioritizing individual experience and emotional truth.

Poetic Diction and Language

One of the most revolutionary aspects of Wordsworth's preface is his insistence on using common language in poetry. He argues that the artificial and elevated diction favoured by neoclassical poets is unnatural and distances poetry from the experiences of ordinary people. Instead, he advocates for a poetic style that reflects the language of common men, particularly those living in rural settings, as he believes their speech is more connected to nature and authentic emotions.

Wordsworth does not suggest that poetry should be a mere transcription of everyday speech. Rather, he emphasises that poetry's language should be selectively refined to heighten its artistic effect while remaining natural and relatable. He believes that this approach ensures poetry retains its sincerity and emotional depth, making it more accessible and impactful for readers.

This argument against artificial poetic diction was a direct challenge to the literary establishment of his time. Traditional poets often employed grandiose language and complex structures, which Wordsworth saw as barriers to true emotional expression. By simplifying poetic diction, he aimed to make poetry a more democratic and universal art form, resonating with a broader audience.

Choice of Subject Matter

Wordsworth's preference for simple language aligns with his belief in using common life as the primary subject of poetry. He argues that the lives of ordinary people, particularly rural folk, offer profound emotional and philosophical insights. Unlike earlier poets who focused on aristocratic themes or mythological subjects, Wordsworth sought to capture the beauty, dignity, and depth of everyday experiences. He intended to bring poetry closer to the realities of human life, making it more accessible and meaningful.

The Role of the Poet

According to Wordsworth, the poet is not just a skilled wordsmith but a person endowed with heightened sensitivity and insight. He describes the poet as "a man speaking to men," emphasising his connection with humanity

rather than positioning him as an elite figure. The poet, he argues, is someone who can feel and perceive emotions more deeply than others and can communicate these emotions in a way that enlightens and moves the reader. He also suggests that the poet plays a moral and philosophical role, helping society understand the deeper truths of human existence through poetry.

Emotion and Imagination

Wordsworth emphasises emotion as the driving force behind poetry. He argues that true poetry originates from deep feelings rather than mere intellectual exercise. He also highlights the role of imagination in transforming simple experiences into profound artistic expressions. Unlike neoclassical poets, who often prioritised reason and order, Wordsworth believed that poetry should embrace emotional spontaneity while still being structured through reflective thought.

Poetry as a Source of Pleasure and Knowledge

Wordsworth sees poetry as both an enjoyable and educational experience. He argues that poetry should provide pleasure, but not through superficial entertainment or artificial embellishments. Instead, poetry should derive its beauty from the genuine emotions it conveys. He also believes that poetry has a didactic function, helping readers develop empathy, moral understanding, and a deeper appreciation of life. He sees poetry as an essential tool for personal and societal growth.

The Importance of Nature

Nature plays a crucial role in Wordsworth's poetic philosophy. He considers nature not only a source of beauty but also a profound teacher that offers wisdom and spiritual fulfillment. He believes that close interaction with nature fosters a purer, more authentic way of

life. This idea aligns with his emphasis on rural life as an ideal subject for poetry, as he sees the simplicity of rural existence as being more in harmony with nature and human emotions.

Rejection of Poetic Formalism

Wordsworth challenges the rigid structures and conventions of neoclassical poetry, which often adhered to strict forms such as the heroic couplet. He advocates for more flexible and organic poetic structures that align with the natural flow of thought and emotion. While he does not completely dismiss traditional poetic forms, he insists that they should serve the content rather than dictate it. His preference for blank verse and ballad forms reflects his commitment to a more natural and expressive poetic style.

The Relationship Between Poetry and Science

In the preface, Wordsworth contrasts poetry with science, arguing that while both seek to uncover truths about the world, poetry appeals to the emotions and imagination in ways that science cannot. He acknowledges the importance of scientific discoveries but insists that poetry offers a deeper, more personal understanding of human experiences. He believes that poetry has the power to touch the human soul, making it a vital part of intellectual and emotional life.

Wordsworth's Influence on Literary Criticism

Wordsworth's preface had a profound impact on literary criticism and the evolution of poetry. His emphasis on emotion, imagination, and simplicity helped define the Romantic movement and inspired future poets such as John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron. His ideas also influenced later literary movements that valued personal expression and authenticity in writing. His views on po-

etic language and the role of the poet continue to be relevant in contemporary discussions on literature.

Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* serves as a foundational text in the Romantic literary tradition. By advocating for simplicity, emotional depth, and a focus on ordinary life, he transformed the way poetry was perceived and practised. His rejection of artificial poetic conventions and his emphasis on nature, imagination, and human emotions set the stage for a more personal and expressive form of poetry. His insistence on defining poetry as an emotional experience and using natural language revolutionised literary thought, making poetry a more intimate and universal form of artistic expression. Even today, his preface remains a vital reference for understanding the principles of Romanticism and the enduring power of poetry in human culture.

3.1.1.2 Analysis

William Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* critiques neoclassical conventions and introduces Wordsworth's vision of poetry as an expression of authentic human emotions, conveyed in a language accessible to all.

Wordsworth defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" that "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." He argues that poetry should emerge from deep emotions and be later refined through reflection. Unlike neoclassical poets, who prioritised structure and reason, Wordsworth champions emotional authenticity, making poetry a medium of human expe-

rience rather than rigid formalism.

A central argument in the preface is Wordsworth's rejection of artificial poetic diction. He criticises the elevated, ornate language of neoclassical poets, advocating instead for a style that mirrors the natural speech of ordinary people, particularly those in rural settings. However, he clarifies that poetry should not be a direct imitation of everyday speech but should refine natural language to enhance artistic expression. This approach ensures poetry remains sincere and emotionally resonant.

Wordsworth redefines the poet as "a man speaking to men," emphasising his connection to common humanity rather than an elite literary class. He believes poets possess heightened sensitivity and insight, enabling them to convey deep emotions and universal truths. He also views the poet as a moral and philosophical guide, helping readers understand human nature through emotional and imaginative engagement.

Wordsworth's preface significantly influenced Romantic poetry by shifting its focus from aristocratic themes and rigid conventions to personal experience and natural expression. His ideas inspired poets like John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley and continue to shape literary criticism today.

By advocating for simplicity, emotional depth, and accessibility, Wordsworth transformed poetry into a more inclusive and expressive art form, solidifying his legacy as a revolutionary literary thinker.

Recap

> ▶ *Lyrical Ballads* preface shaped English Romantic poetry's foundational principles
> ▶ Wordsworth critiqued neoclassical conventions, favoring emotional authen-

ticity in poetry
- ▸ Poetry is "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" recollected in tranquillity
- ▸ Emotion and reflection shape poetry, making it deeply personal
- ▸ Wordsworth rejected artificial poetic diction in favor of natural speech
- ▸ He believed rural language expressed sincere emotions more authentically
- ▸ Poetic language should be refined but remain natural and relatable
- ▸ He opposed neoclassical poetry's rigid structure and intellectual restraint
- ▸ Poetry must reflect real human experiences, not just aristocratic themes
- ▸ Wordsworth emphasised imagination as essential for poetic expression
- ▸ He redefined the poet as "a man speaking to men"
- ▸ The poet possesses heightened sensitivity and deeper emotional insight
- ▸ Poets should guide society through moral and philosophical expression
- ▸ Poetry conveys universal truths through emotion and lived experience
- ▸ Wordsworth valued nature as poetry's inspiration and emotional guide
- ▸ He viewed poetry as pleasurable yet instructive for readers
- ▸ Poetry should inspire empathy and enhance human understanding
- ▸ His ideas greatly influenced Romantic poets like Keats and Shelley
- ▸ Romanticism embraced personal experience and simple poetic expression
- ▸ Wordsworth's legacy redefined poetry's role in human culture

Objective Questions

1. When was the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* published?
2. What is Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry?
3. Which literary movement did Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* influence?
4. What does Wordsworth criticise about neoclassical poetry?
5. According to Wordsworth, poetry should use which type of language?
6. Why does Wordsworth prefer the language of rural people?
7. What role does Wordsworth assign to the poet?
8. Which poets were influenced by Wordsworth's preface?
9. What does Wordsworth say about the emotional process of writing poetry?
10. How does Wordsworth view the relationship between poetry and human experience?
11. What literary convention did Wordsworth reject in his preface?
12. Which poetic form did Wordsworth prefer over heroic couplets?

13. How does Wordsworth describe the poet's sensitivity?
14. What is the primary function of poetry, according to Wordsworth?
15. What is the significance of *Lyrical Ballads* in literary history?

Answers

1. 1798
2. The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings
3. The Romantic movement
4. Its artificial diction and rigid structure
5. The natural speech of ordinary people
6. It expresses sincere and authentic emotions
7. A man speaking to men with heightened sensitivity
8. John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley
9. Emotion recollected in tranquillity
10. Poetry is a medium to express authentic emotions
11. The use of ornate and artificial poetic diction
12. Blank verse and ballad forms
13. Poets feel and perceive emotions more deeply
14. To convey universal truths through deep emotions
15. It marked the transition from Neoclassicism to Romanticism

Assignments

1. Discuss Wordsworth's definition of poetry and its significance in Romantic literature.
2. How does Wordsworth challenge neoclassical poetic conventions in his preface?
3. Explain Wordsworth's views on poetic diction and the use of common language.
4. Analyse the role of the poet according to Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads.*
5. Assess the lasting influence of Wordsworth's preface on modern literary criticism.

Suggested Reading

1. Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition.* Oxford UP, 1953.

2. Butler, Marilyn. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background* 1760-1830. Oxford UP, 1981.

3. Day, Aidan. *Romanticism*. Routledge, 1996.

4. McGann, Jerome. *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. U of Chicago P, 1983.

5. Nicolson, Marjorie Hope. *Wordsworth and the English Lake Country*. Macmillan, 1951.

6. Perkins, David. *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity.* Harvard UP, 1964.

7. Roe, Nicholas. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years.* Oxford UP, 1988.

8. Wu, Duncan. *A Companion to Romanticism*. Blackwell, 1998.

Unit 2

Coleridge - Fancy and Imagination

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ analyse Coleridge's concept of imagination in poetic creation
▶ differentiate between fancy and imagination in literary theory
▶ interpret key ideas from *Biographia Literaria* critically
▶ examine philosophical influences on Coleridge's literary thought

Prerequisites

What makes a poet truly great? Is it the ability to paint vivid pictures with words, or is it the power to create something entirely new, something that transcends reality? Samuel Taylor Coleridge, one of the most profound thinkers of the Romantic era, believed that poetry was more than mere ornamentation; it was an act of creation, fueled by what he called the "imagination." Coleridge was not only a poet but also a philosopher, a critic, and a visionary. His *Biographia Literaria* (1817) remains one of the most complex and influential works of literary criticism, where he makes a crucial distinction between fancy and imagination. Fancy, according to Coleridge, is merely decorative—it collects and arranges ideas without truly transforming them. Imagination, on the other hand, is a powerful, creative force that unites and reshapes reality, revealing deeper truths about existence. In this unit, we will explore Coleridge's revolutionary ideas on imagination, tracing their philosophical roots and understanding how they shaped the course of literary thought. By the end of this discussion, you will see how his theories continue to influence literature, art, and even modern psychology. Let us step into the mind of a Romantic genius and uncover the magic behind poetic creation.

Key Concepts

Imagination, Fancy, Creativity, Romanticism, Poetry, Philosophy, Literary Criticism, Aesthetics, Symbolism

3.2.1 Discussion

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was an English poet, literary critic, philosopher, and theologian, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures of English Romanticism. His literary career flourished after his friendship with William Wordsworth, leading to their collaboration on *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collection that redefined English poetry. Beyond poetry, Coleridge was a visionary thinker, introducing German idealist philosophy to English literary culture and coining significant terms such as "suspension of disbelief."

Coleridge's most celebrated poetic works—"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," and "Christabel"—are known for their supernatural themes, rich symbolism, and dreamlike imagery. However, his influence extended far beyond poetry. As a critic, he profoundly shaped literary theory, particularly through his seminal prose work *Biographia Literaria (1817)*. This two-volume masterpiece blends philosophy, criticism, and autobiography, exploring the creative process, the nature of imagination, and the distinctions between fancy and imagination. While often regarded as complex and unstructured, *Biographia Literaria* remains a cornerstone of Romantic thought, influencing 19th- and 20th-century literary and cultural theory.

Coleridge's intellectual legacy is vast, marked by his deep engagement with poetry, philosophy, and aesthetics. Despite personal struggles, including addiction to laudanum and opium, his writings continue to inspire and challenge readers, offering profound insights into the power of imagination and artistic creation.

3.2.1.1 Fancy and Imagination

Coleridge's views on imagination, particularly poetic imagination, are elaborated in *Bi-ographia Literaria*, published shortly after his Lay Sermons. This work is a fusion of literary autobiography, literary theory, and philosophical speculation, and it contains Coleridge's most well-known definitions of imagination.

Chapter XIII begins with the phrase "On the imagination, or esemplastic power." The term *esemplastic* means "molding into one; unifying." Coleridge describes the "esemplastic power of the imagination" as the faculty that shapes disparate elements into a unified whole. Unlike reason, which analyses and reduces ideas into separate parts, imagination restores these fragments into a cohesive whole, revealing the deeper metaphysical unity behind multiplicity. In contrast, fancy is a rational and decorative faculty that merely rearranges existing ideas without transforming them. Imagination, according to Coleridge, enables a creative perception of the universe's underlying oneness.

The concept of "esemplastic power," in all its variations, is the culmination of *Biographia Literaria,* Volume I. It was the central focus of Coleridge's intellectual investigations from 1800 until the book's publication in 1817. However, Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy differs from Wordsworth's explanation in the 1815 *Preface to Lyrical Ballads.* Coleridge first introduces this distinction at the end of Chapter IV and revisits it at the conclusion of Chapter XIII, marking the entrance and exit of his key philosophical discussions.

In Chapter IV, Coleridge famously argues that imagination and fancy are "two distinct and widely different faculties," rejecting the notion that they are simply different degrees of the same power. He expands on this distinction in Chapter XIII, "On the Imagination." Although he originally intended to explore the subject in greater depth in later works, this never materialised, leaving his analysis con-

fined to the definitions found in *Biographia Literaria:*

"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 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 re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise 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; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the laws of association". (*Biographia Literaria*)

Coleridge distinguishes between two faculties of imagination: the primary and the secondary. The primary imagination is the basic human capacity to perceive and organise sensory experience, comparable to Kant's concept of the reproductive imagination. The secondary imagination, while rooted in the primary, functions at a more advanced level of creative transformation. It actively dissolves and reconstructs reality, producing new forms that aspire toward artistic and philosophical unity. In contrast, fancy is merely a mechanical extension of memory, passively reconfiguring existing ideas without generating original

meaning. Through this distinction, Coleridge formulates a foundational Romantic theory of imagination, one that profoundly influenced literary and philosophical thought throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Primary Imagination

The primary imagination is the faculty by which we perceive the world around us. It represents the mind's fundamental capacity to receive impressions from the external world through the senses. This faculty enables us to perceive objects not only in their separate parts but also as unified wholes. It functions as an involuntary act of the mind, meaning that sensory impressions and stimuli are unconsciously and automatically processed.

The primary imagination imposes order on these impressions, organising them into recognisable forms so the mind can construct a coherent representation of reality. This process allows for clear and structured perception. Coleridge describes the primary imagination as a "mysterious power," capable of extracting "hidden ideas and meanings" from the raw data of sensory experience.

Secondary Imagination

While the primary imagination is universal and inherent in all human beings, the secondary imagination is what makes artistic creation possible. Unlike the primary, which functions involuntarily, the secondary imagination operates through conscious effort and an act of will. It builds upon the raw materials supplied by the primary imagination—namely, sensory impressions—and actively reshapes them into new, imaginative forms.

The secondary imagination selects, organises, and transforms these materials into objects of beauty and meaning. It is esemplastic—a term coined by Coleridge to denote its power to unify disparate elements. He describes it as

a faculty that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate." This imaginative activity lies at the heart of all poetic and artistic expression. Coleridge refers to it as a "magical synthetic power," capable of reconciling opposites and harmonising discordant elements. It fuses various faculties of the soul: the subjective with the objective, the internal mind with external nature, and the spiritual with the material.

Although the primary and secondary imaginations differ in function, they are not separate, but only in degree. The secondary imagination is more active, conscious, and deliberate. While the primary imagination unconsciously organises sensory input, the secondary imagination, guided by conscious will, generates original artistic and intellectual creations. Thus, for Coleridge, imagination is not merely reproductive but also recreative, a dynamic power that actively shapes new meanings and interpretations of reality.

Fancy

Imagination and fancy differ fundamentally in both kind and nature. Imagination is inherently creative, whereas fancy, though a common faculty shared by all, is not. Fancy operates as a mechanical process that passively receives ready-made images and rearranges them without altering their essential nature. It does not fuse or transform; rather, it combines these elements into aesthetically pleasing forms without creating new meaning. Functioning as a form of memory, fancy arbitrarily brings together images that, even when combined, retain their individual properties and remain unmodified by the mind.

Coleridge describes fancy as the "aggregative and associative power." However, Wordsworth contended that "to aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine, belong as well to imagination as to the fancy." In response, Coleridge clarified that aggregation

alone does not amount to imagination, as it lacks the unifying act essential to true creativity. For imagination to operate, raw materials must first be gathered—an initial task carried out by fancy. Thus, in Coleridge's view, fancy is subordinate to imagination, serving merely as the collector of materials that the imagination later transforms and synthesises.

John Ruskin further distinguished between the two faculties. He observed: "The fancy sees the outside, and is able to give a portrait of the outside, clear, brilliant, and full of detail. The imagination sees the heart and inner nature, and makes them felt, but is often obscure, mysterious, and interrupted in its giving of outer detail." Accordingly, while fancy is concerned with external appearances and superficial beauty, imagination penetrates beneath the surface, revealing deeper truths and underlying meanings.

3.2.2 Analysis

During the 17th century, the terms *imagination* and fancy were often used interchangeably, with little distinction in meaning. In the 18th century, the hierarchy between them varied—each was at times regarded as superior—but by the end of the century, *imagination* had firmly established itself as the dominant concept. Coleridge's interest in distinguishing between the two faculties was sparked by his reading of a manuscript poem that left a profound impression on him. Reflecting on the source of its impact, he concluded that "fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power." To illustrate the distinction, he famously remarked: "Milton had a highly imaginative mind, while Cowley had a very fanciful one."

Coleridge regarded fancy as inferior to imag-

ination and did not consider it a truly creative faculty. Fancy merely arranges what it perceives into pleasing shapes without fusing or transforming the elements it uses. He described it as "the arbitrary bringing together of things that be remote and forming them into unity." Elsewhere, he defined fancy as "the faculty of bringing together images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of likeness." In Coleridge's view, fancy functions like a form of memory, arbitrarily assembling images that retain their individual and separate properties, without undergoing any genuine synthesis.

To illustrate the difference between fancy and imagination, Coleridge cited two passages from Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis." As an example of fancy, he quoted:

"Full gently now she takes him by the hand

A lily prisoned in a goal of snow

On ivory in an alabaster band

So white a friend engirds so white a foe."

He pointed out that in these lines, the images remain distinct and do not interpenetrate one another. In contrast, to demonstrate the imaginative process, he cited:

"Look! How a bright star shooteth from the sky

So glides he in the night from Venus' eye."

Coleridge remarked: "How many images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord—the beauty of Adonis, the rapidity of the flight, the yearning yet helplessness of the enamored gazer, and a shadowy, ideal character thrown over the whole." For Coleridge, fancy was merely the "drapery" of poetic genius, whereas imagination was its very soul—an active, creative force that unifies disparate elements into a coherent and meaningful whole.

Coleridge's theory of imagination, like that of Wordsworth, identifies poets as uniquely gifted individuals, distinct from the rest of humanity. However, it remains ambiguous whether the *secondary imagination* is an innate faculty or one that can be cultivated through experience and reflection. Although his distinction between fancy and imagination has been highly influential, it is not always sharply delineated. Given that human perception and imagination often operate in tandem as part of a continuous creative process, imposing rigid categories on the workings of the mind may oversimplify its complexity.

Recap

> ▶ Coleridge was a central figure in English Romanticism
> ▶ Collaborated with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798
> ▶ Introduced German philosophy to English literary thought
> ▶ Coined the famous phrase "suspension of disbelief" in criticism
> ▶ Known for dreamlike poetry rich in symbolism
> ▶ Wrote "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," and "Christabel"
> ▶ *Biographia Literaria* combines criticism, philosophy, and autobiography
> ▶ Explores imagination, fancy, and poetic creative process

- ▶ Primary imagination enables unified perception of sensory experience
- ▶ It works unconsciously to organize impressions into meaning
- ▶ Secondary imagination transforms impressions into artistic poetic creation
- ▶ It is a conscious, deliberate, and unifying faculty
- ▶ Esemplastic power fuses diverse elements into organic whole
- ▶ Fancy is mechanical memory rearranging images without transformation
- ▶ Coleridge calls fancy aggregative, not a creative power
- ▶ Wordsworth thought imagination and fancy overlapped in function
- ▶ Ruskin said fancy shows surface, imagination shows depth
- ▶ Imagination reshapes reality into symbolic philosophical expression
- ▶ Coleridge believed poets possess exceptional imaginative faculties
- ▶ Fancy collects, imagination transforms into visionary artistic unity

Objective Questions

1. What did Coleridge believe poetry was more than?
2. What kind of force was imagination for Coleridge?
3. What does fancy merely do with images?
4. Which of Coleridge's works explains his theory deeply?
5. What term did Coleridge coin for imagination's unifying power?
6. Which faculty reshapes collected images meaningfully?
7. What does imagination reveal beneath surface appearances?
8. How many forms of imagination did Coleridge identify?
9. Which type of imagination perceives reality?
10. Which type of imagination involves conscious creative effort?
11. What does secondary imagination fuse into unified wholes?
12. What type of process is fancy considered?
13. Which faculty is described as vital and creative?
14. Whose poetry did Coleridge use to show the difference?
15. Which kind of images remain separate when used by fancy?
16. What does imagination create beyond superficial metaphors?
17. What divine quality does imagination reflect?
18. Who possesses a higher capacity for imaginative creation?
19. Which literary movement did Coleridge help shape?
20. Which fields still feel the influence of Coleridge's ideas?

Answers

1. Ornamentation
2. Spiritual
3. Arrange
4. Biographia Literaria
5. Esemplastic
6. Imagination
7. Truths
8. Two
9. Primary
10. Secondary
11. Opposites
12. Mechanical
13. Imagination
14. Shakespeare
15. Fancy
16. Symbols
17. Creativity
18. Poets
19. Romanticism
20. Literature

Assignments

1. How does Coleridge elevate imagination above ornamentation in poetry?
2. Explore Coleridge's concepts of primary and secondary imagination, the esemplastic power, and how these contribute to poetic creativity and the discovery of deeper truths.
3. Compare and contrast Coleridge's notions of fancy and imagination.
4. Discuss the role of the poet in Coleridge's Romantic theory of literature.
5. What is the significance of symbolism and unity in Coleridge's literary aesthetics

Suggested Reading

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7. Leask, Nigel. *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

8. McFarland, Thomas. *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1969.

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Matthew Arnold-Functions of Poetry and Criticism

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ become aware of Matthew Arnold's views on poetry's social and moral functions

▶ analyse the role of criticism in shaping cultural and intellectual values

▶ apply Arnold's Touchstone method to evaluate literary works critically

▶ examine the relationship between poetry, criticism, and cultural development in Arnold's theory

Prerequisites

Matthew Arnold, a poet and critic of the Victorian era, believed that poetry was not just a form of entertainment – it was a powerful force that could shape society's morals, intellect, and very way of thinking. In a time when industrialisation and social change were in full swing, Arnold saw poetry as a guiding light, offering deeper truths about life and the human experience. For instance, in his famous poem "Dover Beach," Arnold explores themes of human uncertainty in an age of science and progress, encouraging readers to seek deeper emotional and spiritual connections in an increasingly detached world.

But it wasn't just poets who had a role in this cultural transformation. Arnold believed critics were equally important, serving as the intellectual guardians who held literature up to high standards. His Touchstone Method became his secret weapon, a brilliant way of assessing literary works by comparing them to the greatest examples of artistic achievement, like Homer's epics or Shakespeare's plays. By using these timeless works as benchmarks, Arnold argued that critics could determine the true value of new literature, much like a jeweler uses a diamond to test the quality of other stones.

Arnold's ideas challenge us to think about literature not just as something to be admired, but as a force that can shape the very fabric of society and our understanding of the world. Through his work, he invited us to look beyond surface beauty and consider how art can influence our thoughts, values, and connections to one another.

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Key Concepts

Poetry, Criticism, Touchstone Method, Victorian Era, Literary Standards, Moral Uplift-ment, Deep Truths, Cultural Transformation, Intellectual Guardians

3.3.1 Discussion

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) was a British poet and critic during the Victorian era. Born in Laleham, a village in the Thames Valley, Arnold spent his childhood near a river, which would later influence his work. In 1837, Arnold began attending Rugby School, where his father, Thomas Arnold, was the headmaster. Following Rugby, Arnold enrolled at Oxford in 1841.

In 1847, Arnold became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, who held a prominent cabinet position during Lord John Russell's Liberal ministries. In 1851, to secure the income necessary for his marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman (in June 1851), Arnold accepted an appointment as inspector of schools from Lansdowne. This became his main occupation until just before his death. Arnold travelled extensively across the British provinces and was also sent by the government to investigate the state of education in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Two of his reports on schools abroad were reprinted as books, and his annual reports on schools at home received wide attention, praised for their urbane and civilised prose.

Arnold was particularly noted for his classical critiques of contemporary tastes and manners, targeting the "Barbarians" (the aristocracy), the "Philistines" (the commercial middle class), and the "Populace." He became a leading advocate for "culture" in works such as *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).

3.3.1.1 Function of Poetry

Arnold's views on poetry are clearly articulated in his *Study of Poetry,* which was originally written as an introduction to A.C. Ward's *Selections from English Poets.* Arnold holds poetry in high regard and believes it has an immense future. He is confident that poetry will be a source of stability for the human race, providing consolation, sustaining individuals, and interpreting life in a way that replaces philosophy and religion, which he sees as mere illusions of knowledge. Due to this important role, Arnold insists that poetry must be of the highest standard.

Poetry offers a final source of consolation for humanity. Arnold describes "criticism of life" as the noble application of ideas to life. He emphasises that poetry must adhere to the laws of poetic truth and beauty – truth and seriousness in substance and felicity and perfection in style. Arnold believes that poetry does not simply present life as it is; rather, the poet adds something noble from within, enhancing the soul without directly teaching or appealing to reason. The poet's words resonate with beauty, creating a thing of beauty that becomes a perpetual source of joy. This type of high poetry enriches life and has the power to sustain and delight us like nothing else. It answers the question of "how to live," but does so indirectly by embodying ideals of truth and goodness, uplifting and ennobling the soul. Arnold disapproves of didactic poetry, viewing it as the lowest form of poetry.

From Arnold's perspective, poetry plays a critical role in life and is more significant than

religion. Poetry is "a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for that criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." Therefore, it should be of a high standard – classical poetry from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton being prime examples. Good poetry excels both in substance and in style, with both the matter and manner exhibiting "high beauty, worth, and power." The two elements are inseparable. While religious emotions may fade, poetry endures because it is linked to ideas.

Arnold argues that poetry can serve higher purposes than it appears to, offering interpretation, consolation, and sustenance. He asserts that without poetry, science would be incomplete, and that philosophy and religion are ultimately false shows of knowledge. Soon, humanity will turn to poetry for genuine understanding, as Wordsworth has suggested. However, only poetry of the highest standard can fulfil this role.

Arnold, however, was dissatisfied with the poetry of his time, feeling that poets were more concerned with form and expression than with substance. He believed that poets often sought to attract readers with flashy or extravagant language, rather than focusing on the overall impact of their works. For Arnold, the subject of a poem was far more important than its expression. He regarded human actions as the best subject matter for poetry and believed that ancient poets excelled because they focused on the whole, whereas modern poets focused on the parts. He praises Joseph for his ability to offer a broad yet simple and charming view of human life.

For Arnold, poetry was akin to what it was for Wordsworth – a means to express the essence of all knowledge. He believed a poet is great when he can beautifully answer the question, "How to live?" Arnold also proposed a comparative criticism known as the "Touchstone Method" to judge the greatness of poetry. This method involves studying the works of classical poets and using their lines and expressions as touchstones to evaluate other works of literature. Arnold argued that this method would allow readers to assess poetry's value while avoiding the pitfalls of personal or historical biases.

According to Arnold, there is no distinction between art and morality. He states, "A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life." When Arnold advocates for moral ideas in poetry, he does not mean didactic poems but those that offer profound insights into how to live well.

Arnold's views on poetry have sparked significant debate among critics. Some, like Professor Saintsbury, argue that Arnold unnecessarily limits the scope of poetry by focusing solely on action. Others feel that Arnold's definition of poetry is too broad, with some critics suggesting that all literature is the application of ideas to life, making Arnold's explanation repetitive. Nevertheless, Arnold believed that ideas and sentiments must be based on real life in order to have lasting value. He considered thoughts and feelings detached from action as having no appeal.

Like many great poets and philosophers, Arnold believed that the ethical view of life is central. He sought to renew these ethical values and build art upon these principles. According to Arnold, poetry should combine the best subjects with the highest form of expression to achieve its ultimate goal: to help humanity attain ethical and moral understanding.

3.3.1.2. Function of Criticism at Present

Matthew Arnold recalls the great need for and importance of criticism in English literature.

However, the general opinion was that the creative effort of the human spirit is far superior to the critical effort. Even Wordsworth said that the critic could not have a sensitivity fine enough to appreciate the finer influences of genuine poetry. According to Wordsworth, the time spent on writing a critique was better spent on original compositions because a false or malicious critique would do much harm, while an original composition, however dull it might be, would not harm.

Arnold finds this argument unsustainable. According to him, if a person is genuinely interested in criticism, they should not spend time in the field of creative effort for which they have no aptitude. He agrees that critical activity may be a lower faculty than creative activity and concurs that malicious criticism is harmful. However, he does not agree that it is better to devote time to inferior creative work than to criticism. He substantiates his point by citing examples. For instance, he points out that he cannot imagine Dr. Johnson continuing to write plays like *Irene* instead of writing *Lives of the Poets*, or Wordsworth producing inferior poems such as *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* instead of writing the admirable *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. Arnold expresses his satisfaction that Goethe, one of the greatest poets, wrote a good deal of criticism. Thus, one can use their creative faculty to produce great critical work, not just great works of literature and art.

However, the exercise of creative faculty for the production of great works of art and literature is not possible in all epochs and times. Elaborating on this, Arnold explains that the creative artist works with certain elements and materials. In literature, this material is in the form of ideas. If there is a lack of this material, creative work becomes impossible. There may be periods when there is a lack of fresh and new ideas. However, these ideas are not discovered by literary artists but are the business of philosophers. The literary artist's work is synthesis and exposition. "The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery." The artist is inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere and deals with these ideas divinely, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations. From these observations, Arnold makes an important statement: for the creation of great literature, two factors must combine – the power of the individual and the power of the moment.

Arnold then discusses the essential qualities of criticism. Criticism, says Arnold, should follow the path of disinterestedness, for only then will it prove useful. Criticism must be the free play of the mind on all subjects it touches. It should reject any ulterior, political, or practical considerations that might introduce bias. Real criticism, Arnold says, is "the free play of the mind on all subjects in order to know the best that is known and thought in this world, without any political considerations." Criticism should identify the best in thought and knowledge and make it known to others, creating a current of new and fresh ideas. This must be done with inflexible honesty and ability. Arnold critiques contemporary criticism, noting that the disinterested search for knowledge and the introduction of new ideas were lacking. Practical considerations heavily influenced and guided criticism.

Defining criticism as "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in this world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas," Arnold enumerates the qualities and duties of an ideal critic. Arnold states that the duty of the critic is (a) to learn and understand, (b) to share ideas with others in order to transform the world, and (c) to prepare a suitable atmosphere for further creative genius and writing.

In the broadest terms, the function of Arnold's critic is to promote 'culture', specifically that part of culture dependent on knowledge of letters. The critic must propagate noble ideas and repeatedly emphasize them so that they prevail.

According to Arnold, the critic should not only be a scholar, a well-read person, a propagandist, and a culturist, but also impartial, detached, and disinterested. Criticism should remain free from personal, ulterior, political, or economic considerations. The critic's judgment should never be swayed by any prejudices. The critic must be disinterested in the sense that he should pursue only the ends of cultural perfection and remain uninfluenced by the coarser appeals of the Philistine.

3.3.1.3 Touchstone Method

In *The Study of Poetry*, Arnold presents his idea of excellent poetry and formulates a practical method for identifying true poetry. This method, which he calls the "Touchstone Method," is intended to help identify genuinely great poetry. In the process of finding truly excellent poetry, Arnold advises us to avoid certain fallacies: the fallacy of historical estimate and the fallacy of personal estimate.

Arnold's Touchstone Method is a comparative method of criticism. According to this method, specimens of the very highest quality poetry are compared to the work under study, and conclusions are drawn in favor of or against the work. In this method, the critic must keep in mind lines and expressions from the great masters and apply them as a touchstone to other poetic works. Even a single line or selected quotations will suffice. If the work in question moves us in the same way these lines and expressions do, then it is truly a great work; otherwise, it is not.

Arnold favoured this method because, in his view, the qualities of a great poem are in-

describable. He could only say, "The characteristics of a high-quality poem are what is expressed there." It is better to feel these qualities than to read about them in a prose work written by a critic. He drew examples from great masters like Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. He believed that even a single line is enough to serve this purpose. The lines chosen from these writers may differ, but they all share one common quality: they represent the very highest poetic quality.

Applying the Touchstone Method, Arnold dismisses Chaucer. While he acknowledges Chaucer as the father of English poetry, Arnold believes that Chaucer falls short of being a great poetic classic. Chaucer lacks the marks of high beauty, worth, and power in both the substance and style of the great masters of literature. Arnold agrees that Chaucer has poetic truth in substance, but he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics. Dryden and Pope are also excluded from the list of great poetic classics, although Arnold accepts them as classics of prose.

The Touchstone Method, however, has its limitations. First, lines or even passages taken out of context are often misleading. Second, the real value of a work can be gauged only from the total impression it creates. Arnold himself is aware of this. Professor Garrod calls the touchstone method a "method of selling poetry by the pound." Since the social milieu and motivations of writers differ, a work of art cannot be judged solely by the excellence of another. Above all, the lines Arnold considers the best may not be regarded as such by another critic.

3.3.2.1 Analysis

Matthew Arnold's views on poetry, as articulated in *The Study of Poetry*, present its immense significance in human life, not just as an art form, but as a vital source of consolation,

stability, and guidance. Arnold holds poetry in high esteem, believing that it has the power to offer humanity a deeper understanding of life and a sense of purpose that surpasses philosophy and religion, which he regards as incomplete and illusory sources of knowledge. For Arnold, poetry is more than an aesthetic pursuit; it has a moral and spiritual dimension that allows it to serve as a means of elevating the human soul.

Arnold views poetry as a "criticism of life," a noble application of ideas that helps individuals understand their existence and navigate the challenges of life. However, he believes that poetry should not simply reflect life as it is, but should transcend it by adding something noble and elevating. True poetry, for Arnold, is not didactic or moralising, but rather aims to create beauty and truth that resonate deeply with the human soul, guiding it without being explicitly instructional. He emphasizes that the role of poetry is to answer the question "How to live?" in a way that is indirect yet profound, embodying ideals of truth and goodness.

Arnold argues that for poetry to serve this important function, it must adhere to the highest standards of both substance and style. He believes that the greatest poetry excels not only in its themes and ideas but also in its form and expression. He criticises contemporary poetry, which he considers often prioritises flashy language or surface-level expression over substance. For Arnold, the substance of a poem – the ideas and truths it conveys – is far more important than the style in which it is written. Classical poetry, exemplified by poets such as Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, represents the ideal model for what poetry should strive to achieve.

For Arnold, the poet is not merely an artist but also a moral and intellectual figure who contributes to society by offering a profound vision of life. He aligns himself with Wordsworth's view of the poet as a sage. Still, he takes this idea further by suggesting that the poet's role is not just to express personal feelings but to convey universal truths that help readers navigate life's complexities. The poet's task, therefore, is to create works that enrich the human spirit by embodying beauty and truth, offering both moral guidance and aesthetic pleasure.

Arnold also introduces the "Touchstone Method" as a means of evaluating poetry. This method involves comparing a poem to the works of the great poets, using lines or passages from classical writers as a touchstone to assess the quality of other works. According to Arnold, a poem that moves us in the same way as the works of the great masters can be considered great in its own right. While acknowledging the method's limitations, such as the possibility of misinterpretation when lines are taken out of context, Arnold defends it as a useful tool for discerning high-quality poetry. He also acknowledges that subjective taste may lead to differing opinions on what constitutes great poetry, but he believes that by aligning modern works with classical examples, one can gauge their true value.

Arnold's views on poetry are not limited to its aesthetic qualities; they also have an ethical dimension. He insists that poetry must be aligned with moral ideals and should offer insights into how to live well. Poetry that disregards moral concerns or expresses indifference to them is, for Arnold, a rejection of life itself. He emphasizes that the greatest poetry is that which helps individuals develop a deeper understanding of life and its ethical dimensions, guiding them toward a higher moral and intellectual plane.

Arnold's views on poetry reflect his belief that it is an essential force in human life, one that can offer comfort, guidance, and understand-

ing. By focusing on both the substance and the form of poetry, Arnold seeks to raise the standard of contemporary poetry and ensure that it fulfils its moral and spiritual purpose. For Arnold, the poet's role is not simply to entertain but to uplift and ennoble the human spirit, and poetry should always strive to embody the highest ideals of beauty, truth, and moral wisdom.

Recap

▶ Arnold views poetry as a source of stability
▶ Poetry offers consolation, sustenance, and moral guidance
▶ Poetry provides answers to "how to live"
▶ High-quality poetry combines truth, beauty, and style
▶ Arnold criticises superficial poetry focused on expression
▶ Great poetry elevates the soul with beauty
▶ Poetry transcends life, enhancing it with ideals
▶ Arnold values substance over form in poetry
▶ Classical poets are models for ideal poetry
▶ Arnold advocates for poetry's moral and intellectual role
▶ He believes poetry should embody truth and goodness
▶ Poetry is "criticism of life" through ideals
▶ Arnold disapproves of didactic or moralising poetry
▶ Touchstone Method compares poems to classical works
▶ Arnold favours works that evoke emotional resonance
▶ He acknowledges limitations in the Touchstone Method
▶ Arnold values the ideas conveyed over poetic expression
▶ Poetry must be of the highest possible standard
▶ Arnold rejects poetry indifferent to moral ideas
▶ Great poetry enriches human spirit and intellectual growth
▶ Poets must offer profound insights into human life

Objective Questions

1. Who is the author of *The Study of Poetry?*
2. What does Arnold believe poetry provides to humanity?
3. According to Arnold, what must poetry combine?
4. Which poets does Arnold cite as models for great poetry?
5. What method does Arnold propose for evaluating poetry?

6. What does Arnold criticize in modern poetry?
7. What element is essential in great poetry, according to Arnold?
8. What does Arnold reject in poetry?
9. What should poetry embody, according to Arnold?
10. Which poets does Arnold consider lacking high poetic standards?
11. What is the focus of Arnold's Touchstone Method?
12. What does Arnold argue is more important than expression?
13. What does Arnold believe is the function of poetry?
14. What does Arnold consider a characteristic of high-quality poetry?
15. What does Arnold believe influences contemporary criticism?

