



SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation

(Special English)

B. A. Part-III

(Semester-V Paper-VII

(Semester-VI Paper-XII)

(Academic Year 2015-16 onwards)

Copyright © Registrar,
Shivaji University,
Kolhapur. (Maharashtra)
First Edition 2015

Prescribed for **B. A. Part-III**

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form by mimeography or any other means without permission in writing from the Shivaji University, Kolhapur (MS)

Copies : 3000

Published by:
Dr. V. N. Shinde
Ag. Registrar,
Shivaji University,
Kolhapur-416 004.

Printed by :
Shri. B. P. Patil
Superintendent,
Shivaji University Press,
Kolhapur-416 004

ISBN-978-81-8486-596-7

- ★ Further information about the Centre for Distance Education & Shivaji University may be obtained from the University Office at Vidyanagar, Kolhapur-416 004, India.
- ★ This material has been produced out of the Developmental Grant from UGC, Distance Education Bureau, New Delhi.

**Centre for Distance Education
Shivaji University, Kolhapur**

■ **ADVISORY COMMITTEE** ■

Prof. (Dr.) D. B. Shinde

Vice-Chancellor,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Prof. (Dr.) M. M. Salunkhe

Vice-Chancellor,
Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open
University, Nashi.

Prof. (Dr.) K. S. Rangappa

Hon. Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mysore

Prof. P. Prakash

Pro. Vice-Chancellor,
Indira Gandhi National Open University,
New Delhi

Prof. (Dr.) Cima Yeole

Git Govind, Flat No. 2,
1139 Sykes Extension,
Kolhapur-416001

Dr. A. P. Gavali

Dean, Faculty of Arts and Fine Arts,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Dr. J. S. Patil

Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Dr. C. J. Khilare

Dean, Faculty of Science,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Dr. R. G. Phadatare

Dean, Faculty of Commerce,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Prin. D. R. More

Director, B.C.U.D.,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Dr. V. N. Shinde

Ag. Registrar,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Shri. M. A. Kakade

Controller of Examinations,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Shri. N. V. Kongale

Finance and Accounts Officer,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

Capt. Dr. N. P. Sonaje

(Member Secretary)

Ag. Director,

Centre for Distance Education,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

■ **BOARD OF STUDIES IN ENGLISH** ■

Chairman- **Dr. S. B. Bhambar**

Head, Dept. of English, Tukaram Krishnaji Kolekar Arts & Commerce College, Nesari

● **Prof. (Dr.) M. L. Jadhav**

Professor and Head, Dept. of English,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur

● **Dr. S. R. Ghatge**

Associate Professor, Dept. of English
Vivekanand College, Kolhapur

● **Dr. P. M. Patil**

Assistant Professor and Head,
Dept. of English,
Arts, Commerce & Science College, Palus

● **Dr. R. Y. Shinde**

Associate Professor and Head,
Dept. of English,
Kisan Veer Mahavidyalaya, Wai

● **Dr. N. R. Sawant**

Associate Professor and Head
Dept. of English,
Shivraj College of Arts, Commerce &
Science, Gadhinglaj

● **Dr. S. R. Sawant**

Associate Professor,
Dept. of English,
Kisan Veer Mahavidyalaya, Wai

● **Dr. R. P. Lokhande**

Associate Professor and Head,
Dept. of English,
Rajarshi Chh. Shahu College, Kolhapur

Writing Team

Writer's Name	Sem. V Units	Sem. VI Units
Dr. Sunil Raghunath Sawant (Convener) Kisan Veer Mahavidyalaya, Wai	-	8
Dr. Namdeo Pandurang Khavare Hon. Shri Annasaheb Dange Arts, Commerce and Science College, Hatkanangale	1	-
Dr. Anil N. Dadas Dahiwadi College, Dahiwadi	2	-
Dr. Smt. G. D. Ingale Devchand College, Arjunnagar	3	-
Dr. Arun Jadhav Yashwantrao Chavan Arts and Commerce College, Islampur	4	-
Dr. Subhash Shelake Arts and Commerce College, Nagthane	-	5
Mr. D. C. Tulshikatti Rajarshi Chh. Shahu College, Kolhapur	-	6
Dr. Namdev Shamrao Jadhav Shri Shahaji Chhatrapati Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur	-	7

■ **Editors** ■

Dr. Sunil Sawant
Associate Professor,
Dept. of English,
Kisan Veer Mahavidyalaya,
Wai

Dr. M. A. Shaikh
Senior Academic
Satara

Dr. S. B. Bhambar
Head, Dept. of English
Arts & Commerce College,
Nesari

INTRODUCTION

Dear Learner,

Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation is a Special Paper No.VII and XII at B. A. Part III. The Objectives of the Paper are as follows:

1. To introduce the learners to the major trends in literary criticism
2. To familiarize them with the major critical concepts
3. To make them study the original contributions to literary criticism
4. To acquaint them with the various literary movements
5. To train them to write critical appreciation of poetry

The topics prescribed for your study are: Classical Criticism (Mimesis, Catharsis and Hamartia), Neo-Classical Criticism (Reason and Judgment, Irony and Satire), Sir Philip Sidney's critical essay entitled "An Apologie for Poetrie" (1595), such literary movements as Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Surrealism for Semester V; and Romantic Criticism (Fancy and Imagination, Negative Capability and The Noble Savage), New Criticism (Dissociation of Sensibility, Objective Correlative and Paradox), Matthew Arnold's critical essay entitled "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864), Critical appreciation of a poem on the basis of the theme, the content, the structure, the figures of speech, etc. for Semester VI.

The present book has been prepared keeping in mind the needs, difficulties and problems of the distant learners. A team of writers was appointed to prepare 'Self Instructional Material' (SIM) for this book. The team has prepared the book by referring to different books on Literary Criticism.

Each unit in this book begins with the objectives followed by an introduction of the topic. This is followed by the presentation of the subject matter as per the topics prescribed in the syllabus. There are comprehension questions given under the heading "Check Your Progress" to enable the students to self-evaluate their understanding of the topic. The answers to these questions are given in a separate section titled "Answers to Check Your Progress". The section "Terms to Remember" contains the glossary and notes to understand difficult expressions.

You will find this book easy to understand because a very simple language has been used to explain difficult terms and concepts. Nevertheless, students are advised to refer to different books included in the section “Further Readings”. This book will give them the basic idea about each term and concept prescribed in the syllabus, but the additional reading of different standard reference books will enable them to know the subject thoroughly and deeply. The exercises given towards the end of the unit will definitely help the students to prepare well for the university examination.

We wish you great success!

Dr. Sunil Sawant

Dr. M. A. Shaikh

Dr. S. B. Bhambar

Editors

CONTENTS

Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation

Semester–V Paper-VII

Unit 1	Classical Criticism	1
Unit 2	Neo-Classical Criticism	22
Unit 3	Sir Philip Sidney : "An Apologie for Poetrie"	39
Unit 4	Literary Movements	60

Semester–VI Paper-XII

Unit 5	Romantic Criticism	78
Unit 6	New Criticism	100
Unit 7	Matthew Arnold : "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"	117
Unit 8	Practical Criticism	133

Each Unit begins with the Objectives of the Section -

Objectives are directive and indicative of :

1. what has been presented in the Unit;
2. what is expected from you; and
3. what you are expected to know pertaining to the specific Unit once you have completed working on the Unit.

The self-check exercises with possible answers will help you to understand the Unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answer only after you write your own answers. These exercises are not to be submitted to us for evaluation. They have been provided to you as Study Tools to help keep you on the right track as you study the Unit.

B. A. Part III
Special English
Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation
Semester V Paper VII

Topics Prescribed:

Unit I: Classical Criticism

- i. Mimesis
- ii. Catharsis
- iii. Hamartia

Unit II: Neo-Classical Criticism

- i. Reason and Judgment
- ii. Irony
- iii. Satire

Unit III: Sir Philip Sidney: “An Apologie for Poetrie” (1595)

Unit IV: Literary Movements

- i. Realism
- ii. Naturalism
- iii. Symbolism
- iv. Surrealism

Semester VI Paper XII

Topics prescribed:

Unit V: Romantic Criticism

- i. Fancy and Imagination
- ii. Negative Capability
- iii. The Noble Savage

Unit VI: New Criticism

- i. Dissociation of Sensibility
- ii. Objective Correlative
- iii. Paradox

Unit VII: Matthew Arnold: “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864)

Unit VIII: Practical Criticism

Critical appreciation of a poem with the help of the points given below.

(Five questions on the theme, the content, the structure, the figures of speech, etc. to be set)

Shivaji University, Kolhapur
B. A. Part III
Special English
Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation
Semester V Paper VII
June 2015 onwards
Pattern of Question Paper

Total Marks: 40

Q.1 Objective type Question

A) Multiple choice questions with four alternatives. 5 Marks

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each.

(Q1 A and B to be set on topics covering Unit I to IV)

(At least one item to be set on each unit) 5 Marks

Q.2 Answer the following questions in about 250 words each.