Answers

1. Arnold
2. Consolation
3. Truth
4. Shakespeare
5. Touchstone
6. Superficiality
7. Substance
8. Didacticism
9. Goodness
10. Chaucer
11. Comparison
12. Subject
13. Interpretation
14. Beauty
15. Practicality

Assignments

1. Discuss Matthew Arnold's views on the function of poetry and its significance in human life according to *The Study of Poetry.*
2. Explain Arnold's Touchstone Method and evaluate its effectiveness in assessing the quality of poetry.
3. Analyse Arnold's critique of contemporary poetry and explain why he be-

lieves modern poets fail to meet the standards of great poetic works.

4. How does Arnold distinguish between great and inferior poetry? Use examples from his writings to support your answer.

5. Discuss Arnold's view on the role of criticism in literature and its relationship with creative effort. How does he justify the importance of criticism over mere creative expression?

Suggested Reading

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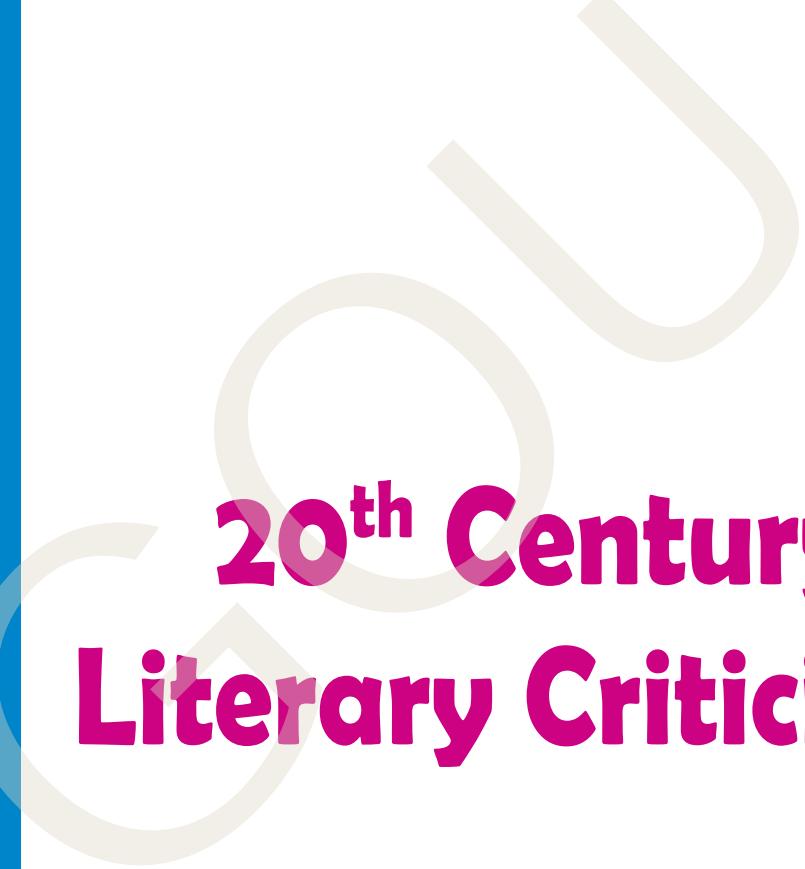
20th Century Literary Criticism

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Unit 1

T.S.Eliot - Tradition, Objective Correlative and Dissociation of Sensibility

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ introduce T. S. Eliot as a literary critic
- ▶ discuss Eliot's influence on modernist literary movement
- ▶ analyse Eliot's concept of tradition and literature's past-present relationship
- ▶ evaluate impersonality theory and the poet's literary role
- ▶ explain objective correlative and evoking emotion in poetry
- ▶ critique dissociation of sensibility's impact on poetry

Prerequisites

T.S. Eliot (1888–1965) was one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century, renowned as a poet, playwright, journalist, and critic. His critical writings, collected in works such as "The Sacred Wood" and "Selected Essays", revolutionised literary theory by emphasizing the importance of tradition, impersonality, and the objective correlative. Eliot's essays, including "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Hamlet and His Problems", challenged Romantic notions of poetry as personal expression, advocating instead a disciplined, impersonal approach to a literary work. His ideas not only shaped modernist literature but also laid the groundwork for the New Criticism movement, which dominated literary studies in the mid-20th century.

Eliot's critical vision was deeply rooted in his belief that literature exists within a dynamic continuum, where past and present works influence and reshape one another. He argued that a poet's individuality emerges not through personal expression but through a profound engagement with literary tradition. This redefinition of tradition, along with his theories of impersonality and the objective correlative, provided a framework for understanding poetry as an autonomous art form, independent of the poet's biography or historical context. Eliot's emphasis on close reading, textual analysis, and the unity of

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thought and feeling in poetry continues to influence literary criticism, making his work a cornerstone of modernist thought and a lasting contribution to the study of literature.

This unit is going to discuss these critical perspectives and their significance in modern literary theory.

Key Concepts

Modernism , Tradition, Impersonality, Objective Correlative, Dissociation of Sensibility,

4.1.1. Introduction to Thomas Stearns Eliot

Fig. 4.1.1. T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

T.S. Eliot was one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century. He was a highly talented writer who gained recognition as a poet, playwright, journalist, and critic. Eliot followed the tradition of poet-critics like Ben Jonson, Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold - writers who understood their craft deeply and expressed their ideas with confidence and clarity.

Eliot's critical writings were first published as articles and essays in various periodicals and journals. Over time, these works were collected in books, including:

1. *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933)

2. *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939)

3. *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (1948)

4. *Selected Essays, Third Edition* (1951)

5. *On Poetry and Poets* (1957)

6. *To Criticise the Critic* (1965)

Some of his most famous essays in literary criticism include "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*"," *Poetry and Drama*"," *The Function of Criticism*", "*The English Metaphysical Poets*", and "*The Frontiers of Criticism*".

Eliot's criticism is valuable because he wrote with authority and precision. His prose is as carefully crafted as his poetry. He played a major role in reviving interest in 17th-century Metaphysical poets. His ability to express complex ideas in striking phrases made his work widely influential. Terms like "dissociation of sensibility," "objective correlative," and "unified sensibility" have become key concepts in literary studies.

4.1.2. The Emergence of Modernism and Eliot's Influence

Modernism, a radical departure from 19th-century literary traditions, emerged as a response to the rapidly changing intellectual, social, and artistic landscape of the early 20th

century. While its origins are often debated, the movement was shaped by the *Art for Art's Sake* philosophy and the experimental ethos of figures like T.E. Hulme, Ford Madox Ford, and Ezra Pound. Among these, T.S. Eliot played a defining role, not only as a poet but as a critic and theorist as well, who provided modernism with a philosophical and aesthetic foundation. His ideas influenced subsequent literary movements, including 'New Criticism' in America and the 'Leavisite School' in England.

4.1.2.1 Tradition and Innovation: Eliot's Critical Vision

A key aspect of Eliot's modernist ethic was his re-evaluation of literary tradition. In his seminal essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), he argued that tradition was not a static inheritance but a dynamic continuum in which every new work of literature altered the existing order. He famously rejected the Romantic emphasis on personal expression, stating:

"Poetry is not the turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."

For Eliot, true artistry required intellectual discipline and objectivity rather than subjective indulgence. He positioned modernist literature as an intricate dialogue with the past, emphasising that great works were not born in isolation but emerged through an engagement with historical literary achievements. He saw writers such as Dante, Shakespeare, and the Metaphysical poets as vital reference points, shaping the modernist approach to form, language, and meaning.

4.1.1.2 The Modernist Ethic: Intellectual Rigour and Artistic Discipline

Eliot's poetic technique embodied the principles of modernism: fragmentation, allusiveness, and an emphasis on irony and ambiguity. His masterpiece, *The Waste Land* (1922), captured the disillusionment of the post-war era while weaving together diverse literary, mythological, and historical references. Through this, Eliot illustrated his belief in the *impersonality* of art, where meaning arose not from the poet's personal experience but from the interplay of ideas, symbols, and cultural memory.

His concept of the *objective correlative*, the idea that emotions should be expressed through concrete images and external situations rather than direct sentiment, further strengthened the modernist commitment to precision and restraint. This theory profoundly influenced literary criticism, shaping the methods of close reading that became central to New Criticism.

4.1.2.3 Eliot's Modernist Ethic and Its Enduring Influence

Eliot's impact on modernist literature extended beyond his own poetry. His critical writings set the intellectual framework for a movement that sought to reconcile artistic experimentation with a rigorous engagement with tradition. This modernist ethic, marked by formal innovation, textual complexity, and philosophical depth, challenged the assumptions of literary Romanticism while preserving its intellectual inheritance in a new form.

Through his dual role as poet and critic, Eliot not only defined the aesthetics of modernism but also ensured its lasting influence on literary scholarship. His vision of literature as a

disciplined, impersonal art form continues to shape contemporary discussions on poetics, criticism, and the evolving nature of artistic tradition.

4.1.3. Tradition and the Individual Talent

Introduction

Professor Frank Kermode classifies Eliot's essays into three groups: general essays, essays on specific writers, and those focused on social and religious criticism. "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*" falls into the first category.

It is considered one of Eliot's most influential essays. At the time he wrote it, his ideas were shaped by Ezra Pound (and through him, writers like Remy de Gourmont and Henry James) and by Irving Babbitt, who introduced him to Humanism at Harvard. Although Eliot's essays may seem structured around theories and systems, they actually come from his personal reading of past poetry and his vision for modern poetry, including his own and that of his contemporaries. "Tradition and the Individual Talent*", "*The Metaphysical Poets*"*, and "Hamlet and his Problems*"* reflect his critical thinking during the time he was writing "Gerontion*"* and The Waste Land.

Among Eliot's works on poetry and criticism, "Tradition and the Individual Talent*"* is one of his most definitive statements. It was first published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1919 and later in *The Egoist*. The essay was later included in *The Sacred Wood* (1920) and *Selected Essays* (1932). The essay presents Eliot's developed theory on how poetry relates to its author and summarises his critical thinking up to 1919. It is often considered an informal statement of Eliot's critical beliefs, as it outlines the key ideas that shaped his approach to literature.

In this essay, Eliot sets the standard by which he hoped to be judged. He discusses the balance between tradition and individuality in a writer's work. His later poem, *The Waste Land,* puts into practice the ideas he first explored here. Like John Dryden, who prepared critical arguments before writing his poems, Eliot used criticism to lay the groundwork for his literary innovations. This has led to him being called the "Dryden of the 20th century."

4.1.3.1 Structure and Criticism of the Essay

The essay is divided into three sections, but it naturally falls into two main parts. The first part discusses the poet's relationship with past writers, and the second explores the poet's relationship to his own poetry. However, Eliot does not clearly connect the two ideas in the title, "Tradition and Individual Talent." F. R. Leavis criticised the essay for its ambiguities, contradictions, and lack of logical clarity.

Eliot was a strong advocate of classicism, even in an era dominated by mass culture. He sought a mystical fusion of the temporary and the eternal in a poet's vision. His critical writing often subtly reflects his own poetry. Notably, he wrote very little about novels, suggesting his preference for poetry and drama, which have classical roots, and his disinterest in popular culture.

Eliot supported conservatism and tradition in literature, politics, and religion, yet he was highly experimental in his poetry. His poetry often challenged traditional language and form, using techniques like Expressionism and Stream-of-Consciousness, which were also employed by modern painters such as Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso. He was one of the first poets to introduce these techniques into poetry.

4.1.3.2 Eliot's Evolving Critical Thought

As a critic, Eliot took an empirical approach. Though he wrote with authority, he constantly refined his ideas. He became a leading figure in the New Criticism movement, but later in *The Frontiers of Criticism* (1953), he admitted that in *The Function of Criticism* (1923) he had placed too much emphasis on formal analysis while dismissing impressionistic criticism.

Eliot's criticism provides insight into what he expected from poetry in terms of themes, style, and method. To fully grasp his "impersonal theory" of poetry, one must carefully examine various ideas scattered across his essays. Throughout his career, he strongly opposed the Romantic notion that poetry is simply an expression of the poet's personality. Instead, he argued that a great poem always connects to the works of past poets. A poet must recognise not just the 'pastness' of past literature but also its relevance to the present. Poetry is not about self-expression; rather, the poet acts as a medium for tradition.

Some might see Eliot's emphasis on impersonality as a sign of coldness toward poetry. However, his ideas are similar to those of John Keats, who proposed the concept of 'negative capability'- the ability of a poet to remain detached and let the work take shape independently of personal bias. Eliot believed that a certain psychological distance was necessary for creating true poetry. His idea of the "objective correlative" reflects his belief that poetry should focus on artistic technique rather than personal expression.

The Victorians judged poets based on their philosophical or moral ideas, but Eliot argued that a poem should be considered for what it *is*, not for what it *says*. His criticism reflects his evolving realisation that poetry relies on inspiration and technique to balance emotion and intellect.

Eliot's idea of escaping personality was not just about avoiding personal emotions—it was also about rejecting opinionated and rhetorical poetry, which had weakened 19th-century poetry. Despite opposing the Romantic idea of poetry as self-expression, he still valued imagination and inspiration. However, rather than calling it "spontaneous imagination," he preferred the term "mechanism of sensibility," showing his preference for structured creativity over uncontrolled emotion.

The essay is divided into three parts:

1. The first part explains Eliot's idea of tradition.
2. The second part introduces his theory of the impersonality of poetry.
3. The third and final section summarises his main arguments.

Eliot wrote this essay in response to the Romantic idea that poetry is purely personal and emotional. He begins by discussing the common misunderstanding of the word "tradition." Many people think of it as outdated and restrictive. However, Eliot defines tradition as literary history ,the body of knowledge that writers inherit and build upon. He criticises the English preference for originality over influence, arguing that the best poets are deeply connected to past writers.

For Eliot, tradition is not about blindly copying the past. Instead, it requires effort, study, and critical thinking to understand which past works are valuable. A true sense of tradition comes only to those with a historical perspective, those who see literature as a continuous flow from the past to the present. He emphasises that great literature from Homer to the modern age exists as part of a unified tradition, where past and present influence each other.

In short, Eliot's idea of tradition includes:

1. Recognising the ongoing continuity of literature.
2. Evaluating which past writers remain relevant today.
3. Gaining deep knowledge of these significant writers through careful study.

To properly judge a poet's work, Eliot argues, we must compare it with the works of earlier poets and understand its place within the larger literary tradition.

4.1.4 Summary

Tradition: A Term Used in a Derogatory Sense by the English

Eliot begins the essay by commenting that in English literature and literary criticism, the correct use of tradition is rare. It is most often used in the adjective form of "traditional," and even then, in a derogatory sense. It is usually used as a word of censure rather than praise. When it is used as praise, which is seldom, it is used in connection with archaeological artefacts. The word is disagreeable to English ears.

The Importance of Tradition in Criticism

Eliot then argues that criticism is not less valuable than creative writing. In fact, criticism is as natural as breathing. Each nation has its own way of thinking critically. The English, seeing how much criticism the French produce, assume that the French put more effort into thinking than the English do. They believe that the French are less spontaneous. However, Eliot insists that criticism is not only natural but also necessary. When someone reads a poem, they instinctively form an opinion about it. However, the English approach to criticism has a flaw-- they tend to

admire the parts of a poet's work that are the most unique and least similar to past poets. This, Eliot argues, is a mistake. Instead, if one reads poetry without bias and with a critical mindset, they will see that the strongest parts of a poet's work are often those where the influence of past poets is most obvious. In other words, a poet's best work is one that has absorbed tradition.

True Tradition: Not Just Imitation but Something Deeper

Eliot's idea of tradition is not about simply copying the past. It does not mean blindly and fearfully following the ways of the previous generation. This kind of repetition or imitation should be firmly rejected, as it is not real tradition. Eliot argues that originality has a much greater meaning- it is not something a writer simply inherits. Instead, one must work hard to achieve it. Tradition is something that must be deliberately acquired through great effort, which includes studying past writers and developing deep knowledge through scholarship.

4.1.4.1 Tradition and Historical Sense

Historical sense is indispensable to anyone who wants to continue being a poet. Historical sense involves a perception "not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence." A poet with historical sense would feel 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." It is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal together, and this is what makes a writer traditional. At the same time, it makes a writer conscious of his place in time and his contemporaneity. The past is not to be seen in isolation. It is related to the present, and continues in and through it.

A writer's own work is a part of a continuing tradition. Eliot implies that a writer has to fuse individualism with a sense of tradition. A writer must be acutely conscious of the different aspects of modern or contemporary life; at the same time, however, he should rise above and beyond this contemporary life and define himself in terms of 'tradition'. It is a recognition of the continuity of literature and a consciousness of the best writers of the past.

4.1.4.2 Tradition is Not Static

Eliot comments that a writer cannot be judged in isolation. He does not have his complete meaning alone. He cannot be valued alone. He has to be compared and contrasted with the order of earlier writers and placed among them. It is only through this kind of comparison and contrast that a writer's true worth can be judged. Eliot's concept of tradition is a dynamic one; tradition is evolving all the time. Tradition consists of both the past and the present. There is a mutual interdependence between the past and the present. The past modifies the present, and the present alters the past. The writer in the present looks for the guidance of the past in literary traditions. But when a new work of art is created, it inevitably modifies tradition. The new work causes a re-adjustment in values and relationships of the already existing works. Tradition is not something static but is forever changing, growing, and evolving. "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new." A sense of tradition implies a changing relationship with the past, the past which is constantly being altered as new works are added to it.

Judging a Poet through Tradition

A poet who understands tradition knows that his work will always be compared with past works and judged in relation to them. However, Eliot clarifies that 'judgement' does not mean simply deciding whether a poet is better or worse than those before them. It also does not mean that new works must meet the exact standards set by earlier critics. Instead, judgement is a form of comparison, where past and present works help explain and enrich each other.

A poet's place in tradition is determined by how their work relates to their literary 'ancestors.' A truly new piece of writing is not something completely separate from the past-- it still connects with and builds upon tradition. A work of art contains both traditional elements and unique, individual aspects. Only by being aware of tradition can we fairly judge a poet's work and understand its place in literary history.

A Poet's Connection to the Past

Eliot discusses the different ways in which a poet relates to the past. He argues that a poet cannot simply take the past as a whole, without making distinctions. Instead, the past must be carefully examined, and only the most important parts should be considered.

A poet also cannot shape themselves entirely based on a few past poets they admire, though this is a natural phase in youth. Similarly, a poet cannot rely solely on one particular period of literature, even if they feel drawn to it. While such preferences may enrich their understanding, they do not represent a true sense of tradition.

According to Eliot, a poet must recognise the 'main current' of tradition. However, this

main current does not always flow through the most famous or celebrated writers. A poet must be able to distinguish between what is truly significant and what is merely fashionable, temporary, or specific to a certain period. Eliot stresses that even lesser-known poets should not be overlooked if one wants to understand the literary tradition fully. He also suggests that a poet must develop a critical mind to navigate this tradition properly.

Art does Not Improve but always Remains Relevant

Eliot makes an important point about art: it does not improve over time. A great work of art is perfect in itself and does not get better. However, the material that art draws upon keeps changing. The cultural and intellectual landscape of Europe evolves, and writers must acknowledge this larger historical mind, which Eliot sees as more significant than their own individual minds.

This continuous development does not mean that great writers like Shakespeare or Homer become outdated. On the contrary, their significance remains intact. While literature and art may become more refined or complex over time, this is not the same as improvement. Instead, literature changes in response to new materials and ideas, adapting to the times without losing the value of its past achievements.

Past and the Present

The key difference between the past and the present is that the present is more aware of the past than the past was of itself. Writers from the past appear differently to us today than they did to themselves. We have more knowledge about them than they ever had about their own work. This means that we reinterpret the past based on our present understanding. In this way, the past continues to live on.

How a Poet should Absorb the Past

A poet must absorb the past in order to express the present. But how should they do this? Eliot acknowledges that some may criticise his idea of tradition, arguing that it demands too much learning. After all, there have been poets who were not highly educated but were still great. Some may also claim that too much learning can dull artistic sensitivity.

However, Eliot does not mean that a poet should simply collect bookish knowledge or gain information just to impress others. True knowledge goes deeper than that. Different poets absorb knowledge in different ways; some do so naturally, while others must work hard for it. For example, Shakespeare gained more insight into history from reading Plutarch than many people could from studying in the British Museum. A poet must develop an awareness of the past and continue to expand this awareness throughout their career.

The Artist's Self-Surrender: Impersonality in Poetry

A poet's connection to the past requires self-surrender to something greater than themselves. They must submit to literary tradition rather than focus on their personal identity. Eliot argues that an artist is constantly working to erase their own personality from their work. They must remain objective and not let personal emotions dominate. He compares the poet's mind to a catalyst in a chemical reaction- something that enables change without itself being altered. This process of removing personal emotions from art makes poetry more like a science, where impersonal truth is valued above individual feelings.

4.1.4.3 Poetry and not the Poet, the Object of Criticism and Appreciation

Eliot argues that honest criticism and sensitive appreciation should focus on poetry itself, not on the poet. Poetry does not express the poet's personality- it is created through the poet, but the poet is merely a medium. The main focus should be on the poetry, not on the person who wrote it.

Poetry is a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. A poem is related to other poems written by different authors, and the importance of this relationship should not be ignored.

The Poet and the Poem: The Poet's Mind as a Catalyst

In the impersonal theory, there is a special relationship between the poet and the poetry which he creates. The mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature. It is not so much because the mature poet has 'more to say' or is more interesting, but because his mind has become a more perfected medium. It is able to receive various feelings and allow these to enter into different combinations. Eliot compares this process to a chemical reaction. Oxygen and sulphur dioxide are brought together to form sulphuric acid in the presence of the catalyst, a filament of platinum. The piece of platinum, however, does not undergo any change itself. It remains unaffected. The poet's mind is like a catalyst. The poet's mind brings about new combinations of emotions, but itself remains unaffected by these changes. The combination contains nothing of the poet's personality, just as the sulphuric acid contains no platinum.

The better the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates. The man suffers or goes through certain experiences. It is the poet's mind that creates something new from those experiences. It is not the personality of the poet which is expressed in his poetry. The mind digests and transmutes the passions, which are the material for poetry. Eliot implies that in art, there are no chaotic emotions and passions that can be found in life. Still, an ordering of these emotions, something personal, has to be transformed into something of wider validity.

Emotions and Feelings

According to Eliot, the experiences that enter a poet's mind, acting as a catalyst, are of two types: emotions and feelings. A poem may be created using only emotions, only feelings, or a combination of both. However, Eliot does not clearly define the difference between the two. He believes that certain words or images naturally carry feelings for the writer. These feelings, along with their associated images, are stored in the poet's mind until the right moment for their use arrives. The poet's mind acts like a container, collecting various emotions, feelings, phrases, and images, which remain there until all the necessary elements come together to form a new poem.

The Greatness of a Poem Depends on the Poetic Process

The greatness of a poem is not determined by moral or ethical considerations. It is not about how strong the emotions or feelings are, but about the intensity of the poetic process itself. Sublimity in poetry comes from "the intensity of the artistic process, the pressures under which the fusion takes place." Eliot illustrates this idea with an example. The episode of Paolo and Francesca in *The Divine Comedy* is based on emotion, yet it is no more intense than the canto about Ulysses' voyage, which does not deal with emotion at all. This shows

that great poetry does not depend on personal emotions but on the intensity of the poetic process. There is a clear distinction between art and life. Poetry involves the fusion and organisation of different emotions and feelings. For instance, Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* is not actually about the nightingale itself. The bird serves as an image that brings together various feelings, which are not necessarily related to the nightingale.

The poet does not express his personality in poetry. He is merely a medium through which impressions and experiences mix in unexpected ways. Some experiences may be deeply personal to the poet but never appear in his poetry, while others, which may seem unimportant to him personally, might become significant in his work. Eliot suggests that critics should judge poetry on its own terms, not by looking into the poet's life. A poem should not require knowledge of the poet's biography to be appreciated.

Personal Emotions vs. Artistic Emotion

A poet is not remarkable because of his personal emotions. The emotions he feels in his own life are not what make his poetry significant. These personal emotions may be simple or raw, whereas the emotions in poetry can be complex and refined. However, this complexity in poetry is not the same as having a complex emotional life. Poetry does not need to express new emotions; trying to do so often leads to eccentricity. A poet's role is not to discover new emotions but to take ordinary emotions and transform them into poetry, expressing feelings that are not present in the original emotions. In fact, a poet can even work with emotions he has never personally experienced, giving them new significance and freshly presenting them.

Poetry is not "Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity"

Eliot disagrees with Wordsworth's idea that poetry comes from "emotion recollected in tranquillity." According to Eliot, poetry does not originate from either emotion or tranquillity. Instead, it results from a concentration of various experiences, which produces something entirely new. This concentration is not a conscious or deliberate effort- it happens passively. However, Eliot does not claim that the entire poetic process is passive. Some parts of it require conscious effort and intention. A skilled poet knows when to be conscious and when to allow things to happen naturally. In contrast, a bad poet is conscious when he should be unconscious and unconscious when he should be conscious, making his poetry too personal. However, Eliot does not clearly explain when a poet should be conscious and when he should not.

4.1.4.4 Poetry an Escape from Emotion and Personality

Eliot formulates his theory of poetry as "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." Eliot is not denying personality to the poet. He means that poetry is the universalisation of the particular. The poet's personal emotion is to be depersonalised, made into something of wider significance. What matters is how the personal emotions are transmuted into an impersonal work of art. For this, a poet needs tradition.

Eliot concludes the essay by emphasising that the emotions in a work of art are impersonal. A poet must completely dedicate himself to his craft to achieve this impersonality. He can only understand his role if he recognises that tradition is alive, that the past continues in the present, and the present, in turn, reshapes the past.

Critical Remarks

This essay has been described as a statement of Eliot's critical ideas. This might seem surprising since Eliot did not establish a strict set of rules for criticism. However, even though he did not provide fixed guidelines, he did outline certain general principles about literary criticism. These ideas appear in this essay as well as in *The Function of Criticism*.

Published in 1919, "Tradition and the Individual Talent*"* contains the foundations of many ideas that Eliot later expanded upon in his other essays. The essay is divided into three sections: the first discusses his concept of tradition, the second presents his theory of impersonality in poetry, and the third summarises the main points. Through this essay, Eliot highlights the deep connection between literary creation and criticism.

4.1.5.Critical Analysis

"Tradition and the Individual Talent" as an Unofficial Manifesto of T.S. Eliot's Critical Creed

T.S. Eliot's essay "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*" (1919) serves as an unofficial manifesto of his critical philosophy, outlining his views on literary tradition, historical sense, and the impersonality of poetry. Through this essay, Eliot challenges conventional notions of creativity and emphasises the deep connection between past and present literature. His ideas laid the foundation for modernist literary criticism and continue to influence critical thought today.

4.1.5.1 Eliot's View of Tradition

Eliot redefines tradition as a dynamic and evolving process rather than a static inheritance. He rejects the idea of tradition as a linear historical progression, arguing instead that past and present exist simultaneously, influencing and reshaping each other. A truly original work does not emerge in isolation but modifies the literary tradition as a whole.

For Eliot, tradition is not about blindly accepting the past but engaging critically with it. A poet must study literary history, recognizing major influences while filtering out less significant ones. Even minor poets contribute to literary development and should not be ignored. Every new literary work should be evaluated in comparison with past literature, as understanding tradition deepens the appreciation of both historical and contemporary texts.

Eliot also asserts that art does not progress in the same way as science. While artistic styles and techniques evolve, the fundamental value of great works remains unchanged. Shakespeare is not necessarily superior to modern poets; rather, each writer exists within the context of their time, contributing to an ongoing literary continuum.

4.1.5.2 Eliot's Concept of Historical Sense

A key aspect of Eliot's critical thought is his concept of historical sense—the ability to perceive literature as a continuous tradition. According to Eliot, a writer must not only understand the past but also recognize its presence in contemporary works. Literary tradition is not about passive imitation; it is a living influence that shapes new creative expressions.

Historical sense enables a poet to develop individuality while maintaining a connection to literary history. Eliot emphasizes that this awareness is not limited to a single literary period or a few favorite authors. Instead, a poet must engage with a broad spectrum of literature, including both well-known and lesser-known writers, to fully appreciate the interconnectedness of literary tradition.

Eliot also argues that literary evaluation should always be comparative. Instead of ranking authors or determining which works are superior, critics should analyze how different literary texts relate to one another. This comparative approach fosters a deeper understanding of literature's evolution and influence across time.

4.1.5.3 Eliot's Theory of the Impersonality of Poetry

One of Eliot's most revolutionary ideas is the impersonality of poetry. He argues that the poet and the poem should be distinct, and personal emotions should not dominate artistic creation. According to Eliot, poetry is not a direct expression of the poet's feelings but an objective artistic construct.

Eliot famously states, "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." This means that poetry should transcend the poet's personal experiences and strive for universality. Eliot compares the poet's role to that of a catalyst in a chemical reaction, essential to the process but not part of the final product. Just as a chemical reaction occurs through a medium that facilitates transformation without altering itself, poetry should be created independently of the poet's personal life.

4.1.5.4 Poetry as Organisation

Eliot emphasizes that poetry is more about structured composition than spontaneous inspiration. He rejects the Romantic notion of poetry as an overflow of personal emotion, arguing instead that great poetry emerges from the careful organization of thoughts and experiences. A poet's personal emotions may not always be relevant to their artistic work, and significant poetry can arise from unrelated or even trivial experiences.

He further suggests that the emotions in poetry are distinct from those in real life. A poet may experience simple emotions, but through craftsmanship, they can create complex and meaningful poetic expressions. Eliot's view challenges the idea that poetry is a mere recollection of emotions, as proposed by Wordsworth. Instead, he sees poetry as a structured process where different experiences merge to form an independent artistic entity.

Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent* stands as an unofficial manifesto of his critical creed, defining his views on literary tradition, historical sense, and poetic impersonality. His essay revolutionized modern literary criticism by advocating for a balance between tradition and innovation. Eliot's emphasis on the interconnectedness of past and present, his rejection of personal emotion in poetry, and his insistence on structured artistic creation continue to shape contemporary literary thought. His essay remains a cornerstone of modernist criticism, reinforcing the idea that poetry is both a personal and historical phenomenon, existing within a larger cultural continuum.

4.1.6.Objective Correlative

The term *Objective Correlative* was first used by the American painter and poet Washington Allston (1779–1843). However, it became famous when T.S. Eliot introduced it in his 1919 essay *Hamlet and His Problems*. Eliot mentioned the term casually, but it later became a widely discussed idea in literary criticism, something that even surprised him. Eliot defined *Objective Correlative as* "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked"

According to Eliot, the best way to express an emotion in poetry is not by directly stat-

ing it but by using a set of objects, a specific situation, or a sequence of events that naturally evoke that emotion in the reader. In other words, instead of simply saying, *I am sad,* a poet should describe a scene or action that conveys sadness, such as a withered flower, an abandoned house, or the sound of distant thunder. These external elements create an emotional response in the reader without the poet having to explain the feeling outright.

Eliot's concept became popular, especially among *New Critics*, who preferred poetry that was precise, structured, and impersonal. They opposed poetry that was vague, overly emotional, or relied too much on direct statements of feeling. For example, they criticised lines like Shelley's *I die, I faint, I fail* in "*Indian Serenade"* because they felt such expressions were too abstract and did not create a vivid emotional effect. Instead, they preferred poetry that conveyed emotions through concrete images and carefully chosen details.

4.1.6.1 Criticism of the Objective Correlative

Despite its influence, Eliot's idea has been criticized for oversimplifying the creative process. Critics argue that no object, situation, or event automatically produces a specific emotion. The way a poet presents an image, chooses words, and structures a poem all contribute to how the reader feels. Two poets could use the same object or situation and create entirely different emotional effects based on how they write about it.

For example, a sunset can symbolise hope in one poem but despair in another. It is not the object itself that holds the emotion but how the poet shapes it through language, tone, and context. This suggests that emotion in poetry is more complex than simply finding the "right" object or situation to represent a feeling.

4.1.6.2 Why the Objective Correlative Became Popular

Despite these criticisms, Eliot's idea became widely accepted because it aligned with a shift in literary criticism during the early 20th century. Critics and poets at the time were moving away from overly personal, sentimental poetry and instead emphasizing structure, precision, and objectivity. The *Objective Correlative* supported this movement by providing a method for writing poetry that was emotionally powerful without being overly subjective.

In essence, Eliot's concept encouraged poets to "show" rather than "tell" emotions in their work. It remains a valuable tool for understanding how literature can evoke deep feelings in readers without directly stating them. While it may not fully explain how poetry is created, it highlights the importance of imagery, structure, and careful craftsmanship in expressing emotions effectively.

4.1.7 Dissociation of Sensibility

T.S. Eliot introduced the term *Dissociation of Sensibility* in his 1921 essay *"The Metaphysical Poets"*. He used this phrase to describe a change in poetry that, according to him, began in the 17th century. Before this change, poets like John Donne and other metaphysical poets had a unique ability to combine deep thought and strong emotions in their writing. Their poetry was both intellectual and deeply felt; they could think and feel at the same time. Eliot described their way of writing as *"a direct sensuous apprehension of thought",* meaning they experienced their ideas as vividly as smelling a rose. Eliot contrasts John Donne's integration of thought and feeling with Victorian poets like Tennyson, who, according to Eliot, do not "feel their thought" as immediately.

Eliot argued that in the 17th century, this close connection between thought and feeling be-

gan to break apart. This split, which he called *dissociation of sensibility*, created a lasting division in poetry that, in his view, had not been repaired.

4.1.7.1 The Metaphysical Poets and Their Style

The metaphysical poets were often criticized for combining very different ideas in surprising ways. For example, in his poem *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, John Donne compares two lovers who are apart to the two legs of a drawing compass. Such unexpected comparisons, or *conceits*, were characteristic of metaphysical poetry. Eliot admired this ability because it reflected a unified way of experiencing the world, where intellect and emotion worked together.

However, as poetry evolved, Eliot believed that later poets lost this balance. He blamed this change largely on the influence of John Milton and John Dryden, whose poetry, in his view, encouraged either pure intellect (thinking without feeling) or pure emotion (feeling without thought). This meant that poets after the metaphysical period tended either to focus on abstract ideas without emotional depth or to emphasise emotion without intellectual complexity.

4.1.7.2 The Impact of Rationalism and Modern Poetry

Eliot believed that this separation of thought and feeling became worse over time, especially with the rise of scientific rationalism. As science and reason became dominant ways of understanding the world, literature and poetry were increasingly pushed into the realm of emotion and imagination. Instead of being seen as a way to explore truth through a combination of thought and feeling, poetry was treated as something separate from rational thought, something that belonged only to the emotional side of life.

This idea influenced *New Criticism*, a literary movement that focused on close analysis of poetry and valued Eliot's approach to literature. Many literary critics in the early 20th century accepted Eliot's claim that poetry had lost its ability to unite thought and feeling, and they looked back to the metaphysical poets as a model of what poetry should be.

4.1.7.3 Criticism of Eliot's Theory

In more recent times, some scholars have questioned Eliot's idea of the *dissociation of sensibility*. They argue that Eliot was biased and nostalgic, wanting to return to an earlier style of poetry that fit his personal preferences. They also point out that poets after the 17th century still combined thought and emotion in their work, but in different ways. While Eliot's idea has shaped modern literary criticism, many now see it as more of an opinion than an absolute fact about literary history.

Eliot's *Dissociation of Sensibility* describes his belief that poetry after the 17th century lost the ability to blend thought and feeling in a unified way. He saw the metaphysical poets as the last group to truly achieve this balance, and he blamed later poets, particularly Milton and Dryden, for deepening the divide between intellect and emotion. While his theory influenced many critics, it has also been challenged as an overly simplistic view of literary history. Regardless of its accuracy, the idea remains an important part of discussions about how poetry expresses human experience.

Recap

- ► Eliot redefined tradition as a dynamic, evolving literary continuum.
- ► Poetry escapes emotion, personality; focuses on impersonal artistry.
- ► Objective correlative: emotions evoked through concrete imagery.
- ► Dissociation of sensibility: thought and feeling split post-17th century.
- ► Eliot's criticism shaped modernist literature and New Criticism.
- ► Tradition requires historical sense, connecting past and present.
- ► Poet's mind: catalyst transforming emotions into art.
- ► Eliot rejected Romanticism, emphasizing intellectual discipline in poetry.
- ► Art doesn't improve; evolves with cultural, intellectual shifts.
- ► Poetry's greatness lies in the intensity of artistic process.
- ► Eliot's impersonal theory: poetry transcends personal emotions.
- ► Metaphysical poets unified thought, feeling; later poets fragmented.
- ► Eliot's essays laid the groundwork for modernist literary criticism.
- ► Tradition and Individual Talent: Eliot's manifesto for modernism.
- ► Eliot's legacy: structured, impersonal, tradition-focused literary analysis.

Objective Questions

1. What is T.S. Eliot's concept of tradition in literature?
2. What does Eliot mean by the "impersonality of poetry"?
3. What is objective correlative, according to Eliot?
4. What does Eliot's term "dissociation of sensibility" describe?
5. Which literary movement did Eliot significantly influence?
6. What is the main argument of *"Tradition and the Individual Talent"*?
7. How does Eliot view the relationship between past and present literature?
8. What role does the poet's mind play in Eliot's theory?
9. What does Eliot criticize about Romantic poetry?
10. What is Eliot's view on the improvement of art over time?
11. What does Eliot argue about the greatness of a poem?
12. How does Eliot define the historical sense in literature?
13. What is the significance of the metaphysical poets in Eliot's criticism?
14. What does Eliot suggest about the poet's personal emotions in poetry?
15. What is the central idea of Eliot's essay *"Hamlet and His Problems"*?

Answers

1. Tradition is a dynamic, evolving continuum of literature.
2. Poetry should transcend personal emotions and focus on objectivity.
3. Emotions are expressed through concrete objects, situations, or events.
4. The separation of thought and feeling in poetry after the 17th century.
5. Modernism and New Criticism.
6. Poetry should balance tradition and individuality, avoiding personal expression.
7. Past and present literature influence and reshape each other.
8. It acts as a catalyst, transforming emotions into art.
9. It overly emphasizes personal emotion and self-expression.
10. Art does not improve; it evolves with cultural changes.
11. It depends on the intensity of the artistic process.
12. The ability to perceive literature as a continuous, interconnected tradition.
13. They unified thought and feeling, a model for modern poetry.
14. They should be depersonalized and transformed into universal art.
15. Hamlet's emotional complexity lacks an objective correlative for expression.

Assignments

1. Analyse Eliot's concept of tradition and literature's past-present relationship.
2. Discuss impersonality in poetry and its challenge to Romanticism.
3. Explain objective correlative and its application in Eliot's poetry.
4. Evaluate dissociation of sensibility and its impact on poetry.
5. Explore Eliot's influence on New Criticism and close reading.

Suggested Reading

1. Eliot, T.S. *Tradition and the Individual Talent. The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, 1920.
2. Eliot, T.S. *Hamlet and His Problems. The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, 1920.
3. Eliot, T.S. *The Metaphysical Poets*. *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed., Faber and Faber,

1951.

4. Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947.

5. Leavis, F.R. *The Common Pursuit*. Chatto & Windus, 1952.

F.R.Leavis - The Great Tradition and Concept of Literature and Criticism

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ understand F.R. Leavis' critical approach
▶ evaluate Leavis' concept of the literary canon.
▶ critically engage with Leavis' critique of mass culture
▶ apply Leavis' principles of close reading
▶ analyse the role of human sensibility

Prerequisites

Frank Raymond Leavis (1895–1978) was a major figure in 20th-century literary criticism, known for his rigorous and morally engaged approach to literature. He believed literature was not merely an aesthetic pursuit but a vital force in shaping human thought and countering the negative effects of modernity. His journal, *Scrutiny* (1932–1953), promoted close reading, focusing on deep textual analysis rather than abstract theories. Leavis argued that literature should engage with the complexities of life, offering insights into human nature, society, and morality. He rejected the idea of literature as mere entertainment, instead underscoring its role in intellectual and moral development. In *The Great Tradition* (1948), he identified Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and D.H. Lawrence as central to the English literary canon, valuing their artistic integrity, moral seriousness, and technical skill.