(Any two out of three based on Unit I, II, and III)

20 Marks

Q.3 Write short notes on the following:

(Any 2 out of 3 based on Unit IV)

10 Marks

- Internal Evaluation: 10 marks for **Seminar Presentation**

Semester VI Paper XII

Pattern of Question Paper

Total Marks: 40

Q.1 Objective type Question

A) Multiple choice questions with four alternatives. 5 Marks

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each.

(Q1 A and B to be set on topics covering Unit V to VII)

(At least one item to be set on each unit) 5 Marks

Q.2 Answer the following questions in about 250 words each.

(Any two out of three based on Unit V to VII)

20 Marks

Q.3 Write a critical appreciation of the following poem

with the help of the points given below. (Unit VIII)

10 Marks

(Five questions on the theme, the content, the structure, the figures of speech, etc. to be set)

- Internal Evaluation: 10 marks for **Project Work**

Unit-1

Classical Criticism

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Presentation of Subject Matter
 - 1.2.1 Mimesis
 - 1.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 1.2.2 Catharsis
 - 1.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 1.2.3 Hamartia
 - 1.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 1.3 Summary
- 1.4 Terms to Remember
- 1.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 1.6 Exercises
- 1.7 Further Reading

1.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to understand –

- Plato's theory of *Mimesis*
- Aristotle's theory of *Mimesis*
- Aristotle's theory of *Catharsis*
- Aristotle's concept of *Hamartia*

1.1 Introduction

The critical enquiry had begun almost in the 4th century B.C. in Greece. Plato, the great disciple of Socrates, was the first critic who examined poetry as a part of his moral philosophy. Plato's critical observations on poetry lie scattered in *The Ion*, *The Symposium*, *The Republic* and *The Laws*. In *The Ion*, he advocated poetry as a genuine piece of imaginative literature, but in *The Republic* which is a treatise on his concepts of Ideal State, he rejected poetry on moral and philosophical grounds. Plato was a great moral philosopher. He was mainly concerned with inducing moral values in the society and seeking the ultimate Truth. For him, poetry is immoral and imitative in nature.

On the other hand, Aristotle, the most distinguished disciple of Plato, was a critic, scholar, logician and practical philosopher. He is known for his critical treatises: (i) *The Poetics* and (ii) *The Rhetoric*, dealing with art of poetry and art of speaking, respectively. Aristotle examines poetry as a form of art and evaluates its constituent elements on the basis of its aesthetic beauty. Aristotle actually observed the then available forms of literature and analyzed them and codified the rules. In his work he has described the characteristics of Tragedy, Comedy and Epic in elaborative manner.

Classical criticism views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation of the world and human life. The primary criterion applied to a work is that of the "truth" of its representation to the subject matter that it represents, or should represent.

In his *Poetics* (fourth century B.C.), Aristotle defines poetry as an imitation (in Greek, mimesis) of human actions. The poem takes an instance of human action and represents it in a new "medium," or material—that of words. Aristotle distinguishes poetry from other arts in terms of the artistic media, the kind of actions imitated, and in the manner of imitation (for example, dramatic or narrative). He also makes distinctions between the various poetic kinds, such as drama and epic, tragedy and comedy.

Aristotle's *Poetics* provides a classic analysis of the form of tragedy. His analysis is based on the tragedies of Greek dramatists such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Aristotle defined tragedy as follows; Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action, that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language

embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, through pity and fear effecting the proper catharsis or purgation of these emotions."

Aristotle further says that the tragic hero will evoke both pity and fear if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil but a mixture of both; and also that the tragic effect will be stronger if the hero is of higher than ordinary moral worth. Such a man suffers a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of a mistaken act, to which he is led by his hamartia—his “error of judgment”.

In this unit we are going to study the literary terms like *mimesis*, *catharsis* and *hamartia* used by the classical critics, Plato and Aristotle.

1.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

1.2.1 Mimesis

Mimesis is one of the most discussed terms in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. It was first used by Plato in *Republic*. Plato has used it in connection with poetry. *Mimesis* means copying something as it is. Plato was of the opinion that 'poetry (literature) imitates'. It is mere copying of the appearances of things, actions and behaviors of people around. Later on, Aristotle interpreted it in the *Poetics* and gave it a comprehensive meaning.

Plato's Theory of Mimesis:

Plato, in his book *Republic*, Chapter X, has used the term '*mimesis*' or 'imitation' for the first time. In it, he makes a difference between useful arts and 'imitative arts'. The useful arts like medicine, agriculture etc. serve our immediate needs; whereas, imitative arts like painting, dancing or poetry do not have such utility. They are called the fine arts.

Plato was of the view that all the fine arts are imitative. They are a copy, a representation of something. They copy some ideas, appearances of things in the world outside. Poetry, being a fine art also imitates such ideas. Plato considered poetry to be 'imitative', a copy of copy, a shadow of shadow. He claimed that poetry is unreal and is away from reality. It is only a replica, a blind imitation of the ideas.

While expressing such views on poetry, Plato gave the example of 'bed'. When a carpenter makes a bed out of wood, he works on the basis of the Idea of bed. It is the

idea that is real and the bed is an imitation of it. It is a copy of the original idea. Plato believed that Ideas are made by God, the Creator. When a painter paints the picture of a bed, he takes the idea from the bed made by carpenter. Thus the painted bed is the copy of a copy. It is an imitation of an imitation and it is twice removed from reality.

Plato applied the same theory to poetry (i. e. literature) also. When a poet presents the world in poetry, he takes inspiration from the outward appearance of the world. The poets' world is a copy of the world in which he lives. It is thus a replica, blind imitation, a copy of a copy. Thus, Plato declared poetry to be unreal, twice or thrice removed from reality. There is nothing creative as such but is imitative.

In this way, the theory of imitation first appeared in Plato's *Republic*. He considered imitation to be a photographic replica and a blind imitation. He thought that there is nothing original and creative in it. In this way, in the course of argument, Plato turned to be a critic of poetry. He declared poetry to be 'the mother of lies'; he even denied any place to the poets in his ideal state.

Such was Plato's theory of imitation. He criticized arts and even poetry on several grounds. At the same time, it must be taken into account that Plato's remarks were made in a particular context. Plato himself was a man of poetic merits. He was aware of the role of arts in human life. But he was an idealist and had a dream of moulding ideal citizens for republic. Hence, he considered poetry to be unsuitable for his purpose.

Aristotle's Theory of Mimesis:

There is no doubt that Aristotle inherited the word '*mimesis*' from Plato. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle has expressed his theory of *mimesis*. It is in chapters I to IV. Aristotle added a new meaning, a new dimension to Plato's concept. He expanded and made it comprehensive. Aristotle's *Poetics* is an indirect answer to Plato. Aristotle breathed a new life, a new spirit in the theory of *mimesis*. He proved that poetry is not a servile copy, a blind imitation but a process of creation.

Aristotle considers *mimesis*/imitation to be the common principle of all fine arts. The term 'fine arts' includes poetry, comedy, tragedy, dancing, music, flute playing, painting and sculpture. All of them imitate something. Thus Aristotle agrees with Plato's theory in principle. He agrees that imitation is the common principle of all arts. At the same time, he differs from Plato by including music in the imitative arts.

It clearly shows that Aristotle's theory of imitation is wider than that of Plato. The musician imitates not the outward form of appearances, but he presents the inward world of human feelings, passions and emotions. It is the inner life of man.

Other arts like painting, dancing etc. also imitate something. It is the common basis of all arts, but there are differences too. All the arts differ from one another in three ways. They have different 'mediums or means' of imitation. They differ in their objects of imitation. Finally, their manners or modes of imitation are also different. In this way, the mediums, the objects and the manners of imitation make differences among arts.

I) Mediums or Means of Imitation:

Some mediums of imitation are form, colour and sounds. Music uses rhythm, language and harmony. Poetry uses the medium of language.

II) The Objects of Imitation:

The objects of imitation or representation are 'human beings'. These are the men performing or experiencing something. They may be either good or bad. It means that the arts represent human beings, either better or worse than they really are. Thus, the objects of imitation are different in each art. In poetry, some poets present men better than reality or as they are. They may be presented lower than the reality. It is the basic difference between tragedy and comedy. Tragedy presents men 'better' than reality, whereas comedy presents them in the lower mode.

Thus, the objects of imitation differ in various arts. For Aristotle, imitation was not limited to outward appearance only. It was the reproduction of human nature and actions. It is a creative process.

III) The Manner of Imitation:

Different arts imitate objects in different manners. There may be three modes of it. First, the poet may use the mode of narration throughout. Secondly, he may use narration as well as dialogues by characters. We find such mode in Homer's poetry. Lastly, a poet may represent the whole story in a dramatic manner. It is in the form of action.

For Aristotle, the manner of imitation helps us to classify poetry into epic, narrative and descriptive types. The dramatic poetry is further divided in tragedy and comedy on the basis of their objects of representation. This classification prepares

the ground for further discussion of tragedy in later chapters. In this way, poetry differs from all other arts on the basis of medium, objects and manner of imitation.