His approach combined detailed textual study with intuitive judgement, focusing on the text itself rather than external influences. Though influenced by T.S. Eliot, he placed greater emphasis on the moral and social responsibilities of literature. He also criticised mass culture, arguing that popular media and commercialised literature weakened intellectual and cultural standards. Despite his selective canon and controversial exclusions - such as his initial dismissal of Charles Dickens- Leavis's ideas continue to shape literary studies. His focus on close reading, moral seriousness, and literature's cultural role

remains influential.

In this unit, you will explore Leavis' critical methods, his views on the English novel, and his lasting impact on literary thought.

Key Concepts

Great Tradition, Moral Seriousness, Literary Canon Formation, Cultural Critique, Artistic Integrity

4.2.1. Introduction to F.R. Leavis
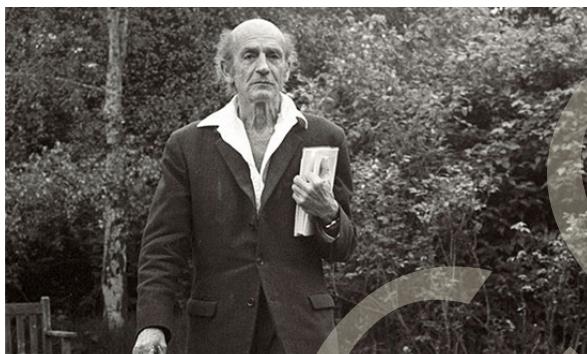
Fig. 4.2.1 F.R. Leavis (1895-1978)

Frank Raymond Leavis was a distinguished literary critic whose approach emphasised close reading and the rigorous evaluation of texts. He advocated that literary criticism should focus on the text itself, prioritising an empirical engagement that enables a deeper understanding of literature. For Leavis, literature held a crucial role in preserving cultural values, providing a counterbalance to the potentially dehumanising effects of technological progress. His teachings, lectures, and ideas were disseminated through *Scrutiny*, the literary quarterly he co-founded in 1932, which remained an influential publication until its closure in 1953.

Leavis' critical method was largely empirical rather than theoretical, and his approach can

be described as an intuitive and socially committed form of moral criticism. His work was deeply influenced by T.S. Eliot, particularly in his early assessments of the English poetic tradition. However, his contributions to English fiction analysis remain among his most impactful works. He emphasised the necessity of literature to present characters that respond sensitively to the social and moral issues of their time. His criticism was founded upon an ethical commitment to literature's role in shaping human sensibility, but he firmly resisted abstract theorisation.

Raman Selden categorised Leavis as a moral critic rather than a New Critic, distinguishing his method from the American New Critical approach, which emphasised an objective, text-based analysis. While the New Critics focused on textual autonomy and formalist scrutiny, Leavis emphasised sensibility and the human experiences embedded in literary works. His approach acknowledged that values in literature were intuitive and deeply felt rather than subject to abstract theorisation.

4.2.1.1 Major Works and Contributions

Leavis's influential works covered both literature and popular culture, some of which include:

- *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (1930)
- *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932)
- *Revaluation* (1936)
- *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948)
- *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955)
- *Dickens the Novelist* (1970, co-authored with Q.D. Leavis)
- *The Living Principle: "English" as a Discipline of Thought* (1975)
- *Nor Shall My Sword* (1970)

His essay on *Hard Times*, originally published in *Scrutiny* (Spring 1947) as "The Novel as Dramatic Poem," reflects Leavis' effort to re-evaluate Dickens as a serious artist. Ian Gregor highlights Leavis' observation of Dickens' stylistic dexterity, symbolic depth, and narrative precision. Though Dickens was initially dismissed by Leavis as primarily an entertainer rather than a serious novelist, his later reassessment in *Dickens the Novelist* (1970) acknowledged Dickens' artistic merit.

4.2.1.2 The Great Tradition and Its Chapters

Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948) remains his most renowned work, establishing a lineage of novelists whom he considered central to the English literary canon. The book consists of the following chapters:

1. The Great Tradition
2. George Eliot
3. Henry James
4. Joseph Conrad
5. *Hard Times*: An Analytic Note
6. Appendix

4.2.2. Summary of Chapter 1 - The Great Tradition

Leavis notes at the beginning that, among English novelists, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad are widely recognised as "the great English novelists." He acknowledges that some critics consider his perspective too limited, but he insists that he can justify his position. The study of fiction is particularly challenging because it allows for multiple interpretations, which can sometimes lead to confusion when forming judgments and shaping critical thought. Writers such as Jane Austen, Thackeray, George Eliot, Mrs Gaskell, Scott, the Brontë sisters, and Trollope, among others, are generally regarded as classical novelists. It is worth highlighting that these authors not only contribute significantly to the literature but also bring about distinct changes in the artistic possibilities of the novel. Through their works, they explore and expand human understanding by engaging with the complexities and "possibilities of life," offering insights into human nature, society, and moral choices.

Leavis proposes a tradition within the English novel, where novelists form a continuous lineage in relation to the idea of tradition. As a result, the established views of English fiction's past would require significant revision. He particularly admires Henry Fielding for his role in introducing Jane Austen to this tradition. Leavis also praises Fielding for the broad scope and variety of episodes in his novel *Tom Jones*. However, he observes that Fielding's focus on human nature, though straightforward, has a limitation; it results in a certain monotony. According to Leavis, while Fielding's work is notable, it does not offer enough diversity in terms of themes and depth of exploration.

Jane Austen is "one of the truly great writers, and herself a major factor in the background

of other great writers." She provides a faithful and enlightening portrayal of ingenuity and artistically portrays the connection between individual talent and tradition. Her relation to tradition is creative in that she not only considers tradition a lineage but also the effort to look back into her intentions as far as her relationship with the past is concerned.

Leavis quotes Cecil Day Lewis, who observes that George Eliot is "the first modern novelist who not only excels entertainment but also explores "serious problems and preoccupations of mature life". She breaks with the primary tradition of form and matter characteristic of the novel of her times. Lewis compares George Eliot with Jane Austen because their plots are not only deliberate and well-calculated but they also offer an insight into the realities of life

Leavis comments that Jane Austen is interested in composition; however, she maintains an aesthetics that is disparate from moral significance. The dual principles of organisation and development, in her works offer an intense moral interest that shows her preoccupation with her personal life. She is serious and dedicated enough to impersonalise her moral tensions and makes efforts to learn what to do with them. Her success is her preoccupation with morals

The great novelists in the tradition identified by Leavis are preoccupied with form for they are technically original and use their genius to frame uniquely appropriate methods and procedures in their art. The various novels of D.H.Lawrence, George Moore, Jane Austen and George Eliot show the composition that is orderly and frames an authentic picture of life.

Lewis however imparts to Jane Austen a superiority over George Eliot due to the freedom from moral preoccupations, which Austen enjoys. An example would be Emma that is appreciated only in terms of Austen's moral preoccupation that brings out the novelist's peculiar interest in life. Emma is a great novel because it is perfect in form with aesthetic matter preserved in the beauty of composition and "represents truth to life."

Henry James, who admires Jane Austen is infused with a peculiar ethical sensibility. His ethical sensibility is discerning, his wit is real and natural, his poetry is intelligent and rich; moreover, it is devoid of anything that is false, vulgar or cheap with regard to his principles. He is a novelist who studies and analyses his fellow-craftsmen. James' works are easy due to the use of well-grounded technical sophistication and bears a view of the world that is quite different from his contemporaries. Though he is unmistakably an American from the English point of view, he is also very much a European in temperament

George Eliot could create only from her personal experiences that is closely related to the middle and lower class of the rural England of the 19th century Midlands, observes Leavis. Though she is labelled a Puritan, this is quite misleading because there is no evidence of anything restrictive or timid about her ethical habits and what she expresses through her Evangelical background, other than her serious attitude to life and an interest in human nature that makes her a great psychologist. Her psychological and moral insights are significant because her characters exhibit the best in society. Her moral seriousness has not been taken seriously by many writers, especially Henry James. Leavis considers James' treatment of George Eliot too narrow and lauds Eliot's efforts.

Henry James is a genius who creates an ideal civilised sensibility and possesses the capacity to communicate by the finest means of implication. Joseph Conrad is also an innovator in form and method who takes a serious inter-

est in life. Like James, Conrad views fiction as a serious art where the peculiar way of the ingenuity and uniqueness of the artist can be explicitly drawn. Charles Dickens possesses the vitality and vision of art as Conrad does. However, Dickens cannot be included "in the line of great novelists"

Leavis mentions that despite the creativity and the permanent place that Dickens holds among the classics, his "genius was that of a great entertainer and he had for the most part no profounder responsibility as a creative artist than this description suggests". Dickens' novels are not serious in subject matter, and they serve as a source of recreation only. His failure as a serious novelist shows his immaturity in projecting the intensity of life. For these reasons, Dickens fails to be in line with the "great English novelists", and this justifies the exclusion of the elaboration of Dickens' art and creativity in *The Great Tradition.*

Leavis quotes Santayana, who mentions, in Soliloquies in England, that Dickens is famous only among parents and children all over the world, probably in the evenings. Leavis discerns that he is immature and his creative genius is controlled throughout "to a unifying and organising significance." *Hard Times* is denied due recognition for the great product it is. The novel is quite perfect, but quite uncharacteristic of Dickens. The work maintains complete seriousness and is free of "repetitive overdoing and loss of inclusiveness;" moreover, the themes in the novel are rich, well-knit and exceedingly commanding.

In this connection, Leavis mentions, "The fable is perfect; the symbolic and representative values are inevitable and, sufficiently plain at once, yield fresh subtleties as the action develops naturally in its convincing historical way." The prominent feature of the Victorian civilisation is drawn by Dickens with an awe-inspiring force that is manifested con-

cretely. The connections and significances among the characters, as well as the setting, are appropriately realized.

Dickens, in *Hard Times,* brings out crucial aspects related to Victorian Utilitarianism through the characters, Gradgrind and Bounderby. Gradgrind, though respected, possesses "the grossest and crassest, the most utterly unspiritual egotism, and the most blatant thrusting and bullying to which a period of 'rugged individualism' gave scope." He is practical and marries his daughter to Bounderby, who is as individualistic as Gradgrind. The greatness of *Hard Times* has passed unnoticed, and Dickens' artistic felicity cannot be underestimated.

Leavis concludes by discussing the contributions of D.H. Lawrence, whose novels are characterised by their vitality, radical experimentation, and engagement with fundamental human experiences. He critiques James Joyce's *Ulysses* for lacking a unifying organic principle, despite its technical ingenuity. While Joyce is admired for his formal innovations, Leavis argues that the novel's fragmented structure ultimately detracts from its artistic coherence.

In conclusion, Leavis affirms that Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and D.H. Lawrence collectively define the great tradition of the English novel. These writers exemplify a continuous evolution of form, intellectual depth, and artistic integrity, shaping the trajectory of English fiction in profound and enduring ways.

4.2.3. Critical Analysis

The Great Tradition and Leavis's Critical Approach

Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948) is one of his most influential works. In it, he argues for

a lineage of great English novelists who represent the highest artistic and moral standards. He identifies Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad as the central figures in this tradition, later including D.H. Lawrence. Leavis defines "tradition" not as a mere continuity of literary forms but as an evolving, self-renewing process in which each great novelist builds upon and transforms the achievements of predecessors.

His selection of novelists was controversial because he excluded some of the most celebrated authors of the time, such as Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy. Leavis dismissed Dickens, for example, as primarily an entertainer rather than a serious artist, arguing that his novels lacked the depth and complexity necessary for inclusion in *The Great Tradition.* However, he later revised his view, acknowledging *Hard Times* as a serious work of fiction.

Leavis emphasised "close reading" and believed that literary criticism should be an act of precise discrimination. He rejected abstract theorizing and instead focused on the nuances of language, style, and moral seriousness in literary works. His approach was influenced by T.S. Eliot in his early years, particularly in *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), where he championed poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound. However, Leavis later diverged from Eliot, particularly in rejecting the concept of poetic impersonality.

4.2.3.1 Key Novelists in The Great Tradition

Jane Austen

Leavis considered Austen "one of the truly great writers" whose works exhibit artistic ingenuity and moral seriousness. She maintains a delicate balance between form and ethical concerns, offering insightful explorations of human nature and society. Her contribution to the novel lies in her ability to unify artistic excellence with profound moral and psychological depth. *Emma* is particularly significant because of its intricate form and precise character development, which, according to Leavis, "represents truth to life."

George Eliot

Mary Ann Evans, known by her pen name George Eliot, was an English novelist, poet, journalist and translator of the Victorian era. Leavis regarded Eliot as "the first modern novelist," who, beyond providing entertainment, engaged with serious intellectual and moral questions. Her works, such as *Middlemarch*, break with earlier traditions by integrating complex philosophical and psychological dimensions. Eliot's profound moral seriousness and deep engagement with human relationships make her a key figure in *The Great Tradition*. However, Leavis noted that her fiction was deeply tied to her personal experiences and her Evangelical background, which informed her ethical outlook.

Henry James

Leavis viewed James as a writer of remarkable ethical sensibility and technical sophistication. His novels are distinguished by their psychological depth and precise narrative control. James's work, such as *The Portrait of a Lady*, reflects a refined ethical perception and an intricate understanding of human relationships. Leavis appreciated James's dedication to fiction as a serious art form and his influence on the evolution of the modern novel.

Joseph Conrad

According to Leavis, Conrad is a master of narrative form and psychological complexity. His novels, including *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*, embody a serious moral vision

and a deep concern with human nature. Like James, Conrad viewed fiction as a means of profound inquiry into the human condition. His stylistic innovations and thematic depth secured his place in *The Great Tradition.*

D.H. Lawrence

Lawrence represents, for Leavis, a radical departure from traditional forms of fiction. His novels, such as *Women in Love* and *Sons and Lovers*, are marked by their intense exploration of human emotions, relationships, and sexuality. Leavis considered Lawrence's fiction to possess a unique vitality and immediacy, making him a vital force in modern literature. Unlike James, whose ethical sensibility was finely tuned but restrained, Lawrence embraced a passionate, unfiltered engagement with life and its contradictions.

4.2.3.2 Leavis's Exclusion of Other Novelists

Leavis's exclusion of Dickens from *The Great Tradition* was particularly controversial. He believed that Dickens, despite his creative genius, lacked the serious artistic purpose that characterized Austen, Eliot, James, and Conrad. However, he acknowledged that *Hard Times* was an exception, a novel that displayed the depth and structural integrity he valued.

Similarly, Leavis was critical of James Joyce and *Ulysses,* despite the novel's technical brilliance. He felt that Joyce's work lacked an organic unity and a moral core that would place it within the tradition of great English fiction. Unlike Lawrence, whose fiction reflected a dynamic engagement with life, Joyce's work appeared to Leavis as overly experimental and detached from deeper human concerns.

F.R. Leavis remains one of the most influential literary critics of the 20th century. His emphasis on close reading, moral seriousness, and the importance of tradition in literature

shaped modern English studies. *The Great Tradition* continues to provoke debate about the criteria for literary greatness and the role of criticism in shaping the literary canon.

Leavis's approach to literature was passionate and uncompromising. His insistence on the importance of literature as a means of preserving human values and resisting the dehumanization of modern life underscores his enduring relevance. While his exclusions and strong opinions have been challenged, his contributions to literary criticism, particularly his insistence on literature as a serious, life-affecting endeavour, ensure his lasting impact on the field.

4.2.4 F.R. Leavis: Concept of Literature and Criticism

F.R. Leavis remains one of the most influential literary critics of the twentieth century, shaping modern approaches to literary criticism through his emphasis on moral responsibility, tradition, and close reading. His critical philosophy was deeply rooted in the belief that literature plays a vital role in shaping cultural and ethical consciousness. Unlike critics who saw literature as merely an aesthetic pursuit, Leavis insisted on its profound connection to life, morality, and intellectual development. His work sought to establish a rigorous approach to literary analysis, one that rejected superficiality and upheld a selective literary canon of works that demonstrated both artistic excellence and moral depth.

4.2.4.1 Literature as a Moral and Social Force

Leavis viewed literature as essential to the moral and cultural development of society. He believed that great literature was not only an artistic achievement but also a medium through which moral and ethical values were explored and reinforced. For Leavis, literature

was integral to the human experience, offering insights into the complexities of life, character, and personal responsibility. He championed works that engaged deeply with moral issues and criticised those that he believed encouraged intellectual passivity. His critical method sought to distinguish between literature that cultivated serious thought and that which merely entertained or pandered to popular taste. This perspective led him to critique much of Victorian and Romantic literature, which he often dismissed as overly sentimental or lacking intellectual rigour.

4.2.4.2 The Importance of Tradition and the Literary Canon

A central aspect of Leavis's criticism was his emphasis on literary tradition. He argued that literature should be studied in terms of a carefully curated canon of great works, primarily from the English tradition. Leavis's idea of the literary canon was selective, valuing works that he believed demonstrated supreme artistic and intellectual achievement. He held particular admiration for Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Austen, Eliot, and Conrad, while he was critical of certain Victorian and Romantic writers whom he saw as indulgent or emotionally excessive. His selective approach to literary tradition shaped debates about the nature of literary value and the criteria by which works should be judged.

4.2.4.3 Close Reading and the Scrutiny Method

Leavis' approach to literary criticism was heavily influenced by the New Criticism movement, which advocated close reading and detailed textual analysis. He believed that literature should be examined for its intrinsic qualities rather than through the lens of historical or biographical context. This method was advanced through *Scrutiny*, a journal he

founded in 1932, which became a platform for promoting his critical ideals. Through *Scrutiny*, Leavis encouraged a meticulous and disciplined approach to literary analysis, one that sought to uncover the nuances of language, structure, and meaning within a text. This insistence on close reading shaped the academic study of literature, emphasizing precise textual interpretation over broad theoretical speculation.

4.2.4.4 Critique of Mass Culture and Popular Literature

One of the most controversial aspects of Leavis's criticism was his strong opposition to mass culture and popular fiction. He was deeply sceptical of the influence of commercialisation on literature and saw the rise of mass media as a threat to serious intellectual engagement. He argued that popular literature, film, and advertising encouraged superficiality, weakening the ability of individuals to think critically. In contrast, he saw serious literature as demanding intellectual effort and providing deeper insights into human experience. His views on mass culture reflected a broader cultural critique, warning against the dangers of passivity and the decline of rigorous intellectual standards in modern society.

4.2.4.5 Reevaluation of English Literary Tradition

Leavis sought to redefine and refine the English literary tradition, often challenging the conventional appreciation of certain authors. He was particularly critical of the Romantics and certain Victorian writers, whom he regarded as lacking the intellectual discipline necessary for great literature. Instead, he championed the works of the metaphysical poets, as well as modernist writers like T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence, whom he saw as embodying the complexity and depth that great literature

required. His analysis of Lawrence, in particular, emphasised the psychological and moral dimensions of literature, arguing that literature should engage with fundamental questions of human existence. By promoting this reevaluation, Leavis contributed to shifting critical focus towards more intellectually demanding and morally engaging works.

4.2.4.6 Impact on Literary Criticism

Leavis' influence on literary criticism was profound and long-lasting. His insistence on a selective literary canon, the rigorous application of close reading, and the moral function of literature helped shape English literary studies throughout the twentieth century. His work reinforced the idea that literature should be judged based on its intellectual and moral value, rather than on its popularity or historical significance alone. However, his approach has also been criticised for its elitism and ex-

clusivity, with some arguing that his rigid criteria for literary value overlooked important works that did not fit into his narrow definition of great literature. Despite such critiques, Leavis' impact on literary criticism remains undeniable, and his ideas continue to influence contemporary discussions on the role of literature in society.

F.R. Leavis's concept of literature and criticism was founded on the belief that literature is a moral and intellectual pursuit, essential to the development of culture and individual thought. His advocacy for a selective literary canon, his emphasis on close reading, and his critique of mass culture have left a lasting imprint on literary studies. Although his views remain debated, his insistence on rigorous critical standards and the intellectual responsibility of literature continue to shape how literature is studied and understood today.

Recap

- ▶ Leavis focused on detailed analysis of language, structure, and meaning.
- ▶ He judged literature based on its ethical and moral significance.
- ▶ *The Great Tradition* defined important English novelists in literary history.
- ▶ *Scrutiny* promoted rigorous literary criticism and in-depth textual analysis.
- ▶ Literature preserves cultural values and shapes ethical human consciousness.
- ▶ He criticised mass media for encouraging superficiality and intellectual laziness.
- ▶ His criticism relied on textual evidence rather than theoretical speculation.
- ▶ Literature should explore emotions, relationships, and deep moral dilemmas.
- ▶ He supported a selective literary canon based on artistic excellence.
- ▶ Initially, Dickens was dismissed but *Hard Times* gained his approval.
- ▶ Influenced by Eliot, he emphasised the literature of moral and social relevance.
- ▶ He admired Lawrence for experimental writing and deep human insights.

- He criticised *Ulysses* for lacking coherence despite technical achievements.
- His methods shaped English literature studies through strict critical analysis.
- Leavis's legacy highlights literature's role in moral and intellectual life.

Objective Questions

1. What was the name of the literary journal founded by F.R. Leavis?
2. Which work by Leavis identifies Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad as central figures in the English literary canon?
3. What critical method did Leavis emphasise, focusing on detailed textual analysis?
4. Which novelist did Leavis initially dismiss as an entertainer but later acknowledge for *Hard Times*?
5. What term describes Leavis's belief in literature as a force for shaping cultural and ethical consciousness?
6. Which literary movement influenced Leavis's early criticism, particularly his focus on textual autonomy?
7. Which novelist did Leavis include in *The Great Tradition* for his radical experimentation and engagement with human experiences?
8. What did Leavis criticise James Joyce's *Ulysses* for lacking?
9. Which Victorian ideology is critiqued through characters like Gradgrind and Bounderby in *Hard Times*?
10. What did Leavis view as a threat to intellectual rigour and cultural values in modern society?
11. Which poet's work did Leavis champion in *New Bearings in English Poetry*?
12. What did Leavis consider the primary role of literature in society?
13. Which novelist did Leavis describe as "the first modern novelist" for engaging with serious intellectual and moral questions?
14. What did Leavis believe was essential for a work to be included in the literary canon?
15. Which literary figure's concept of poetic impersonality did Leavis later reject?

Answers

1. Scrutiny
2. The Great Tradition
3. Close Reading
4. Charles Dickens
5. Moral Criticism
6. New Criticism
7. D.H. Lawrence
8. Organic Unity
9. Utilitarianism
10. Mass Culture
11. T.S. Eliot
12. Moral Development
13. George Eliot
14. Artistic Integrity
15. T.S. Eliot

Assignments

1. Why did Leavis include specific novelists in *The Great Tradition*?
2. How does Leavis's moral criticism differ from other critical approaches?
3. What are Leavis's concerns about mass culture and popular literature?
4. How does Leavis's close reading method enhance literary text analysis?
5. What is F.R. Leavis's lasting impact on literary criticism today?

Suggested Reading

1. Leavis, F. R. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. Chatto & Windus, 1948.
2. Leavis, F. R. *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*. Minority Press, 1930.
3. Leavis, F. R. *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation*. Chatto & Windus, 1932.
4. Leavis, F. R. *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist*. Chatto & Windus, 1955.
5. Mulhern, Francis. *The Moment of Scrutiny*. Verso, 1979.

New Criticism - Key Theorists and Core Concepts

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ understand New Criticism's principles, focusing on close reading
▶ evaluate contributions of Richards, Brooks, and Empson's criticism
▶ apply Empson's ambiguity concept to interpret poetic texts
▶ assess Intentional and Affective Fallacies' impact on interpretation
▶ compare New Criticism with structuralism and reader-response theories.

Prerequisites

New Criticism emerged in the early 20th century as a response to the need for a more structured and objective approach to literary analysis. At a time when traditional certainties were being questioned, critics like I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot sought to shift the focus of literary criticism away from external factors such as authorial intent, historical context, and reader response, and instead concentrate on the text itself. This movement, which gained prominence in the United States through the works of John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, and W.K. Wimsatt, emphasised close reading and the autonomy of the literary work. New Critics argued that a poem or novel should be treated as an independent object, with its meaning derived from its form, language, and internal structure rather than from biographical or historical influences. Key concepts such as paradox, irony, ambiguity, and organic unity became central to this approach, as seen in works like Brooks's "The Language of Paradox" and Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. By rejecting the "Intentional Fallacy" (the idea that an author's intentions determine a text's meaning) and the "Affective Fallacy" (the idea that a reader's emotional response should guide interpretation), New Criticism established a rigorous, text-focused methodology that dominated literary studies for much of the 20th century.

To understand New Criticism, it is essential to familiarise oneself with its foundational texts and key figures. I.A. Richards's Practical Criticism (1929) introduced the method of close reading, emphasising the importance of analysing texts without external biases.

William Empson expanded on this in Seven Types of Ambiguity (1930), exploring how poetic language creates multiple layers of meaning through ambiguity and paradox. In the United States, John Crowe Ransom's The New Criticism (1941) and Cleanth Brooks's The Well-Wrought Urn (1947) further developed these ideas, focusing on the interplay of structure and texture in poetry and the role of irony and paradox in creating meaning. Additionally, W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's essays on "Intentional Fallacy" and "Affective Fallacy" reinforced the New Critical principle that a text's meaning resides in its language and form, not in the author's intentions or the reader's emotions. These works collectively established New Criticism as a dominant force in literary studies, shaping how literature was analysed and taught in academic settings. Familiarity with these texts and concepts is crucial for understanding the movement's emphasis on textual autonomy, close reading, and the intricate interplay of form and meaning in literature. In this unit, you are going to learn more about the key principles of New Criticism, its major figures, and how their ideas continue to influence literary analysis.

Key Concepts

New Criticism, Close Reading, Textual Autonomy, Ambiguity, Intentional Fallacy, Paradox

Discussion

4.3.1. New Criticism

At the start of the 20th century, a group of critics in England and the USA aimed to bring more structure to literary criticism. Society and people's ways of thinking were changing, and literature was also evolving. As A.C. Ward put it: "The old certainties were certainties no longer. Everything was held to be open to question, everything from the nature of the Deity to the construction of verse forms."

Poets of the 20th century rejected rigid authority and fixed ideas. They began questioning long-established beliefs, influenced by critics such as Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, Arthur Symons, Sir Walter Raleigh, George Saintsbury, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf. These early critics often took an impressionistic approach, lacking clear methods. Meanwhile, other academic fields, especially the social sciences, were becoming more scientific, leading to calls for a more structured approach in literary criticism as well.

David Robey describes *New Criticism* as a literary theory that started with I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot in England before the Second World War and continued in the USA with John Crowe Ransom, W.K. Wimsatt, Cleanth Brooks, and Allen Tate during the 1940s-1960s. Although separate from Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism, these movements shared some similarities. They rejected traditional literary scholarship, focusing instead on literature itself. Both viewed literary texts as independent from their author and historical context, emphasising structure and internal connections.

One of the earliest figures in this movement was T.S. Eliot. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), often considered a modernist manifesto, Eliot argued that poet-

ry should be impersonal. He saw poetry as an *escape* from personal emotion rather than a direct expression of the poet's personality. He also stressed objectivity in literary criticism. As B.K. Das explains, Eliot believed that a great poet's mind functions like a chemical catalyst, facilitating new artistic combinations without being influenced itself.

Among the most influential critics was I.A. Richards, whose *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) had a major impact on British literary studies. Richards focused on the reader's response to literature and developed methods of analysing poetry without reference to biography or historical context. In *Practical Criticism*, he conducted experiments at Cambridge, giving students anonymous poems to analyse without any background information. This led him to propose a more rigorous approach to poetry, focusing on language, meaning, and close reading. His student William Empson expanded on this idea in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), which examined how poets use language to create multiple meanings, sometimes appearing contradictory. Empson's work was influenced by Sigmund Freud's ideas on language and symbolism.

In America, a group known as the *Fugitive Poets* led the New Criticism movement. Key figures included John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks. Others, such as R.P. Blackmur, Yvor Winters, and Kenneth Burke, also contributed. Major works included Blackmur's *The Double Agent* (1935), Tate's *Reactionary Essays* (1936), and Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939). These critics emphasised close reading and the autonomy of literature. Ransom, for example, argued that poetry should be analysed as a self-contained structure rather than judged based on the poet's biography or historical influences.

Although New Critics shared a belief in analysing texts closely, they sometimes disagreed on key ideas. Ransom, for example, criticised I.A. Richards's focus on emotional response and disagreed with Cleanth Brooks's emphasis on paradox and irony. Ransom and Tate were also interested in the debate between science and poetry, arguing that poetry reveals deeper truths than scientific facts alone.

By the 1930s, New Criticism was becoming central to academic study in the USA. Many of its leading figures took teaching positions at universities, such as Ransom at Kenyon College and Brooks at Yale. Books like *Understanding Poetry* and *The World's Body* introduced students to the methods of close reading, moving literary studies away from biography, historical analysis, and moral judgment.

4.3.1.1 Key Ideas of New Criticism

The Poem as an Independent Object

New Critics believed that a poem should be analysed on its own terms, focusing on its form, structure, and language rather than its historical or social background.

Close Reading

Critics emphasised the detailed study of a text's linguistic and structural features to uncover its multiple layers of meaning. William Empson's work was particularly influential in this area.

Rejection of External Influences

New Critics argued that a poem's meaning should not depend on the author's biography, historical context, or moral messages. Cleanth Brooks called this the "heresy of paraphrase", arguing that poetry is not merely an expression of experience but an experience in itself.

Organic Unity

A poem's meaning and structure are seen as inseparable. The idea that a poem should not simply *mean* but *be* was famously expressed in Archibald MacLeish's poem *Ars Poetica*:

> _A poem
>
> Should not mean
>
> But be.be._

Rejection of Authorial Intention

New Critics believed that analysing an author's intentions was unnecessary. W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley argued in their essay "The Intentional Fallacy" that a poem's success should be judged based on how well it functions as a piece of literature, not on what the poet intended to express.

New Criticism dominated literary studies for much of the early 20th century, especially in poetry analysis. However, by the 1950s, its influence began to decline. Scholars started to explore new critical approaches, including structuralism, reader-response criticism, and cultural studies, which considered broader historical and social contexts.

Despite its limitations, New Criticism had a lasting impact on literary analysis. Its focus on close reading remains central to the way literature is studied today, particularly in academic settings.

4.3.2. I. A. Richards (practical criticism)

Ivor Armstrong Richards was a poet, dramatist, speculative philosopher, psychologist, and semanticist. He was among the first critics of the twentieth century to introduce scientific precision and objectivity into English literary criticism.
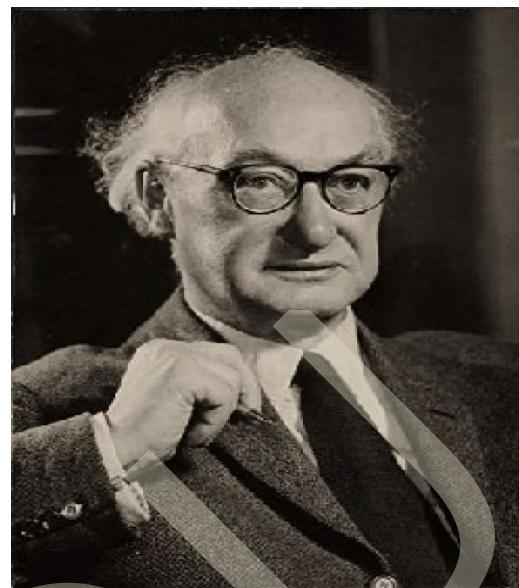

Fig. 4.3.2. I. A. Richards (1893 - 1979)

Often regarded as the 'critical consciousness' of the modern age, Richards's work played a foundational role in the development of New Criticism and modern poetics. His influential writings, including *Principles of Literary Criticism*, *Practical Criticism*, *Coleridge on Imagination*, *The Foundation of Aesthetics* (co-authored with C.K. Ogden and James Wood), and *The Meaning of Meaning* (co-written with Ogden), continue to shape critical discourse. Alongside T.S. Eliot, Richards was instrumental in steering Anglo-American criticism towards a more analytical and scientific approach.

Richards's influence extended to numerous critics on both sides of the Atlantic. Scholars such as John Crowe Ransom, Kenneth Burke, Cleanth Brooks, R.P. Blackmur, Robert Penn Warren, and William Empson, despite variations in their theoretical frameworks, have acknowledged their intellectual debt to him. He is widely regarded as the most significant English literary critic since Coleridge, having formulated a comprehensive and systematic theory of poetry. His insights are both highly original and profoundly illuminating. Like

Coleridge, Richards possessed extensive knowledge not only of literature but also of philosophy, psychology, aesthetics, the fine arts, and various branches of science. This vast intellectual breadth enabled him to develop a strikingly innovative poetics (theory of poetry), making Coleridge the only critic with whom he can be meaningfully compared.

Educated at Cambridge, Richards was appointed a professor of English literature there in 1919, marking the beginning of a distinguished career as both a teacher and critic. He lectured at both Cambridge and Harvard, shaping the trajectory of literary criticism in Britain and America. His first published work, written in collaboration with C.K. Ogden, appeared in 1922. This was followed by *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), also co-authored with Ogden. His *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), widely hailed as a groundbreaking work, offered a fresh orientation to critical theory. This was followed by *Practical Criticism* (1929), which established him as an unrivalled advocate of textual analysis. The book put his theories to the test while further refining and clarifying them. Other significant works by Richards include *Science and Poetry*, *Coleridge on Imagination*, *Mencius on the Mind*, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and *Speculative Instruments*.

4.3.2.1 Practical Criticism

I.A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* (1929) is a landmark work in literary studies, marking a significant shift in how texts are analysed and interpreted. The book emerged from a series of psychological and literary experiments that Richards conducted at the University of Cambridge, where he sought to remove external biases from literary evaluation by focusing solely on the text itself. This approach laid the foundation for what later became known as close reading, a method that deeply influenced the New Criticism movement.

4.3.2.2 Origins and Methodology

Richards' experiments involved presenting students with a selection of poems without revealing any information about their authorship, historical period, or context. The students were then asked to analyse these texts based purely on their language, structure, and imagery. Richards meticulously recorded and examined their responses, revealing a wide range of misinterpretations, inconsistencies, and emotional reactions.

By stripping texts of their external frameworks, Richards sought to highlight the inherent meaning of a poem as it exists on the page, free from preconceived notions or biographical speculation. This approach challenged traditional methods of literary analysis, which often relied on historical and authorial context. Instead, *Practical Criticism* advocated a more scientific, objective, and text-focused form of literary interpretation.

4.3.2.3 Key Principles of Practical Criticism

1. **Focus on the Text Itself:** Richards insisted that readers should base their interpretations solely on the words, syntax, and structure of a text rather than external influences such as the author's biography or historical background. This principle was revolutionary at the time and laid the groundwork for later formalist and structuralist approaches to literary criticism.

2. **Avoidance of Preconceived Notions:** Readers often bring personal biases and assumptions to a text, which can obscure its true meaning. Richards argued that critics should approach literature with an open mind, allowing the

text to shape their response rather than imposing external ideas upon it.

3. **Emphasis on Psychological Response:** Richards was deeply interested in how readers interact with literature on an emotional and intellectual level. He believed that reading a poem should be an active and engaging process in which the reader's understanding evolves through careful attention to language and form. He introduced the idea of organised response, where a well-trained reader should be able to clarify and refine their emotions through literary engagement.

4. **Scientific Approach to Criticism:** Richards aimed to bring a level of objectivity to literary criticism by treating it as a psychological and cognitive process. He analysed student responses as data, identifying common patterns of misunderstanding and emotional reaction. This empirical method was groundbreaking in literary studies, as it attempted to systematise the practice of reading and interpreting literature.

Impact and Influence

Practical Criticism had a profound influence on literary theory, particularly in the development of New Criticism, a movement that emerged in the United States in the mid-20th century. New Critics such as Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, and William Empson (who was a student of Richards) embraced and expanded upon his ideas, advocating close reading as the central method of textual analysis.

The book also influenced modern literary pedagogy, shaping how literature is taught in schools and universities. Richards's emphasis on text-based analysis remains a fundamental principle in literary studies, encouraging students to engage directly with a work's language and structure rather than relying solely on secondary interpretations.

Criticism and Limitations

While *Practical Criticism* was revolutionary, it was not without limitations. Some critics argue that Richards's approach can lead to an overly narrow interpretation of texts by disregarding their historical and cultural contexts. Additionally, later literary theorists, particularly poststructuralists and deconstructionists, challenged the notion that a text has a fixed or inherent meaning that can be objectively discerned.

Despite these critiques, *Practical Criticism* remains a foundational text in literary theory, demonstrating how rigorous textual analysis can enhance understanding and appreciation of literature. Richards's work continues to inspire scholars, reinforcing the importance of precision, attentiveness, and intellectual discipline in the study of literature.

4.3.3. Wimsatt and Beardsley (affective and intentional fallacy)

Fig. 4.3.3. Wimsatt and Beardsley

Wimsatt and Beardsley: Affective and Intentional Fallacy

W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley were two important literary critics who helped shape modern ways of analysing literature. They are best known for introducing the ideas of the '*Intentional Fallacy*' and the '*Affective Fallacy*', which argue that a literary work should be judged on its own, without focusing on the author's intentions or the reader's emotions. These ideas became central to the New Criticism movement, which encouraged close reading of texts.

> The *Intentional Fallacy* is the mistake of using an author's intentions to judge the meaning or quality of a literary work. Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that a poem, novel, or play should be understood based on the words and structure within the text itself, rather than what the writer may have meant to say.

The *Intentional Fallacy*, first introduced by Wimsatt and Beardsley in their 1946 essay of the same name, argues that an author's intentions should not be used as a criterion for interpreting or evaluating a literary work. They developed this idea further in *The Verbal Icon* (1954), asserting that meaning is embedded in the text itself rather than in the author's personal motivations or creative process. According to their argument, it is impossible to determine an author's true intentions with certainty, and even when an author states his intended meaning, this does not necessarily reflect the full significance of the work. Furthermore, if an author's stated intention does not align with the text's actual impact, the work should be judged on what it achieves rather than what the author intended. They also emphasised the self-sufficiency of a literary work, arguing that once it is published, it gains an independent existence, shaped by its language, structure, and literary tradition rather than by external explanations. As they famously stated, "If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed, then the poem is not adequate evidence." By this logic, they insisted that meaning should be derived through close textual analysis rather than speculation about the author's mindset.

Closely related to this is the *Affective Fallacy*, a term they introduced in *The Verbal Icon* (1954), though first developed in 1949. This concept warns against evaluating a literary work based on the emotional response it elicits from readers rather than through objective analysis of its structure and meaning. Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that relying on personal reactions makes criticism overly subjective, as different readers will inevitably have different interpretations. They cautioned that when literary criticism focuses too much on emotion, "the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgement, tends to disappear, so that criticism ends in impressionism and relativ-

> The **Affective Fallacy** is the mistake of judging a literary work based on the emotional reaction of the reader. Wimsatt and Beardsley argued that criticism should not be about how a poem makes someone feel, because different readers may have different reactions.

ism." Instead, they advocated a structured approach, where literature is assessed based on its intrinsic qualities, such as form, language, and themes. For example, if one person says *Hamlet* is inspiring, another finds it depressing, and another thinks it is boring, these opinions are all personal feelings. They do not tell us anything about the structure, themes, or meaning of *Hamlet* itself.