IV) The Origin and Development of Poetry:

Aristotle traces the origin and development of poetry in human life. The discussion is concentrated on dramatic poetry. Aristotle considers that the origin of poetry lies in two natural instincts. First, it is the natural human impulse to imitate things. Such impulse is found even in children. Secondly, it is in the delight in recognizing and appreciating a good imitation. It helps to appreciate even ugly objects, if imitated well. Then there is the instinct of getting pleasure in harmony and rhythm. Poetry grew out of these natural instincts.

Poetry, later on, developed into two directions, according to the personal characters of the poets. Some poets with serious spirits represented noble personages and their actions. They composed panegyrics and hymns to the gods. On the other hand, poets with lighter spirits presented frivolous characters with trivial actions. These were the comedies and satires. Aristotle considers Homer to be the unique poet who shared in both the tendencies.

Imitation - a Creative Process:

Aristotle thus took the term '*mimesis*' from Plato. He gave it a wider significance and a new implication. Plato considered poetry/literature merely a replica, a blind copying. For Aristotle, it was an act of creative vision. No doubt, a poet takes his material from the phenomenal in the world, but he makes something new out of it. A poet may deal with the facts from the past, from the established beliefs or with the unrealized ideals. He transforms them into some universal and permanent characteristics of human life. Poetic imitation thus involves a creative faculty. It is the transformation of material into an art. Aristotle asserts: "It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity". Poetry is thus more philosophical than history. Aristotle refuted the charge against poetry being a 'mother of lies'. He brought out the higher truth involved in it. Poetry is an act of creative vision. Imitation, to Aristotle, was none other than 're-creation'.

1.2.1.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

- 1) Aristotle's *Poetics* was an answer to
 - a) Sidney's 'An Apology for Poetry'
 - b) Shelley's 'A Defense of Poetry'
 - c) Plato's *Republic*
 - d) Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*
- 2) The *Poetics* is mainly concerned with
 - a) Comedy
 - b) Poetry
 - c) Epic
 - d) Tragedy
- 3) The common principle of all fine arts is that
 - a) they give us pleasure
 - b) they imitate something
 - c) they are useful to us
 - d) they are of no use
- 4) Tragedy is an imitation of
 - a) action
 - b) people
 - c) life
 - d) world
- 5) The term '*mimesis*' was first used by -----
 - a) Philip Sidney
 - b) P. B. Shelley
 - c) Plato
 - d) Chaucer

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

- 1) What was Plato's interpretation of imitation?
- 2) Aristotle admits that poetry is imitation. But there is something more. What is it?
- 3) Why did Plato banish poets from his ideal Republic?
- 4) Where did Plato use the term '*mimesis*'?
- 5) Which Greek word is represented 'imitation' in English?

1.2.2 Catharsis

Introduction

Aristotle's *Poetics* is a celebrated work of literary criticism. It is basically an answer to Plato's *Republic*. The *Poetics* is about the art of poetry in general, but it mainly focuses epic and tragedy. There are 26 chapters in all, out of which 14 are devoted to tragedy only. So it is clear that Aristotle gave much importance to tragedy in it. It is because epic and tragedy were considered to be the ideal forms of literature in the ancient age. Hence the *Poetics* concentrates on tragedy, in particular. Aristotle's views on catharsis are found in chapters VI and XIV of the *Poetics*. While defining tragedy, Aristotle uses the word 'catharsis' for the first time.

The Theory of Catharsis:

'Catharsis' or 'Katharsis' is perhaps the most debated term in literary criticism, all over the world. It is a word of Greek origin. Aristotle used it only once, in chapter VI of the *Poetics*. Unfortunately he himself has not explained it anywhere. Hence it gave birth to divergent interpretations and explanations. Aristotle used the term 'catharsis' while defining tragedy. He used it in connection with the emotional effect of the tragedy on the spectators. Thus for Aristotle, catharsis meant the effect or the function of tragedy.

Before studying it in detail, it is necessary to understand that Aristotelian theory of tragedy was framed to be an answer to Plato's charge that 'poetic drama feeds and waters the passions, instead of starving them, and as such encourages anarchy (disturbance) in the soul'.

Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that poetry does not create disturbance in human mind but provides proper expression to emotions in a regulated manner. Thus poetic drama provides proper channelization of emotions. Aristotle's views on 'catharsis' are found in chapters VI and XIV of the *Poetics*.

The Place of Pity and Fear in Catharsis:

The terms pity and fear are closely associated with Aristotle's theory of *catharsis*. There are different types of fears in human life. Fear may be centered on an individual or it may be at collective or society level also. It may arise due to some vague feeling of danger, insecurity or anxiety. It may occur because of some awful,

disastrous or inexplicable event in life. It may come because of the sense of guilt due to some error committed. All these forms of fear are well expressed in a tragedy.

Pity is occasioned by some undeserved misfortune. It is a sort of pain for one who comes across some destructive evil, even if he doesn't deserve it; we pity someone who is suffering because of a misfortune. We feel pity for others, at the same time we fear for ourselves, if we are placed in those circumstances. Thus, pity and fear are closely related emotions.

Different Interpretations of Catharsis:

Aristotle in his famous definition of tragedy has used the term '*catharsis*'. He has used it to suggest the effect or the function of tragedy. It is a Greek word and Aristotle himself has not provided any explanation of it. Naturally, it gave way to different explanations and interpretations in the world of literature. The term has been interpreted by different critics in different ways. They have different opinions regarding the exact meaning of the term. Each critic takes some aspect of it into consideration. The traditional critics have emphasized the emotional aspect of *catharsis*, whereas the modern critics analyse it from the intellectual point of view. Scholars have suggested religious, moral, medical, psychological and aesthetic interpretations of it.

There are three common interpretations of *catharsis*. They are 'purgation, purification and clarification'. Now, let us examine them in detail.

1) The Purgation Theory:

The purgation theory interprets *catharsis* in medical terms. It is a medical metaphor. In medical terms (especially in the older sense), purgation meant the removal of excess or unnecessary elements from body. The health of body depends upon a true balance of all elements. If they are in excess, it is suggested to provide an outlet. In the same way, the excess or unhealthy passions also need to be purged. *Catharsis* is thus a process of purgation to such unhealthy emotions. Tragedy arouses emotions of pity and fear. Then it provides an outlet. The excessive emotions are purged, removed away from mind. It helps to create an emotional balance. A calmness of mind is maintained. Purgation thus denotes the pathological effect on the mind comparable to the effect of medicine on body. This theory was advocated by critics like Milton, Twining and Barney.

Some critics interpreted *catharsis* as a homeopathic process. They thought it to be a case of 'like curing like'. A little substance of some element cures the body of an excess of the same thing. To support this, these critics refer to some passages by Aristotle in the *Politics* and the *Poetics*. These passages describe the effect of music on body and some religious frenzy, calmed down by the same things.

Neo-classical critics like Dryden interpret it in the opposite way. They consider *catharsis* in allopathic way of 'like curing unlike'. According to this method, the arousing of pity and fear was supposed to bring about the purgation of other emotions such as anger, hatred, pride etc. It is the process of feeding and watering of unhealthy emotions. Purgation is thus a major explanation of *catharsis*. Sigmund Freud, a modern psychoanalyst, also supports this theory. He said, "by helping patients to recall their painful childhood experiences, neurosis can be cured."

2) The Purification Theory:

Another interpretation of *catharsis* is purification. Some critics like Humphrey House rejected the purgation theory in the medical sense of the term. They criticized that 'theatre is not a hospital and the audience are not patients'. Humphrey House advocated the purification theory, which means 'moral learning, moral instructing or moral conditioning of mind'. It is the idea of cleaning or cleansing of the soul. Tragedy by arousing pity and fear brings back the soul to a balanced state. Tragedy thus trains and purifies the emotions and brings them to a balanced state. The emotions are directed towards the right objects, at the right time. In this way, we are made virtuous and good. The purification theory is related to soul as the purgation is related to body. Critics like Butcher, Corneille and Lessing have supported it.

3) The Clarification Theory:

It is the third interpretation of *catharsis*. It is advocated by critics like Leon Golden, O. B. Hardison and G. E. Else. They think that Aristotle was mainly concerned with the intellectual effect and not the emotional effect of tragedy. Tragedy is concerned with the spectator's understanding of the events of plot. A tragedy presents some universal truths of human life through particular events and characters. Watching a tragedy gives us joy, pleasure. It is called the aesthetic pleasure. Aristotle himself has said, "if well imitated, pictures, even of corpse and ugly creatures, give us pleasure". Thus incidents like a person blinding himself, murdering his friend or a husband killing his wife, would horrify us in routine life. If

they are presented artistically, they provide delight, a sort of pleasure. It is this pleasure that tragedy gives.

According to the clarification theory, *catharsis* becomes an indication of the function of tragedy, and not of its emotional effect on audience. It leads to an understanding of the universal law that governs the universe. *Catharsis* thus turns to be an intellectual process.

Some Other Interpretations:

Apart from these commonly accepted explanations, there are some other theories also. Some critics tried to give the psychological interpretation of *catharsis*. S. H. Butcher regards it as a refining process. He thinks that tragedy provides a process of reforming lower type of emotions into the refined ones.