These ideas became central to *New Criticism*, a movement that promoted close reading and detailed textual analysis. New Critics believed that literature should be treated as an independent work of art, free from historical context, the author's biography, or personal interpretations. They focused on elements such as imagery, irony, symbolism, and structure to understand how meaning is created within a text. Wimsatt and Beardsley's theories supported this approach by reinforcing the idea that literary analysis should be objective and based solely on what is present in the text. Their work continues to influence literary studies today, reminding critics to focus on the text itself rather than external influences.

While later critical movements, such as reader-response criticism and post-structuralism, have challenged aspects of their arguments, the *Intentional Fallacy* and *Affective Fallacy* remain central to discussions on literary interpretation, ensuring that texts are evaluated based on their inherent qualities rather than external, subjective considerations.

4.3.4. John Crowe Ransom

Fig. 4.3.4. John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974)

John Crowe Ransom was an American poet, literary critic, and scholar who played a key role in the development of *New Criticism*. His 1941 book *The New Criticism* helped define the movement, emphasising that literary analysis should focus on the text itself rather than external factors like the author's biography or historical context. Ransom introduced the concepts of *structure* and *texture* in poetry, arguing that a poem's *structure* refers to its overall meaning and organisation, while *texture* includes elements like imagery, rhythm, and metaphor. He believed that both elements were essential and should not be separated in literary analysis. His influence extended beyond criticism. He was also a respected poet, with collections such as *Chills and Fever* (1924) and *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* (1927), and he founded *The Kenyon Review* in 1939, which became a leading literary journal.

Ransom was also associated with two other movements: *The Fugitives* and *Agrarianism*. The Fugitives was a group of poets he formed in the 1920s to challenge traditional sentimentalism in Southern literature, publishing their work in *The Fugitive* magazine. Later, he co-authored *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), a manifesto promoting 'Agrarianism', which advocated a return to rural values and criticised industrialisation. In literary criticism, Ransom championed *ontological criticism*, which holds that a text has its own independent existence and should be analysed as a self-contained entity. He insisted that critics should not go beyond the text in their interpretations and that meaning should be found within the work itself. His ideas greatly influenced *New Criticism*, which dominated literary studies for much of the 20th century. His contributions earned him significant recognition, including the Bollingen Prize for Poetry in 1951 and the National Book Award in 1964 for *Selected Poems*.

4.3.5. Cleanth Brooks (Paradox)

Cleanth Brooks studied at Vanderbilt College and Tulane University in the United States before continuing his education at Oxford.
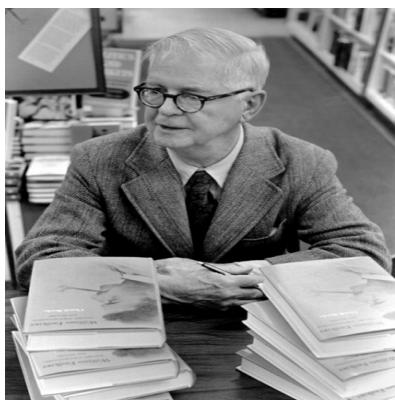
Fig. 4.3.5. Cleanth Brooks

He worked as a Professor of English at Louisiana State University and later at Yale. From 1964 to 1966, he served as a cultural attaché at the American Embassy in London.

Brooks, along with Robert Penn Warren, edited well-known textbooks such as *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943), which were widely used in American universities. According to critic Robert B. Heilman, Brooks had a major influence on literary criticism and literature from 1935 onwards. He is often considered a key figure in the New Criticism movement, although he himself disliked being labelled a "New Critic." However, he acknowledged his central role in the movement, once stating, "I dare say that I am often set down as the most thoroughly typical (and therefore the most reprehensible) of the New Critics."

Brooks is best known for his method of close reading, focusing on literary techniques such as paradox and irony. He was also a critic of critics, analysing the history and practice of literary criticism. Many of the key terms he used, such as ambiguity, paradox, irony, and complex of attitudes, highlight the tensions, conflicts, and contrasts present within a work of art and the reader's experience. He believed that a work of art is "a pattern of resolutions, balances, and harmonisations, developed through a temporal scheme." In other words,

poetry is a dynamic interplay of different perspectives and interpretations.

Brooks repeatedly emphasised that poetry is not merely a statement of truth or a decorative arrangement of words and sounds. At times, he seemed to align with I. A. Richards's idea that poetry operates through emotional rather than rational language. However, Brooks did not fully accept this view. Instead, he argued that poetry provides a unique form of knowledge, one that captures the depth and richness of the world in a way that science, with its focus on abstract and general truths, cannot. Many scholars have praised Brooks's work. Literary critic John Crowe Ransom remarked that some readers are so captivated by Brooks's arguments that they follow him "as if under a spell."

4.3.5.1 Introduction to The Language of Paradox

Many New Critics tried to define poetry by focusing on different aspects of language. For example, Ransom used the terms structure and texture, Allen Tate spoke of tension, extension, and intention, while William Empson explored ambiguity. Brooks, however, believed that the essence of poetry could best be understood through paradox and irony.

His essay "The Language of Paradox" is a key example of New Criticism. It argues that literary language is different from ordinary language, offering a special kind of meaning that cannot be expressed through scientific or factual statements. In this essay, Brooks explains his views on the language of poetry in a detailed and sometimes controversial way.

4.3.5.2 Main Argument

Brooks argues that paradox is not just a literary device but the very foundation of poetry. He believes that poets can only communicate their ideas effectively through paradox.

Poets often go beyond the simple, dictionary meanings of words, using irony and paradox to shape and refine their messages. These techniques make poetry more precise and compact. For example, in "It is a Beauteous Evening," the poem's power comes from the paradox of conscious versus unconscious worship. Similarly, in "Composed Upon Westminster *Bridge,"* the beauty of the poem arises from the paradox in which the city appears alive, even though it seems lifeless in the early morning.

Brooks argues that such paradoxes are not mere stylistic choices but arise naturally from the very nature of poetic language. In poetry, words carry not just their direct meanings (denotations) but also their implied meanings (connotations), which create layers of complexity.

To further illustrate his point, Brooks provides an in-depth analysis of John Donne's poem *"The Canonization." In* this poem, Donne repeatedly uses paradox by playing on the multiple meanings of words. The idea of canonization itself is paradoxical, as it presents profane love (romantic love) as something divine, a love worthy of sainthood. Additionally, the word "die" is used in multiple senses: not only to signify physical death but also to suggest the idea of sexual consummation.

According to Brooks, paradox, irony, and ambiguity are not limited to any one literary period. They can be found in the works of poets from different eras, including Milton, Dryden, the Augustans, the Romantics, the Victorians, and the Modernists.

He argued that poetry expresses complex truths through apparent contradictions, and these contradictions should not be simplified into straightforward statements. This idea is explored in his famous essay "The Language of Paradox" (published in *The Well-Wrought Urn,* 1947), where he demonstrates how great poetry often contains opposing ideas that, when taken together, create a deeper meaning.

For example, in Wordsworth's poem "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free," the evening is described as both calm and breathless with adoration. This seems contradictory, but Brooks argues that poetry works by modifying the meanings of words to create a new, richer understanding.

4.3.5.3 Irony and Structure

Brooks also stressed the importance of irony in poetry, describing it as the organising principle that holds a poem together. He identified two types:

- **Verbal irony** – when words mean something different from their literal interpretation.
- **Dramatic irony** – when the audience knows something that a character does not (e.g., Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*).

For Brooks, irony and paradox work together to create the structure of a poem, making meaning inseparable from form. He believed poetry is different from scientific language because poets shape their own language, creating unique meanings that cannot be separated from the poem itself.

Brooks's ideas became central to New Criticism, influencing how poetry was studied in universities for much of the 20th century. His insistence on close reading, paradox, and irony remains a foundation of literary criticism today.

4.3.6. William Empson (Ambiguity)

Sir William Empson was a highly influential English literary critic and poet, known for his close analysis of language and meaning in poetry.
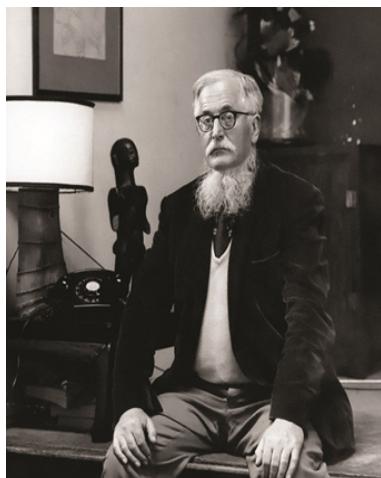
Fig. 4.3.6. Sir William Empson (1906–1984)

His work significantly contributed to *New Criticism*, a literary movement that emphasised detailed textual analysis over historical or biographical context. Empson's theories focused on the complexities of language, particularly *ambiguity* and *paradox*, which he saw as central to poetic expression.

As a *New Critic*, William Empson focused on the detailed analysis of literary texts, particularly the structure and meaning of poetry, without relying on historical, biographical, or social context. His approach centred on *close reading*, arguing that a poem should be understood as a self-contained work of art. He saw *ambiguity* and *paradox* as fundamental to poetry, as they create multiple layers of meaning and deepen the reader's engagement with a text.

Empson's most influential work, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), explored how words and phrases in poetry can hold several meanings at once, making interpretation a complex and dynamic process. He argued that rather than limiting meaning, ambiguity enriches poetry by allowing different ideas to coexist within a single text.

He identified seven forms of ambiguity that reflect the intricate ways in which meaning operates in poetry:

1. **Metaphor** – A comparison between two seemingly unrelated things, offering multiple interpretations.
2. **Antithesis** – The use of contrasting words or ideas that create tension and complexity.
3. **Shifting Meaning** – When a poet develops an idea in real time, causing words or phrases to hold multiple, evolving meanings.
4. **Pun** – A play on words that exploits multiple meanings, often producing irony or deeper significance.
5. **Contradictory Meanings** – When two interpretations seem to oppose each other but together express the poet's complex thoughts or emotions.
6. **Reader Interpretation** – When a statement is unclear, requiring the reader to construct meaning, sometimes in opposition to the poet's intention.
7. **Opposites in Context** – When two seemingly contradictory words or ideas reveal a deeper, unresolved tension within the poem.

For Empson, ambiguity and paradox were not flaws in poetry but essential tools that poets use to challenge straightforward interpretation. He saw poetry as a space where contradictions could coexist, creating richer and more profound meanings.

His approach aligns closely with *New Criticism*, which prioritises *form, structure, irony, tension, and meaning within the text itself,*

rather than external factors such as the author's life or historical background. Empson's ideas encouraged readers to engage deeply with a poem's language and structure, treating every word as significant.

His other major works, *Some Versions of Pastoral* and *Milton's God*, also applied these principles to literature. In *Some Versions of Pastoral*, he argued that the pastoral genre was more than simple depictions of rural life; it contained deeper philosophical and political meanings. In *Milton's God*, he examined *Paradise Lost* and challenged traditional religious interpretations, suggesting that the poem presents moral contradictions rather than resolving them.

Through his emphasis on *ambiguity, paradox, and textual analysis*, Empson played a key role in shaping *New Criticism*, influencing how poetry and literature are studied today. His work remains a model for modern literary analysis, reinforcing the idea that meaning in poetry is complex, layered, and deeply connected to the language itself.

Recap

▶ New Criticism emerged in the 20th century, focusing on textual analysis.
▶ Rejected authorial intent, historical context, and reader emotions.
▶ Emphasised close reading, structure, and language in literature.
▶ T.S. Eliot argued poetry should be impersonal and objective.
▶ I.A. Richards pioneered Practical Criticism, focusing on text autonomy.
▶ William Empson explored ambiguity in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.
▶ John Crowe Ransom introduced structure and texture in poetry.
▶ Cleanth Brooks highlighted paradox and irony in poetic language.
▶ Wimsatt and Beardsley rejected intentional and affective fallacies.
▶ New Criticism dominated academia, shaping modern literary studies.
▶ Poetry seen as self-contained, independent of external influences.
▶ Close reading became central to literary analysis and pedagogy.
▶ New Critics valued organic unity and internal textual connections.
▶ Richards's experiments removed biases, focusing on reader interpretation.
▶ New Criticism declined in the 1950s but influenced later theories.

Objective Questions

1. What was the literary approach that emerged in the 20th century, focusing on textual analysis?
2. What did New Criticism reject, including authorial intent and historical context?
3. What method emphasised close reading, structure, and language in literature?

4. Which poet argued that poetry should be impersonal and objective?
5. Who pioneered Practical Criticism, focusing on text autonomy?
6. Who explored ambiguity in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*?
7. Who introduced the concepts of structure and texture in poetry?
8. Who highlighted paradox and irony in poetic language?
9. Which theorists rejected intentional and affective fallacies?
10. What literary movement dominated academia, shaping modern literary studies?
11. How was poetry seen in New Criticism, independent of external influences?
12. What became central to literary analysis and pedagogy under New Criticism?
13. What did New Critics value in literature, emphasising internal textual connections?
14. Whose experiments removed biases, focusing on reader interpretation?
15. When did New Criticism decline, though it influenced later theories?

Answers

1. New Criticism
2. Context
3. Close reading
4. Eliot
5. Richards
6. Empson
7. Ransom
8. Brooks
9. Wimsatt, Beardsley
10. New Criticism
11. Self-contained
12. Close reading
13. Unity
14. Richards
15. 1950s

Assignments

1. How does New Criticism's close reading challenge historical and biographical literary analysis? Provide examples.
2. How do paradox and irony shape meaning in poetry? Compare Brooks' paradox with Empson's ambiguity.
3. How do Wimsatt and Beardsley's fallacies support text-focused criticism? Discuss limitations of this approach.
4. How did I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism influence New Criticism? Evaluate strengths and weaknesses.
5. How does Empson's ambiguity theory enhance poetry analysis? Apply it to a chosen poem.

Suggested Reading

1. Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism, 1920.
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Unit 4

Structuralism - Language and Sign Systems

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ► understand the origins and development of structuralism
- ► explain Saussure's langue, parole, signifier, and signified concepts
- ► compare American and European structuralist linguistic traditions
- ► analyse structuralist literary criticism through key theorists' contributions
- ► explore structuralism's influence on anthropology, sociology, and philosophy

Prerequisites

Structuralism emerged as a significant intellectual movement in France during the 1950s, fundamentally altering approaches to language, literature, and culture. Rooted in the belief that meaning is derived from underlying structures rather than individual elements, structuralism emphasises the interrelation of signs within a system. Introduced to Britain primarily in the 1970s, the movement gained prominence in the 1980s and influenced diverse fields, including literary criticism, anthropology, and philosophy. Drawing on the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropological insights of Claude Lévi-Strauss, structuralists sought to analyse cultural phenomena through objective, systematic methods. By shifting focus from authorial intention to the structures governing texts, structuralism provided a new framework for literary analysis, shaping modern critical thought. In this unit, you are going to learn about the key principles of structuralism, its major theorists, and its impact on literary and cultural studies.

Key Concepts

Structuralism, Saussure, Semiotics, Lévi-Strauss, Narratology

Discussion

4.4.1. Structuralism

Structuralism began in France in the 1950s as an intellectual movement. It is based on the idea that things cannot be understood on their own but must be seen as part of a larger structure, hence the name 'structuralism'. The movement was introduced to Britain mainly in the 1970s and became widely influential in the 1980s. Supporters of structuralism believe that all aspects of human culture, including literature, can be understood as part of a system of signs. Initially, structuralist literary studies were centred in Paris, but the approach later spread across Europe and the United States.

Two key figures in structuralism are the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the French theorist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Both aimed to make the study of language and society more scientific by separating them from their traditional humanistic meanings and focusing instead on their formal structures. Structuralists examine how different elements relate to one another within a system, rather than looking at their connection to the outside world. Saussure introduced an important distinction between *langue* (the overall system of language) and *parole* (individual speech acts). This idea became central to later structuralist theories, as it suggests that language should be studied as an underlying system rather than through specific examples of speech or writing.

Saussure and Lévi-Strauss both explored ways to identify the structures that shape human behaviour and society. Saussure broke language down into its basic units, which he called signs. A sign consists of two parts: the *signifier* (the sound or written word) and the *signified* (the meaning it represents). As literary theorist Raman Selden notes, language is just one of many sign systems (some believe it is the most important one), and the study of such systems is called 'semiotics' or 'semiology'. Structuralism and semiotics are often considered part of the same theoretical field. Structuralism is also used to study systems that do not directly involve signs, such as kinship structures in anthropology, but which function in a similar way to sign systems.

4.4.1.1 Two Schools of Structuralism in Linguistics

There are two main types of structuralism in linguistics:

1. **American Structuralism** has been associated with the approach variously called "post-Bloomfieldian," "Bloomfieldian" or simply "Bloomfieldian." The adherents of this approach have commonly called it "descriptive linguistics." This approach was shaped by scholars such as Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf, and Leonard Bloomfield in the early 20th century. Key works in this field include Boas's *The Handbook of American Indian Languages* (1911), Sapir's *Language* (1921), and Bloomfield's *Language* (1933).

2. **European Structuralism**, which was influenced by Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1915). Saussure believed that language is a system of signs used to express ideas and speculated about the role of signs in society, laying the foundation for the science of 'semiology'.

4.4.1.2 European Structuralism

Structuralism played an important role in European literary theory, particularly in the work of Russian Formalists such as Mikhail Bakh-

tin. Some of these scholars moved to Czechoslovakia, where structuralist ideas continued to develop. Other branches of European structuralism emerged in Copenhagen and France.

French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss applied structuralist ideas to the study of social customs, rituals, and cultural systems. He noticed strong similarities between language and cultural structures, concluding that an anthropologist's task was to uncover the 'grammar' of each system. According to Lévi-Strauss, structuralist methods in anthropology should work in the same way as in linguistics.

Later, structuralism influenced many important thinkers, including Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette, Stanley Fish, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault. One key figure was Vladimir Propp, who studied 100 Russian folktales in *The Morphology of the Folktale*. He identified 31 basic 'functions' (or key actions) that structure all folktales. This approach compares the 'subject' of a sentence to typical characters (such as the hero or villain) and the 'predicate' to common narrative actions. A.J. Greimas later built on Propp's system to develop a 'universal grammar' of storytelling in his book *Structural Semantics* (1966). Todorov and Genette expanded these ideas by analysing different literary works.

4.4.1.3 Structuralism in Literary Criticism

Jonathan Culler, a well-known American literary critic, was one of the first scholars to introduce French structuralism to Anglo-American criticism in 1975. He argued that linguistics provided the best model for studying the humanities and social sciences. Unlike Saussure, Culler was influenced by Noam Chomsky's theories. He believed that the real aim of literary criticism should not be to analyse individual works but to understand how they become

meaningful. He suggested that critics should study the rules and conventions that allow readers to interpret texts, shifting focus from the text itself to the reader's experience.

Structuralism aimed to bring scientific precision and objectivity to the study of literature. It was partly a reaction against earlier Romantic approaches and sought to separate literature from traditional humanistic ideas about meaning and interpretation.

4.4.2 Ferdinand de Saussure

Fig. 4.4.2. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)

In recent years, linguistic theories, particularly those introduced by early pioneers like Saussure, have regained interest in literary criticism and sociology. Scholars now use linguistic insights to explore fundamental issues in these fields.

Ferdinand de Saussure is often called the 'father of modern linguistics' because he introduced a completely new way of studying language and laid the foundation for structuralist thought. He was influenced by sociologist Émile Durkheim, who aimed to establish sociology as a science in *Rules of the Sociological Method*. Saussure similarly wanted to make linguistics a scientific discipline based

on rigorous research.

From an early age, Saussure showed a deep interest in linguistic problems. At just 22, he gained recognition for his book *Memoir on the Primitive System of Vowels in Indo-European Languages*. After studying at the University of Paris, he joined the *Société Linguistique* and became a respected scholar. By the age of 24, he was lecturing on comparative grammar, impressing audiences with his insight. In 1891, he began teaching at the University of Geneva, where he gave lectures on general linguistics.

Saussure did not publish his most important ideas himself; instead, his students compiled his notes and lectures into *Course in General Linguistics* after his death. In this book, he challenged the traditional focus on historical linguistics and proposed a new way of studying language. His goals were:

1. To establish a scientific method for the synchronic (present-day) study of language.
2. To demonstrate that linguistic structures exist independently of individual speech acts.
3. To develop clear methods for analysing linguistic systems.

Saussure's work laid the groundwork for many later developments in linguistics, literary theory, and cultural studies.

4.4.1.4 Language as a Social Fact

Saussure's most important contribution was changing how we think about language. He saw language as a social fact, something that exists independently and should be studied separately from other related fields. This approach allowed scholars to focus on the structural aspects of language. While exploring these ideas, Saussure introduced several key concepts:

1. **Language connects thought and sound** - A concept itself is non-verbal and exists as a psychological entity. Language serves as the link between abstract thought and spoken words.

2. **Linguistics studies 'signs'** - Language consists of linguistic signs, which have two parts: the signified (the meaning) and the signifier (the sound or written form). The connection between them is arbitrary. This idea later influenced theories in cultural and sociological studies.

3. **Langue and Parole** - Saussure distinguished between langue (the system of language, which includes rules and structures that people unconsciously follow) and parole (the actual spoken or written use of language). He also introduced other important paired concepts that shaped the growth of structuralism.

4. **Diachronic and Synchronic Approaches** - Before Saussure, linguists focused on the historical development of language (diachrony), tracing how it evolved over time. Saussure rejected this approach, arguing that to truly understand language, it must be studied as it exists at a particular moment (synchrony). Only by doing so can we fully grasp its complexity and internal structure.

5. **Language is based on differences** - Saussure proposed that in language, meaning comes from differences between elements.

Words and sounds gain their value through contrast with others. This idea helped linguists identify basic units of language, such as phonemes (smallest sound units) and morphemes (smallest meaningful units).

Saussure's ideas had a major impact beyond linguistics. Later thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan applied his theories to cultural and sociological studies. They used his concept of difference to examine how certain social and intellectual structures reinforce dominance and inequality.

Linguistics has once again become a powerful tool for analysing human behaviour. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida, drawing on Saussure's structuralist ideas, challenged traditional ways of thinking and introduced bold new perspectives. Today, linguistic concepts are widely used to explain social and cultural phenomena. Roland Barthes, for example, applied Saussure's theory to all kinds of social practices, treating them as 'sign-systems' that function like language. As one scholar put it, "Every human action presupposes an underlying system of differences, just as every individual act of speech (*parole*) depends on a structured system (*langue*)."

4.4.3. Saussure's Contribution to Linguistics

Saussure changed the way linguists approached language. Instead of studying it historically (**diachronic study** - how language changes over time), he focused on its structure at a given moment (**synchronic study**). He believed that by looking at how a language system functions at one point in time, we could better understand its internal structure.

Saussure revolutionised the study of language with his structuralist approach. His theories laid the foundation for modern linguistics and

semiotics, highlighting the structured nature of language. Two of his key concepts, *langue* and *parole*, distinguish between the overarching system of language and its individual use. Furthermore, Saussure introduced the idea of the *sign*, comprising the *signifier* and *signified*, demonstrating how meaning is constructed.

4.4.3.1 Langue and Parole: The Structure and Use of Language

Saussure classified language into two primary aspects:

1. **Langue (Language System):** This refers to the structured system of rules, grammar, and vocabulary that govern a language. It is a social construct shared by a linguistic community and enables communication. For example, the English language includes grammatical rules like subject-verb agreement and word order conventions (e.g., "She eats an apple" follows a structured pattern).

2. **Parole (Speech or Use of Language):** This pertains to the actual use of language in everyday conversation, writing, or personal expression. It represents individual utterances and variations. For instance, while English grammar dictates sentence structure, different speakers might phrase things differently: "She eats an apple" versus "She is eating an apple."

The distinction between *langue* and *parole* helps linguists understand language both as a structured system and as an evolving form shaped by speakers.

Langue is the set of rules and conventions that people in a community follow when using a

language. Saussure describes it as a 'store-house' of grammar and vocabulary that exists in the minds of all speakers. *Parole*, on the other hand, is how individuals actually use the language in conversation. While *langue* is an unconscious system that speakers rely on, *parole* is the spoken or written expression of that system. Saussure shows that language is not controlled by individual speakers but by a larger social structure. This means that when we read a novel or poem, we are engaging with a broader language system, not just the author's personal expression. He also argues that language should be studied as a complete system at a particular time, rather than as something that slowly builds meaning over history. Every instance of *parole* (speech) only makes sense within the larger *langue* system.

4.4.3.2 Language as a System of Signs

Saussure defined language as a system of signs. For him, words are not simply symbols representing things in the real world—they are signs, made up of two parts:

1. **Signifier:** The physical form of the word, whether spoken or written. For example, the word "tree" is a signifier because it represents something.
2. **Signified:** The concept or mental image associated with the word. When one hears "tree," they think of the actual object—a tall plant with branches and leaves.

$$SIGN = \frac{Signifier}{Signified}$$

This study of language as a system of signs is called semiotics or semiology. Unlike earlier ideas about language, Saussure's model removes the idea that words directly connect to real objects. A word does not name a specific thing but links a concept with a sound-image.

For example, when we read the word tree, we do not think of one specific tree but the general idea of a tree. Similarly, the letters s-k-y bring to mind the vast sky, but there is no natural reason for this connection; it is simply an agreed meaning among English speakers. Different languages have different words for the same concept (ciel in French, himmel in German), showing that the relationship between words and meanings is completely arbitrary.

4.4.3.3 Meaning through Differences

Words do not have fixed meanings on their own; they only make sense within a system of relationships. Saussure illustrates this with an example:

A train, such as the 8:25 p.m. Geneva-to-Paris Express, remains the 'same train' each day, even if the coaches, engine, or staff change. This is because its meaning comes from its position in the train schedule, not from its physical parts. Even if it runs late, it is still the 8:25 train as long as it remains distinct from the 7:25 and 9:25 trains.

The same applies to writing. We can write the letter 't 'in different styles, but as long as it remains distinct from other letters (l, f, k), it retains its meaning. In both cases, meaning depends on difference and structure, not on any fixed, physical reality.

Saussure's theories of *langue*, *parole*, and the system of signs provide a structured way to understand language. His emphasis on the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signified concepts highlights the socially constructed nature of language. These ideas continue to influence linguistics, semiotics, and related fields, shaping our understanding of communication and meaning-making in society.

4.4.4. Analysis

Structuralist critics examine literature using the methods of structuralist linguistics. They follow the theories of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Peirce, particularly their ideas on semiotics, which is the study of signs. Saussure's theories were developed in his *Course in General Linguistics* (1915), and his work laid the foundation for later structuralist thought. In the 1950s, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss applied Saussure's ideas to cultural studies, analysing myths and kinship systems using a linguistic model. This demonstrates how structuralism is not limited to literature but extends into social sciences and other cultural fields.

Saussure introduced a new approach to linguistics by studying language as a synchronic system rather than a diachronic one. A diachronic study examines how language evolves over time, while a synchronic study focuses on its structure at a specific moment. Saussure argued that studying language as a system at a fixed point in time reveals its deeper patterns and organisation. He introduced the concepts of *langue* and *parole* to differentiate between the abstract system of language and its practical use in speech. *Langue* refers to the underlying structure and rules of a language, such as grammar and vocabulary, while *parole* refers to the actual way people speak and write in daily life.

Saussure also defined language as a system of signs, where each sign consists of two parts: the *signifier* and the *signified*. The *signifier* is the word or sound itself, while the *signified* is the concept or idea it represents. He emphasised that the connection between the two is arbitrary and based on social convention rather than any natural link. Because this relationship is not fixed, language operates within a structured system where meaning is determined by differences between signs rather than by direct reference to reality.

Structuralist critics apply these linguistic ideas to literature, treating literary texts as self-contained systems governed by rules and conventions. They believe that meaning is produced by the structure of a text rather than by the author's intentions. One key idea in structuralist analysis is binary oppositions, where meaning is created through contrasting elements, such as good versus evil or life versus death. These opposites structure texts in a way that shapes interpretation. Structuralists also prefer the term *text* over *work* to emphasise that literature is a system of codes and conventions rather than a product of an individual author's creativity. They reject the idea of the author as a unique, original creator, arguing instead that writers unconsciously follow linguistic and literary structures. Roland Barthes expressed this view by declaring, "The author is dead," meaning that the focus should shift from the author's intentions to how readers interpret the text.

Structuralist ideas have influenced various fields beyond literature. In poetry and narratology, critics examine how language patterns create meaning in poetic and narrative structures. In semiotics, theorists like Roland Barthes, Michael Riffaterre, and Susan Sontag have explored cultural phenomena as systems of signs. Barthes also introduced the idea of *readerly* and *writerly* texts. A *readerly* text presents fixed meanings that the reader passively absorbs, while a *writerly* text encourages active interpretation, allowing multiple meanings to emerge.

In the late 1960s, structuralism faced criticism from poststructuralists, who argued that meaning is never fixed and is always shifting within an endless chain of signifiers. They claimed that language defers meaning rather than providing a stable structure. This idea,

influenced by thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, challenged the structuralist belief that texts function within a clearly defined system of signs. Despite these critiques, structuralist approaches remain influential in literary and cultural studies. Many critics continue to apply structuralist methods to analyse texts, focusing on their formal structures and semiotic codes rather than on traditional ideas of authorship or inherent meaning.

Recap

- ▶ Structuralism analyses elements as part of broader interconnected systems.
- ▶ Originating in France, it influenced Britain in the 1970s–1980s.
- ▶ Saussure distinguished between *langue* (system) and *parole* (individual speech).
- ▶ Signs consist of *signifiers* (forms) and *signifieds* (meanings), forming language.
- ▶ American structuralism developed descriptive linguistics through Boas and Bloomfield.
- ▶ European structuralism, influenced by Saussure, focused on semiotics and language.
- ▶ Lévi-Strauss applied structuralism to anthropology, studying myths and kinship.
- ▶ Propp analysed folktales, identifying 31 structural narrative functions.
- ▶ Culler introduced structuralist literary criticism, focusing on reader interpretations.
- ▶ Structuralism sought scientific objectivity, contrasting with Romantic literary traditions.
- ▶ Saussure's synchronic analysis examined language structure at specific moments.
- ▶ Structuralism studies binary oppositions, shaping meaning in texts.
- ▶ Roland Barthes argued meaning derives from readers, not authors.
- ▶ Poststructuralists challenged structuralism, arguing meaning is unstable.
- ▶ Structuralism remains influential in literary, linguistic, and cultural studies.

Objective Questions

1. Where did structuralism originate?
2. In which decade did structuralism become widely influential in Britain?
3. Who is considered the father of modern linguistics?
4. What are the two components of a linguistic sign?
5. What is the study of signs called?

6. Which linguist introduced the distinction between *langue* and *parole*?
7. What does *parole* refer to?
8. Which theorist applied structuralist ideas to anthropology?
9. Who studied Russian folktales using structuralist methods?
10. What kind of approach did American structuralism develop?
11. What term describes the study of language at a specific moment?
12. Who introduced structuralism to Anglo-American criticism?
13. What key concept in structuralism involves contrasting elements in texts?
14. What did Roland Barthes mean by "The author is dead?"
15. Which movement challenged structuralism by arguing meaning is unstable?

Answers

1. France
2. 1980s
3. Saussure
4. Signifier, signified
5. Semiotics
6. Saussure
7. Speech
8. Lévi-Strauss
9. Propp
10. Descriptive linguistics
11. Synchronic
12. Culler
13. Binary oppositions
14. Reader interpretation
15. Poststructuralism

Assignments

1. Explain structuralism's principles and its scientific influence on literary studies.
2. Discuss Saussure's *langue*, *parole*, and signs shaping structuralist linguistics.
3. Compare American and European structuralism's differences and theoreti-

cal influences.
4. Evaluate structuralism's literary impact through Barthes and Culler's theories.
5. Analyse structuralism's link to semiotics using Lévi-Strauss and Barthes.

Suggested Reading

1. Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature.* Cornell University Press, 1975.
2. Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology.* Translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, Basic Books, 1963.
3. Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics.* Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, translated by Wade Baskin, Philosophical Library, 1959.
4. Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies.* Translated by Annette Lavers, Hill and Wang, 1972.
5. Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Poetics of Prose.* Translated by Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, 1977.

BLOCK – 05

After Structuralism

Unit 1

The Text and the Author- Barthes, Foucault,Derrida

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ identify and explain the key differences between the concepts of 'work' and 'text' as discussed by Roland Barthes

▶ analyse Michel Foucault's concept of the 'author-function' and its significance in relation to textual analysis

▶ apply the principles of Deconstruction as outlined by Jacques Derrida to analyse literary and non-literary texts

▶ compare and contrast the views of Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida on the role of the author and the text

Prerequisites

Literary criticism is a vibrant field, constantly evolving and mirroring the dynamic nature of literature itself. Over time, various critical approaches have emerged to analyse and interpret literary works. These approaches allow readers to explore literature through different lenses, raising essential questions about meaning, context, the author, the reader, and the text itself. The process of reading literature within a specific theoretical framework enables scholars to examine ideologies, biases, and other factors that shape interpretation. There are several modes of criticism that offer distinct ways to engage with texts, including the author-centered, reader-centered, context-related, and text or language-oriented perspectives. Each of these approaches highlights a unique facet of literature, whether it's the author's intentions, the reader's subjective experience, the social or political context, or the text's inherent structure and meaning.

In the contemporary landscape of literary theory, poststructuralism challenges earlier paradigms by suggesting that meaning within a text is unstable and continually shifting. It emphasises contradictions, absences, and ruptures within the language of the text, pushing for multiple interpretations rather than a singular, fixed meaning. This philo-

sophical stance is informed by the works of thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault, who argue that texts are never closed, and their meaning is never complete or absolute. Poststructuralism also extends beyond the traditional boundaries of literary criticism, influencing various other critical fields such as feminism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and postcolonial theory. Understanding the premises of poststructuralism is essential for exploring the complexities of textual interpretation, especially as it interrogates the roles of the author, the reader, and the text itself, shifting the focus from a singular authorial intent to the diverse meanings generated through active reader engagement.

Key Concepts

Poststructuralism, Barthes, Death of the Author, Foucault, What is an Author, Derrida, Deconstruction

5.1.1 Discussion

Introduction

Literary criticism is as dynamic and expansive as literary creation is. There are several ways of reading and interpreting texts. Appreciation of any literary work demands the freedom to explore and critically assess the work to construct an argument. Reading literature within certain theoretical frameworks has raised pertinent questions about meaning, ideology, the text, the reader, the author, the context and others. Hence, there are several points of view or perspectives that point out to diverse angles of reading texts and studying literature.

There are primarily four ways of studying literature, namely author-centred, reader-centred, context-related and text or language-oriented (Krishnaswamy 6). The earliest approach to the study of literature is centred on the author and his intentions. It also gives importance to the biographical details of the author. The interpretations offered by this mode of analys-

ing literature are subjective and human nature is extolled. The second approach focuses on the reader whose interpretations are as important as the author's intentions. The connotations the reader produces supplement existing meanings.

Context-centred approaches depend on psychological, social, economic, political, religious and cultural factors under which literature is produced. This approach is heterogeneous and offshoots into branches such as psychoanalytic criticism, feminist criticism, New Historicism, Postcolonial criticism, Marxist criticism, and Myth criticism to mention a few. The text-oriented theory traces patterns, design, form, and symbols among others in texts and brings forth a set of concepts or beliefs based on these. Russian Formalism, Practical Criticism or New Criticism, Structuralism and Poststructuralism are the four paths that discover structures or underlying patterns within texts.

It is to be understood that these four approaches to studying literature offer divergent per-

spectives on reading a text. None of these modes dominates over the other or occupies a privileged position in comparison with the other. All these approaches contradict, overlap, inform and compete with each other. They inform the reader about the instability of meanings deciphered because the world is in an undetermined and unknown postmodern condition, and the processes in the world cannot be accurately explained or predicted using language.

At this juncture, the fundamental premises of poststructuralism should be outlined:

1. Poststructuralists locate disunity in a text.
2. They search for contradictions and paradoxes in a text that this move announces a poststructuralist methodology.
3. Shifts or movements, ruptures and breaks in tone, perspective, tense, time, person, and attitude are identified.
4. Contradictions, conflicts, absences, and omissions in the linguistic individualities of a text are ascertained.

These points suggest that meanings in a text constantly change, and it is impossible to identify a single meaning in a text. The reader's task is to interpret the text by closely observing the shifts in patterns of words, the diverse aspects of the text and hidden connotations that would together offer multiple viewpoints. In this process, the text opens itself to conflicts, arguments and linguistic peculiarities and ushers fresh grounds for critical analyses.

Poststructuralism incorporates the theory of psychoanalysis proposed by Jacques Lacan, the archaeological and genealogical theory of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes' semiology and the Deconstruction theory of Jacques Derrida. These philosophers try to explain how texts generate meaning by disrupting every conventional notion that is identified by structuralism.

The thinkers point out that it is impossible to describe any system as a whole or coherent signifying system because systems are unstable as they are always subjected to change. Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Queer Studies, Postcolonialism and Historicisms are developments of poststructuralism, especially Deconstruction that recognises the uncertain position of the subject. These theories question identity, which is considered purely contextual. These perspectives encourage reading the text against itself to uncover deviations from the dominant modes of reading and analysing texts.

Poststructuralism questions knowledge, the totality of systems, and the notion of a unified subject within an ideology. As objects of knowledge, the structures of systems of signification depend on the subject. At the same time, these systems are structures for subjects that are controlled by forces that are created by them.

Poststructuralism offers pathways that challenge earlier theories and reveal inconsistencies in their assumptions. It questions established notions of language, author, reader and the text. Poststructuralism neither claims to be a new theory nor advocates one, but draws on earlier and existing theories and opens new grounds of critical paradigms.

To elaborate on the text and the author, it would be appropriate to understand the relevance of the propositions of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida and trace the influence of poststructuralism in their theoretical principles.

5.1.2 Roland Barthes

The French literary theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes(1915-1980) is considered one of the most influential critics of the twentieth century. His methods of critical analyses however shifted orientations as he changed his outlook or approach often. Though he was initially influenced by the Marxist ideology, he turned to semiology and structural linguistics later, and then to post-structuralism.

Some of his seminal works include *Writing Degree Zero*(1953) where he introduces his notion of "ecriture", and asserts that the writer should not be bound by traditional ahistorical notions of writing, but each work should be comprehended on the grounds of some kind of ideology. He is of the opinion that the writer cannot influence society or effect social change. Writing emerges from the writer's interaction with society, so it cannot be completely historical or subjective.

In *Elements of Semiology*(1964) and *S/Z* (1970), he analysed texts within the structuralist paradigm. Later, however, he employed poststructuralism to analyse texts in *S/Z*. In *Mythologies* (1958), he examined literary and non-literary cultural texts like food, clothing, toys, film, fashion and advertising by employing Saussure's notion of signs.

His path-breaking entry into poststructuralism is the essay "Death of the Author" (1968) where he privileges the reader by using the term "the modern scriptor" and rejects the authority of the author. *Pleasure of the Text* (1975) considers reading a form of pleasure (*jouissance*) that a reader would derive through free play of meaning within the text. His autobiography is *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975).

5.1.2.1 The Formulations of Roland Barthes

In *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), Barthes explained how the 'Author" came into existence during a particular period in history and elaborated how the term "author" gained prominence due to the concept that Foucault later termed "individuation". Over time, several discourses like fiction writing employed "the author function" where the author figured as a proper name and granted the author ownership of the text. As a result, the author became the centre of property by the eighteenth century.

5.1.2.2 'Readerly' and 'Writerly' Texts

The foremost explanation of the text within the post-structural framework is given by Barthes in *S/Z* (1970). He argues that texts could either be 'readerly' or lisible and 'writerly' or scriptable, where the role of the reader is demarcated. In a readerly text, the text controls, dominates and offers meaning, and the role of the reader is reduced to a passive consumer of this meaning. In such a text, characters, events and the plot are easily deciphered. The novels of George Eliot and Arnold Bennett fall into this category.

On the other hand, in a writerly text, the reader plays an active role because the meaning of the text lies in his interpretation when he extricates (digs out) meaning from the textual process. So, the reader makes the effort to decode the meaning that lies hidden within the text. The best examples of such texts are James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *William* Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, where the reader plays a dominant and active role in elaborating and interpreting the language of the text.

5.1.2.3 Death of the Author and Birth of the Reader

The essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) was later published in *Image-Music-Text* (1977). In this essay, Barthes' views on the roles of author and reader as considered by the text are elaborated. Barthes asserts that the author cannot claim ultimate authority over his own words, images, sounds or other features that appear in the text. It is the reader who becomes the owner because he interprets them. The author's intention cannot be considered here because the validity or authenticity of the author's purposes, meanings or aims that are expressed through words, images, sounds or other features cannot be established.

Under such circumstances, there is no assurance that the author has exposed his intentions clearly. So, this gives way to multiple interpretations. The message conveyed by words is important and the symbols used in the text are decoded by the reader. In this process, the role of the text is to be analysed and the author and the process of writing are insignificant.

Meaning is an integral aspect of the text, which need not be discovered, but it has to be continually created in the process of reading and this is where the reader plays an active role. The reader invests in rewriting or rewriting the meaning of the text, which then becomes open to diverse interpretations and becomes more flexible in making meaning. Barthes denies the "true meaning" of a text because according to him such a meaning does not exist.

The predetermined notions of both the reader and the author affect their reading of the text. Therefore, the larger the number of readers, the more number of interpretations can be expected. The "birth of the reader" is more important than the "death of the author" and the essay concludes with the statement, "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148). This means that interpretations offered by readers are more central to the understanding of the text than the intentions of the author whose role ends when the process of writing ends as the text is created.

5.1.2.4 Shift from Work to Text

In the essay "From Work to Text" that is included in *Image-Music-Text* (1977), Barthes differentiates between 'work and 'text'. He believes that Text is the space in society where both the language and the traditional view of a literary work have been transformed to such an extent that no specific position can be claimed. He identifies seven factors: method, genre, signs, plurality, filiation, reading, and pleasure that distinguish 'text' from 'work'.

Barthes carries forward the discussion by mentioning that the Text cannot be bound by rigid categories and genres, but the work can. While the Text undermines categorisation of any sort and is capable of demonstrating only, the work can be viewed. The work, which is a book is a physical entity, but the Text is language, which is non-physical that often carries multiple meanings and contradictions with it. A book has symbolic overtones and it can be interpreted. In contrast, the Text does not limit meaning because its language is never-ending, it transcends all interpretation because of its infinite nature.

The Text has no origin because it is sometimes connected with all other texts but a work maintains an ordered or harmonious pattern of influence. This suggests that there is a connection between the author and the work. The Text is produced by the author, but the difference between reading and writing is eliminated in the Text. The Text offers itself to play than be read. Therefore, it is impossible to completely understand what a text means. The contribution of Barthes to the understanding

of text and its relation to the author is often studied in comparison with Michel Foucault whose essay "What is an Author?" (1969) presents opinions that either agree or contradict Barthes'.

5.1.3 Michel Foucault and His Views on the Author

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is a French philosopher and historian of ideas. His ideas stem from living in post-war France, especially the 1960s and the 1970s which saw the emergence of existential phenomenology and Marxism as the two chief intellectual guiding principles. Foucault's works are set against an environment of extensive resentment against America's neo-imperial policies worldwide, discontentment against racist factions in Europe and America and America's intrusion into the internal affairs of Vietnam. Most of Foucault's works reflect his radical views on thinking and behavioural changes that question power and its structures. His disagreement with Marxism is obvious because he considered a revolutionary approach to the question of power to explore the social structures in France.

A French philosopher in psychopathology in the early phase of his life, he later became a lecturer in philosophy and psychology. Then he turned towards history and engaged with archaeology and genealogy. This transition marked his shift from the structuralist viewpoint to the poststructuralist one. Foucault's *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1954) is related to mental illness, human behaviour and personality. His principal works include *Madness and Civilisation* (1961), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976).

In the essay "What is an Author?" (1969), Foucault mentions that it is the text which points to the author and not the other way round as it is thought. He quotes Samuel Beckett notion of the author in the question: "What matter who's speaking, someone said, what matter who's speaking?" This question has arisen out of two major themes. First, writing does not give importance to expression, a Romantic idea. The poststructuralist view is against the formal reading of a literary work. Writing should not be controlled by the need to "express" but should only be used to represent itself.

Writing is an interplay of signs that are placed to the type of signifiers. Foucault adds that writing reveals itself like a game, *jeu* that extends beyond its own rules and crosses its limits. Writing is controlled by the text itself and not the author. The emotions under the work produced become insignificant and to write is to create a space, an opening where the "writing subject", disappears always.

Second, the link between death and writing. Writing is linked to sacrifice to the point that the work which once granted the writer "immortality", attains the "right to kill" and becomes the "author's murderer". Foucault's "Writing" is compared to Barthes' "Text". Writing has the power or right to kill the author and become the murderer. The individuality of the writer is killed by writing and the "sign of the writer is the singularity of absence". The author is metaphorically a dead person in the game of writing. But this cannot be simply stated says Foucault. He warns that it is important to find out the "space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers."

Foucault then problematises the concept of work in the absence of the author. He notices that there is no theory as such that answers questions generated by work and the act of publishing the complete works of an author. The idea of *ecriture* guarantees the presence of the author not as the producer of the meaning

of the text, but as the occupant of spatial and temporal discussions within the text. However, *ecriture* only transposes the empirical nature of the author to a transcendental level of obscurity. This way, the absence of the author is problematised by Foucault.

He also problematises the author's name. He argues that the author's name is not merely a proper name but a functional one in relation to books only, and this author-function comprises four characteristic features:

1. The author is related to a legal system: Texts were earlier connected to religion and the dominant religious ideology was preferred over the others. A change in the role of the author in connection with legal aspects became prominent after the eighteenth century. That is why copying a text without the prior permission of the author is considered illegal.

2. The function of the author is not universal or comprehensive: The author's name was excluded in literary works of earlier times because stories conveyed moral messages. This contrasted with scientific works that bore the name of the author. After the eighteenth century, there was a complete reversal with literary texts bearing the name of the author, but scientific texts not requiring them.

3. Function of the author is constructed; it is not natural: Foucault quotes from St. Jerome who has laid down four criteria for author function:

a. Author's name designates an expected level of quality of a work. Texts that do not meet this ex-
pected standard are discarded. An example would be drafts of works.

b. Texts that fail to agree with the author's assumptions are rejected.

c. Texts that do not conform with the author's writing style are excluded.

d. Events that happen after the demise of the author are also not considered.

5. Author's function raises multiple selves and a range of subject positions; therefore, the notion of a single individual is ruled out: The writings of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud are not only about their own contributions but also state how other texts and discourses as well as new systems of thought arise out of a single text written by them.

After mentioning the four author-functions that are identified by St. Jerome, Foucault mentions four other author-functions that he has noticed. They are:

1. An author places at the centre so that a unified meaning from the text is asserted. Hence, the text itself is meaningful.

2. An author can only be dislocated from the text, but not completely eliminated.

3. A text should be connected to larger groups of texts or discourses, and it cannot be analysed in isolation.

4. The author is an ideological individual or a character.

Foucault moves on to describe two types of positions of an author:

1. Transdiscursive position: Au-

thors who are not only authors of books but also the originators of a theory, tradition, or a discipline that helps flourish new books and authors occupy a transdiscursive position. Examples are Homer and Aristotle.

2. Imitators of discursive practices: During the nineteenth century, in Europe, a new kind of writers emerged that not only produced their own work but also framed rules for forming other texts in future. They provided the field not only for parallels to be adopted by works of the future but also expand the scope for divergent views within the discourse they started. Such a move is different from a scientific venture.

Foucault concludes the discussion by saying that the author-function is quite complex and the above distinction is not a clear demarcation. Author-function becomes more perceptible only when several disciplines of study and large groups of works are studied closely. The author's position at the centre was formed to emphasise the unified meaning of a text. However, the text itself becomes meaning. The author who occupies the central position is not the absolute authority of meaning. Hence, the author of the unified subject is relocated from the centre but not entirely set apart or eliminated. The text should be connected to larger groups of texts or discourse.

5.1.3.4 A Comparison of Barthes and Foucault's Notions of the Domain of the Author

While Barthes censures or condemns the author, Foucault problematises the author. Barthes frames binaries such as author and reader, but Foucault regards the author to be created or constructed by the reader. Barthes

works within a narrow frame of literature and literary criticism, but Foucault outspreads his discussion from imaginative works to non-fictional writings.

Poststructuralism describes the philosophy of Deconstruction and the contribution of Jacques Derrida. It critically comments on the notion of structure as propounded by structuralism. The ideas of text and author are also discussed by Jacques Derrida through his principle of Deconstruction.

5.1.4 Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida(1930-2004) is a French philosopher who is predominantly discusses about the hierarchical formation of knowledge stated by Western philosophers from Plato to Saussure. His three fundamental works, *Speech and Phenomena, Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference* all published in 1967 elaborates his theory of Deconstruction. Derrida argues that language is neither objective nor impersonal, hence the claim that it is used to state objective and impersonal laws becomes challenging. This main assumption that question established notions of purity, originality and centrality would become the basis of his writings.

In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida critiques Edmund Husserl's theory of *signs* and analyses the concepts of voice and presence. *Of Grammatology* (1967, trans.1973) focuses on the Western philosophical approach to language. The work discusses the privileged position of speech over writing and shows that this conventional practice can be reversed. *Writing and Difference*(1967, trans. 1978), the sequel to *Of Grammatology* scrutinises the concepts of philosophers and thinkers such as Freud, Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas, Edmund Husserl, Antonin Artraud, Georges Nataille, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Derrida shows how literary texts interfere into

another and transgress disciplinary boundaries and offer numerous implications. He compares the texts of Hegel and Genette to reiterate the impossibility of locating a definite meaning in a text and emphasises the chances of mutual overlapping among texts. In *Specters of Marx* (1993), he discusses the contribution of Marx and the tenets of Marxism.

The most significant contribution of Derrida is revealing the shortcomings of structuralism and expressing the need to reconsider its doctrines, especially the ideas of a stable centre and binary oppositions in hierarchy. This new philosophical method is Deconstruction. Derrida undertakes the linguistic study of philosophical texts, which are constructs of language.

5.1.5 Structuralism: Basic Tenets

Structuralism contends that language is the product of the inherent stable structure of the human mind and not objects. Language is primarily a system of *signs* that functions through the dual processes of relation and difference of one *sign* from the other and relates *signifier* to *signified* but sees this relationship to be arbitrary. A *signifier* is connected with a particular *signified* because of a social convention that is based on social approval.

Experience operates through *binary oppositions* that are constructed on a hierarchical arrangement, whereby one element of the pair is privileged. Language is considered stable, structured and communicable through the dominant ideology that functions throughout a literary work. Structuralism assumes the presence of a centre that tries to control or govern the entire system and makes it stable and meaningful.

The structure is grounded on a system of codes or rules that are interrelated and work together. All literary texts are composed of such in-

terrelated structures. The unity and wholeness of a text can be discovered by observing the rules of the structure. The critic's task is to discover the meaning of a text in an objective and scientific manner.

5.1.6 The Process of Deconstruction

The philosophy of Deconstruction assesses the hierarchies in the binary oppositions in Western thought like philosophy/literature, speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture, langue/parole, signifier/signified, subjectivity/objectivity, mind/body, form/meaning, man/woman, God/man, light/darkness, heaven/earth, day/night, good/bad, strong/weak, and oriental/occidental among others that are inherent in a text or noticeable in the world.

In a binary, the first term is privileged over the second one. When a binary opposition is deconstructed, the hierarchy is reversed and the privileged term occupies the inferior position and the second term becomes the superior one. This is a continuous strategic process of Deconstruction. Such an operation suggests that the two terms of the binary are complementary to each other and they do not maintain a natural hierarchical relationship as proposed by structuralism.

For instance, consider the binary 'light/darkness'. 'Light' is naturally considered superior to 'darkness'. This suggests that 'light' is more important than 'darkness'. The philosophy of Deconstruction argues that the importance of 'light' is realised only because of the presence of 'darkness' or in relation to 'darkness'. So, 'darkness' becomes the privileged term. The binary is reversed, which then becomes darkness/light. It can again be argued that 'darkness' is more important than 'light'. However, Deconstruction proposes that the importance of 'darkness' becomes evident only in the presence of 'light'. So, 'light' becomes the privileged term. This way, all hierarchies ob-

served are constantly reversed, and the instability of such constructions stands exposed.

Deconstruction contends that in any discourse or ideology, there are no aspects that exist as natural binaries or appear as hierarchical in structure. Binaries do not have a natural relationship. These are constructed by discourses or ideologies. Texts offer such binary constructions through specific discourses. The aim of deconstruction is not to destroy the binary, but to undo it, and reassign it with a new structure and mode of functioning.

This new mode of functioning essentially involves a new practice of reading the text, where the text is shown to read against itself. The text is carefully read to uncover a stable meaning. But meaning cannot be completely realised as meaning recedes further away. The definite meaning of a text cannot be ascertained because the text does not contain a fixed or ultimate meaning. Hierarchies are continually reversed and *signs* forever postpone and differentiate meaning.

Meaning is temporary, and this leads to several other meanings. Meaning is continuously *deferred* (postponed) and *differed* (different)- the two terms Derrida combines to coin the term *difference*, which highlights that the text is unstable without a determinable meaning. Consider the text to be a system. Deconstruction argues that the literary text is not a structured unit, which contains meaning. The text is not a stable system with a determinable meaning because it does not have a stable centre that regulates the system. So, ambiguities and disruptions are found in every text that is open-ended with multiple meanings to be uncovered. The text is multiple and disunited with shifts and breaks, contradictions, silences, gaps, and cracks that expose any earlier activity and movement.

5.1.6.1 Deconstruction and Language

Derrida mentions that human beings are a part of language and they are the products of the language they speak. Language is as unstable as human beings are. Therefore, the notion of a stable language with definite meanings proposed by culture is impermanent. However, culture is also unstable because it is written using language. Human beings do not possess a stable identity and they are multiple selves divided by resistances, oppositions and conflicts, and these selves remain fragmented by distress, fear, apprehensions, and delusions. These contradictions and conflicts of culture are internalised through language.

Human beings are the outcome of a fragmented and divided language. Human identity is constructed or created, and determined by culture. Language is dynamic and constantly experiences shifts in meaning. Therefore, meaning is not fixed. Similarly, a central agency that could control human actions does not exist, and human identity is invented or constructed. Therefore, literature, which is created by language, is also unstable. Since meaning is not found in the text, the reader could either make use of the existing meaning or discover new ones.

The reader creates meaning through the process of reading but the meanings created are unstable. Meanings generated constantly play with other meanings created through reading the text several times over or by other readers' interpretations and there arises endless possibilities of meaning that overlap each other. Every reading is the outcome of the culture of the reader and the system of beliefs inherent in each culture.

Deconstruction points out the undecidability of the text, which identifies complexities, uncertainties and contradictions found in the text. The reader and the text are both

caught within language, which is slippery and the notion of a fixed meaning is just impossible. All literary and non-literary texts are constituted of language. Meanings interfere in several ways to generate infinite possibilities of understanding a text and realising the conflicting ideologies of a text. A deconstructive strategy of reading a text looks out for conflicting and contradictory meanings as against searching for the main theme in conventional readings or interpretations.

The text itself does not realise the contradictions it carries. Deconstruction does not resolve the tensions in the text or tend to harmonise them. It encourages such tensions because the nature of language is also filled with contradictions that do not permit an easy resolution of the complexities. Language is constructed by contradictions and instabilities. Deconstruction encourages divergent modes of thinking and the text deconstructs itself. Meanings lie scattered and a deconstructive reading of a text only takes hold of dispersed meanings temporarily.

5.1.6.2 Deconstruction and Literature

Conventionally, literature is claimed to be specific, pure, original and decisive, but these aspects are challenged by Deconstruction theory. According to Derrida, literature does not

convey a message and it is written with a specific purpose. A literary work reconstructs or rearranges words that are present or that have been used earlier to reveal newer connotations.

A literary work is not influenced by anything outside of itself, and it does not possess any particular meaning. The hierarchy that is created between the literary and the non-literary aspects depends on the extent to which creativity is employed. Derrida is of the opinion that if languages reverse the hierarchy to disrupt comprehension, then the suggestion that literature is a discipline that is creative and communicative would be pointless.

To conclude, traditionally, a literary work is considered a cohesive or united unit with a finite meaning, but a deconstructive analysis of the text recognises and exposes a reversible organisation of meaning, which is integral to the text. Therefore, the text does not possess literariness. This aspect disagrees with Roman Jakobson, the Russian formalist critic's argument that the meaning of a literary work rests in the form of the work. Meaning in a text is impermanent and it can never be completely attained. It is the task of the literary critic to find out how a literary text dislocates the hierarchy that is evident in the text and how multiple viewpoints of a text are deciphered.

Recap

▶ Fundamentally, there are four ways of studying literature, namely author-centred, reader-centred, context-related and text or language-oriented approaches.

▶ Context-centred approaches depend on psychological, social, economic, political, religious and cultural factors under which the text is framed.

▶ Text-oriented theory draws on patterns, design, form, and symbols among other factors seen in texts and brings out a series of concepts that are based

on these aspects.

- ▶ Author-centred approach gives importance to the author, his intentions, and his biographical details.
- ▶ Reader-centred approach focuses on the readers whose diverse interpretations open the text for multiple viewpoints.
- ▶ Poststructuralism involves the theory of psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan, the archaeological and genealogical theory of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes' semiology and Jacques Derrida's theory of Deconstruction.
- ▶ Poststructuralism asserts that meanings in a text are not fixed. A text does not possess a single definite meaning.
- ▶ The reader's task is to interpret a text by closely observing the shifts in patterns of words, the diverse aspects of the text and hidden connotations within the text.
- ▶ A text with diverse perspectives would open itself to conflicts, arguments and complexities that would propel fresh grounds for critical analyses.
- ▶ In *S/Z* (1970), Roland Barthes asserts that texts could either be 'readerly' or lisible and 'writerly' or scriptable, which apparently demarcates the role of the reader.
- ▶ The Text is not bound by rigid categories and genres, but the work is.
- ▶ While the Text undermines categorisation of any sort, and only demonstrates, the work can be viewed.
- ▶ A work is a physical entity, but the Text is language, which is non-physical and often carries multiple meanings and contradictions with it.
- ▶ A book has symbolic implications, and it can be interpreted, but the meaning in a Text is infinite because its language is dynamic.
- ▶ Foucault says that writing is controlled by the text itself and not the author.
- ▶ Writing has the capacity or right to kill the author and become the murderer and the individuality of the writer is killed by writing
- ▶ Structuralism proposes that language is primarily a system of *signs* that functions through the dual processes of relation and the difference of one *sign* from the other.
- ▶ Structuralism relates *signifier* to *signified* in an arbitrary relationship.
- ▶ A *signifier* is related to a particular *signified* because of social convention that relies on social consent.
- ▶ Structuralism asserts that experience operates through *binary oppositions* and maintains a hierarchical relationship. One element of the pair is privilege.
- ▶ Language is considered a stable and structured unit.

- Structuralism assumes the presence of a centre that tries to control or govern the entire system and renders it stable and meaningful.
- Deconstruction maintains that in any discourse or ideology, there nothing exists as natural binaries or appears to be hierarchically constructed.
- Deconstruction points out the undecidability of the text, and complexities, uncertainties and contradictions found in the text.
- The reader and the text are both bound by language, which is slippery, and the notion of a fixed meaning is clearly out of the question.
- Deconstruction contends that there are no aspects, which are natural binaries or appear as hierarchically related. Binaries do not have a natural relationship, and they are constructed by discourses or ideologies.
- Deconstruction encourages divergent modes of thinking, and the text continually deconstructs itself.
- Meanings are dispersed within a text and a deconstructive reading of a text takes hold of the scattered meanings temporarily.

Objective Questions

1. Who introduced the concept of 'work' and 'text'?
2. Which philosopher emphasises the idea of 'death of the author'?
3. What does Barthes describe as infinite and non-physical?
4. Which philosophical approach is Derrida known for?
5. What is the key factor that distinguishes 'text' from 'work'?
6. Which philosopher discussed the concept of 'author-function'?
7. Who coined the term 'ecriture'?
8. What does Derrida argue about language?
9. What does Barthes say about the meaning of 'work'?
10. Which text by Derrida critiques structuralism?

Answers

1. Barthes
2. Foucault
3. Text
4. Deconstruction
5. Language

6. Foucault
7. Foucault
8. Instability
9. Limited
10. *Of Grammatology*

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of the reader in finding out the meaning of a text.
2. How does a text open itself to multiple perspectives? Discuss with the help of the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy.
3. Why is the author's function important?

Suggested Reading

1. Abrams, M.H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 11th ed. Cengage Learning, 2015.
2. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* 3rd ed., Viva Books, 2014.
3. Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 2011.
4. Krishnaswamy, N., John Varghese, and Sunita Mishra. *Contemporary Literary Theory: A Student's Companion*. Trinity P, 2001.
5. Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice.* Routledge, 2002.

Unit 2

Postcolonialism - Key Terms and Perspectives

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ analyse colonial power structures through postcolonial theoretical frameworks

▶ evaluate Said's Orientalism as a tool of domination

▶ explain Fanon's psychological analysis of colonial oppression

▶ assess Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry

▶ critique Spivak's argument about subaltern representation

Prerequisites

Postcolonialism critically examines the cultural, political, and psychological legacies of colonialism, exploring how formerly colonised societies resist imperial domination and redefine their identities. This field interrogates Eurocentrism, the dominance of Western perspectives, while challenging historical narratives that marginalise non-European voices. Central to this study are concepts such as othering, the colonial practice of dehumanising indigenous populations by positioning them as inferior, and Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, which reveals how the West constructed an exotic image of the East to justify control. Theories of subalternity, explored by thinkers like Gramsci and Spivak, investigate how oppressed groups, especially women and the working class, are systematically excluded from mainstream discourses. Movements such as Négritude, led by Césaire and Senghor, demonstrate cultural resistance through the reclamation of African identity in the face of colonial racism. Additionally, postcolonialism engages with the idea of hybridity, as developed by Homi Bhabha, which examines how colonised cultures adapt and transform colonial influences to create new identities.

To understand this field meaningfully, a basic knowledge of colonialism, imperialism, and key theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak is essential.

Familiarity with literary and historical texts from previously colonised regions will help deepen your analysis, while theoretical approaches, including Marxism, feminism, and critical theory, offer important tools for examining power relations. In this unit, you will explore the historical and ideological foundations of postcolonialism, the contributions of major theorists, resistance movements and decolonial thought, the continuing impact of colonialism on today's global relations, and the broad field of postcolonial literature and cultural expression. This well-rounded approach will enable you to think critically about how colonial legacies continue to shape identity, power structures, and cultural production in today's interconnected world.

Key Concepts

Postcolonialism, Colonial Legacy, Othering, Subaltern, Negritude, Resistance

Discussion

5.2.1. Introduction to Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism refers to the ideas and studies that deal with the history, culture, politics, literature, and identity of countries and people who were once colonised by Western powers. It is a field of thought that questions the impact and legacy of colonialism and looks at how societies have responded to this long period of foreign control. Postcolonialism includes many different approaches and perspectives and covers areas such as race, gender, class, language, and culture. Some writers use the word with a hyphen, post-colonialism, to describe the period that comes after colonialism ended, usually when a country became politically independent. Others prefer the form without a hyphen, postcolonialism, to show that the effects of colonialism began before independence and continue even now. Both versions are widely used, but the choice between them reflects different ways of thinking about colonialism and its aftermath.

Postcolonialism brings together ideas from many other areas of theory, such as Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism. One of the main goals of postcolonialism is to challenge imperialism, the control or domination of one country over another. It also studies how colonised people were treated and how they resisted. Postcolonial thinkers try to show that colonial powers not only took land and resources but also controlled the minds and cultures of the people they ruled. Even after the end of colonial rule, the social, political, and cultural systems of many countries still show traces of their colonial past. Postcolonial scholars aim to study how these systems developed and how people today continue to fight against the lasting influence of colonialism.

One of the earliest thinkers in postcolonial studies was Frantz Fanon. He was born in Algeria and trained as a psychiatrist. He wrote two important books - *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952 and *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon used psychoanalysis to study how colonialism affected Black people's identity. He explained how colonised people were forced to adopt the language and culture of the colonisers, of-

ten making them feel ashamed of their own heritage. For example, Black people in French colonies were expected to speak French and follow French ways of thinking, which damaged their self-respect and led them to believe that white culture was superior. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon offered a Marxist analysis of colonial society. He supported the idea that the oppressed people, the ones at the bottom of society, had the right to resist and fight against the system. His writings gave later thinkers useful concepts, such as the idea of "otherness," which means how colonised people were seen as different and inferior by their colonisers.

Another major figure in postcolonial thought was Edward Said, who was born in Palestine and later became a professor in the United States. His most famous book,*Orientalism*, was published in 1978. Said argued that Western societies created a false and often negative image of the East, or the Orient, as a way to justify colonial rule. He explained how European and American writers, artists, and scholars described Eastern people as lazy, weak, and irrational, while portraying themselves as strong, intelligent, and civilised. These false ideas made it seem like Eastern countries needed the West to rule them. Said showed how these images were not based on truth, but were created to maintain power. In his later book, Culture and Imperialism, he continued to explore how literature and culture were used to support imperialism. He encouraged readers and scholars to look closely at the real experiences of colonised people and to challenge the idea that the West was naturally superior.

Homi K. Bhabha, originally from India, made a major impact on postcolonial theory with his book *The Location of Culture*, published in 1994. Bhabha introduced several important ideas to describe how colonised people experienced identity and culture. One of these ideas is unhomeliness, which refers to the feeling of not belonging to either one's original culture or the culture of the colonisers. According to Bhabha, colonised people often see the world through two different views, their own and that of their rulers, and this makes them feel like outsiders in both. Another key idea is 'mimicry'. This is when colonised people try to imitate the culture and behaviours of their rulers. While this may seem like acceptance, Bhabha argued that mimicry can actually be a way of resistance. By copying their rulers but not becoming exactly like them, colonised people can challenge the authority of the colonisers. Bhabha also introduced the idea of hybridity, which describes the mixing of cultures. When two cultures come into contact, they influence each other and create something new. This hybrid culture can challenge traditional ways of thinking and allow for new identities to form. Bhabha saw hybridity as both a struggle and a creative process.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is another important postcolonial thinker. She was born in India and now teaches in the United States. Spivak combines ideas from Marxism, feminism, and deconstruction in her work. She is especially interested in the ways in which poor, working-class women are silenced in history and literature. Her most famous essay is called "Can the Subaltern Speak?", written in 1988. In this essay, Spivak discusses the story of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, a young Indian woman involved in the struggle for independence. She committed suicide after failing to complete a political task. However, her death was wrongly seen as the result of a love affair. Spivak argued that this false story erased Bhuvaneswari's real identity as a revolutionary. She used this example to show how the voices of oppressed people, especially women, are often ignored or misrepresented. Spivak also criticised Western feminists for ignoring differences in class, culture, and language

when trying to create one theory of feminism that fits everyone. She warned that speaking for others without understanding their background can be dangerous and misleading.

Spivak's work also includes analysis of Western philosophy and literature. In her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, she looked at how European philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, supported ideas that excluded women, the poor, and non-European people. She showed how even subjects like English literature were used to promote imperialism, especially through novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Robinson Crusoe*. On the other hand, Spivak also worked to highlight the stories of women and tribal groups in India. She translated and wrote about the Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi, who wrote about the struggles of poor and marginalised people.

Postcolonialism was further developed by three Australian scholars- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin - through their book *The Empire Writes Back*, published in 1989. They helped establish postcolonial literature as a field of study separate from older ideas like "Commonwealth literature." They argued that writers from former colonies use literature to challenge the values of the colonisers and to create new ways of telling their own stories. They explained that the English language, once a tool of empire, has now been adapted and changed by writers from around the world. These writers create new forms of English, which they called "englishes", to express their own culture and resist colonial values. This shows how language itself can be a form of resistance.

Gauri Viswanathan, another Indian scholar, focused on how the British used education to continue their control over India. In her book *Masks of Conquest*, published in 1989, she argued that the British introduced English literature as part of their plan to rule. By teaching

Indians to admire British writers and values, they made their rule seem acceptable and natural. This use of culture as a form of power is another important idea in postcolonial studies.

Not all scholars agree with every part of postcolonial theory. Aijaz Ahmad, for example, pointed out that much of postcolonial theory is created in Western universities and may not fully understand the experiences of people living in former colonies. In his book *In Theory*, published in 1992, Ahmad argued that we need to pay more attention to local cultures and real-life problems. He supported using Marxist theory but with attention to local details. Similarly, Meenakshi Mukherjee questioned whether postcolonial theory, as created in American universities, can properly address the needs of countries like India. She co-edited a book called Interrogating Post-colonialism, where she examined how theory and practice can sometimes be disconnected.

Other thinkers have also contributed to the field by exploring topics like migration, identity, and resistance. Paul Gilroy looked at the experiences of Black people moving between Africa, Europe, and America. Rey Chow wrote about Chinese identity and diaspora. Anne McClintock studied how race, gender, and sexuality were shaped by colonial rule. Neil Lazarus explored nationalism and culture in the postcolonial world. All these thinkers show that postcolonialism is a rich and diverse field with many voices and ideas.

Postcolonialism has several important features. First, it is not just one idea but a group of different approaches. It looks at how literature, history, and culture are all connected. Second, it argues that colonialism caused great harm and that its effects are still felt today. Third, it developed during and after independence movements in places like Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Fourth, postcolonial critics believe that theory should deal with real

social and political issues and not only with language or form. Fifth, the goals of postcolonial criticism include retelling history from the point of view of the colonised, showing the damage caused by colonialism, studying how people fought back, and helping former colonies build their own identities. Sixth, postcolonialism pays close attention to how gender, class, and race shape people's lives.

In conclusion, postcolonialism helps us understand the deep and lasting effects of colonialism on the world. It shows how power worked through language, education, literature, and culture. Postcolonial thinkers like Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and Spivak have helped us see how colonial systems operated and how people resisted them. Postcolonialism gives a voice to those who were once silenced and allows us to see the world from many different points of view. It remains an important way of thinking about freedom, justice, and identity in today's global world.

5.2.1.1. Eurocentrism

Eurocentrism is the belief or idea that places Europe and European ways of thinking at the centre of everything. It treats European culture, history, politics, economics, and education as the model that everyone else should follow. At the same time, it pushes aside the cultures, histories, and ideas of non-European and non-white societies, treating them as less important. This way of thinking assumes that European experiences and values are universal and should be accepted by the rest of the world as the standard. It does not recognise or respect the wide variety of human experiences that exist outside of Europe.

Eurocentric thinking often presents the world in simple opposites: European versus non-European, civilised versus uncivilised, modern versus backward. This kind of thinking has affected the way history, culture, and literature have been taught and understood for many years. Postcolonial studies try to challenge this view by looking at how Eurocentric ideas have dominated global thinking. Scholars in this field examine how these ideas were used to control and silence non-European voices. They show how Western powers used their culture and knowledge systems to justify their dominance over others, claiming that Western ways were superior.

One way Eurocentric thinking shows itself is in the way the world has been divided. The First World is made up of Western countries like Britain, the United States, and other European nations. The Second World includes places like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Southern Africa, as well as the former Soviet Union. These areas are often linked to white populations and European influence. The Third World refers to developing countries, such as India, many African nations, and countries in South and Central America and Southeast Asia. These countries were mostly colonised in the past. The Fourth World includes Indigenous peoples such as Australian Aboriginal communities, Native Americans, and First Nations in Canada. These groups often live within wealthier countries but remain marginalised and oppressed.

During colonial times, European powers claimed that it was their duty to bring civilisation to the colonised people, who were often described as primitive or uncultured. They believed they were helping by bringing education, religion, and order to lands they thought were uncivilised. However, this so-called help often meant taking away people's languages, traditions, and self-rule. Colonised people were made to feel ashamed of their own identities, and their cultures were treated as unimportant or even dangerous. European rulers controlled how colonised people were allowed to live, speak, and even think.

Frantz Fanon, a well-known thinker in post-colonial studies, wrote about these issues in his books *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. He explained how colonial rule affected the minds and identities of the people who were colonised. According to Fanon, colonised people were often treated as objects rather than human beings. They were not allowed to speak for themselves and were instead described and explained by their colonisers. Their personal stories and unique experiences were ignored. Instead, the colonisers created a single story or image of what a colonised person was supposed to be. This image was negative and did not reflect the real lives or thoughts of the colonised people.

Colonial identity, shaped by this narrow and negative view, did not respect the diversity or individuality of colonised people. It grouped them all together and gave them one identity that served the interests of the colonisers. As a result, many people from colonised societies struggled to understand or accept themselves because they had been taught to see themselves through the eyes of those who had power over them.

Postcolonial scholars argue that it is important to question and break away from this kind of thinking. They believe that everyone's story matters and that the experiences of colonised people should be heard and valued. By studying literature, history, and culture from different parts of the world, postcolonial thinkers aim to create a more balanced and inclusive way of understanding the world. They challenge the idea that Europe should always be at the centre and instead celebrate the richness and variety of all human experiences.

5.2.2.Orient/Occident

The word "Occident" refers to the West, which generally means the Western world or Western countries. It is the opposite of the word "Orient," which refers to the East. In earlier times, the term Occident was mainly used to describe Western Europe or the Western Roman Empire. The word itself comes from the Latin word *occidens*, meaning "sunset" or "where the sun sets." This makes sense because the West is where the sun goes down. In contrast, the word Orient comes from the Latin word *oriri*, which means "to rise" or "to be born." So the Orient is linked to the East, the direction in which the sun rises.

Over time, these two terms have not only described geographical directions but have also come to represent different ways of life, cultures, and beliefs. The countries considered part of the Occident are mostly linked to religions such as Christianity and Judaism. These include many nations in Western Europe and the Americas. On the other hand, the Orient is often associated with religions like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism, which are followed in many Asian countries.

Besides religion, the terms Occident and Orient have also been used to describe differences in economy, trade, military style, technology, and culture. For example, many ideas and movements that shaped the modern Western world—such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Reformation—are considered part of the Occidental tradition. In today's world, the West is often linked with values like democracy, individual rights, modern lifestyles, and material wealth. These values have come to be seen as "Western" or Occidental. The idea of the West is now often tied to progress, scientific development, and freedom of thought.

In contrast, the East, or Orient, has been viewed quite differently. It has often been described in a more mystical and traditional way. Oriental cultures are commonly linked with spirituality, ancient traditions, and artistic practices. Many people in the West have

long seen the Orient as a place of deep religion, magic, and beauty. This way of thinking, however, has not always been accurate or fair.

The term "Orientalism" is used to describe how the West views and represents the East. It became well known because of the work of Edward Said, a famous scholar who studied how the East has been shown in Western writing and art. Said argued that the Orient was often shown as strange, romantic, and different in a way that made the West feel superior. In his view, the West did not see the East as it really was, but created an image of the East based on their own ideas and imagination. This image included mysterious people, exotic landscapes, and unusual customs.

Said explained that this way of thinking allowed the West to feel more powerful and justified when they ruled or influenced Eastern countries. According to him, Orientalism turned the East into a kind of fantasy world, rather than a group of real places with real people and histories. As a result, Orientalism is not just about geography but also about power. The West used this false image of the East to support colonialism and to treat Eastern cultures as backward or less advanced.

So, while Occidentalism became linked with ideas such as progress, human rights, science, and wealth, Orientalism came to represent something older, more spiritual, and often mysterious. These ideas have influenced how people think about East and West for centuries. Even today, the way Western countries view Asia, the Middle East, and other parts of the world is shaped by these old ideas.

In simple terms, Occident and Orient are more than just names for East and West. They show how people in different parts of the world have seen each other, and sometimes misunderstood each other, for a long time. Understanding these terms helps us see how culture, history, and politics shape the way people think about the world and each other.

5.2.3. Othering

In postcolonial studies, the concept of "othering" is an important way of understanding how colonial powers created divisions between themselves and the people they colonised. During colonial rule, European powers often separated themselves from non-European societies by creating an imaginary idea of difference. They considered themselves to be superior and civilised, while presenting the colonised people as backward, strange or even inferior. This process of creating a division between the colonisers and the colonised is called othering. It allowed colonial powers to justify their actions, claiming that they were bringing order, culture, and progress to people who supposedly lacked these things.

Othering is not just about physical differences such as skin colour or language. It also includes how the colonisers thought and felt about the colonised. They often projected their own fears and negative emotions onto the colonised people. For example, they would describe them as lazy, uncivilised, or dangerous, even when there was no truth to these claims. This way of thinking helped to support colonial rule, because it made it seem like colonised people were not capable of ruling themselves or making decisions. The colonisers presented themselves as the "self" - the civilised, intelligent and powerful group - while everyone else became the "other", the uncivilised, ignorant, and weak.

In postcolonial theory, scholars strongly oppose the idea of othering because it has been used to silence and marginalise people for generations. By labelling others as different or lesser, colonial systems excluded them from full participation in society, politics, and education. Postcolonial thinkers aim to challenge

and reverse this kind of thinking by showing that all cultures and peoples have value, history and meaning. They argue that othering is not a natural or fair process, but something that was created by colonial powers to keep control.

The idea of alterity is closely related to othering. Alterity means "otherness," and in postcolonial theory, it refers to the way European colonisers constructed an image of colonised people that made them seem permanently different. This difference was not based on actual facts or evidence, but on stereotypes and generalisations. Colonised people were described in terms of their religion, language, geography, and customs, but only in a way that highlighted how they were not like Europeans. These descriptions made colonised societies appear as exotic, strange, or even dangerous, and helped to keep them in a lower position.

Postcolonial critics explain that this difference was not simply an observation, it was a strategy. By stressing how different the colonised people were, colonisers could argue that their own culture was better. This belief supported actions such as taking land, forcing education, changing legal systems, and controlling religious practices. In this way, othering and alterity were powerful tools in maintaining colonial rule.

In literature and art, the process of othering is also visible. Many colonial-era texts and artworks show non-European people as mysterious, uncultured, or even violent. These portrayals helped create a long-lasting image of the East or the Global South as the opposite of the West. Edward Said, a key postcolonial scholar, explained this in his work on Orientalism. He showed how the West created a fictional version of the East, filled with exotic scenes and characters, which were more about Western imagination than real Eastern life. This is another form of othering, where the East is reduced to a fantasy so the West can feel more powerful.

Today, postcolonial thinkers work to change this narrative. They highlight the real voices, stories, and experiences of people who were colonised. Instead of being spoken for or represented by others, postcolonial scholars believe that formerly colonised people should represent themselves. They focus on reclaiming identity, dignity and history. In doing so, they challenge the systems that continue to other those who were once colonised, even long after colonial rule has ended.

Othering is not just a thing of the past. Its effects can still be seen in modern attitudes, immigration policies, global politics, and media representations. People from non-Western backgrounds are still sometimes treated as different or less valuable. This is why the idea of othering remains central in postcolonial studies, it helps us understand how inequality and prejudice were built into the system, and how these ideas can still affect people today. By understanding how othering works, we can begin to question it, challenge it, and work towards a more equal and inclusive world.

5.2.4. Subaltern

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist thinker, argued in his work *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* that every person has the potential to be an intellectual. However, not everyone becomes one due to different circumstances. Traditionally, intellectuals are seen as people in professions like law, medicine, education, the church, or the sciences. These people are often labelled as "traditional intellectuals." They are usually not directly connected to a specific social class and tend to stay neutral in political matters. Yet, they often end up supporting the interests of the powerful classes in society and help maintain the structures that allow the dominant groups to stay in control.