Another critic, Herbert Read considers *catharsis* to be a safety valve that provides outlet to excess emotions. It results in the feeling of emotional relief.

I. A. Richards considers 'Pity as an emotion to approach, whereas fear is an emotion to retreat or withdraw'. Tragedy brings these opposite emotions harmoniously together. It creates a balance, an equilibrium of mind.

Conclusion:

As Aristotle himself has not provided any explanation of *catharsis*, critics vary in interpretations. There is no agreement as to what Aristotle really meant. The theories like purgation and purification relate *catharsis* to the psychology of the audience. The clarification theory seems to be more acceptable because it focuses on the work of art and not the audience. It is to be noted that Aristotle was writing on the art of poetry and not on psychology of the audience.

1.2.2.1 Check Your Progress:

A) **Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:**

- 1) We got to see a theatre to witness a tragedy because -----.
- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) we want education | b) we need <i>catharsis</i> |
| c) we seek entertainment | d) we look for comfort |

- 2) Purgation is basically a term.
 - a) literary
 - b) psychological
 - c) medical
 - d) philosophical
- 3) As a homeopathic term, *catharsis* means ----- .
 - a) purification
 - b) sublimation
 - c) purgation
 - d) enjoyment
- 4) Aristotle argues that art is ----- than the reality or truth.
 - a) something less
 - b) something more
 - c) something better
 - d) something worse
- 5) ----- believed that neurosis can be cured by recalling painful childhood experiences.
 - a) Sigmund Freud
 - b) F. L. Lucas
 - c) Carl Jung
 - d) I. A. Richards

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

- 1) Why are there so many interpretations of the term ‘*catharsis*’?
- 2) Where did Aristotle use the term ‘*catharsis*’?
- 3) Why, according to psychologists, do spectators go to the theatre?
- 4) On what principle is the purgation theory based?
- 5) On what occasion were the tragedies staged in Aristotle’s times?

1.2.3 Hamartia:

Hamartia, also called tragic flaw, (*hamartia* from Greek *hamartanein*, “to err”), refers to an inherent defect or shortcoming in the hero of a tragedy, who is in other respects a superior being favoured by fortune. Aristotle introduced the term casually in *The Poetics* in describing the tragic hero as a man of noble rank and nature whose misfortune is not brought about by villainy but by some “error of judgment” (*hamartia*). This imperfection later came to be interpreted as a moral flaw, such as Othello’s jealousy or Hamlet’s irresolution, although most great tragedies defy such a simple interpretation. Most importantly, the hero’s suffering and its far-

reaching reverberations are far out of proportion to his flaw. An element of cosmic collusion among the hero's flaw, chance, necessity, and other external forces is essential to bring about the tragic catastrophe.

In Chapter XV of the *Poetics*, Aristotle deals with the art of characterization on an extended scale. He lists four essentials of successful characterization.

Four Essentials of Characterization:

i) **The character must be good** - A character is good, if his words and actions reveal that his purpose is good. In ancient Greece, women were considered as inferior beings and slaves as worthless. But Aristotle says that, when introduced in tragedy, even women and slaves must be shown to have some good in them. Entirely wicked characters, even though assigned minor roles, are unfit for tragedy. Wickedness may be introduced only when required by the necessities of the plot. Wanton introduction of wickedness must be avoided; and when introduced even wicked characters must be made good in some respects. Wickedness must be mixed up with some good as in actual life. In other words, Aristotle prefers complex characters. Just as a successful painter makes his portrait more beautiful than the original, in the same way the poet must represent his characters better and more dignified and must still preserve the likeness to the original.

ii) **The character must be appropriate** - According to Aristotle the character must be appropriate, that is to say each character must be true to 'type' or 'status'. For example, a woman must be shown as womanly and not 'manly'; a slave must be given a character which is appropriate to his 'status'. Manliness would not be appropriate in a woman, and dignity and nobility in a slave. If the characters are taken from some known myth or story, say the story of King Oedipus, and then they must be true to tradition. They must behave as King Oedipus is traditionally supposed to have behaved. In this respect, Aristotle had the practice of Greek dramatists in mind, who chose their tragic themes from history, myth, and other traditional sources.

iii) **Characters must have likeness** - The third essential of successful characterization is that characters must have likeness i.e. they must be like ourselves or true to life. In other words, they must have the virtues and weaknesses, joys and sorrows, loves and hatreds, likes and dislikes, of average humanity. Such likeness is essential, for we can feel pity only for one who is like ourselves, and only his

misfortunes can make us fear for ourselves. This in itself rules out perfectly good, or utterly wicked and depraved characters. Such characters will not be like us. They will be unreal and unconvincing. The characters must be of an intermediate sort, mixtures of good and evil, virtues and weaknesses like us.

iv) **The characters must be consistent** - They must be true to their own natures, and their actions must be in character. Thus a rash, impulsive person should act rashly and impulsively. There should be no sudden changes in character. If the dramatist has to represent an inconsistent person, then he must be 'consistently inconsistent'.

Aristotle emphasizes the point further by saying that the actions of a character must be the necessary and probable outcome of his nature. He should act as we may logically expect a man of his nature to act, under the given circumstances. Just as the incidents must be casually connected with each other, so also the various actions of a character must be the necessary and probable consequences of his character, and the situation in which he is placed. They must be logically interlinked with his earlier actions, and must not contradict the impression produced earlier.

The Ideal Tragic Hero:

Having examined the art of characterization in general, Aristotle proceeds to examine the qualities which the ideal tragic hero must have. No passage in the *Poetics*, with the exception of the phrase *catharsis*, has attracted so much critical attention as his ideal of the tragic hero.

The function of a tragedy is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear, and Aristotle deduces the qualities of his hero from this function. He should be good, but not too good or perfect, for the fall of a perfectly good man from happiness into misery, would be odious and repellent. His fall will not arouse pity, for he is not like us and his undeserved fall would only shock and disgust. Similarly, the spectacle of an utterly wicked person passing from happiness to misery may satisfy our moral sense, but is lacking in the proper tragic qualities. Such a person is not like us, and his fall is felt to be well-deserved and in accordance with the requirement of justice. It excites neither pity nor fear. Thus, according to Aristotle, perfectly good, as well as utterly wicked persons are not suitable to be heroes of tragedies. However, Elizabethan tragedy has demonstrated that, given the necessary skill and art, even villains, like Macbeth, can serve as proper tragic heroes and their fall can arouse the

specific tragic emotions. The wreck of such power excites in us a certain tragic sympathy; we experience a sense of loss and regret over the waste or misuse of gifts so splendid.

Similarly, according to Aristotelian canon, a saint—a character perfectly good—would be unsuitable as a tragic hero. He is on the side of the moral order and not opposed to it, and hence his fall shocks and repels. However, his martyrdom is a spiritual victory and the sense of moral triumph drowns the feeling of pity for his physical suffering. The saint is self-effacing and unselfish, and so he tends to be passive and inactive. Drama, on the other hand, requires for its effectiveness a militant and combative hero. However, in quite recent times, both Bernard Shaw and T. S. Eliot have achieved outstanding success with saints as their tragic heroes. In this connection, it would be pertinent to remember that Aristotle's conclusions are based on the Greek drama with which he was familiar. In the same manner, he is laying down the qualifications of an ideal tragic hero; he is here discussing what is the very best, and not what is good.

Having rejected perfection as well as utter depravity and villainy, Aristotle points out that the ideal tragic hero, "*must be an intermediate kind of person, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgment.*" The ideal tragic hero is a man who stands midway between the two extremes. He is not eminently good or just, though he inclines to the side of goodness.

The tragic hero is not depraved or vicious, but he is also not perfect, and his misfortune is brought upon him by some fault of his own. The Greek word used here is "*hamartia*". The root meaning of *hamartia* is "*missing the mark*". He falls not because of the act of some outside agency or vice or depravity, but because of *Hamartia* or *miscalculation* on his part. *Hamartia* is not a moral falling, and hence it is unfortunate that it has been translated rather loosely as "tragic flaw", as has been done by Bradley. Aristotle himself distinguishes *hamartia* from moral falling, and makes it quite clear that he means by it some error of judgment. He writes that the cause of the hero's fall must lie, "not in depravity, but in some error or *hamartia* on his part." Butcher, Bywater, and Rostangi, all agree that *hamartia* is not moral state; but an error of judgment which a man makes or commits. However, as Humphrey House tells us, Aristotle does not assert or deny anything about the connection of *hamartia* with moral failings in the hero.

Thus, *hamartia* is an error or miscalculation, but the error may arise from any of the three ways: i) It may arise from “ignorance of some material fact or circumstance”, ii) It may be an error arising from hasty or careless view of the special case, iii) It may be an error voluntary, but not deliberate, as in the case of acts committed in anger or passion. Else and Martin Ostward, both critics interpret *hamartia* actively and say that the hero has a tendency to err, created by lack of knowledge, and he may commit a series of errors. They further say that the tendency to err characterizes the hero from the beginning—it is a character-trait—and that at the crisis of the play, it is complemented by the recognition scene (*anagnorisis*), which is a sudden change, “from ignorance to knowledge”.

As a matter of fact, *hamartia* is a word which admits of various shades of meaning, and hence it has been differently interpreted by different critics. However, all serious modern Aristotelian scholarship is agreed that *hamartia* is not moral imperfection – though it may be allied with moral faults – that it is an error of judgment, whether arising from ignorance of some material circumstances. It may even be a character-trait, for the hero may have a tendency to commit errors of judgment, and may commit not one, but a series of errors. This last conclusion is borne out by the play *Oedipus Tyrannus* to which Aristotle refers again and again, and which may be taken to be his ideal. In this play, the life of the hero is a chain of errors, the most fatal of all being his marriage with his mother. If King Oedipus is Aristotle’s ideal hero, we can say with Butcher that, “*his conception of hamartia includes all the three meanings mentioned above, which in English cannot be covered by a single term.*” *Hamartia* is an error, or a series of errors, “whether morally culpable or not,” committed by an otherwise noble person, and these errors drive him to his doom. The tragic irony lies in the fact that the hero may err innocently, unknowingly, without any evil intention at all, yet he is doomed no less than those who are depraved and sin consciously. He has *hamartia*; he commits error or errors, and as a result his very virtues hurry him to his ruin. Says Butcher, “Othello in the modern drama, Oedipus in the ancient, are the two most conspicuous examples of ruin wrought by characters, noble indeed, but not without defects, acting in the dark and, as it seemed, for the best.”

1.3 Summary:

Aristotle took the term '*mimesis*' from Plato. He gave it a wider significance and a new implication. Plato considered the process of poetic creation merely a replica, blind copying. For Aristotle, it was an act of creative vision. No doubt, a poet takes his material from the phenomenal world, but he makes something new out of it. A poet may deal with facts from the past or the present, from the established beliefs or with the unrealized ideals. He transforms them into some universal and permanent characteristics of human life. Poetic imitation thus involves a creative faculty. It is the transformation of material into an art. Aristotle asserts, "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity". Poetry is thus more philosophical than history. Aristotle refuted the charge against poetry being a 'mother of lies'. He brought out the higher truth involved in it. Poetry is an act of creative vision. Imitation, to Aristotle was none other than 're-creation'.

The function of tragedy is *catharsis*. Aristotle himself has not provided any explanation of *catharsis*, so critics vary in interpretations. There is no agreement as to what Aristotle really meant. The theories like purgation and purification relate *catharsis* to the psychology of the audience. The clarification theory seems to be more acceptable because it focuses on the work of art and not the audience. It is to be noted that Aristotle was writing on the art of poetry and not on psychology of the audience.

Hamartia is a word which admits of various shades of meaning, and hence it has been differently interpreted by different critics. However, all serious modern Aristotelian scholarship is agreed that *hamartia* is not moral imperfection – though it may be allied with moral faults – that it is an error of judgment, whether arising from ignorance of some material circumstances. It may even be a character-trait, for the hero may have a tendency to commit errors of judgment, and may commit not one, but a series of errors.

1.4 Terms to Remember:

- ***Mimesis***: copying something as it is
- **disciple**: student
- **treatise**: a written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject.

- **Dithyrambic:** Greek religious song sung to Dionysus, originally sung by a single person.
- **Catharsis:** a Greek word indicating the effect of tragedy.
- **anarchy:** disorder
- **magnitude:** length
- **language embellishments:** ornaments of language
- **aesthetic pleasure:** joy concerned with beauty and appreciation
- **inexplicable:** that cannot be explained
- **Hamartia:** missing the mark or tragic flaw
- **Anagnorisis:** a sudden change, “from ignorance to knowledge”.

1.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.2.1.1

- A)** 1) Plato's '*Republic*'
 2) Tragedy
 3) They imitate something
 4) action
 5) Plato
- B)** 1) All art is imitation twice removed from reality.
 2) Imagination
 3) Because he thought that poetry aroused passions that darkened the reason
 4) In his book, *The Republic*.
 5) *Mimesis*

1.2.2.1

- A)** 1) seek entertainment
 2) medical
 3) purgation

- 4) something more
- 5) Sigmund Freud
- B)** 1) It is because Aristotle did not explain it in *The Poetics*.
- 2) In the definition of tragedy.
- 3) The spectators go to the theatre for enjoyment and this enjoyment gives them relief from their pent up feelings or emotions.
- 4) On the Homeopathic principle of 'Like cures like'.
- 5) During the festival of Dionysus.

1.2.3.1

- A)** 1) missing the mark
- 2) Tragic flaw
- 3) An error of judgment
- 4) Moral falling
- 5) Ideal tragic hero
- B)** 1) He should be good, but not too good or perfect, for the fall of a perfectly good man from happiness into misery, would be odious and repellent.
- 2) The root meaning of *hamartia* is "missing the mark".
- 3) Both critics interpret *hamartia* actively and say that the hero has a tendency to err, created by lack of knowledge, and he may commit a series of errors.
- 4) It is a sudden change, "from ignorance to knowledge".
- 5) Butcher, Bywater, and Rostangi,

1.6 Exercises:

- 1) Write a critical note on Aristotle's theory of *mimesis* and compare his views with those of Plato?
- 2) 'Poetry is not a slavish imitation but is a creative process'. Explain the remark in the context of Aristotle's theory of imitation.

- 3) What, according to Aristotle, is the proper pleasure of tragedy? How does tragedy achieve its ends?
- 4) What different theories have been advanced to explain Aristotle's concept of *catharsis*?
- 5) What are the different characteristics of an ideal tragic hero?

1.7 Further Reading:

- 1) Butcher, S. H. (1894) *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*. London: Macmillan.
- 2) Bywater, Ingram. *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*. London: Oxford University Press.
- 3) Fyfe, Hamiton. (1940) *Aristotle's Art of Poetry*. London: Oxford University Press.
- 4) Verma, C. D. (1973) *Aristotle's Poetics*. New Delhi: Aarti Book Centre.
- 5) Sen, S. (1979) *Aristotle's Poetics*. New Delhi: Unique Publishers.
- 6) House, Humphrey. (1988) *Aristotle's Poetics*. New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.



Unit-2

Neo-Classical Criticism

Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Presentation of Subject Matter
 - 2.2.1 Reason and Judgement
 - 2.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 2.2.2 Irony
 - 2.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 2.2.3 Satire
 - 2.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 2.3 Summary
- 2.4 Terms to Remember
- 2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 2.6 Exercises
- 2.7 Further Reading

2.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- explain the salient features of Neo-Classical Criticism
- understand the major concepts such as reason and judgement
- understand the concept of irony
- understand the concept of satire

2.1 Introduction

Like literature, criticism has a long tradition that may refer back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. You have studied Aristotle's theory of poetry in the earlier unit. Aristotle focused on tragedy in his *Poetics* and laid emphasis on the concepts like *mimesis*, *catharsis*, *hamartia*, etc. After the study of Classical Criticism, let us try to understand the Neo-Classical Criticism in this unit.

The English Neo-Classical movement was derived from both classical and contemporary French models. Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674) and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711) both provide us critical statements of Neo-Classical principles. The movement embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence — ideals of order, logic, accuracy, correctness, restraint, decorum, and so on. It encouraged the artists to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman originals. Neo-Classicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century.

To a certain extent Neo-Classicism represented a reaction against the Renaissance view of man as a being fundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. Neo-Classical theorists, by contrast, saw man as an imperfect being, inherently sinful, whose potential was limited. The Renaissance emphasized imagination, invention, experimentation, and mysticism. The Neo-Classical theorists, however, emphasized order and reason, restraint, common sense, and religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. They maintained that man himself was the most appropriate subject of art. They saw art itself as essentially pragmatic, valuable because it was somehow useful — and as something which was properly intellectual rather than emotional. Hence they gave importance to proper subject matter. They made an attempt to subordinate details to an overall design. And they employed in their work concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace.

The 'Neo-Classical period' in England spans the 140 years or so after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. The Neo-Classical Criticism is divided into two phases. The first phase covers the Restoration Age from 1660 to 1700 where Neo-Classicism was liberal and moderate. John Dryden was the leading figure of this age. The second phase covers the first six or seven decades of the 18th century where Neo-Classical Criticism becomes more and more narrow, slavish and stringent. Pope,

Addison and Dr Johnson were the prominent critics of this phase. Matthew Arnold called the Neo-Classical Age as ‘our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century’. Yet this school of criticism is known to us by various names. Firstly, it is called the Restoration Age because King Charles II was restored to the throne of England. Secondly, it is called the Augustan Age because the writers of the period believed that their age was the golden age of English literature like the age of Emperor Augustus whose period was the golden age of Latin literature. Thirdly, it is also called the Classical Age as the epithet ‘Classical’ refers to creative writers of outstanding works of the highest merit. The writers of this period believed that the works of the writers of Classical Antiquity (Latin writers) presented the best models and ultimate standards of literary taste. The principle of classicism is best expressed by Pope in his poetry. But the Neo-Classical Critics misunderstood and wrongly interpreted the so-called ‘rules’. Lastly, this period is named as a Pseudo-Classical or Neo-Classical Age because classicism of this period is different from the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome. The works of this period lack inspiration or emotion that differentiates true classics.