On the other hand, Gramsci introduced the idea of "organic intellectuals." These individuals come from the working classes or marginalised sections of society. They are connected to the communities they come from and represent their thoughts and struggles. These intellectuals try to challenge the existing power structures and offer alternative ways of thinking. Their close connection to the lives of ordinary people sets them apart from traditional intellectuals.

Gramsci used the term "subaltern" (from the Italian word "subalterno") to describe people who are in subordinate positions in society. This includes groups who are socially, politically, and economically lower in rank. In his writings, especially when referring to the class struggle in Italy, the term was used mainly for the working class or proletariat. Over time, scholars began using the term more broadly. It now refers to all marginalised and oppressed people, including peasants, labourers, women, tribal communities, and others whose voices are often ignored in mainstream society. In South Asia, a group of historians known as the Subaltern Studies Collective brought attention to the struggles of such people. They aimed to write a "history from below," which means telling the story of people who are normally left out of official historical records.

Ranajit Guha, a key figure in the Subaltern Studies group, criticised traditional histories of Indian nationalism. He said these histories often focused only on the actions of elite groups, such as political leaders and upper-class activists, while ignoring the efforts of the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast. In his essay "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," Guha explained that the term "subaltern" refers to the difference between the total population and the small group of people considered elites. These elites include both foreign rulers, such as British colonial

officials, missionaries, and businessmen, and local Indian elites, like landlords and wealthy merchants. According to Guha and other subaltern scholars, both colonial and nationalist histories have overlooked the experiences of the majority of the people. Subaltern Studies tries to correct this by highlighting the impact of colonialism, class, caste, and gender on everyday life and showing how ordinary people resisted domination in their own ways.

The idea of the subaltern became even more widely discussed after Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian scholar and feminist, wrote her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in 1985. She borrowed Gramsci's term and applied it to the study of postcolonial societies, especially focusing on the situation of women in these societies. In her essay, she explored the example of Sati, a traditional practice in which a widow would immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Spivak studied a particular case of a woman named Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, who was involved in revolutionary activity in India. When she found herself unable to complete a political task, she committed suicide. However, her death was wrongly seen as the result of a failed love affair. Spivak used this example to show how the real story of subaltern women is often erased or misrepresented.

Spivak argued that the subaltern, especially the subaltern woman, is not able to speak in a meaningful way within dominant systems of power. Her voice is either ignored, misunderstood, or replaced with the voice of someone more powerful. According to Spivak, an individual only becomes recognised through systems of language and meaning (which she refers to as "discourse"), and these systems are controlled by those in power. Because of this, the subaltern cannot express themselves freely or truthfully. Instead, they become the object of other people's interpretations. Spi-

vak believed that both colonial rule and Indian patriarchy worked together to silence women. When the British banned Sati, they did so while portraying themselves as protectors of Indian women from their own culture. This gave rise to the idea of "white men saving brown women from brown men," which Spivak strongly criticised. She said this action made it look as though the British were helping, while they were really using the issue to support their own rule and present themselves as civilised.

Spivak warned against trying to speak for the subaltern. She believed that doing so could push the subaltern further into silence, as it takes away their chance to speak for themselves. She suggested that instead of trying to give them a voice, scholars and intellectuals should recognise the ways they themselves are part of the problem. According to Spivak, the failure to hear the subaltern is not just because the subaltern cannot speak, but because we are not able or willing to listen. The solution lies in understanding our role in silencing these voices and changing the way we look at knowledge, identity, and representation. Spivak also pointed out that the idea of a "subaltern" or a "Third World woman" is not simple or uniform. Every woman's experience is different, shaped by factors like language, religion, class, and location. These differences must be respected and not ignored in theory or practice.

Spivak added that the relationship between the speaker and the listener is important. How a person's words are understood depends on who is listening and in what context. She believed that there must be a genuine effort to create space for the subaltern to be heard, without forcing them into a pre-existing mould. She suggested that scholars should create moral responses to subaltern voices, which means trying to understand and respect their

experiences rather than simplifying or misusing them. She argued that the West has created and maintained the position of the marginalised or the "Other" for its own reasons, and even postcolonial studies sometimes helps to keep this system going. This is why, according to her, postcolonial studies itself must be examined and criticised.

In the end, Spivak made it clear that the subaltern cannot speak in the usual sense, because the systems of power and knowledge that exist around them do not allow their voice to be heard properly. Unless we change these systems and how we listen, the subaltern will remain silent, not because they have nothing to say, but because they are not given the chance to say it in a way that is truly heard or understood. Therefore, Spivak challenges both postcolonial theory and academic institutions to take responsibility and make space for real, meaningful voices from the margins of society.

5.2.4.1. Postcolonial Subaltern

Aijaz Ahmed, a Marxist thinker and writer, compares colonial rulers with modern postcolonial governments, showing that both oppress certain groups in society. During colonial rule, native people were treated as subalterns with no voice or power. In postcolonial times, it is often women, lower caste and class communities, and ethnic minorities who are pushed to the margins. The new ruling class is just as harsh and exclusive as the colonisers. Writers like Rohinton Mistry show how the Parsi community faces marginalisation, while authors from India's North-Eastern states highlight issues such as lack of development, border tensions, the struggles of refugees, and neglected tribal groups, all of which challenge the idea of a truly united country. Rapid industrial growth and deforestation threaten the lives of tribal communities, as shown by Randhir

Khare in his book *People Unlike Us: The India That Is Invisible*. Postcolonial society often sidelines many cultures and ways of life, and problems like unequal access to education and healthcare remain serious concerns, even in a democracy like India. Postcolonialism continues to silence certain people, and nationalism becomes a tool to force everyone to fit into one idea of identity. In response, Dalit writers use their own languages to speak out, offering strong protest against the ongoing oppression in postcolonial India.

5.2.5. Negritude

The Negritude movement began in the middle of the twentieth century as a cultural and literary effort mainly led by African and Caribbean writers. It developed in response to the impact of colonialism, which had caused deep political and social problems for black communities across the world. The movement aimed to highlight and celebrate the cultural identity, dignity, and heritage of black people throughout the African diaspora. Key figures in the Negritude movement were Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, Aimé Césaire from the island of Martinique, and Léon Damas from French Guiana. These individuals took a close look at Western values and began a serious re-evaluation of African culture and traditions, aiming to restore respect and pride in black identity.

One important influence on the Negritude movement was the Harlem Renaissance, which had taken place in the United States during the 1920s. This was a creative period marked by the growth of black literature and art, especially in New York City. Writers like Claude McKay and Langston Hughes gave a voice to the experiences of black Americans and helped create a foundation for black cultural expression. The Negritude poets were inspired by these American writers, and they also found inspiration in jazz music and in the poetry of late nineteenth-century French writers like Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Charles Baudelaire. These varied artistic sources helped shape the unique style and direction of the Negritude movement.

The purpose of the Negritude movement was to push back against the way black people had been pushed aside and ignored in history. Its writers and thinkers wanted to show that black identity was valuable and independent and not something to be measured against European standards. Césaire and Damas, who came from places affected by the transatlantic slave trade, wrote poetry that expressed their anger, sadness, and longing for their African roots. Their writing showed how deeply the slave trade had damaged their cultures and identities. Senghor, on the other hand, focused more on the beauty and strength of African traditions, using poetry to preserve and honour them. While each of the three poets had a different approach, their combined efforts gave the movement its power and richness. Together, they created a strong message of cultural pride and resistance.

Negritude attracted the attention and support of several important people. French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, supported the movement and saw its value in standing up against oppression. Another supporter was Jacques Roumain, who had founded the Haitian Communist Party. While the movement gained support, it was also criticised by some. Some critics claimed that the movement romanticised black culture in a way that made it seem exotic or overly simplified, and they feared that this might create a new kind of racism. One of the most well-known critics was Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka. He felt that Negritude was too focused on race and that this made black people act too defensively. Soyinka famously said, "A tiger doesn't proclaim its tigerness; it jumps on its prey," suggesting

that people should not have to loudly declare their identity but rather prove their strength through action.

In response to these criticisms, Senghor explained that Negritude was not about claiming that black people were better than others or about denying others their identity. Instead, it was about being confident in one's own roots and recognising the value of one's culture. He compared Negritude to what some English-speaking Africans called the "African personality" - a term that refers to the idea of being proud of African heritage and embracing one's cultural background. Senghor believed that this kind of self-acceptance was necessary after the damage caused by colonialism. Despite the arguments against it, Negritude continued to have an impact. Its focus on black culture and pride remained important throughout the twentieth century and still influences writers and thinkers today.

The Negritude movement helped many black people reclaim their history and culture in a world where they had often been denied a voice. Through poetry, essays, and art, the leaders of the movement showed that African identity was not only different from the West but also equally rich and worthy of respect. They encouraged black people to take pride in who they were and to resist being defined by colonial standards. Although the movement faced disagreement from others within the black community, it played a key role in the wider effort to challenge racism and promote cultural pride. Its message of self-respect, cultural value, and unity continues to inspire generations even now.

Recap

- ▶ Postcolonialism examines colonialism's lasting cultural and political impacts globally.
- ▶ Fanon analysed colonial psychology and advocated violent anti-colonial resistance.
- ▶ Said exposed Orientalism as a Western fantasy justifying colonial domination.
- ▶ Bhabha theorised hybrid identities emerging from colonial cultural mixing.
- ▶ Spivak questioned whether subaltern voices can truly be heard.
- ▶ Eurocentrism positions European culture as universal while marginalising others.
- ▶ Othering creates artificial divisions between colonisers and colonised peoples.
- ▶ Subaltern studies recover histories of marginalised, oppressed colonial subjects.
- ▶ Negritude celebrated black identity against colonial racism and oppression.
- ▶ Colonial education systems imposed Western values on colonised minds.
- ▶ Postcolonial literature rewrites narratives from previously colonised perspectives.
- ▶ Mimicry reveals both colonial submission and subtle resistance strategies.

- ▶ Imperialism justified itself through civilising mission ideologies.
- ▶ Diaspora examines displaced colonial subjects' hybrid cultural identities.
- ▶ Decolonisation challenges ongoing Western epistemic and economic dominance.

Objective Questions

1. What field examines colonialism's cultural and political impacts?
2. Who wrote Black Skin, White Masks?
3. Which scholar developed the concept of Orientalism?
4. What term describes the mixing of colonised and coloniser cultures?
5. Who asked "Can the Subaltern Speak?"?
6. What movement celebrated African identity against colonialism?
7. Which theorist introduced mimicry as resistance?
8. What ideology centres European perspectives as universal?
9. What process divides colonisers and colonised as superior/inferior?
10. Which group wrote The Empire Writes Back?
11. What practice did Spivak analyse in subaltern women's silencing?
12. Which term refers to marginalised groups in Gramsci's work?
13. What did Fanon advocate for in The Wretched of the Earth?
14. Which scholar critiqued Western feminism's universal claims?
15. What did Negritude poets reclaim against colonial racism?

Answers

1. Postcolonialism
2. Fanon
3. Said
4. Hybridity
5. Spivak
6. Negritude
7. Bhabha
8. Eurocentrism
9. Othering
10. Ashcroft-Griffiths-Tiffin

11. Sati
12. Subaltern
13. Resistance
14. Spivak
15. Pride

Assignments

1. Analyse Frantz Fanon's concept of "otherness" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. How does colonial identity formation contribute to psychological oppression?

2. Discuss Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a tool of colonial power. Provide examples of how Western portrayals of the "Orient" were used to justify imperialism.

3. Explain Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry. How do these ideas challenge traditional colonial power structures?

4. Critically assess Gayatri Spivak's argument in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Why does she argue that the voice of the subaltern woman is systematically silenced?

5. Compare the aims of the Negritude movement with Eurocentric perspectives. How did writers such as Césaire and Senghor work to reclaim African cultural identity?

Suggested Reading

1. Abrams, M.H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 11th ed., Cengage Learning, 2015.

2. Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 1989.

3. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

4. Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, Grove Press, 2008.

5. Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2002.

6. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.

7. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271-313.

Unit 3

Feminism - Waves, Schools and Gynocritics

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

► identify key achievements across feminism's three waves

► compare major schools of feminist theoretical thought

► analyse feminist criticism's challenge to patriarchy

► explain gynocriticism and its literary significance

► trace development of women's writing through phases

Prerequisites

Before studying this unit, you should have a basic understanding of social structures and how societies organise power between genders. Understanding patriarchy, which refers to systems where men hold more power, and traditional gender roles, will help you see why feminism emerged as a movement. It is also useful to be familiar with key historical events such as the Industrial Revolution and women's suffrage movements, as these provide important background to the development of feminist thought.

You should also be clear about key concepts such as the difference between sex and gender. Sex refers to biological differences, while gender refers to socially constructed roles and expectations. This distinction is central to feminist theory and helps in analysing how society shapes our identities.

It is helpful to know about major social theories like Marxism and postcolonialism, as these ideas have influenced different feminist approaches. For example, some feminist thinkers build on Marxist ideas about class and labour, while others explore how colonial histories affect women in non-Western societies. In terms of literary criticism, it is important to be aware that classic literature has often marginalised women's voices. This will help you understand the need for feminist approaches like gynocriticism, which fo-

cus on women as writers and creators of literature, not just characters or readers.

A good grasp of the concept of intersectionality is also essential. This refers to the way different forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and classism, overlap and affect people in complex ways. Modern feminism pays close attention to these connections, especially in its efforts to include the experiences of women of different races, classes, and backgrounds.

Finally, you need an open and curious mindset. Feminism is not one single idea but a wide-ranging and evolving movement. Different feminist schools, such as liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, postcolonial, and ecofeminism, offer different perspectives on how gender equality can be achieved. Being ready to understand and compare these views will help you think critically about feminism's goals, strengths, and limitations, particularly when it comes to race, class, and global diversity.

This unit will help you explore feminism's historical waves, theoretical schools, and its application in literature and culture.

Key Concepts

Patriarchy, Intersectionality, Gynocriticism, Waves of Feminism, Agency

Discussion

5.3.1 Feminism

Feminism is a social and political theory as well as a movement that is mainly focused on the rights and experiences of women. It questions and challenges the inequality faced by women in society and aims to improve their social, political, and economic status. Feminists believe that society is shaped by patriarchy, a system where men hold more power and privileges than women. Feminism works to create fairness and equal rights for both men and women. Feminist thinkers and activists have addressed many important issues such as the right to vote, equal pay, workplace discrimination, access to education and healthcare, domestic violence, and reproductive rights. They also highlight how women's voices and experiences have often been silenced or overlooked in history, literature, and culture.

Feminist theory looks closely at gender roles, power relations, and sexuality, and studies how these affect the lives of women. Feminist critics argue that social norms and traditional roles have forced women into secondary positions in families, workplaces, and politics. They believe that both laws and cultural ideas need to change so that women can lead free, equal, and dignified lives. While feminism began as a movement to support women, it also seeks justice for all individuals who are treated unfairly because of their gender, including men who do not fit traditional masculine roles. Feminism does not aim to oppose men, but to challenge unfair systems that hurt both women and men in different ways.

Historically, feminist thinking has been present for centuries, but modern feminism began to take shape in the 19th century. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft are seen as early feminists. In her book *A Vindication of the Rights*

of Woman, she argued that women should be educated and treated as rational individuals. She did not blame men alone for women's condition, but said that both men and women had helped to keep women in a weak and dependent position. As more people began to see the unfair treatment of women, the feminist movement started to grow.

The organised feminist movement is said to have begun with the first women's rights convention held at Seneca Falls in the United States in 1848. This was the beginning of the first wave of feminism, which focused mainly on legal rights such as the right to vote and own property. In Britain, Emmeline Pankhurst and the Women's Social and Political Union fought for women's suffrage and faced jail for protesting. Their bravery helped to draw attention to the injustices faced by women and led to changes in laws and public attitudes. Over time, feminism evolved to include a wider range of concerns beyond legal rights.

In the 1960s, the second wave of feminism emerged. This wave focused on a broader range of issues, including sexuality, family life, workplace equality, and reproductive rights. Feminists during this time argued that the personal is political, meaning that private issues like housework, motherhood, and marriage were not just personal choices but part of a larger system that limited women's freedom. Writers and thinkers of the second wave encouraged women to share their personal experiences to highlight common struggles and push for social change. This wave also gave rise to feminist literary criticism, where literature was examined to see how it reflected or challenged the ideas of patriarchy.

In recent years, some scholars and activists have spoken about a third wave of feminism, which began in the 1990s. This wave is more diverse and inclusive. It recognises that women come from different backgrounds and that their experiences are shaped by race, class, religion, sexuality, and other factors. Third-wave feminism also questions some of the earlier feminist ideas and focuses on the individual's right to choose their own path. It has grown along with technology and social media, giving more space for new voices and opinions to be heard.

Feminist literary criticism plays an important role in highlighting how literature and language have supported gender inequality. It looks at how women are represented in texts and how these representations affect readers' views of women. Feminist critics analyse both the content and the structure of literature to reveal how it reflects a male point of view. They explore how women writers present female characters, how their writing style differs from male authors, and how society reacts to their work. This approach also seeks to recover lost works by women writers that have been ignored by traditional literary history.

One of the key goals of feminist literary criticism is to challenge the dominance of patriarchal ideas in literature. This includes rethinking the way literature is studied and choosing texts that include female perspectives. Feminists have also worked to include more voices from non-Western cultures and from women of different races and social classes. They study how women's experiences vary in different parts of the world and under different social conditions. They also discuss themes like motherhood, sexuality, labour, and identity, and how these are expressed in literature. Feminist critics stress that women's personal lives are deeply connected to politics and social structures.

Another aspect of feminist criticism is that it questions the assumptions of male critics and publishers. It tries to expose how women's writing has been judged and limited by male standards. It explores whether women have

been offered the same opportunities and recognition as male authors. It also studies how the literary world, including awards, reviews, and publishing decisions, may be shaped by gender bias. Feminist criticism, therefore, is not just about analysing texts but also about making changes in the literary world to ensure fair representation and recognition.

Feminism, as a critical method, is also influenced by other theories such as Marxism and poststructuralism. Marxist feminism, for example, examines how capitalism affects women, especially working-class women. It focuses on issues like unpaid domestic labour, wage gaps, and the exploitation of women's work. Poststructuralist feminism questions the way language shapes our understanding of gender and identity. It challenges fixed ideas about what it means to be a woman and suggests that identity is flexible and constructed through language and culture.

Feminist criticism can also be divided into different phases. The first phase is sometimes called the 'feminine' phase, where women wrote in the way that was acceptable to the male-dominated world. The second is the 'feminist' phase, where women began to protest against male values and highlight female experiences. The third is the 'female' phase, where women focused more on expressing their own identity and experiences, creating new ways of writing and reading literature. Each of these phases helped feminist criticism grow and reflect the changing views of society.

Important themes in feminist criticism include representation, voice, sexuality, gender roles, and the division of labour. Critics often explore how women have been portrayed in literature, as mothers, wives, lovers, or outsiders, and how these roles limit women's freedom and identity. They also consider how women's language and writing style differ from those of men, and whether women express themselves differently in fiction and poetry. Gynocritics, a branch of feminist criticism, focuses specifically on studying women's writing and female literary traditions.

Feminist literary critics believe that literature can be a powerful tool for social change. By reading, analysing, and writing differently, they hope to challenge stereotypes and create new ways of understanding women's lives. The aim is to give women more control over their own stories and to create space for different kinds of voices and experiences. Feminist criticism also encourages readers to think about how gender affects their understanding of texts and to question the assumptions that they may take for granted.

As the feminist movement continues to develop, new ideas and approaches keep emerging. Writers and thinkers from different cultures bring fresh perspectives, and feminist criticism has become more inclusive of issues related to sexuality, disability, and environment. Literature remains a space where women can challenge limits, express themselves, and connect with others. Feminist criticism helps us understand that literature is not neutral but is shaped by power, politics, and history. By applying feminist theory, we can read texts in new ways and uncover hidden meanings and voices.

To understand feminist criticism fully, it is important to look at the development of feminist thought through the different waves of feminism and the major schools of feminist theory. It is also helpful to explore key ideas such as gynocritics, which is the study of women's writing and literary traditions, and how feminist theory engages with concepts like the id, ego, and superego in relation to gender and identity.

5.3.2 Three Waves of Feminism

Feminism is a wide-reaching movement that fights for the equality of women in all areas of life. It challenges the historical dominance of men in society and calls for equal rights and opportunities for women. Feminism is not just about women alone—it is about fairness for everyone, regardless of gender. At its core, feminism is both a social theory and a political movement that aims to bring an end to gender-based discrimination, inequality, and oppression. It supports women's rights in all areas, including education, employment, political participation, and control over their own bodies. Feminists argue that society has been structured in a way that benefits men more than women. This system is known as patriarchy. Through various forms of activism and writing, feminists seek to create awareness and bring about change that ensures equal treatment for all genders.

The feminist movement has evolved over time, and this evolution is generally explained in terms of three main "waves" or stages. These waves represent different periods in history when feminism focused on specific goals and issues. The first wave of feminism began in the 19th century and continued into the early 20th century. This period was largely political, and it focused on securing legal rights for women, especially the right to vote. Women in Britain gained the right to vote in 1918, and women in the United States gained that right between 1919 and 1920. This wave also pushed for property rights and protested against laws that treated women as the property of their husbands. Important thinkers from this period include Mary Wollstonecraft, who in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) argued that women's lower status in society was the result of a lack of education. She was among the first to claim that gender roles were not natural but socially created. Other influential figures include John Stuart Mill, who supported women's intellectual and social freedom in his work *The Subjection of Women* (1869), and Margaret Fuller, who, in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), supported women's rights to education and employment.

While the first wave concentrated on legal and political rights, the second wave, which emerged in the 1960s and lasted into the 1980s, turned its attention to cultural and social issues. This period questioned traditional roles assigned to women and focused on the experiences and struggles of women in everyday life. The slogan "the personal is political," popularised by Carol Hanisch, became central during this time. It meant that personal problems faced by women, such as domestic labour, childcare, or lack of access to contraception, were not just private matters but signs of larger social inequalities. French feminist Simone de Beauvoir made a lasting impact with her book *The Second Sex*, in which she argued that society treated men as the central figure, or "subject," and women as the "other." This difference, she claimed, was not natural but created by society. De Beauvoir famously wrote, "One is not born a woman, but becomes one," meaning that womanhood is something shaped by social expectations rather than biology.

American feminists took these ideas further and created new theories and ways of reading literature. Radical feminism, a branch of second-wave feminism, argued that male dominance and patriarchal systems were at the heart of women's oppression. Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) challenged the belief that women could only find fulfilment in the roles of wife and mother. Friedan criticised the way women were confined to the home and encouraged them to seek independence through education and

work. Other important thinkers during this time included Mary Ellman, Kate Millett, and Germaine Greer. In her work *Sexual Politics*, Millett analysed how male writers portrayed women in sexist ways. Greer's *The Female Eunuch* attacked the way women were taught to suppress their sexuality and live according to male expectations. She argued that true freedom for women would only come when they had full control over their own bodies and identities.

During the second wave, many feminist literary critics also emerged. Elaine Showalter was a leading figure who introduced the idea of "gynocriticism," which focused on studying women's literature from a female perspective. In her book *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter outlined three stages in the development of women's writing: the feminine stage (where women writers tried to write like men), the feminist stage (where they protested against male standards), and the female stage (where they developed a distinct female voice). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar also made an important contribution with *The Madwoman in the Attic*, where they examined how 19th-century women writers, like Charlotte Brontë and Emily Dickinson, dealt with patriarchal control and expressed their creativity.

Despite the progress of the second wave, the movement was criticised for focusing mainly on the experiences of white, middle-class women. This criticism gave rise to the third wave of feminism in the 1990s. The third wave argued that women's experiences were not the same everywhere and that issues of race, class, culture, and sexuality played a major role in shaping their lives. Rebecca Walker, daughter of well-known writer Alice Walker, helped define the third wave in her essay "Becoming the Third Wave." She highlighted the importance of working for justice in all areas—gender, race, class, and more. Third-wave feminists challenged the idea that there

is a single definition of womanhood. Instead, they supported individuality and the freedom to define one's own identity, whether as a woman, man, or someone outside traditional gender categories.

Third-wave feminists also explored new forms of expression. They used pop culture, art, and social media to share feminist ideas and to celebrate diversity. Unlike the previous waves, which focused on large-scale protests and formal activism, third-wave feminists often worked through smaller, more personal actions. They also explored gender as something fluid, rather than fixed, and examined how beauty standards, body image, and media influence women's lives. This wave embraced intersectionality, a term introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which means that women experience discrimination in many different ways—based on gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, and more. Intersectionality became a key idea in the third wave and helped make feminism more inclusive and representative of all women's experiences.

Another important area that emerged from the second and third waves was feminist literary criticism. Feminist critics not only examined how women were portrayed in literature but also sought to recover forgotten or neglected women writers. They worked to build a literary tradition of women's writing and to challenge the idea that only male perspectives were valuable in literature. Feminist literary criticism questioned who had the right to tell stories, what stories were being told, and how power dynamics were reflected in those stories. This focus on language, representation, and identity brought feminist criticism close to other critical approaches such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and post-structuralism.

A major part of feminist literary criticism is the idea of gynocriticism. Coined by Elaine Showalter, this approach shifted attention

from male authors and male-dominated literary traditions to texts written by women. Gynocriticism aims to study the unique ways in which women express themselves through writing. It looks at the female experience, female creativity, and female language in literature. It also encourages the building of a female literary history that had been ignored or undervalued. Gynocriticism was important in reshaping the literary canon and making space for women's voices and experiences.

Over the years, feminist thought has continued to evolve. New waves and schools of feminism have emerged, each focusing on different aspects of women's lives and rights. These include ecofeminism, which connects feminism with environmental issues, and cyberfeminism, which explores how women interact with digital spaces. Feminism today is a rich and diverse movement that seeks justice and equality in a world that is still marked by many forms of discrimination and inequality.

As feminism continues to develop, it draws from and connects with other fields, such as psychology, literature, and cultural studies. One important link between feminism and psychology is the analysis of identity and the self. This brings us to the next topic for discussion: the theories of id, ego, and superego. These psychological concepts, introduced by Sigmund Freud, are important not only in understanding the human mind but also in analysing literature, gender identity, and the power structures that feminism challenges.

5.3.3 Different Schools of Feminism

Feminism is not a single, fixed theory. It has developed into many schools of thought, each shaped by different historical, cultural, and political situations. These schools of feminism look at the many forms of inequality faced by women and propose different ways to improve the condition of women in society. Feminist

thinkers, writers, and activists from around the world have contributed to this growing body of ideas, which continues to evolve as the experiences of women themselves change with time and place. Some schools focus on legal rights, while others aim for complete social transformation. Some prioritise economic justice, while others highlight race, sexuality, or environmental issues. The diversity within feminism is one of its greatest strengths, as it allows people to understand and address oppression in multiple forms. This overview will take you through the main schools of feminism in a simple and clear way, helping you understand how each one has contributed to the wider feminist movement.

5.3.3.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism was one of the first organised feminist schools to develop. It aims to bring equality between men and women through changes in laws, policies, and institutions. It works within the existing social and political system rather than trying to change it completely. Liberal feminists believe that men and women are essentially the same in terms of their ability to reason and make decisions. Therefore, women should be given the same rights and opportunities as men, particularly in areas like education, employment, and political participation. Mary Wollstonecraft's book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written in 1792, is one of the earliest liberal feminist texts. She argued that women should be educated so that they could be good mothers, but also independent thinkers and contributors to society. John Stuart Mill followed this line of thought in the 19th century, writing *The Subjection of Women*, in which he called for women's equality in marriage, education, and politics. Modern liberal feminists like Susan Okin and Martha Nussbaum have continued to argue for equal access to education, fair working conditions, and greater political rep-

resentation. However, critics of liberal feminism say it focuses too much on middle-class women and does not question the deeper structures of power that cause inequality in the first place.

5.3.3.2 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the belief that legal changes were not enough to end women's oppression. Radical feminists argue that patriarchy, the system of male domination, affects all aspects of women's lives, including their personal relationships, sexuality, and bodies. They believe that society needs to be completely transformed to achieve real equality. Writers like Betty Friedan helped to bring attention to the dissatisfaction many middle-class housewives felt in America. Her book *The Feminine Mystique* challenged the idea that women should be happy as wives and mothers and nothing more. Other radical feminists like Shulamith Firestone and Andrea Dworkin explored how childbirth, pornography, and male violence are all ways in which women are controlled and oppressed. Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* is another important text that talks about women's spirituality and how patriarchy damages women physically and mentally. Radical feminists have been criticised for focusing mainly on white, middle-class women and for not always including the experiences of women of different races, classes, or sexual orientations. Still, radical feminism played an important role in bringing private and personal experiences, like domestic abuse and sexual violence, into public discussion.

5.3.3.3 Marxist and Socialist Feminism

Marxist and socialist feminism connect women's oppression to capitalism, the economic system in which wealth is controlled by a small number of people. Marxist feminists argue that under capitalism, women's unpaid work in the home, cooking, cleaning, and raising children, helps to keep the system running. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote about how the family unit came into being to support private property and inheritance. Later feminist thinkers like Alexandra Kollontai and Silvia Federici looked at how capitalism continues to use women's labour for profit. Socialist feminists take a broader approach and say that patriarchy and capitalism work together to keep women in a lower position in society. They push for policies like paid maternity leave, affordable childcare, and equal pay to help improve women's lives. Critics argue that Marxist feminism may pay too much attention to class and not enough to other forms of oppression, like racism or sexism.

5.3.3.4 Black Feminism

Black feminism focuses on the specific struggles faced by Black women and other women of colour, who often face racism and sexism at the same time. Black feminists argue that traditional feminist movements have mainly focused on white, middle-class women and have failed to recognise the different experiences of women based on their race, class, or background. Sojourner Truth, a former slave and activist, gave a famous speech in 1851 called *Ain't I a Woman?* where she highlighted the exclusion of Black women from the women's rights movement. In the 20th century, writers like bell hooks and Audre Lorde continued to challenge the limitations of mainstream feminism. The Combahee River Collective, a group of Black feminists, also contributed greatly to feminist thought. They stressed the importance of addressing issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality together. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term *intersectionality* in 1989 to describe how different forms of discrimination overlap and affect people in complex ways. Black feminism continues to

influence social justice movements and calls for more inclusive forms of feminism that respect all women's experiences.

5.3.3.5 Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism looks at how colonialism, the control or occupation of one country by another, has affected women, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It criticises Western feminists for assuming that all women face the same problems and that solutions from the West can apply to everyone. Postcolonial feminists argue that women in formerly colonised countries have different histories, cultures, and challenges. Gayatri Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* points out that when Western feminists try to speak for women in the Global South, they may actually silence them. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in *Under Western Eyes*, criticises the way Western scholars often show Third World women as helpless or backwards. Postcolonial feminists want to understand women's lives in their own cultural and historical settings and to listen to the voices of those women rather than imposing ideas from outside.

5.3.3.6 Lesbian Feminism

Lesbian feminism argues that heterosexuality, the idea that relationships between men and women are the norm, is a system that benefits men and keeps women dependent. Lesbian feminists say that society pressures women into heterosexual roles through family, religion, and media. Adrienne Rich, in her essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, argues that women should be free to choose their own sexual identity without being judged. Monique Wittig goes further to argue that lesbian women reject the traditional roles given to them and therefore challenge the very idea of what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal society. Lesbian feminists

work to create safe spaces for women, support same-sex relationships, and fight against homophobia. Their work also draws attention to the need for feminism to include all women, regardless of their sexuality.

5.3.3.7 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism makes a connection between the way women and nature are treated under patriarchy. Ecofeminists believe that both women and the environment are seen as resources to be controlled and used by men. Françoise d'Eaubonne first used the term ecofeminism in the 1970s. Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist, shows how global capitalism affects women in poor countries. She talks about how women's traditional roles in farming and seed saving are being destroyed by large agricultural companies. Ecofeminists support a way of life that is respectful to both women and the Earth. They also call for women to take leading roles in environmental movements. Ecofeminism encourages us to rethink our relationship with nature and see it as a partner rather than a resource.

5.3.3.8 Postfeminism

Postfeminism is a modern development in feminist thought. It suggests that feminism is no longer needed because women have achieved equality. Some postfeminists argue that feminism was too focused on victimhood and ignored women's choices. Figures like Camille Paglia and Naomi Wolf have criticised traditional feminism and called for a more personal, choice-based approach. However, others like Susan Faludi argue that postfeminism hides the ongoing problems women face, such as unequal pay and gender violence. Postfeminism is often linked with media portrayals of powerful, independent women who seem to have it all, but critics say this ignores the reality for many women around the world.

All these schools of feminism show how different women experience different types of oppression. Each school offers its own view of how to understand and change society to make it more equal. Liberal feminists focus on equal rights through law, radical feminists look for a complete change in the system, and Marxist and socialist feminists connect gender issues with class and economics. Black and postcolonial feminists call attention to race and culture, while lesbian feminists focus on sexual identity. Ecofeminists link women's rights with environmental care, and postfeminists question whether feminism is still needed today. Together, these schools of thought help us see that there is no single way to be a feminist, and no one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, they remind us that real change comes from listening to many voices and being open to many ideas.

These different schools of feminism have laid the groundwork for more specialised forms of feminist theory, including the important field of psychoanalysis and feminism. As we now shift our attention to key psychological concepts such as id, ego and superego, we will examine how psychoanalytic ideas have contributed to feminist thought and helped us understand the formation of gender identity, personal development, and inner conflicts.

5.3.4 Elaine Showalter and Gynocriticism

Elaine Showalter is a well-known American literary critic and feminist thinker. She has written extensively about women's writing and their place in literary history. Her early work, *The Double Critical Standard: Criticism of Women Writers in England, 1845-1880*, was her doctoral thesis and later became a famous book titled *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* published in 1977. In this book, she

discusses British women writers and how they developed their literary voices over time. Her work looks closely at how women's literature has evolved and how society and culture have influenced it. She also explored how mental health and literature were connected in her book *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, where she showed how "hysteria" was once seen as a disease related mostly to women. In this way, she linked literature, psychology and women's history.

Showalter's other works include *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1990), *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (1991), and *Hystories: Historical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (1997). In these books, she explores topics like mass hysteria, how gender roles have changed over time, and how female writers have faced and challenged expectations. In *Inventing Herself: Claiming a Feminist Intellectual Heritage* (2001), she highlights important women in feminist intellectual history. *Teaching Literature* (2003) and *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (2005) deal with her experiences in teaching and academic life. In *A Jury of Her Peers* (2009), she reviews American women's writing from its beginnings up to the 1990s. Showalter has also edited several important books, such as *The New Feminist Criticism* (1985) and *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin de Siècle* (1993). In 2016, she published a biography called *The Civil Wars of Julia Ward Howe*, about the American writer and activist.

One of Showalter's most important contributions to feminist literary criticism is the concept of gynocriticism. She introduces this idea in her essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (1979). Gynocriticism focuses on the woman as a writer rather than just a reader

of literature. This theory encourages looking at women not as passive receivers of meaning created by men, but as active creators of literature, ideas, and meaning. Gynocriticism studies the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature written by women. It also looks at women's language and the way they express themselves in writing. In another essay, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (1981), Showalter evaluates the current state of feminist criticism and argues that gender is not the only factor to consider. She believes that aspects like class, race, nationality, and historical background are also very important when studying women's writing. She sees women's culture as a shared experience that connects women across different time periods and cultures.

In "Towards a Feminist Poetics", Showalter explains that feminist criticism can be divided into two main types. The first type is the feminist critique, where the woman is the reader of texts written by men. In this type, critics examine how women are portrayed in literature, especially by male authors. They analyse how women are stereotyped, how their real experiences are left out, and how literature may reinforce gender inequalities. This type of criticism also looks at how women as readers are influenced or manipulated by literature, films, and other forms of media. It reveals how women are often turned into symbols or signs within a male-dominated culture.

The second type is gynocriticism, where the woman is the writer. This approach studies women as producers of literature, focusing on their creative processes, themes, styles, and use of language. Gynocriticism also explores the psychological and emotional aspects of women's writing, their linguistic choices, and the cultural experiences that influence their literary works. It encourages the study of women's literature as a separate tradition that

deserves its own analysis and understanding. Gynocriticism pays attention to individual writers as well as whole periods of women's literary history. Showalter believes that this approach can help feminist criticism move forward and deal with some of the challenges it faces.

To show how women's literature has developed over time, Showalter proposes three main phases of women's writing. She presents this idea in *A Literature of Their Own*. The first phase is the feminine phase, which lasted from around 1840 to 1880. During this time, women tried to write like men and gain recognition by copying the male style. Many women wrote under male pen names to be taken seriously. For example, Mary Ann Evans used the name George Eliot, and the Brontë sisters used names like Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Showalter argues that this imitation had a negative effect because it made the feminine elements of their writing less visible or more hidden. These women wrote with a sense of irony and subtle rebellion, but their efforts could easily be misunderstood or overlooked if readers didn't know the true meaning behind their work.

The second phase is the feminist phase, from about 1880 to 1920. This period was marked by protest and the rejection of male-dominated literary traditions. Women writers began to express their frustrations openly and fought for their rights. Their works focused on exposing injustices and demanding social and political change. Literature became a way to challenge patriarchy and call for equality. In this phase, women no longer wanted to copy men, they wanted to speak in their own voices and address issues that mattered to them.

The third phase is the female phase, which began around 1920 and continues today. In this phase, women writers move beyond protest and focus on celebrating female experi-

ences. They explore their identities, cultures, and creativity with confidence. They are not just reacting to male writing anymore, they are creating something new and independent. This phase shows a deep interest in women's lives, emotions, and thoughts. Feminist critics and writers study and celebrate these works as part of a growing tradition of female literature. The female phase highlights diversity among women, recognising that every woman's experience is unique.

Elaine Showalter's work has played a major role in shaping feminist literary criticism. She gave scholars a way to study women's writing as something valuable and meaningful on its own. Through gynocriticism, she encouraged the study of women's literature from the viewpoint of women's own experiences, not just in comparison to men's writing. She also helped feminist critics see the importance of class, race, and culture in understanding literature.

Her ideas have inspired many to continue exploring the richness and variety of women's voices in literature.

Gynocriticism has since become an important part of feminist literary theory. It has opened up space for writers and critics to recover forgotten women's texts, question traditional literary canons, and develop new approaches to reading literature. As we move forward in feminist literary studies, Showalter's work continues to remind us that women's creativity and stories deserve recognition, careful analysis, and celebration. This idea links directly to the broader discussions of feminist thought, including the different schools and waves of feminism. Understanding Showalter's work helps prepare us to explore how feminist theory has developed over time through these schools and waves, each with its own ideas and goals.

Recap

▸ Feminism challenges gender inequality through social/political movements worldwide.

▸ Patriarchy gives men more power than women in society.

▸ First-wave feminism fought for voting rights and legal equality.

▸ Second-wave feminism addressed workplace rights and reproductive freedom.

▸ Third-wave feminism embraces intersectionality and diverse identities.

▸ Liberal feminism seeks equality through legal/systematic reforms.

▸ Radical feminism demands complete societal transformation against patriarchy.

▸ Marxist feminism links women's oppression to capitalist exploitation.

▸ Black feminism highlights racism and sexism combined impacts.

▸ Postcolonial feminism critiques Western-centric feminist perspectives.

▸ Ecofeminism connects environmental destruction to women's oppression.

▸ Gynocriticism studies women's writing as a distinct literary tradition.

▸ Feminist criticism exposes male-dominated literary representations.

▸ Feminism evolves through waves, addressing different priorities.

▸ All feminisms aim for gender justice differently.