2.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter

2.2.1 Reason and Judgement

The Neo-Classical Age is also called the Age of Reason because the classical ideals of order and moderation inspired this period. This period has limited aspiration and its emphasis is on the common sense of society rather than individual imagination. All this can be characterized as rational. Reason had traditionally been assumed to be the highest mental faculty, but in this period many thinkers considered it a sufficient guide in all areas. Both religious belief and morality (judgement) were grounded on reason: revelation and grace were de-emphasized; morality consisted of acting rightly to one’s fellow beings on this earth. The most famous philosopher of the age, John Locke, analyzed logically how our minds function. He argued for religious tolerance and mentioned that government is justified not by divine right but by a ‘social contract’ that is broken if the people’s natural rights are not respected.

As reason should guide human individuals and societies, it also directs artistic creation. Neo-Classical art is not meant to seem a spontaneous outpouring of emotion or imagination. A work of art should be logically organized and should advocate rational norms.

The literature of the Neo-Classical period marked the breaking of ties with the Elizabethan literature. The spirit of the Neo-Classical literature was very much different from the spirit of the Elizabethan literature. There was gradual change in the tone of literature and in the temperaments of writers. Literature became intellectual rather than imaginative or emotional. The new spirit was all critical and analytical instead of creative and sympathetic. The merits of new school were found in its intellectual force and actuality. Thus, with the ascent of Reason and Judgement (Proportion) some of the poetic qualities of English literature disappeared.

The reason was dominant in the Neo-Classical period that emphasized correctness of rules and regulations. The writers of the age turned to the writers of ancient Greece and Rome. The imitative work of the new school was of a frigid and limited quality. Pope wrote:

Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are nature still, but Nature methodized.

The precept 'follow nature' was the very centre of the Neo-Classical creed. To the writers of the age Nature meant human nature. They were more interested in human nature than mountains, forests, streams etc. They were interested in men and manners of society. They cared more for manner than matter. They sought to paint realistic pictures of a corrupt court and society. They emphasized vices rather than virtues. Later this tendency to realism became more wholesome. It led to a keener study of the practical motives which govern human action. It focused on social events and controversies of the day in their works. Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* and Pope's *Rape of the Lock* are based on an actual incident in London society. In short, Neo-Classical writers wrote about kings and princes, lords and ladies, current fashions, fads, and controversies of the day.

The Neo-Classical Age was essentially an Age of Reason and Good Sense and of prose. The emphasis was laid on 'correctness', 'reason' and 'good sense'. The writer should follow the rules 'correctly', and any exuberance of 'fancy' or 'emotion' must be controlled by reason or sense. A balance must be maintained between Fancy and Judgement. The head must predominate over the heart. The need of 'inspiration' was recognized but it was to be held in check by reason and good sense. Moderation was the golden rule in life and in literature. The Rational opposed extravagant or imaginary.

Judging and condemning gave birth to the spirit of satire. As a result the Restoration Age became the age of satire. It was a period of bitter political and personal contention, of easy morals and subdued enthusiasm, of sharp wit and acute discrimination. For these reasons satire acquired a new importance and sharper edge. Satire in this period attacked the old religion of Puritanism, false spiritual authorities. With this age the old poetical spirits of oppositions sprang up giving rise to political satires. We will consider satire in detail later on.

Reason was very important in the Neo-Classical era. The emphasis in this era was on formal finish and perfection rather than on content. Originality and perfection in respect of content was not possible because the universal truths were limited. In this age, the didactic function was considered more important than the aesthetic one. Much thought was given to the style and diction of poetry. Virgil was held out as the ideal to impart dignity and elevation to the diction. Common words were avoided. The use of compound words and epithets was also frequent for this very reason. As a result, there was the rise of the artificial poetic diction that Wordsworth condemned in his 'Preface'.

Judgement of the writers of this period was different. They avoided the technical words of arts and sciences, attention to minute details and use of far-fetched imagery and conceits. They emphasized the need of decorum. It was recognized that different kinds of poetry have different styles proper to them. For example, the diction proper to satiric poetry would be improper for the epic, and a poet must use the style proper to the genre in which he was writing. There was not only difference between the diction of prose and poetry but also a difference between the diction of different kinds of poetry. The heroic measure was considered as the right measure for poetry. Literature of this period differs from the earlier Elizabethan Age in three respects – versification, diction and subject matter. The striking feature of the poetry of Dryden and Pope was its external character and its limited range of subjects. Hence, this period became the period of reason and judgement. Pope was the well-known poet as well as critic who flourished in the Neo-classical age. He was against those critics who considered only the diction, style or verse apart from the sense. He warned the critic against judging by parts rather than by whole. He was also against those critics who attached undue value to the false brilliance of flashy conceits. He condemned judgements based on popular notions and without a proper understanding of the work itself. He also condemned extreme fastidiousness in criticism:

1. Irony means the use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning, a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.
2. Irony is a form of deliberate mockery in which one says the opposite of what is obviously true.
3. Irony means the use of words in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. In simple words, it is a difference between the appearance and the reality.
4. Irony means ‘the expression of one’s meaning by using language that usually signifies the opposite, generally for humorous or emphatic effect.’
5. Irony indirectly presents a contradiction between an action or expression and the context in which it occurs.
6. Irony means ‘the use of words to mean or imply the opposite of what they usually mean.’
7. Irony is nothing but the use of witty language to convey insult or scorn.

The term ‘irony’ has its root in the Greek comic character called the *eiron* who was a dissembler. *Eiron* characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was. Yet he triumphed over the *alazon* – the self-deceiving and stupid braggart. In the use of irony, there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case, in order to deceive, to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. The word ‘irony’ came into English as a figure of speech in the 16th century as similar to the French *ironie*. It derives from the Latin *ironia* and ultimately from the Greek *eironeia*. Irony is found in literature in almost all the ages.

Irony is used to bring about some added meaning to a situation. Ironical statements and situations in literature develop readers’ interest. Irony makes a work of literature more intriguing, and forces the readers to use their imagination and comprehend the underlying meaning of the texts. Moreover, real life is full of ironical expressions and situations. Therefore the use of irony brings a work of literature closer to the life. The writers make use of irony purposely. Irony inverts our expectations. It can create the unexpected twist at the end of a joke or a story that gets us laughing – or crying. Verbal irony tends to be funny; situational irony can be

funny or tragic; and dramatic irony is often tragic. Let us see some interesting examples of irony:

- The name of Britain's biggest dog was 'Tiny'.
- The carrot is as sweet as bitter-gourd.
- 'Oh great! Now you have broken my new specks.
- Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.
- 'Go ask his name: if he be married.
My grave is like to be my wedding bed.'

In real life circumstances, irony may be comical, bitter or sometimes unbearably offensive. Broadly speaking, there are different kinds of irony that we come across in literature.

Verbal irony:

Verbal irony is a trope in which the intended meaning of a statement differs from the meaning that the words appear to express. For example, a character stepping out into a hurricane and saying, "What a nice weather we're having!" The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation. Verbal irony is different from situational and dramatic irony in the sense that it is produced *intentionally* by speakers. For instance, a man exclaims, "I'm not upset!" but reveals an upset emotional state through his voice while trying to claim he's not upset. In verbal irony speakers communicate implied propositions that are intentionally contradictory to the propositions contained in the words themselves. For example, Shakespeare employs verbal irony in *Julius Caesar* as:

Cassius: 'tis true this god did shake'.

Here Cassius calls Caesar 'this god' though he knows the mortal flaws of Caesar.

Similarly Mark Antony's speech:

'But Brutus says he was ambitious;

And Brutus is an honourable man’.

appears to praise the assassins of Caesar while actually condemning them.

A more complex example of irony is the famed sentence with which Jane Austen opens *Pride and Prejudice*: ‘It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife’. Here the part of ironic implication is that a single woman is in want of rich husband. Sometimes the use of irony by Pope and others is very complicated. For example,

‘It grieves me much’, replied the Peer again,
Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain’.

(Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*)

Ironic similes are a form of verbal irony where a speaker intends to communicate the opposite of what they mean. For instance,

- as soft as concrete
- as clear as mud
- as sweet as bitter-gourd
- as pleasant as a root canal

Many ironists are misinterpreted and sometimes get into serious trouble with the obtuse authorities. Following the intricate and shifting manoeuvres of great ironists like Plato, Swift, Austen or Henry James is a test of skill in reading between the lines.