Objective Questions

1. What is the primary focus of feminism as a movement?
2. What term describes a system where men hold more power than women?
3. Which feminist wave focused on securing women's voting rights?
4. What was the key slogan of second-wave feminism?
5. Who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)?
6. What does intersectionality in feminism refer to?
7. Which feminist school seeks equality through legal reforms?
8. What does radical feminism aim to completely transform?
9. Which feminist theory links women's oppression to capitalism?
10. Who coined the term "intersectionality" in feminist theory?
11. What does postcolonial feminism critique in Western feminism?
12. What is the main focus of lesbian feminism?
13. Which feminist approach connects women's oppression to nature's exploitation?
14. What is Elaine Showalter's concept of studying women's writing called?
15. What are the three phases of women's writing in gynocriticism?

Answers

1. Women's rights and gender equality
2. Patriarchy
3. First-wave feminism
4. "The personal is political"
5. Mary Wollstonecraft
6. Overlapping discrimination (race, class, gender, etc.)
7. Liberal feminism
8. Patriarchal society
9. Marxist feminism
10. Kimberlé Crenshaw
11. Assuming all women's experiences are the same
12. Challenging compulsory heterosexuality
13. Ecofeminism
14. Gynocriticism
15. Feminine, feminist, female phases

Assignments

1. Compare liberal vs radical feminism's methods and goals.
2. Analyse intersectionality's role in modern feminist movements.
3. Apply gynocriticism to analyse a female-authored literary work.
4. Contrast the three feminist waves' key goals and impacts.
5. Debate postfeminism: Is feminism still necessary today?

Suggested Reading

1. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. 1792. Foundational liberal feminist text arguing for women's education.
2. de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. 1949. Explores "woman" as a social construct.
3. Hooks, Bell. *Ain't I a Woman?* 1981. Black feminist critique of racism and sexism.
4. Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own*. 1977. Key text on gynocriticism.
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Unit 4

Psychoanalysis - Freudian Concepts and Literary Application

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

▶ understand Freudian theory of id, ego, and superego
▶ analyse unconscious motives in literary characters and texts
▶ explore symbolism and metaphor in psychoanalytic literary criticism
▶ recognise contributions of Freud, Jung, and Lacan
▶ examine literature through psychoanalytic and psychological frameworks

Prerequisites

Psychoanalytic criticism is a powerful way of looking at literature through the lens of human psychology. This approach helps us explore not only what writers say in their work, but also what they may be expressing unconsciously, such as hidden fears, desires, or inner conflicts. In this unit, you will learn how stories can reflect the deeper layers of the human mind, much like dreams do.

To fully understand the ideas in this unit, it is helpful to have some background knowledge of how literature uses symbols, metaphors, and characters to convey complex meanings. You should also be familiar with basic psychological terms like *conscious*, *unconscious*, *repression*, and *desire*. A basic understanding of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, and his theory of the human mind, divided into the id, ego, and superego, will help you grasp the core concepts more easily.

This unit encourages you to think deeply about why writers create certain characters or situations, and how readers respond to them. You will explore how literature can reveal not only the author's inner world, but also our own. Approaching the texts with an open and thoughtful mindset will allow you to uncover hidden meanings and appreciate how closely literature is connected to human psychology.

By the end of this unit, you will see how psychoanalytic ideas have influenced not just literature, but also how we understand ourselves and others.

Key Concepts

Psychoanalytic criticism, Unconscious mind, Freud's theory, Id, ego, superego, Literary analysis

Discussion

5.4.1 Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalytic criticism is a type of literary analysis that looks at how the mind works and how it affects literature. It began to develop during the early 19th century as a way to understand not just what authors write, but why they write it. Unlike general psychological criticism, which focuses more on understanding the author's personal traits through their work, psychoanalytic criticism uses the theories and methods of psychoanalysis to explain deeper meanings in literature. These theories are mainly based on the work of Sigmund Freud, who introduced the idea of the unconscious mind as a powerful influence on behaviour and thought. Freud believed that human behaviour is often guided by hidden desires, fears, and conflicts that exist in the unconscious part of the mind. He explained that the mind is divided into three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is where basic desires and instincts live, the superego represents the rules and values of society, and the ego tries to balance the two. When the ego cannot resolve a conflict between these forces, the result may be repression. These repressed thoughts and feelings often find their way into dreams, behaviour, or even literature, in disguised or symbolic forms.

Freud's work led to the idea that literature, like dreams, can be a way for authors to express repressed feelings and desires. His famous idea of the Oedipus complex, which refers to a child's unconscious desire for the parent of the opposite sex and rivalry with the same-sex parent, became a key concept in literary studies. Freud believed that even taboo or uncomfortable desires can appear in literature, not directly, but through symbols and metaphors. Writers might not be aware that they are expressing these ideas, but the psychoanalyst can uncover them. This approach treats literature almost like a dream, looking beyond what is obviously said to find hidden meanings. It is particularly useful in analysing characters and their motivations, which may reflect deep psychological truths.

Other theorists followed Freud but also added to or changed his ideas. Otto Rank, a follower of Freud, argued that writers often turn their deep inner wishes into stories or myths. He focused on the idea that the hero in many stories shares common traits because of similar unconscious feelings in writers and readers. Ernest Jones applied Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex to Hamlet, saying that Hamlet delays killing his uncle because he identifies with him and feels guilt. Carl Jung, another important figure, had a different approach. He believed in a collective unconscious, which is a set of shared memories and ideas common to all humans. According to Jung, certain themes and characters keep appearing in stories across cultures because they are part of the collective unconscious. He focused on archetypes, like the hero, the mother, or the trickster, that show up in myths and literature around the world.

Over time, psychoanalytic critics began applying their ideas not just to authors, but also to literary characters. They treated these characters almost like real people, trying to understand their inner lives. Critics like Marie Bonaparte analysed the life and writing of

Edgar Allan Poe and suggested that his deep connection to his mother influenced his stories. Other critics used psychoanalysis to look at how authors might express hidden fears or wishes in their writing. Sometimes, the surface of the story is called the "manifest content," while the hidden, deeper meaning is called the "latent content." This mirrors Freud's way of studying dreams.

Freud's ideas were further developed by Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst who brought language into the picture. Lacan believed that the unconscious mind is structured like a language and that the way people speak and write can reveal hidden meanings. He built on Freud's theories but focused more on how language shapes our understanding of ourselves and the world. Lacan introduced the idea of the mirror stage, when a child first sees themselves in a mirror and starts to understand that they are separate from others. This is an important moment in forming the sense of self or ego. Later, the child learns to use language and joins the "symbolic order," a system of meanings created by society. Lacan argued that identity is shaped by this system, and that we are always looking for something that is missing, something we cannot quite name.

Lacan's theory had a strong influence on many modern literary critics, especially those interested in poststructuralism and feminism. Feminist critics used his ideas to explore how language itself may be built in ways that support male dominance and exclude women's voices. They agreed that language and identity are connected but wanted to find ways to change how language works so that it includes women's experiences more fully. Lacan's work also helped inspire reader-response criticism, which looks at how readers bring their own emotions and ideas to the text and how the meaning of a work can change depending on who is reading it.

Norman Holland is one critic who used psychoanalytic ideas to study how readers respond to literature. He suggested that reading is a personal and emotional experience, and that readers interpret stories in ways that reflect their own unconscious thoughts and desires. For example, he read Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall" as a fantasy about breaking down barriers between people. Other critics like D.W. Winnicott explored how readers form relationships with texts, similar to how children form emotional bonds with people and objects.

Today, psychoanalytic criticism includes a wide range of ideas and approaches. It is not limited to Freud's original theories but has grown to include many different views of how the mind works and how people express themselves. Some critics focus on the psychological development of characters, while others look at how writers use symbols to deal with their own inner conflicts. Still others are more interested in how readers react to literature and how reading affects them emotionally. What connects all these approaches is the idea that literature is not just about what happens on the surface, but also about what lies beneath.

Freudian criticism continues to be useful for understanding how stories deal with desires, fears, and conflicts that people often cannot express openly. It helps to see how art can be a way of working through personal and cultural problems. Jungian criticism offers a broader view by looking at common patterns in stories across cultures, helping to explain why certain themes are so powerful. Lacanian criticism adds another layer by showing how language and identity are connected, and how meaning is always shaped by the words we use. Together, these different approaches give us many tools for understanding literature and for thinking about how stories reflect the inner lives of writers, readers, and characters.

Psychoanalytic criticism also connects with other kinds of literary theory. For example, Marxist critics may focus on how economic forces affect literature, but they can also use psychoanalysis to understand how power works in people's minds. Feminist critics can use psychoanalysis to explore how gender roles are formed and reinforced in stories. Even deconstructionists, who believe that meaning is always shifting and uncertain, find value in psychoanalysis because it shows how identity itself is unstable and made up of contradictions. All these different kinds of criticism can work together to give a richer understanding of literature.

In conclusion, psychoanalytic criticism has played a key role in helping readers explore the deeper layers of meaning within literature. By using the ideas of thinkers like Freud, Jung, and Lacan, this form of criticism allows us to better understand the hidden thoughts, fears, and desires of both authors and characters. It shows how literature reflects the complexities of the human mind and reveals the unspoken truths that lie beneath the surface. As we move forward, it becomes important to examine one of the central ideas in Freudian theory—the structure of the human psyche, which includes the id, the ego, and the superego. These three elements form the foundation of Freud's view of how the mind works, and they continue to influence psychoanalytic criticism and our understanding of character development in literature. Let us now explore how the id, ego, and superego interact, and how they shape human behaviour and literary expression.

5.4.2 Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist who is widely regarded as the founder of psychoanalysis, a field that explores how unconscious thoughts influence human behaviour. Born in 1856 in Freiberg, which is now part of the Czech Republic, Freud spent most of his life in Vienna, where he also received his education. Initially, he worked in biology and clinical neurology, but his interest gradually shifted to understanding the human mind, particularly after he studied with Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris. Charcot's use of hypnosis to treat patients with hysteria inspired Freud to consider the role of the unconscious mind in mental health. He later collaborated with Josef Breuer, who helped develop the method of making patients revisit distressing experiences in order to uncover hidden emotions. However, Freud went further than Breuer, arguing that these painful memories were not simply forgotten but were actively repressed and buried deep in the unconscious mind.

Although Freud's techniques and case studies have drawn some criticism—especially when it became evident that he sometimes exaggerated or invented certain patient accounts—his impact on psychology, literature, and philosophy has been enormous. His theories introduced a new way of thinking about mental illness and human behaviour. One of Freud's most influential contributions is his structural model of the mind, which is divided into three parts: the id, ego, and superego. This model attempts to explain the dynamic workings of the human psyche and remains one of the cornerstones of psychoanalytic theory.

5.4.2.1 Conscious, Preconscious and Unconscious

Freud's early work focused on developing a topographical model of the mind to explain how different mental processes operate. He proposed that the mind could be divided into three regions: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. He likened the mind to an iceberg, with only a small part, the conscious mind, visible above the surface. The conscious mind includes everything we are currently aware of, such as feeling hun-

gry or thinking about what to do next. Beneath the surface lies the preconscious, which holds memories and thoughts that are not currently active but can easily be brought into awareness, such as remembering your phone number or a friend's name.

The deepest part of the mind is the unconscious. This region contains our most hidden and often disturbing thoughts, wishes, and memories. These are typically painful or socially unacceptable, such as aggressive urges or traumatic childhood experiences. Because they are too threatening to face directly, the unconscious mind keeps them buried. However, these hidden contents continue to influence our behaviour, emotions, and even our dreams. For instance, someone might have a deep fear of dogs without recalling a childhood incident of being bitten. According to Freud, the goal of psychoanalysis is to bring these unconscious thoughts into awareness so that they can be understood and managed.

5.4.2.2 Unconscious Mind

The unconscious mind plays a central role in Freud's theory of personality. Although the idea of the unconscious existed before Freud, he popularised it and gave it significant psychological meaning. He believed that many psychological issues stem from conflicts buried deep within the unconscious. These might be forgotten traumas, unfulfilled desires, or forbidden urges. For example, a child who had a troubling experience at school might repress the memory, but as an adult, the individual may feel intense anxiety in academic settings without knowing why.

Freud also introduced the idea of "Freudian slips," or errors in speech that reveal unconscious thoughts. An example would be saying "I'm glad you're here to suffer—uh, I mean, suffer through this event with me" instead of "celebrate this event." Freud claimed such

slips are not random but are meaningful indicators of hidden thoughts. Similarly, dreams, according to Freud, are a form of wish-fulfilment and a way for the unconscious mind to express itself safely. Many of his early studies were based on analysing dreams and uncovering their latent content, the hidden meaning beneath the obvious storyline.

5.4.2.3 Id

The id is the most primitive part of the human personality. It is entirely unconscious and operates from birth. The id is governed by what Freud called the "pleasure principle," which means it seeks immediate gratification of its desires and instincts. These include basic drives such as hunger, thirst, aggression, and sexual urges. It does not consider reality or consequences and functions in a childlike manner. For example, if a baby is hungry, it will cry until it is fed, without any understanding of patience or timing. This need for instant satisfaction continues to exist throughout life, although it is regulated by the other parts of the psyche.

The id contains the life instincts(Eros), which include the sexual drive(libido), and the death instincts(Thanatos),which include aggression. Because the id is not influenced by logic, ethics, or social rules, it can lead to destructive or unacceptable behaviour if not controlled. In Freud's view, the id is like a wild animal inside us, full of raw, instinctive energy. Although we may not always be aware of it, the id is constantly pushing us to fulfil our desires, and this creates internal tension if those desires are not met.

5.4.2.4 Superego

The superego is the part of the personality that represents our moral standards and ideals. It develops during early childhood, around the age of five, as children begin to learn right

from wrong, mostly from their parents and society. Freud believed that the superego consists of two parts: the conscience, which punishes the ego through guilt when we do something wrong, and the ego-ideal, which rewards us with feelings of pride when we behave well. The superego is driven by what Freud called the "morality principle." Unlike the id, which seeks pleasure, the superego aims for perfection.

The superego exists in all three levels of consciousness—conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. It monitors the actions of the ego and constantly judges our thoughts and behaviour. For instance, if someone has a desire to cheat in an exam (driven by the id), the superego might prevent them from doing so by instilling guilt or shame. It acts as a kind of internalised authority figure. In cases where the superego is too strong, it can make a person overly critical of themselves and lead to anxiety or low self-esteem. For example, someone raised in a very strict household may feel guilt for actions that are not actually wrong, simply because their superego has been conditioned to be extremely harsh.

5.4.2.5 Ego

The ego is the rational part of the personality that mediates between the desires of the id and the moral constraints of the superego. Freud said the ego operates according to the "reality principle." It tries to satisfy the demands of the id in socially acceptable and realistic ways. The ego is mostly conscious but also operates in the preconscious and unconscious levels. It is like the manager or mediator of the mind, balancing the impulsive needs of the id with the judgmental rules of the superego.

Freud used the metaphor of a horse and rider to explain the relationship. The id is the horse, powerful, instinctive, and wild,while the ego is the rider who tries to guide the horse in the right direction. The ego uses defence mechanisms to deal with conflicts between the id and superego. These include repression (blocking distressing thoughts), denial (refusing to accept reality), projection (attributing one's own unacceptable thoughts to others), and rationalisation (explaining behaviour in a logical way even if the real reason is emotional). For example, if someone feels angry at their boss but cannot express it, they might come home and shout at a family member instead. This process is known as displacement and is a common defence mechanism used by the ego.

Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego has shaped much of modern psychology and remains a key concept in understanding human behaviour. Though criticised and revised over time, his ideas provide a valuable framework for exploring how unconscious forces influence our thoughts, emotions, and actions. The id drives our basic urges, the superego reminds us of our morals, and the ego keeps both in check by making practical decisions. When these three parts are balanced, we function healthily. However, when one dominates, it can lead to psychological issues. For example, if the id is too strong, a person may become impulsive and selfish. If the superego is too dominant, they may be overly judgmental or anxious. And if the ego is weak, it may struggle to manage inner conflict. Freud's legacy lies not just in his clinical work, but also in how he taught us to look inward and question the hidden parts of ourselves.

5.4.2.6 Criticism of Freud's Theories

While Freud's ideas have been extremely influential in psychology and beyond, they have also faced serious criticism over the years. Although his theory of the id, ego, and superego has helped many understand human personality and unconscious motivation, some aspects of his work have been challenged for being limited, outdated, or biased.

One of the main criticisms is that Freud placed too much emphasis on the inner workings of the mind without considering the role of external factors. His theory largely ignored the influence of environment, culture, and social context on personality development. He focused heavily on mental illness, repression, and early childhood experiences, but gave little attention to healthy psychological growth or positive human potential. Moreover, Freud's overemphasis on sexuality, particularly male sexuality, is seen as narrow and sometimes inappropriate, with other important elements of human experience overlooked.

Another issue is that Freud's ideas were not based on scientific methods. Most of his conclusions came from case studies or self-analysis rather than systematic experiments. This means that many of his theories cannot be tested or proven in a scientific way. For example, concepts like the Oedipus complex or repression cannot be measured or clearly observed, which makes them hard to confirm or disprove. For a theory to be accepted in science, it must be open to being tested and possibly proven wrong. Many argue that Freud's

work does not meet this standard, and therefore lacks scientific credibility.

Freud's work has also been criticised for its gender bias. Modern feminists and scholars have pointed out that some of his ideas reflect the patriarchal views of the time in which he lived. For instance, his theory of "penis envy" suggests that women feel inferior because they do not have male anatomy. This idea is now widely rejected as sexist and outdated. Feminist thinker Betty Friedan argued that such views were more about the social values of the Victorian era than about genuine psychology. She believed Freud's theories helped to limit women's roles in society and reinforced harmful stereotypes about femininity.

In conclusion, while Freud's contributions to psychology are significant and enduring, it is important to approach his work with a critical mind. His theories opened up important discussions about the unconscious mind, human motivation, and personality. However, many of his ideas have been revised, rejected, or reinterpreted in modern psychology due to their limitations, lack of scientific evidence, and cultural bias.

Recap

▸ Psychoanalysis studies how unconscious thoughts influence people and literature deeply.

▸ Freud believed childhood experiences shape adult thoughts, actions, and fears.

▸ Repressed desires appear in dreams, behaviours, or symbolic writing forms.

▸ The id demands pleasure and acts without thinking of consequences.

▸ The ego balances id's desires with realistic, social decision-making.

▸ The superego judges behaviour using learned morals and social values.

▸ Strong superego causes guilt, anxiety, and self-critical thoughts in people.

▸ The ego delays gratification and chooses acceptable ways to act.

▸ Freud compared id to horse, ego as guiding rider.

- ▶ Dreams reveal hidden fears or wishes through images and symbols.
- ▶ Freudian slips expose repressed feelings through unexpected speech mistakes.
- ▶ Lacan said unconscious works like language, shaping identity and thought.
- ▶ Jung introduced archetypes from collective unconscious shared across human culture.
- ▶ Critics say Freud ignored culture, science, and women's real lives.
- ▶ Despite criticism, Freud's theories still shape psychology and literary studies.

Objective Questions

1. Who is considered the founder of psychoanalysis?
2. In which century did psychoanalytic criticism begin to develop?
3. What part of the mind did Freud believe guides hidden desires?
4. Which part of the mind operates on the pleasure principle?
5. What term refers to the censoring force based on societal values?
6. Which part of the psyche balances desires and morals?
7. What is the term for hidden, repressed desires showing in speech?
8. What concept explains rivalry with the same-sex parent?
9. Which theorist developed the idea of collective unconscious?
10. What term did Carl Jung use for recurring character patterns?
11. Which psychoanalyst focused on language and the unconscious?
12. What is the term for the deeper meaning of a dream?
13. Who believed literature acts like a dream with hidden meaning?
14. What does the superego operate on, according to Freud?
15. What Freudian term is used for blocking painful memories?

Answers

1. Freud
2. Nineteenth
3. Unconscious
4. Id
5. Superego

6. Ego
7. Slip
8. Oedipus
9. Jung
10. Archetypes
11. Lacan
12. Latent
13. Freud
14. Morality
15. Repression

Assignments

1. Explain the core concepts of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and discuss how they influence literary analysis.
2. How do the id, ego, and superego function within a literary character? Use examples from any literary text.
3. Discuss the concept of the unconscious mind in Freudian theory. How is it reflected in literature and dreams?
4. Compare and contrast Freud's and Jung's contributions to psychoanalytic literary criticism.
5. Critically evaluate the role of repression, defence mechanisms, and Freudian slips in the interpretation of texts.

Suggested Reading

1. M.H Abrams. "Psychological and Psychoanalytic Criticism". *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York.
2. Biddle, Arthur W., and Toby Fulwiler. *Reading, Writing, and the Study of Literature*. New York,1989.
3. Sigmund Freud. *On Dreams*. Cambridge, 1993.
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BLOCK – 06

Indian Aesthetics

Unit 1

Theory of Rasa, Alamkara and Dhwanisidhant

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

▶ develop an understanding of the theories of Rasa, Alamkara, Ritisidhant and Dhwanisidhant

▶ acquire knowledge about various types of figures of speech

▶ become acquainted with *Thinai* Poetics

▶ understand the contribution of Tamil literature to the history of Indian Aesthetics

Prerequisites

Literature evokes joy and emotional resonance, prompting inquiries into how such experiences are made possible. This is the concern of aesthetics—the study of beauty in literature and art. While Western aesthetics traditionally focuses on the sensory and philosophical dimensions of fine arts, Indian aesthetics offers a spiritually rooted approach, exploring how art expresses the Absolute and evokes inner states.

Indian aesthetic thought has given rise to various schools and theories, each explaining a different aspect of literary experience. Key among them are the Rasa theory, which focuses on emotive expression; Dhvani, the theory of suggestion; Vakrokti, which explores stylistic nuance; and Alamkara, which deals with figurative language. These concepts evolved primarily in the context of dramatic and poetic traditions, as seen in foundational texts like Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra,* a seminal treatise that integrates art, philosophy, and technique, positioning drama as a synthesis of all other arts.

Indian poetics spans centuries, from early formulations in the Vedas to systematic frameworks developed by scholars like Bhamaha, Dandin, Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and Kuntaka. These thinkers enriched literary criticism through their analysis of form, content, and emotional impact. In South India,*Thinai poetics* emerged as a distinct tradition, rooted in Tamil classical literature, emphasising the interplay of landscape, emo-

tion, and human experience.

Together, these theories represent a comprehensive exploration of how literature communicates meaning, stirs the senses, and shapes aesthetic experience across cultures and times.

Key Concepts

Rasa, Alamkara, Ritisidhant, Dhvanisidhant, *Thinai Poetics*

6.1.1 Indian Aesthetics: Introduction

Indian thought on beauty and art grew from a wish to stir deep feelings and insight in those who listened or watched. In this tradition, the highest aim of a poem, play, song or dance was not merely to charm the ear or the eye but to lead the mind towards a sense of the eternal. The branch of philosophy that studies such matters is called aesthetics. It asks what beauty is, how we recognise it and why it moves us. Indian writers began to explore these questions long before similar debates gained shape in Europe. Western scholars often remark that a full theory of aesthetics did not appear until the Italian thinker Benedetto Croce wrote in the early twentieth century; yet in India, many treatises on the same themes were already many centuries old. From the first, these Indian works set out to explain why certain sounds and images bring delight and how that delight may lift the spirit.

Early Indian learning set out four chief subjects. *Anvikshiki* trained the mind in clear reasoning. *Trayi* explored the three sacred books called the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. *Varta* dealt with farming, cattle keeping, trade and the flow of money. *Dandaniti* studied rule, power and public order. In time, a fifth subject appeared, *Sahityavidya*, the study of letters and story. The wise called it the outcome of the first four studies, for it drew thought, belief, wealth and rule into a single human voice that could delight and teach.

Most of the great early works on Indian literary theory were written in Sanskrit because that was the language of learning. The subject took several names. *Sahityasastra* meant the science of writing. *Alankarasastra* meant the study of adornment for words. *Kavyasastra* and *Kavyamimamsa* meant inquiry into poetry. The term Sahitya itself joined two ideas, sound and sense, to suggest that a true poem unites them in perfect accord. Alankara carried the wider sense of anything that lends extra charm, from a vivid image to a ringing metre. When scholars spoke of Sastra or Mimamsa, they pointed to a reasoned system, a careful weighing of claims. Some modern writers use the word *Soundaryasastra*, which covers not only poetry but also music, painting and other fine arts, much like the broad Western notion of aesthetics.

Indian tradition tells a glowing story about how knowledge of art reached humankind. The poet and critic Rajasekhara writes that the goddess Sarasvati shaped a figure called the Kavyapurusha, poetry made flesh. She sent him to earth so that people might learn how words can sing. He taught seventeen pupils, and each wrote a treatise on some part of the craft. One of these pupils was Bharata, the sage who later composed the *Natyasastra*.

The *Rig Veda*, the oldest Indian book to survive, already shows that its poets were thinking about the nature of beauty. They use simile, overstatement, and other figures that mirror how the mind leaps from one image to another. One famous Vedic line states that a single word, if rightly chosen and placed, can bring any wish to fulfilment. Another tells us that rasa, the taste of feeling, is in truth the supreme spirit. Still another says that bliss is the very form of that spirit. Such hints grew into systematic doctrine in the *Natyasastra*, where Bharata sets out how different emotions arise on stage, how gestures and speech blend to evoke them, and how the audience tastes the final relish.

Indian critics kept asking the same pressing questions: what is a poem, what shapes its outer form, what gives it an inner life, what kind of pleasure does it offer and what gifts must a writer possess? To answer such puzzles, they framed different theories. Each theory gathered disciples and became known as a school, or paddhati. Over time, eight chief schools emerged: the rasa school, which centred on emotion; the alankara school, which prized ornament and figures of speech; the guna school, which looked at noble qualities; the riti school, which stressed style; the dhvani school, which argued for suggested meaning; the vakrokti school, which loved the witty twist of language; the aucitya school, which valued fitness and proportion; and the anumiti school, which challenged the claims of suggestion. The schools arose because critics could not agree on which element counts as the true soul of poetry. They often overlap and quote one another, yet the rasa and dhvani views won the widest following and reshaped Indian poetics. Alankara and vakrokti share a focus on verbal sparkle, rasa, dhvani and aucitya cluster around feeling and propriety, while guna and riti stand close in their concern for quality and manner. Anumiti, devised mainly

to deny dhvani, soon faded from sight.

Throughout these writings, one principle returns again and again. A work of art succeeds when it moves the listener or viewer beyond the everyday self toward a shared field of experience. The term rasa conveys this savour. It is compared to the taste of a dish in which many ingredients blend until none can be picked apart, yet all contribute. Gesture, voice, costume, plot, and poetic image mingle to awaken the chosen sentiment. When the blending is perfect, the audience feels a gentle lift of consciousness, a moment of clarity and repose. This effect is not mere amusement; it is a glimpse of a deeper order that underlies both joy and sorrow.

While Sanskrit thinkers wrote mainly for learned circles, their ideas spread into regional languages and shaped the wider culture of India. Poets in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and many other tongues drew on earlier Sanskrit theory yet also adapted it to local speech forms and folk song traditions. Courtly verse and devotional hymns alike employed the classic figures of speech, and temple dance followed the codes set down in the *Natyasastra*. Even today, students of Indian dance, drama, or classical music study the ancient manuals to grasp the link between technical precision and emotional truth.

Modern scholars cast new light on these old theories by bringing in tools of linguistics, psychology, and cultural history. They note that Indian poetics treats meaning as an event that unfolds in time through hint and resonance rather than as a fixed object. They also observe that the stress on shared sentiment offers a bridge between personal feeling and collective imagination. Some compare the idea of dhvani to modern notions of subtext or intertextuality, and the idea of rasa to concepts in phenomenology or affect studies.

Yet for many artists, the value of the tradition is less in its scholarly schemes than in its living guidance. A dancer still follows Bharata's codified eye movements to portray love, fear, or disgust. A musician still thinks of the rasa of a raga when setting a poem to melody. A playwright still plans the rising play of moods toward the steady joy that must crown the performance. Thus, ancient aesthetics continues to feed present creativity.

Indian aesthetics forms an age-old inquiry into why art delights and uplifts. Rooted in sacred song and ritual, it grew into a critical science with precise terms and methods. It sees poetry as a body animated by a soul of feeling, shaped by adornment, measured by rhythm, and completed when the reader or spectator senses a taste of the universal. Its debates across schools show a lively pursuit of truth where each theory adds a facet to the jewel of art. Though written long ago, these ideas speak to any age that seeks to understand the strange power of words, sound, and image to widen the heart's horizon.

6.1.2 Theory of Rasa

When we read a poem or watch a play, we often feel lifted out of daily life into a mood that seems larger than ourselves. Sanskrit poets and thinkers called that heightened flavour of feeling rasa, a word that first means juice or taste and then, by extension, the savour of an experience. They spoke of poetry as a vessel that carries rasa from the stage or page into the heart of the listener, and they ranked this transmission as the highest purpose of art. Earlier writers had listed several practical gains that verse might offer. A clever poem could bring the author fame, attract gifts and patronage, teach graceful conduct for social life, or ward off evil influences through its holy sound. Yet beyond all these stood a rarer prize, the sudden joy that frees the mind from its limits. Later critics said that such joy feels akin

to realising the deepest Self. Abhinavagupta, the great Kashmir thinker who commented on Bharata's classic treatise the *Natyasastra*, even described the thrill of rasa as a glimpse of the same limitless bliss that lies at the core of the universe.

The idea itself is older than any surviving manual, but the first full explanation appears in the *Natyasastra*, a massive work on drama and dance ascribed to the sage Bharata. Scholars cannot fix his dates with certainty; most place him somewhere around the first century before the Common Era. His treatise runs to thirty-six long chapters, though some later copies add a thirty-seventh. Only chapter six and the next few chapters concern rasa in detail; yet that short stretch shaped the course of Indian aesthetics for two thousand years.

Bharata's Natyasastra is a vast manual of thirty-six chapters and roughly six thousand verses, which is why later readers nicknamed it Shatsahasri, the text of six thousand. The opening chapter tells how drama arose as a fifth Veda, drawing speech from the Rig Veda, song from the Sama Veda, movement from the Yajur Veda, and feeling from the Atharva Veda. Chapter Two sets out precise rules for building a theatre. Chapter Three explains the rites offered to the gods of the stage. The fourth describes the stages of performance, while the fifth explains the opening and closing ceremonies around the curtain. Chapter Six, called Rasavikalpa, gives the first full treatment of rasa or mood, a topic that continues into Chapter Seven. Chapters Eight to Fourteen explore further details of acting. From Fifteen to Twenty-Two, the focus is on spoken delivery. Chapter Twenty-Three shows why costume matters, and Chapter Twenty-Four sums up the art of performance as a whole. Chapter Twenty-Five discusses characters who pursue pleasure for a living. Gesture and bodily expression are the concern

of Chapter Twenty-Six. Chapter Twenty-Seven explains the two kinds of success, human and divine. Chapter Twenty-Eight describes many musical instruments; the next three look at them one by one, with the lute in Chapter Twenty-Nine, the flute in Chapter Thirty, and cymbals in Chapter Thirty-One. Chapter Thirty-Two lists poetic metres and the skills required of singers. Drums and other percussion fill Chapter Thirty-Three. Chapter Thirty-Four portrays the various types of heroes and heroines, while Chapter Thirty-Five advises on casting actors to match each role. The final chapter, Natyavatarana, tells how this sacred art was first performed in heaven before it found a home on earth.

During the next millennium, many scholars re-examined Bharata's seed idea and tried to explain exactly how rasa moves from stage to spectator. Some, like the elusive Bhattalollata and Bhattatauta, may have written direct glosses on the Natyasastra, though only fragments quoted by others survive. The most ambitious synthesis came from Abhinavagupta in his Abhinavabharati, a vast commentary that gathers earlier views, adds insights from Yoga and Kashmir Shaivism, and argues that the relish of rasa briefly dissolves the narrow sense of "I" as the mind rests in universal awareness.

Side by side, another line of thought grew around poetic suggestion or dhvani. Anandavardhana, in the ninth century, claimed that the finest poetry functions through meanings hinted at rather than plainly stated. He showed that a single word or image can echo an emotion much deeper than its direct sense. In doing so, he joined the theory of rasa to that of dhvani, saying that suggested meaning is the surest road by which rasa reaches the reader. His disciple Mammata and later writers such as Visvanatha and Jagannatha repeated that union: the richest poem is one where emotion arises through subtle implication.

Not every thinker accepted all parts of this scheme. Some focused on verbal ornament, some on moral quality, some on stylistic grace. Yet even these schools tended to admit that without rasa, no amount of rhetorical glitter can satisfy. The debate, therefore, turned less on whether rasa matters and more on how it is kindled, how many rasas exist, whether tranquillity deserves a separate place as the ninth rasa, and whether the audience truly forgets its own identity during the experience or only imagines the character's state. These questions kept philosophers busy for centuries, and their answers form the subject that modern historians call the theory of rasa.

Understanding this theory is essential before we step into its details, for it lays the foundation on which all later Indian criticism stands. It explains why Indian stagecraft devotes such care to gesture and song, why classical poets choose certain word patterns to convey hidden moods, and why traditional musicians speak of each raga as carrying a distinct flavour of feeling.

6.1.2.1 What is *Rasa*?

The literal meaning of *rasa* is 'aesthetic pleasure' or 'aesthetic juice'. It is the pleasure enjoyed by the reader/spectator from a book/a play. It is the same feeling that is experienced by the characters in the work of art. *Rasa* is something that already exists in the minds of the readers or spectators, which could be elucidated by the author.

Three factors in *Rasa*

Rasa constitutes three factors, or it can be attained by the union of three factors.

"*Vibhava anubhava vyabhichari samyogat-Rasanishpatti*"-Bharata Muni

The three factors are:

1. Vibhava

2. Anubhava

3. Vyabhicharibhava (Sanchari bhava)

All three factors lead to the formation of *rasa* or *rasanishpatti*. *Samyogati* is the process of combining these three factors.

1)Vibhava

Vibhava is the cause (karana) for the arising of an emotion. It is the objective condition which leads to an emotion. This external stimulus can be a person or a situation.

Vibhava is of two kinds:

a.Alambana vibhava (person as a supporting excitant)

b.Uddipana vibhava (intensifying situational excitants)

Alambana vibhava is the person with respect to whom an emotion is aroused or manifested (due to the presence of Dushyanta, Shakuntala felt emotion). Uddipana vibhava refers to the circumstances that lead to emotional excitement (the beauty of nature initiates the manifestation of emotion in Shakuntala).

2)Anubhava

Anubhava follows bhava. It is a distinct kind of experience (felt by readers/spectators) due to vibhava. It is expressed through psycho-physical movements such as gestures and other facial expressions. In other words, anubhava is the experience due to the observation of vibhava, and it is manifested through bodily expressions such as winking eyes, smiles, nodding heads, etc. Anubhava denotes the psychophysical experiences of the audience/readers. Dancing, crying loudly, rolling on the ground, etc., are some of the other examples of anubhava. These experiences are extracted from *stayibhava* - fixed emotions (8 numbers according to Bharat). In other words, we can

conclude that anubhava is created from *stayibhava*.

3)Vyabhicharibhava (Sanchari bhava)

Vyabhicharibhava (Sanchari bhava) denotes the transient state (temporary) of the mind, which is subsidiary to stayibhava. Look at the comparison given below:

Sea - tide \ stayibhava - vyabhichari bhava \ shoka - depression or doubt

It is clear from the above example that vyabhichari bhava, or the transient state of mind, is the after-effect of anubhava (just as the sea is permanent and tides are momentary). Shoka may be the *stayibhava* and doubt or depression follows as the vyabhichari bhava. So, vyabhichari bhava is the after-effect of anubhava. According to Bharat, there are 33 vyabhichari bhavas.

Samyogat (Samyogatti)

Samyogat refers to the perfect union or settlement of the above-mentioned three factors. It is the fitting combination of these three factors which can be realised through *satvik bhavas*. Through the process of samyogat, one can realise *satvik bhavas*, which are the involuntary experiences that are realised during samyogat. These can be exhibited through visible signs. Only after samyogat is done, one may experience *rasanishpatti*. In other words, *satvik bhavas* can be realised through samyogatti, which then leads to the attainment of *rasanishpatti*.

Vibhava + Anubhava + Sanchari bhava = Rasanishpatti

Satvik bhavas

There are 8 Satvik bhavas:

1. Sthambha (immobility)

2. Swetha (perspiration)

3. Romancha (raising of hairs)

4. Swarabhanga (choking of voice)

5. Kampana (shivering)
6. Vivarnatha (decolourisation)
7. Asrupravah (shedding of tears)
8. Moorcha (senselessness)

Bhava- Rasa relation

Bhava	Rasa	Sense
Rati	Sringara	Adoration
Hasa	Hasya	Laughter
Shoka	Karuna	Grief
Krodha	Raudra	Rage
Utsah	Vir	Excitement
Bhaya	Bhayanaka	Fear
Jugupsa	Bhibatsa	Disgust
Vismaya	Adbhut	Awe
Sama (Tranquil)	Shantham (*not by Bharata; identified later by Abhinavagupta)	Peaceful
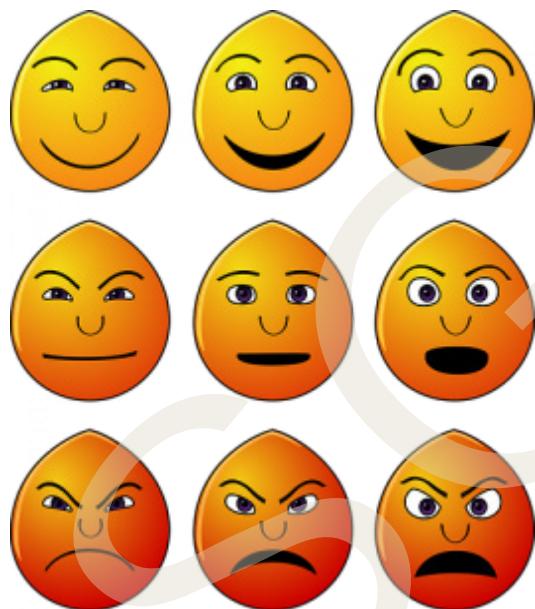
1.Rasa: Shringara

Colour: Pale Light Green

Meaning: Love & Beauty

Property: It is the crown emotion that has the capability to heal anything. It helps us get rid of ego. Love is everywhere and inherent in everything. It connects and allows us to experience divine love. It denotes love and attraction.

2.Rasa: Hasya

Colour: White

Meaning: Joy & Laughter

Property: It connects us to joy, laughter and our sense of humour. Happiness makes you forget everything and relieves you of stress. Happiness is a state of mind that also keeps you content.

3.Rasa: Karuna

Colour: Grey

Meaning: Sorrow, Compassion

Property: It means pity or compassion that is invoked by anguish or pain, or sorrow. It is also associated with sadness. Compassion is a bridge that connects us all, through which we can relate to each other's sadness deeply and honestly. It also helps us understand and empathise with each other.

4.Rasa: Raudra

Colour: Red

Meaning: Anger

Property: It means roaring and has a sense of rage. Anger can lead to irritation, hatred and violence. It is a property of fire, and just a moment of anger can destroy a lifetime of goodwill. So, let go of the anger within you rather than getting stuck.

5.Rasa: Veera

Colour: Pale Orange

Meaning: Heroism, Courage

Property: It reflects a heroic or manly attitude. Everyone has a warrior inside him/her; it's just that you need to awaken it from dormancy. It is strong, vibrant and is associated with bravery, confidence, determination, self-assurance and valour.

6.Rasa: Bhayanaka

Colour: Black

Meaning: Fear

Property: It is associated with fear, worry, insecurity, and self-doubt; these factors engulf us completely and shut us down. One can overcome this emotion through love, inner strength and truth.

7.Rasa: Bibhatsa

Colour: Blue

Meaning: Disgust

Property: It means to detest or have aversion. It characterises a judgemental mind, self-pity, loathing and also self-hatred.