Dramatic Irony:

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative. It is an effect produced by a narrative in which the audience knows more about present or future circumstances than a character in the story. In other words, it is a device of giving the spectator an item of information that at least one of the characters in the narrative is unaware of it. It means it places the spectator a step ahead of at least one of the characters. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows a key piece of information that a character in the play, movie or novel does not. This is the type of irony that makes us yell, ‘DON’T GO IN THERE!’ during a scary movie. It is also called situational irony which involves a contrast between reality and a character’s

intention or ideals. It describes a sharp discrepancy between the expected result and actual results in a certain situation. For example, in Sophocles' Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, King Oedipus searches for his father's murderer, not knowing that he himself is that man. Another famous example of situational irony is O Henry's well-known story 'The Gift of the Magi'. In this story, there is a young couple too poor to buy Christmas gifts for each other. The wife wants to buy a chain for heirloom pocket watch of her husband. So she cuts off her treasured hair and sells it to a wigmaker. Her husband also sells his watch to buy a set of combs for the wife's long beautiful hair. Both have made sacrifice in order to buy gifts for one another, but the gifts are useless. The real gift is how much they are willing to give up to show their love for each other. The double irony lies in the particular way their expectations were foiled.

There are two types of irony – tragic irony and comic irony. Tragedy involves tragic irony and it is huge in Shakespeare's tragedies. For example, his *Othello* is so powerful to read and watch because of tragic irony. We know that the handkerchief used as proof of Desdemona's infidelity was stolen by Emilia at Iago's behest. And we know she is innocent. But we are powerless to stop Othello who has resolved to murder his wife. Even Iago kills Roderigo before he can reveal the truth. So we are complicit with Iago's misdeeds. We are the witnesses, and yet we can do nothing.

Comic irony occurs in Comedy. For instance, in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio struts and preens in anticipation of a good fortune that the audience knows is based on a fake letter. The dramatic irony is heightened for the audience by Malvolio's ignorance of the presence of the hidden hoaxers, who gleefully comment on his incongruously complacent speech and actions.

Cosmic Irony:

Cosmic irony is also called 'irony of fate'. It stems from the notion that a deity or any god or the fate is amusing themselves by toying with the minds of mortals with deliberate ironic intent. Like situational irony, it arises from sharp contrasts between reality and human ideals, or between human intentions and actual results. The resulting situation is poignantly contrary to what was expected or intended. This is a favourite structural device of Thomas Hardy. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the heroine lost her virtue because of her innocence. She loses her happiness because of her honesty. She finds it again only by murder and having been briefly happy, is

hanged. Hardy concludes this novel: ‘The President of the Immortal, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess.’

Some critics suggest the sarcasm, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions and jocularity should all be considered the forms of irony. Irony is less direct, but no less effective. In ordinary conversation irony is often expressed by a tone of voice. For example, ‘she’s a fine example of a faithful wife’ can be spoken by stressing ‘she’s’ and ‘fine’ to mean exactly the opposite of what they seem to mean.

2.2.2.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Irony is -----
 - a) a common sense
 - b) an educational term
 - c) a rhetorical device
 - d) a fake concept
2. Irony indirectly presents a -----between an action and the context in which it occurs.
 - a) similarity
 - b) parallelism
 - c) contradiction
 - d) collaboration
3. ‘That’s the best idea I have heard in years!’ is an example of ----- irony.
 - a) verbal
 - b) dramatic
 - c) cosmic
 - d) structural
4. ‘I, Oedipus, whom all men call great’ from Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* is an example of -----
 - a) comic irony
 - b) Socratic irony
 - c) cosmic irony
 - d) tragic irony

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is irony?
2. What is difference between tragic and comic irony?

3. Identify the irony used in the following line:
‘Sure, what the hell, it’s only cancer’
4. Give one example of situational irony.
5. Give one example of comic irony.

2.2.3 Satire

Satire is a verbal attack on a person or a part of society. It has mostly a reformatory purpose. It is of classical origin. It lashes out at follies and foibles of people. However, the satire does not have a set literary form. Certain features can be attributed to the satire:

- a. The satire implies comedy.
- b. It is vindictive in nature.
- c. It can be mild. e.g. works of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens
- d. It can be biting. e.g. works of Pope and Swift.

Satire may be defined as the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust by the ridiculous or unseemly behaviour provided that humour is a distinctly recognizable element in it, and that the utterance is invested with literary form, it is more clownish, jeering. Satire can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation. Satire differs from the comic. It uses laughter as a weapon and against a butt that exists outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual, a class, an institution, a nation or even the entire human race.

There is direct imitation of the Roman satirists in English literature in the writings of Donne, Hall and Marston. Most of the great dramatists of the 17th century were more or less satirists. For example, Butler’s *Hudibras*, Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*. The 18th century was indeed the age of satire. Pope and Dryden made poetry more satiric. Fielding and Smollett made the novel to be the vehicle of satire. Satire of Thackeray is a thoroughly British article, a little solid, a little wanting in finish, but honest, weighty and durable. The 19th century satire also witnessed eminent writers like Dickens as the keen observer of the oddities of human life, George Eliot as the critic of its emptiness, Balzac as the painter of French society or Trollop as the mirror of the middle classes of England.

Nearly everybody is a satirist in a small way. But the real satirist differs from us both in

- a. the strength of his feeling and
- b. having the wit and genius to express it in the novel or a poem or a play.

The satirists must have some of the qualities of the moralist or the preacher, and some of the qualities of the clown. It is because the best way of attacking wickedness and foolishness is by laughing at them. Then the question arises:

What sort of weapons does the satirist use in his attack on the wickedness and foolishness of mankind?

The simplest weapon is invective i.e. 'a violent attack in words', for example,

- i. an angry motorist after a small accident, or
- ii. excited supporters at a football match.

Another weapon is irony. Irony is less direct, but no less effective. Irony means 'the expression of one's meaning by language of opposite or different tendency, especially the adoption of another's views or tone'. In ordinary conversation irony is often expressed by a tone of voice. For example, 'she's a fine example of a faithful wife' can be spoken by stressing 'she's' and 'fine' to mean exactly the opposite of what they seem to mean.

The most important weapon is the ability of the satirist to amuse and entertain the reader. Without this satire becomes merely tedious and bad tempered.

Satire is found both in prose and poetry. It has no set literary form. A verse satire might be written as an ode, an elegy, a ballad, or anything else. A satire is of classical origin. The plays of the Greek Aristophanes and Latin satirists were the models for satire in English. The two essential elements of literary satire are criticism of ridicule and humour. The satirist's trade is not censure. He/she condemns whatever he/she does not approve. Each has had its own set of vices to ridicule. The satire holds mirror upto nature and lashes out at contemporary follies.

Critics have divided satires into two broad types:

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is satire?
2. What are the two types of satire?
3. Give one example of satire.
4. What are the two essential elements of literary satire?
5. How is satire better than the hundred speeches of preachers?

2.3 Summary:

This unit has introduced the characteristic features of Neo-Classical Criticism with special reference to reason and judgement, irony and satire.

2.4 Terms to Remember

- **antiquity:** old times, esp. before the Middle Ages; great age
- **inspiration:** influence(s) arousing creative activity in literature, art, music etc.
- **aspiration:** desire
- **revelation:** making known of something secret or hidden
- **frigid:** unfriendly, without sympathy
- **devise:** think out, plan
- **conceit:** over-high opinion, witty expression
- **diction:** choice and use of words, style or manner of speaking and writing
- **dissembler:** a person who hides one's real feelings and entertains as a joker in circus
- **braggart:** a person who boasts
- **intrigue:** to make and carry out secret plans or plots
- **hurricane:** violent windstorm (e.g. Indian cyclone)

2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.2.1.1

- A)**
1. a. 1660
 2. d. The Elizabethan Age
 3. b. Reason
 4. b. Judging and condemning
- B)**
1. Reason is the highest mental faculty.
 2. Mathew Arnold described the Neo-Classical Age as ‘our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century’.
 3. The Neo-Classical period is considered as pseudo-classical period because classicism of this period was not true and it was different from the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome.
 4. Dr Johnson
 5. The Neo-Classical Age is different from the Elizabethan Age in three respects – versification, diction and subject matter.

2.2.2.1

- A)**
1. b. a rhetorical device
 2. c. contradiction
 3. a. verbal
 4. d. tragic irony
- B)**
1. Irony means ‘the use of words to mean or imply the opposite of what they usually mean.’
 2. Tragic irony appears in tragedy and comic irony, in comedy.
 3. Verbal irony
 4. In Sophocles’ Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, King Oedipus searches for his father’s murderer, not knowing that he himself is that man.
 5. Malvolio’s act in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*.

2.2.3.1

- A)**
1. c. verbal
 2. a. laughter
 3. b. indirect satire
- B)**
1. Satire is a verbal attack on a person or a part of society.
 2. Direct satire and indirect satire
 3. Butler's *Hudibras*
 4. The two essential elements of literary satire are criticism of ridicule and humour.
 5. Because it aims at the reformation of men and manners.

2.6 Exercises:

Answer the following questions in about 250 words each:

1. Consider 'Neo-Classical Age as the Age of Reason and Judgement'.
2. Define irony and illustrate different types of ironies.
3. What is satire? Comment on the use of satire in literature with different examples.