8.Rasa: Adbhuta

Colour: Yellow

Meaning: Wonder, Surprise

Property: This means wonder, amazement and surprise. It also depicts our innocence and playfulness. The moment when we are sur-prised or curious or in awe of something, we appreciate and enjoy those little things around us. We get fascinated and become adventurers of life.

9. Shanth Rasa- the ninth rasa

This rasa is the contribution of Abhinavagupta. It is based on the *nirveda bhava*, and it is rarely seen in literature.

Rasa: Shanta

Colour: White

Meaning: Peace

Property: It reflects deep calmness and relaxation. When we sit quietly or meditate, we are at peace. It means to be peaceful, tranquil, or contented.

6.1.2.1 Interpretation of Rasa Theory

Rasa theory has been interpreted in many dimensions by various theorists. Some of them are given below:

Bhatta Lollata (Mimassaka)

Bhatta Lollata emphasised the idea of union or conjunction, and according to him, *vibhavas* are the primary cause of *rasa*.

Samkuka

Samkuka placed importance on the idea of inferring the *absolute* from the *real*.

Bhatta Nayaka

According to him, aesthetic pleasure is a spiritual existence elevated to a universal level. His theory of rasa is called *Bhukti Vada*.

Bhukti Vada:

The sorrow of a particular person is a personal experience, and it has nothing to do with

art. On the other hand, when it is aesthetically performed, it evokes a universal response of pathos in art. An object in reality becomes a spiritual creation in the mind of a man. This theory of rasa is called *Bhukti Vada*.

This theory distinguishes between poetic language and ordinary language. Only the poetic languages have the functions of *bhavkatuva* and *bhojakatuva*.

Bhatta Tauta

Bhatta Tauta, the guru of Abhinavagupta, in his work 'Kavya Kauthuka', said that spectators' memories and associations contribute to the present experience, making it a new and unique spiritual enlightenment, which he termed as the confluence of individual and universal emotions (rasavadhara or chamatkara).

Mammata

In his work 'Kavya Prakasha', Mammata says *rasa* is the 'effect' and its 'cause' is *vidhara*.

Abhinavagupta

Abhinavagupta is a Kashmiri Sanskrit scholar. In his work 'Abhinavabharati', a commentary on 'Natyasastra', he disagrees with Lollata, Samkuka, and Bhatta Nayaka. Bhatta Lollata overemphasised the word 'samyogatti', but Abhinavagupta focused on the word 'nishpatti', which he took in the sense of manifestation.

In accordance with his theory, *rasa* is not an *effect* (Lollata), *rasa* is not *inferred* (Samkuka), it is not by means of *bhavkatuva* or *bhojakatuva* that a *sahrudaya* enjoys a *rasa* (Nayaka). *Rasa* is manifested by the elevation of feelings to a universal level.

6.1.2.2 Two types of universalisation:

1. In expression, an emotion becomes devoid of all its local colour.

Example: Sorrow becomes pathos to a universal level.

2. In reception, it is pathos that is enjoyed by the spectators and not the sorrow of the individual character.

The emotional motive complexes vary from one viewer to another. He opined that there are three psychological stages in the realisation of rasa in poetry and drama:

1. Intellectual: recognises formal elements
2. Imaginative: idealisation and universalisation using imagination
3. Emotional: climactic, inexpressible affective state.

6.1.3 Theory of Alankara

Basically, 'alankara' is a study of language. It means 'ornament'. The theory of 'alankara' focuses on the 'literariness' of a work of art. Figures of speech, figurative expressions, grammatical accuracy, pleasantness of sound, and, to a great extent, meaning are the key concepts to be kept in mind when we learn about the theory of 'alankara'.

Bhamaha is the first 'alankara' poet. There is a multiplicity of meaning in certain alankaras such as 'arthantharanyasa', 'vibhavma', and 'samasokti'. Bhamaha's famous book 'Kavyalamkara' describes 35 figures of speech.

After Bhamaha, Dandin, Udbhata, Rudrata, and Vamana contributed much in this field. Anandavardhana integrated 'alankara' with 'rasa' and 'dhvani' and thereby provided a new realm to the theory of alankara. According to him, *dhvani* is evoked by *alankara* and *rasa* is evoked by *dhvani*.

6.1.2.3 Classification of Alankara

I. **Rudrata** classifies alankara into two:

Phonetic based (Sabdaalamkara)

Meaning based (Arthalamkara)

II. **Bhoja** adds a third one to it, called 'Ubhayalamkara'.

III. There is another classification of alankara given by **Ruyyaka** on the basis of meaning:

    a. Lokanyaya (logic)

    b. Gudhartha Pratiti (inference)

    c. Kavyanyaya (logic of poetry)

    d. Virodha (opposition)

    e. Sadrusya (similarity)

    f. Tarkanyaya (reasoning)

    g. Srinkalabadha (chain bound)

IV Classification of alankara by Mamata:

Mamata has given 61 alankaras. All these are categorised into 7 sections as given below:

1. Upama (simile)

2. Rupaka (metaphor)

3. Aprastuta Prasamsa (indirect description)

4. Dipaka (stringed figures)

5. Vyatireka (dissimilation)

6. Virodha (contradiction)

7. Samuchaya (concatenation stanza-linking. It refers to the linking of one stanza to another by the repetition of words from the last line of one stanza in the first line of the next. This joins the poem together, stanza by stanza, as if it were a chain, a catena.)

There are numerous other subcategories proposed by different scholars (68 in total).

6.1.4. Ritisidhant

The 'Riti' school of poetics is propounded by Vamana, the author of *KavyalankarSutravritti*. He flourished in Kashmir towards the end of the 8th century A.D. When Anandavardhana states that *dhvani* is the soul of poetry, Vamana states that *guna* and *alankara* are different. Vamana's *riti* is anticipated in the *marga* of the South Indian writer Dandi, author of *Kavyadarsha*. The distinctions between the *vaidarbha* style and the *gaudya* style were known even to Bhamaha, the earliest important writer who was against praising the *vaidarbha* and condemning the *gaudya*, and said that both styles have their place in good literature. But in Dandin, we find the earlier partiality for *vaidarbha* and aversion to *gaudya* given great prominence. He takes the *vaidarbha* style as the best and says that it contains all ten poetic qualities properly balanced. Those ten qualities are:

► Ojas: strength through the use of long compounds

► Prasad: clarity and lucidity

► Shlesha: well-knitted

► Samata: evenness of sound within a line

► Samadhi: ambivalence through the use of metaphors

► Madhurya: sweetness

► Sukumarata: softness and delicacy

► Udaratha: exaltation

► Arthavvakti: lucidity of meaning

► Kanti: grace

Vamana took the ten *gunas* of Bharata and Dandi, but he traced all *gunas* separately as belonging to the expression and as belonging to the meaning, thus making their number twenty. He defined them in his way to suit his theory of *riti* and stated that all the *gunas*

existed clearly and fully in the *vaidarbha riti* and only a few of them existed in other *ritis*.

To the early *vaidarbha* and *gaudiya* styles of ancient writers, Vamana added a third one called *Panchali*; all these are geographical names and suggest the style popular in those regions, and he defines these *ritis* in his way:

a. *Vaidarbha:* According to Vamana, *vaidarbha* is that style which is untouched by even the slightest blemish, which is full of all the qualities and which is as smooth as the lute.

b. *Gaudiya style:* The *Gaudiya* style is characterised by *Ojas* and *Kanti*, but it is devoid of *Madhurya* and *Saukumarya*, which is full of long compounds and bombastic words.

c. *Panchali*: *Panchali* is the style which has the qualities of *Madhurya* and *Saukumarya* and is devoid of *Ojas* and *Kanti*. It is soft and resembles the Puranic style.

6.1.5 Dhvani Sidhanth (Dhvani Theory)

Literally, 'dhvani' means 'sound'. In poetics, it refers to the suggested meaning or the indirect meaning. It was first advocated by Anandavardhana (9th Century) in his treatise '*Dhvanyaloka*', which again connotes the universe of suggestion.

Anandavardhana has explained two major concepts - *Vachyartha* and *Vyangyartha*. *Vachyartha* refers to the 'expressed or literal meaning' while *Vyangyartha* indicates the 'suggested meaning or the evoked meaning'. A reader of poetry requires *prabhita* (poetic sense) to understand the *Vyangyartha*, according to his theory.

Another contribution of Anandavardhana is *Dhvanikavya*, the type of poetry which uses the dhvani theory. *Dhvanikavya* is of three types:

▶ Uttam Kavya
▶ Gunibhuta Kavya
▶ Chitra Kavya

Uttam Kavya is also known as *Dhvani proper* or *Dhvani Kavya*, where *Vyangyartha* is considered to be more significant. In *Gunibhuta Kavya*, *Vachyartha* is more important. In *Chitra Kavya*, the poet gives more importance to verbal meaning, and there will be no place for suggested elements or *dhvani*. Here, the poet makes use of drawings and various patterns for the creation of poems. Anandavardhana always preferred *Vyangyartha* in his poems.

Words have two meanings - primary/literal meaning, called *abidha*, and secondary/contextual meaning, called *lakshana*. Dhvani manifests itself when the literal meaning is subordinated and the suggested meaning is dominant. In other words, when *lakshana* receives more importance than *abidha*, we experience dhvani.

Dhvani is the soul of poetry, said Anandavardhana. He integrated *Rasa* with *Dhvani*. He was of the opinion that *rasa* can be experienced well through the thorough understanding of *dhvani*. This is because *rasa* is the effect of *dhvani* or suggestion.

Anandavardhana adopted the concept of *dhvani* from the Sanskrit grammarians Bharatamuni and Patanjali, who developed the *sphota* theory. *Sphota* theory suggests that when we hear a sound, we can visualise the image and its meaning in our mind. An undifferentiated and eternal image of the sound in the mind reveals the meaning. *Sphota* theory is a linguistic theory, whereas *Dhvani* theory is an aesthetic theory.

Based on his *dhvani* theory, Anandavardhana has classified poetic expressions into three:

- ▶ Uttama (best poems)
- ▶ Madhyama (poems of minimum quality)
- ▶ Adhama (poems with low quality, with unnecessary elements)

According to Anandavardhana, *rasa* is the effect of poetry, and *dhvani* is the technique of expression to create that effect.

Criticism

Abhinavagupta has written criticism on *dhvani* in his famous work *Locana* (10th century). To him, *Dhvani* is nonexistent. It is the product of inference, and it is under *lakshana*. It is beyond the realm of words.

6.1.6 *Thinai* Poetics

In Tamil poetics, '*Thinnais*' (tiṇai – "genre", "type") is a type of poetical mode or theme. A *thinai* consists of a complete poetical landscape - a definite time, place, and season in which the poem is set - and background elements characteristic of that landscape - including flora and fauna, inhabitants, deities, and social organisation. These collectively provide imagery for extended poetic metaphors, which set the mood of the poem.

Classical authors recognised two broad categories of *thinais*:

1. *Akam thinais* (literally, "the inner genre") consisted of modes used in love poetry, associated with specific aspects of a relationship or specific stages in the development of a relationship.

2. *Puram thinais* (literally, "the outer genre") consisted of modes that corresponded closely to the *akam* modes, but were used in heroic, philosophical, and mor-

al poetry, to describe the stages of a battle or particular patterns of thought. Later commentators added further categories, such as *akappuram*, which consisted of modes that mixed elements of *akam* and *puram* poetry, and *purappuram*, which consisted of modes used for peripheral *puram* themes. Recent literary studies on *Tinai* gave birth to *Tinai Poetics*, the native Indian theory similar to ecocriticism, which is based on the *Tinai* concept of Classical Tamil Literature.

6.1.7 Sangam Literature

Sangam literature is the oldest available Tamil writings from ancient South India. These writings are from a period between 400 BC and 200 AD. Sangam was an assembly comprising Tamil scholars and poets, which could be regarded as a literary academy. The main literary works of this period are included in 8 anthologies and 10 Idylls. The Sangam corpus contains 2279 poems in Tamil composed by 473 poets, some 102 of whom remain anonymous. The literary conventions of this period are contained in *Tholkappium*, which is a work on the grammar and aesthetics of the Sangam period. The third section of *Tholkappium* prescribes the aesthetic conventions of Sangam poetry. Though the date of Sangam literature precedes that of *Tholkappium*, it is generally used as a guidebook to understand Sangam poetry. The poems in the Sangam corpus are thematically classified into love poetry ('*Akam*') and other ('*Puram*') poetry. The word *Akam* means 'inner' and *Puram* means 'outer'. The *Akam* poetry deals with love between a man and a woman and the related incidents. The *Puram* poetry deals with heroism, war, personal virtues, the glory of kings, etc. The field of *Akam* and *Puram* poetry is five landscapes: 'mountainous regions', 'forests', 'cropland',

Region	Flower for Akam	Flower for Puram
Mountain/hilly and adjacent area	Kurinci (Strobilanthus)	Vetci (Leccova coccinea)
Forest and adjacent area/ pastoral tract	Mullai (Fasminium trichotomum)	Vanci (Calamus rotang)
Paddy fields and adjacent areas/wet or agricultural lands	Marutam (Terminalia tomentosa)	Ulinai (Cardiospermum halicacabum)
Seashore and adjacent area/ coastal area	Neytal (Nymphaea lotus)	Tumpai (Leucas asphera)
Uncultivated/parched dry land	Palai (Mimusops Kauki)	Vahai (Albizia lebbeck)

'seashore', and 'desert'. The desert, which is parched to a wasteland from mountainous and cropland during summer, is not part of the natural landscape of South India. These landscapes are known as *thinai* in Sangam poetry. Each *thinai* is named after a flower belonging to that region. For *Puram* and *Akam*, different sets of flowers assume importance. Each *thinai* is associated with different human emotions or activities.

In the *Akam* poetry, the *thinai* comprises three aspects, which constitute the poetic composition of Sangam poetry as defined by *Tholkappium*. These three aspects form the fundamental aesthetic structure of *Akam* poetry. These aspects are the 'primary aspect' (*Muthal porul*), 'nuclear aspect' (*Karu porul*), and the 'human aspect' (*Uriporul*). The primary aspect consists of place, time, and the season. The nuclear aspect consists of things that belong to that land, including gods, fauna and flora, animals, musical instruments, etc. The human aspect includes five aspects of love life, namely lovers' union, separation, waiting, agony of separation, and sulkiness of the heroine due to the hero's unfaithfulness. In the *Akam* poetry, the place and season, along with the native things of the land, form the background for the human feelings to be displayed. The primary aspect and the nuclear aspect form the stage for the display of the human aspect.

It is important to understand the *thinai* concept and the landscapes in relation to the human aspect, which is the central theme of Sangam poetry. According to the convention of Sangam literature, the human aspect that is assigned to the mountain area - *Kurinci* - is sexual union and the incidents that lead to it. *Kurinci* and *Kanthal* flowers belong to this area. Murugan is the god of the mountain land. Tigers, bears, elephants, monkeys, wild pigs, parrots, and peacocks live here. Millet, paddy, and tubers are cultivated. Sandalwood trees are plentiful. Millet cultivation and honey collection are done. Springs and waterfalls add beauty to this landscape. The assigned time for this *thinai* is midnight of the cold season. This sets a very conducive backdrop for the romantic drama. During such times, lovers long to meet each other even at the risk of losing many things. This is the time when birds and animals return home to be with their loved ones. The subject of these *Kurinci* poems is usually the pre-marital secret meeting of lovers at the millet field or at night, where the heroine escapes her mother's watchful eyes. However, with time, gradually the suspicion arises that the heroine is up to some

mischief.The human aspect assigned to the forest and adjoining area – *Mullai* – is separation. This landscape is named after the jasmine, a plant that grows wild in forest areas,

especially in the rainy seasons. When *mullai* is in bloom, the scent spreads all over the forest area. The god of this landscape is *Mayon* (the dark one). Wild fowl, cattle, deer, and rabbits live here. Millet and wild grain are cultivated in this land. Jasmine and thornless flowers are plentiful here. *Kondrai* and *Kaya* are the native trees of this region. In the rainy season, streams flow across the forest area. The time assigned is late evening. This is the time when the environment is neither hot nor too cold. The heroine is waiting for the hero's return. The hero who went on business returns home. On his way home, he sees various scenes that arouse sexual desire in his heart. This background intensifies the feeling of separation.

The human aspect that is assigned to paddy fields and adjoining lands, which forms the *Marutham,* is the heroine's resentment due to the hero's infidelity. This region is named after the *marutham* flower, which grows in agricultural areas. Indran is the god of this landscape. Rice, both white and the red variety, is cultivated here. Lotus and lilies are found in this region, where the water buffalo is the animal usually found. This region has 'vanji', 'kanchi' and 'marutham' trees. There are plenty of wells, ponds, and streams in this region. Due to the presence of a rich water source, pelicans, waterfowl, and swans are seen here. People in this region work in paddy fields. The hero and the heroine marry and have a child; the hero starts visiting a harlot. The heroine is hurt due to the hero's infidelity. The heroine's sulkiness has no specific time. Hence, no specific time is allocated to this region. However, the early morning hours are generally assigned to this region. It is when the hero returns home after spending the night with a harlot. Early morning is a suitable time for the heroine to overcome the bitterness and accept her hero back into the house.

Neydal - the seashore and adjoining lands - is named after the blue water lily. Varunan is the god of the region. People here work in the salt pans and do fishing. Dark-coloured web-footed water birds, cormorants, sharks, crocodiles, and buffalo live here. This region has many wells and saltwater ponds. Screw pine trees grow here. Parathavar, the fishing community, lives in this region. The human aspect assigned to this region is the agony of separation. The time assigned is nightfall of all seasons. During nightfall, fall birds fly back to their nests to be with their partners. This, along with scenes on the seashore, increases the agony of the heroine of being separated from the hero. The parched wasteland of *Kurinci* and *Mullai* becomes a desert in the summer. This happens during the summer months from February to July. This region is named after the *palai* tree, which grows in very dry areas. *Kotravai* is the goddess here. *Irruppai*, *omai*, and *ulignai* trees are in this land. Tigers, vultures, pigeons, red foxes, eagles, and lizards live in this dry land. Pathiri, revam, and kuravam flowers are seen here. The time assigned to this land is midday. Because of excess heat, the vegetation is dried up, and the birds and animals are fatigued. The human aspect assigned to this land is separation from the family.

The land and the imagery of the land and season provide the backdrop for the human emotions. This backdrop functions like a word picture, intensifying the human condition. This prescriptive poetic composition is a unique feature of Sangam poetry. The following examples illustrate how this composition functions in a poem. This poem is from *Kurintohai* – one of the collections of *Akam's* poems in the eight anthologies. This poem belongs to *Kurincithinai*:

> "*Greater than the earth,*
>
> *Higher than the sky,*
>
> *Deeper than the ocean*

Is my love for this man

from the country where

mountain slopes have

black-stalked kurinci

flowers, that yield rich honey" (Kur 3)

This poem talks about the love the heroine has for the hero, who is from mountainous land with *kurinci* flowers that yield rich honey and bloom only once in twelve years. This poem, by comparing with nature, shows the greatness of the heroine's love and the uniqueness of the hero.

A poem from the forest land in *Aikurunuru*:

"*The bees buzz, frogs croak,*

The fragrance of mullai flowers fills the cool pasture.

The pleasant season has arrived.

I have returned as promised.

Don't be sad anymore" (Ain 494).

The hero promised to return by evening. The pleasant evening has dawned in the *Mullai* region, and the hero returns as promised and tells the heroine not to be worried as he has returned.

6.1.7.1 Thinai-Poetic Device

In Sangam poetry, *thinai* is the key poetic device that anchors the whole poetic discourse. *Thinai* is formed by the triad *Muthal* (place and time), *Karu* (things thereof) and *Uri* (human aspect). Thus far, the "place" (Muthal porul) in *thinai* has been regarded as a geographical social space. Essentially, a living space. The five landscapes of *thinai* indeed existed as real space as they exist now. However, whether these spaces are strictly living spaces or whether these landscapes are only a

poetic space used for the poetic device in the context of *thinai* is arguable.

The second aspect of *Muthal porul* – time and season – is fixed for a *thinai*. For example, for *Kurunchi thinai*, the allocated time is night in the cold season. Is the time and season of a *thinai* frozen? No. Nachchnarkkiniyar, an acclaimed commentator of Sangam literature, says that in the night the atmosphere is pleasant and cool, the fragrance of *mullai* flowers spreads far and wide in the region, birds and animals return to their mates with joy, and that is the most favourable time for the hero to return to meet the heroine. Hence, we see that the time and season are selected to augment the emotional state of the human aspect. So, what prevents us from thinking that the "place" in *Muthal porul* is also selected to augment the human aspect as part of the poetic device?

The *Karu porul* are things that are associated with the place. Hence the *Muthal porul* and *Karu porul* go hand in hand. These are essentially connected. *Muthal porul* and *Karu porul* combine to form the background for the human aspect. *Tholkappium* states that "*Karu porul* is more important than *Muthal porul*, and *Uri porul* is more important than the other two in *thinai*. The background has a poetic association with the *Uri porul* - human aspect. This association is similar to the association we see between romanticism and roses in world literature.

The human aspect—*Uri Porul* is the main ingredient of the *thinai* concept. A certain type of human behaviour is allocated to each *thinai*. For example, the pre-marital lovers' union and those that lead to it are allocated to *Kurinchithinai*. One obvious question that arises from this allocation is whether this type of pre-marital lovers' union takes place in the other *thinais*. In other words, why is the pre-marital union of lovers specific to the

hill country? Aren't there pre-marital lovers' unions in another type of land? The behaviour patterns that are allocated to each landscape are as follows:

- Hill country—lovers' union
- Pasturelands—wife patiently waiting for husband
- Countryside—males' infidelity and the sulking wife
- Seashore—agony of separation
- Uncultivated dry land—separation.

Some of these behaviour patterns are attributable to pre-marital situations and some to post-marital situations. These five behaviour patterns could exist in one single love relationship. These five behaviour patterns could be regarded as different stages of a love relationship.

According to psychological theories of love, various aspects that form the basis of a love relationship vary in strength from time to time, depending on various factors. The triangular theory of love suggests three main components of a love relationship:

- Intimacy encompasses the feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness experienced in loving relationships
- Passion encompasses the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation
- Decision/commitment encompasses, in the short term, the decision that one loves another, and in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love.

The nature of love one experiences depends on the strength of the three components and the interplay between them. The components interact with each other, and this interaction will determine the type of love experienced. The triangular theory of love overarches other theories of love, and a number of empirical findings in the research literature support this theory. The intensity of these three components varies throughout the love relationship. Depending on the strength of these components, we could explain the behaviour patterns of *thinais*. For example, in *Kurinci thinai*, where early love is depicted, passion is the most important component. This drives the intense need to meet the lover and have physical encounters. Other behavioural patterns of other *thinais* could also be explained by using this framework. Hence, it is plausible that these behaviour patterns of *thinais* are essentially psychological necessities rather than economic or social necessities. Sangam literature germinated in the prehistoric Tamil community. What mattered most in that society were the human beings and nature. Human beings' dependence on nature made nature the only source of inspiration and reference for them. Humans saw the reflection of their feelings in nature and vice versa. This is what is reflected in the Sangam poetry. This tradition, which was practised by poets, became conventional through the Sangam, which was the forum for poets and intellectuals of that period.

6.1.7.2 Use of Nature

There are two important dimensions in the use of nature in Sangam poetry. One is the use of nature as imagery. Imagery can be defined as a representation in words of a sensory experience that can be known by one or more of the senses. In Sangam poetry, imagery reflects the poet's impulse to perceive unity between man and nature, the unrelated, distinct components of nature, to create meaning that is beyond the resources of direct language. The complexity of the meanings implied by imagery differs in depth and profundity. The force

and vitality of the imagery also vary depending on the contextual relation to other images in the poem. This aspect of aesthetics is well explained in the chapter titled *Uvamyyeyal* in *Porulathikaram* of *Tholkapium*. The Sangam poets achieved expressivity that could not be achieved by verbal communication by employing imagery association.

The second dimension in the use of nature in Sangam poetry is the poet's need to express the visual experience in the poetic composition. The visual art was not well developed in ancient Tamil society. Literature, music, and drama were the main ingredients of ancient Tamil culture (*Iyal*, *Isai*, and *Nadagam*). The visual experience derived from nature had no outlet other than verbalising in the literature. In today's world, there are so many visual art forms—painting, photography, film, video, etc.—to express visual experiences of a creative mind. When these visual media are not available, one could only describe the visual experience of nature in the literature. As noted by many scholars, the Sangam poetry hardly has any reference to the real beauty of nature as seen in Wordsworth's poetry. For the Sangam poet, the poetic composition was the medium to express his visual experience. Here, the human aspect functions as the vehicle for the delivery of such experience.

Sangam poetry could be regarded as a composition like what we see in abstract painting. Composition is commonly used in the context of visual arts. It is the arrangement of visual elements in a work of art to provide a collective emotional experience. Composition is distinct from the subject of art. The subject of art may be a portrait, but the composition includes the subject and the background. The colours and the technique used for the subject should harmonise with the background to produce a good composition. In the composition of Sangam poetry, the *Uri porul* – the human aspect – is the main subject. The background should resonate with the same feeling that is created by the human aspect. There cannot be a discordant relationship between the human aspect and the background. This is precisely why certain landscapes are associated with certain human behaviours. The extension of this usage can be seen in present-day South Indian films, where a hero from a very poor financial background suddenly goes into a dream state to sing a love duet in a paradise garden. Or a hero from the littoral area sings a sad song in a desert backdrop. Thus far, no acceptable explanation has been provided in the text of Sangam literature, *Tholkappium*, or in the commentaries for assigning human behaviour patterns to the respective landscapes. However, nature has been used as a storehouse of objects to supply similes and metaphors for the Sangam poets. In addition, nature provides a visual backdrop to enhance the effect of human emotions in the poetic composition by the emotional congruence it has with human behaviour.

Recap

> ▶ Rasa Theory: Rasa means "aesthetic pleasure" and is evoked through the combination of Vibhava (cause), Anubhava (effect), and Vyabhicharibhava (transitory emotions), leading to *Rasanishpatti* (realisation of rasa) through *Samyogati* (union).
>
> ▶ Types of Vibhava: Vibhava is divided into Alambana (person causing the emotion) and Uddipana (situational factors), which together stimulate emo-

tional response in the audience.

▶ Satvik Bhavas: These are involuntary physical responses like tears or shivering, realised at the peak of aesthetic experience. There are 8 Satvik Bhavas that complete the Rasa experience.

▶ Abhinavagupta's Contribution: He added Shantha Rasa (the rasa of peace) as the ninth rasa and offered extensive interpretations integrating aesthetics and spirituality.

▶ Alankara Theory: Focuses on the "literariness" of poetry, emphasising figures of speech. Bhamaha was the first Alankara theorist, and his work *Kavyalamkara* describes 35 Alankaras.

▶ Riti Theory: Proposed by Vamana, this theory defines style (riti) as the soul of poetry and lists 10 gunas (qualities) like *Ojas*, *Prasada*, and *Madhurya*, which determine poetic excellence.

▶ Dhvani Theory: Introduced by Anandavardhana in *Dhvanyaloka*, this theory emphasises suggested meaning (Vyangyartha) over literal meaning (Vachyartha), arguing that real beauty in poetry lies in what is implied, not directly stated.

▶ Integration of Theories: Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta integrated Rasa and Dhvani theories, establishing that Rasa is evoked through Dhvani, and Dhvani operates through the use of Alankaras.

▶ Sangam Literature and Tamil Poetics: Ancient Tamil literature (Sangam period) uses the concept of Thinais—landscape-based themes like *Kurinci (union)* and *Palai (separation)*—to express emotions in poetry.

▶ Akam and Puram: Tamil poetry is divided into Akam (love and personal emotions) and Puram (valor, ethics, public life), with nature used symbolically to convey human experiences and emotional states.

Objective Questions

1. What is the literal meaning of Rasa?
2. Which are the three components (factors) that constitute Rasa?
3. What is the process of combining the components of Rasa called, which leads to Rasanishpatti?
4. What are the two types of Vibhava in Rasa theory?
5. What is the transient emotional state in Rasa theory known as?
6. How many Vyabhichari Bhavas are mentioned by Bharata Muni?
7. Who is the author of *Kavya Prakasa*, which interprets the Rasa theory?
8. What does the theory of Alankara focus on?

9. What is the triad by which a Tinai (landscape) is formed in ancient Tamil culture?
10. What are the main ingredients of ancient Tamil culture?

Answers

1. Aesthetic pleasure or aesthetic juice
2. Vibhava, Anubhava, and Vyabhicharibhava (Sanchari Bhava)
3. Samyogatti / Samyogat
4. Alambana Vibhava and Uddipana Vibhava
5. Vyabhichari Bhava
6. 33
7. Mammata
8. Literariness of a work of art
9. Muthal (place and time), Karu (things thereof), and Uri (human aspect)
10. Iyal (literature), Isai (music), and Nadagam (drama)

Assignments

1. Write a short description of '*Thinai* as a poetic device.'
2. Discuss the contribution of Sangam poetry to the nurturing of Tamil culture.
3. Compare and contrast the different interpretations of *Rasa* theory propounded by various scholars.
4. Discuss the psychological stages in the realisation of *rasa* in poetry and drama as given by Abhinava Gupta.
5. Discuss any one alankara of your choice with a suitable example.

Suggested Reading

1. Drew, Elizabeth (1933). *Discovering Poetry*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
2. Quinn, Arthur (1993). *Figures of Speech*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
3. Constantine, G. R. (2018). Nature in Ancient Tamil Poetry – Research Meth-

odologies and Researchers. Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities, Vol. 5 No. 3.

4. Murugathas, A. (2006). Sangak Kavitaiyakkam: Marapum Maarramum. Kumaran Book House, Colombo.

5. Pillai, V. (1956). History of Tamil Language and Literature: Beginning to 1000 A.D. New Century Book House, Madras.

6. Sastri, K.A.N. (1958). A History of South India. Oxford University Press.

7. Varadarajan, M. (1969). The Treatment of Nature in the Sangam Literature. Saiva Siddantha Society, Madras.

8. Zvelebil, K.V. (1992). Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature. Brill, Leiden.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

SIXTH SEMESTER BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - **B21EG06DC PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM**

(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence.   **(10×1= 10)**

1. Who declared "The author is dead"?

2. Who is twice removed from truth: poet, philosopher, or craftsman?

3. What fallacy relates to the reader's emotional reaction to a text?

4. Who defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"?

5. Which feminist school emphasises the overlap of race, class, and gender discrimination?

6. Which structuralist theorist studied kinship systems?

7. Which genre of literature does Sidney include under "poetry" besides verse

8. Which rasa corresponds to "shoka" (grief)?

9. What is the reversal of fortune in a tragedy called?

10. Who introduced the concept of the collective unconscious?

11. What was the name of the literary journal co-founded by F.R. Leavis?

12. What does Sidney argue poetry teaches alongside delight?

13. Which Greek poet did Aristotle consider superior in epic writing?

14. How many *vyabhichari bhavas* are there according to Bharata?

15. What is the term for speech errors that reveal unconscious thoughts?

SECTION B

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences. (5×2=10)

16. What are the three unities in drama according to Aristotle?

17. What was Arnold's main criticism of contemporary critics?

18. How does Plato illustrate the difference between the real and the imitated using geometry?

19. What did Wordsworth think the role of the poet was?

20. What does Sidney say about rhyme and metre in poetry?

21. What does Aristotle mean by saying "Poetry is more philosophical than history"?

22. How does fancy differ from imagination according to Coleridge?

23. Why does Plato think physical objects are not truly real?

24. What major idea did T.S. Eliot introduce in "Tradition and the Individual Talent"?

25. Why did Sidney feel the need to defend poetry in Elizabethan England?

26. Define *anubhava* in Rasa theory.

SECTION C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6×5=30)

27. How does Aristotle distinguish between tragedy and epic in *Poetics*?

28. Explain how Wordsworth's poetic philosophy contrasts with Neoclassical ideals

29. Describe the way colonial powers used education and religion as tools of domination.

30. Explain the difference between the world of Forms and the material world in Plato's theory.

31. What are satvik bhavas, and how do they contribute to the realisation of rasa?

32. Compare the roles of *peripety* and *anagnorisis* in tragic plots.

33. Analyse Sidney's differentiation between sacred, didactic, and "right" poetry.

34. Why did Coleridge believe imagination was superior to fancy?

35. Describe I.A. Richards's method and contribution through Practical Criticism.

36. In what ways does Sidney argue that poetry is more effective than philosophy or history in teaching virtue?

37. Describe the role and classification of vibhava in Rasa theory.scientific understanding.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words.   **(2×10 = 20)**

38. Evaluate Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* as a response to Puritan criticism of literature.

39. Critically analyse the significance of the three components in the realisation of rasa.

40. Discuss Aristotle's theory of imitation and how it differs from Plato's philosophical stance on art. What implications does this have for literature and creative writing?

41. Critically examine the central assumptions of New Criticism and assess its strengths and weaknesses.
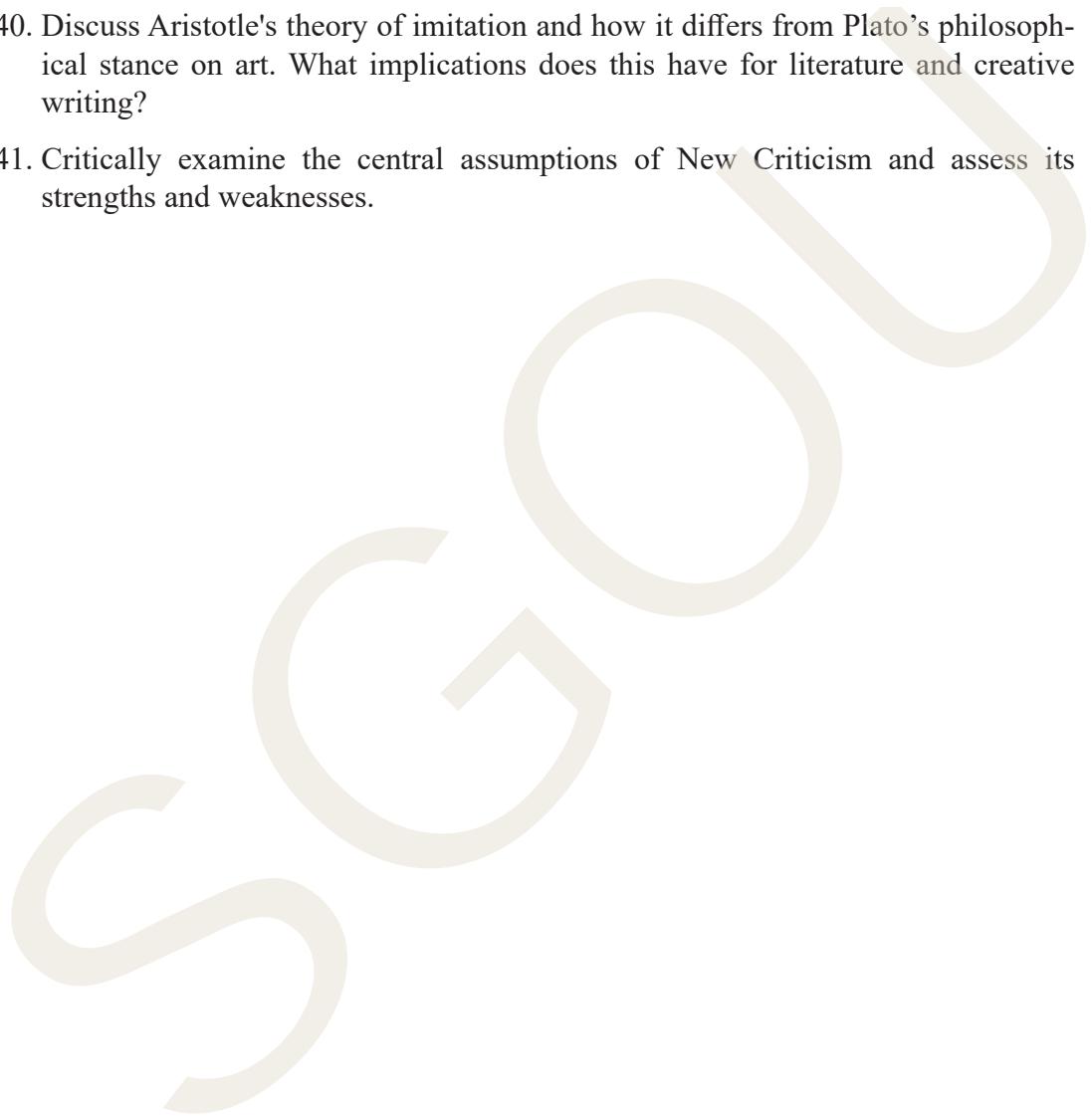
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SET-2

QP CODE: ………

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Reg. No :

Name : ………………...

SIXTH SEMESTER BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE - **B21EG06DC PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM**

(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence.   **(10×1= 10)**

1. Who does Plato consider superior: philosopher or poet?

2. Which Greek philosopher does Sidney follow in defining poetry?

3. What is Eliot's metaphor for the poet's mind in the creative process?

4. What is the tragic flaw in a character called?

5. What does the term *dhvani* mean in literary criticism

6. What power does Coleridge associate with creative imagination?

7. What method did Arnold propose to evaluate poetry

8. What is the Latin term Sidney uses for poets, meaning "seer"?

9. What is the Greek term for "imitation"?

10. Which poet-critic wrote *Tradition and the Individual Talent*?

11. Which movement did Romanticism primarily revolt against?

12. What is the French term Saussure used for the overall system of language?

13. Which critic wrote *Seven Types of Ambiguity*?

14. What word is used to describe countries like India, many African nations, and parts of South America in the Eurocentric division?

15. What faculty does Coleridge describe as mechanical and decorative?

SECTION B

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences.   **(5×2=10)**

16. What kind of language did Wordsworth advocate for in poetry?

17. What is the significance of Barthes' concept of 'écriture'?

18.   What is Plato's critique of Homer and Hesiod?

19. How did Lacan add to Freud's psychoanalytic theory?

20. What kind of pleasure does Aristotle believe tragedy provides?

21.   Define *Anubhava* in the Rasa theory.

22. What does Plato mean by "twice removed from reality"?

23. What distinguishes Coleridge's primary from secondary imagination?

24.   How does the concept of 'othering' support colonial domination, and why is it important to challenge it?

25. How does Aristotle define a tragic hero?

26. What does Edward Said's concept of Orientalism describe?

SECTION C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph.   **(6×5=30)**

27. Discuss the roles of the id, ego, and superego in Freud's theory of personality.

28. Discuss Sidney's justification for poetry being the "monarch" of all arts.

29. Explain the three essential components of Rasa as proposed by Bharata.

30. Explain the concepts of synchronic and diachronic analysis in linguistics

31. How did Wordsworth redefine the role of the poet in his Preface?

32. Explain the significance of Coleridge's concept of the esemplastic power of imagination.

33. What are the six elements of tragedy according to Aristotle? Explain each briefly.

34. Explain how postcolonial feminism challenges Western feminist assumptions.

35. Compare and contrast the roles of the craftsman, the painter, and the philosopher in Plato's thought.

36. What does Arnold mean by "high seriousness" in poetry?

37. Examine Sidney's critique of Renaissance drama and comedy.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2×10 = 20)

38. Critically examine the revolutionary elements of Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* in the context of English literary criticism

39. Analyse the impact of Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism on the study of women's literature and feminist literary criticism.

40. Discuss how Sidney's Apology embodies the ideals of Renaissance humanism and literary criticism.

41. Explore Aristotle's views on character and plot development. How do these elements interact to create effective tragedy according to *Poetics*?

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

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Principles of Literary Criticism

COURSE CODE: B21EG06DC

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