2.7 Further Reading:

1. Abrams, M H. (1969) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Harcourt.
2. Cuddon, J. A. (1999) *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. England: Penguin.
3. Murphy, M. J. (1972) *Understanding Unseens*. Bombay: Blackie.
4. Prasad, B. (1996) *A Background to the Study of English Literature*. Madras: Macmillan.
5. Rees, R J. (1979) *English Literature*. London: Macmillan.
6. Seturaman, V. S. & others. (1990) *Practical Examination*. Madras: Macmillan.
7. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Vol 9, 11, 14, 20.



Unit-3

Sri Philip Sidney: 'An Apologie For Poetrie'

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Presentation of Subject Matter
 - 3.2.1 Section 1
 - 3.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 3.2.2 Section 2
 - 3.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 3.2.3 Section 3
 - 3.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 3.3 Summary
- 3.4 Terms to Remember
- 3.4 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.5 Exercises
- 3.6 Further Reading

3.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand Sidney's views on poetry;
- understand the significance of Sidney's defence of poetry;
- understand Elizabethan literary criticism; and
- Find relation between Classical criticism and Renaissance criticism

3.1 Introduction:

Literary criticism is said to have started in the earliest times when writers began to write. But the systematic study of literature, with its principles and problems, began in Greece. It began with Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics* (both in 4th c. B.C.). Longinus' *On the Sublime* (1st c. A.D.) also contributed significantly. Among the Roman critics Horace and Quintilian (both 1st c. A.D.) are noteworthy. During the medieval period (11th to 13th c.) Dante (1265-1321) was a major critic. During the Renaissance period (14th to 16th c.), one of the notable literary scholars was Sir Philip Sidney.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) lived in the glorious era of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) when England emerged as an imperial power. He was born in an aristocratic family. He was privileged to get proper education and scholarly company in which his literary and critical abilities developed. He was 'one of the jewels' in the court of Queen Elizabeth, an embodiment of the idea of Renaissance Gentleman, a brave warrior, a devout Christian, an admirable poet and a renowned literary scholar. His fame had spread far and wide all over Europe. At the Battle of Zutphen in 1586, he was fatally wounded and died on the battlefield. He was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral after a magnificent public funeral. His well-known works are *Arcadia* (1580), *Astrophel and Stella* (1582) and 'An Apologie for Poetrie' (1595).

The Elizabethan Age was remarkable for unprecedented literary activity particularly in the realm of poetry, drama and criticism. Shakespeare, Spenser and Ben Jonson wrote during this period. While the poets and playwrights wrote poetry and plays, the critics freely discussed the merits and demerits of literary works. It was also an age of the rise of Puritans, i.e. those people who wanted to maintain purity in all walks of life including literature. These Puritans attacked poetry for its 'harmful' effect on morals. One of the Puritans, Stephen Gosson, attacked poetry in a treatise titled *The School of Abuse* (1579). The book was unceremoniously dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney: 'To the right noble Gentleman, Master Philip Sidney, Esquire'. The book was described as 'a pleasant invective against poets, pipers, jesters and such like caterpillars of commonwealth'. Gosson indicted poetry on four counts: poetry has no use; it is the mother of lies; it is the nurse of abuse; and Plato had rightly banished poets from his ideal republic. Sidney wrote a strong reply to Stephen Gosson in defence of poetry through 'An Apologie for Poetrie'. It was

probably written in 1580, but published in 1595 after his death. Since then it has remained a valuable document in Renaissance criticism. Sidney's defence of poetry is often compared to Aristotle's defence of poetry against Plato's charges.

3.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter:

Sir Philip Sidney's '**An Apologie for Poetrie**' is a reply to Stephen Gosson's charges against poetry made in his book *The School of Abuse* (1579). But its impact reaches beyond a reply to the charges of an individual. It emerges as a spirited defence of poetry against the whole tradition of charges made against it since Plato. In order to do this convincingly, Sidney liberally uses Classical literature, mythology and criticism. He refers to Plato, Aristotle and Horace of the Classical times and the Italian and French critics of the Renaissance period. Thus he emerges as the champion of Classicism without compromising the innovative fervour and the Romantic spirit of Elizabethan England.

Sidney's views are presented in the following three sections: the first section presents the reasons for attaching special value to poetry; the second section presents an exposition of the nature and usefulness of poetry; and the third section discusses the contemporary objections to poetry and his remarks on the state of contemporary English poetry, on style, diction and versification.

3.2.1 Section 1:

Antiquity and Universality of Poetry:

Sidney, at the outset, feels apologetic about having to defend the noble art of poetry which he calls 'a pitiful defence of poor poetry'. He gives a number of reasons to prove the greatness of poetry. He stresses the ancient origin of poetry and its early civilizing function. It is the 'first light-giver to ignorance' and 'the first nurse' whose milk helped feed tougher knowledges. He gives the example of Greece where poets like Homer and Hesiod lived before the manifold sciences came into being. In those days poetry was believed to have miraculous power. Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes and even beasts listened to Orpheus. In Rome Ennius (239-169 B.C.) and in Italy, Boccaccio (1313-1375) and Petrarch (1304-1374) were poets before any sciences came into being. And in England Gower (1330-1408) and Chaucer (1340-1408) beautified their mother tongue.

For a long time, in Greece even the philosophers appeared under the mask of poets. Thales (624-546 B.C.), Empedocles (4th c. B.C.) and Permenides (born 513 B.C.) wrote their natural philosophy in verse. Pythagoras (6th c. B.C.) and Phocylides (6th c. B.C.) gave their moral counsel in verse. Plato himself was a poet. He wrote poetical dialogues which are ‘flowers of poesy’. Even the historians borrowed the fashion and weight of poets. Herodotus (484-424 c. B.C.) wrote history in the name of nine Muses. Historians used aspects of poetry –passionate description of emotions, particularities of battles and long orations given to great kings and captains. Without poetry neither the philosopher nor the historian could have become popular. Even in uncivilized countries such as Turkey and Ireland, poetry was respected.

Dignified titles for Poets:

In all the great civilizations people bestowed heavenly titles on poetry. The Romans called the poet ‘*vates*’ which meant ‘diviner’ or ‘prophet’. In those days, the prophesies of Delphi were in verse and the people found divine force in the words and conceits of poetry. The Hebrew poet, David, wrote ‘Psalms’-‘a heavenly poesy’. The Greeks used the word ‘poet’ which was derived from the Greek word - ‘*poiein*’. It meant ‘to make’. The poet, thus, was a ‘maker’. Thus the Greek gave the great title of the ‘Creator’ to the poet.

Transcendental Nature of Poetry:

According to Sidney, other arts and sciences are inferior to poetry. Astronomer looks upon the stars; geometrician, arithmetician, the natural and moral philosophers follow nature. The lawyer, the historian, the rhetorician and the logician keep nature in mind. The physician and the metaphysician too build on the depth of nature. Only the poet, lifted up with the vigour of his invention, ‘doth grow in effect another nature’. He makes things either better than nature or makes them anew. So the poet is not enclosed within the narrow bounds of nature’s gifts. He ranges within the limits of his own wit. Nature does not fill the earth with such richness as poets have done with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees and sweet-smelling flowers. Therefore Sidney declares, ‘Her (Nature’s) world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden’.

The Poet as an Idealist:

The poet is an idealist. None but the poet can portray so true a lover as Theagenes, so constant a friend as Pylades, so valiant a man as Orlando, so upright a prince as Cyrus and so excellent a man as Aeneas. Sidney believes that the skill of the poet lies

in the ‘idea or fore-conceit’ of the work because the poet has a direct contact with the Ideal. The poet manifests the Idea in a concrete form ‘by delivering them in such excellency as he hath imagined them’. Thus, Sidney directly answers Plato’s charge against poetry that it is ‘twice removed from reality’. Sidney argues that the poet presents the Ideal forms in his poetry.

Supremacy of Imagination:

According to Sidney, imagination is the ‘highest point of man’s wit’ and nobody can compare it with the efficiency of nature. The poet’s imagination is God’s gift. One should give due regard to ‘the heavenly Maker of the maker’, who after creating man after his own likeness, set him beyond all the other of that second nature. Therefore, the poet, with the force of divine breath, brings forth things far surpassing the nature. But the lower wits on the earth (attackers of poetry) do not understand the poet’s or God’s work.

3.2.1.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Sir Philip Sidney lived in the era of.....
 - i) Queen Victoria
 - ii) Queen Elizabeth
 - iii) King John II
 - iv) Queen Mary
2. Sidney wrote ‘An Apologie for Poetrie’ in response to...
 - i) Spencer’s poetry
 - ii) Shakespeare’s plays
 - iii) Stephen Gosson’s *The School of Abuse*
 - iv) Decadence of poetry in the Elizabethan age
3. called poets ‘caterpillars of commonwealth’.
 - i) Philip Sidney
 - ii) Edmund Spenser
 - iii) Plato
 - iv) Stephen Gosson
4. is the ‘first light-giver’ and ‘the first nurse’ according to Sidney.
 - i) God
 - ii) science
 - iii) poetry
 - iv) philosophy

5. One of the great Greek poets is...
i) Herodotus ii) Plato iii) Aristotle iv) Homer

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. By which name did the Romans call the poet?
2. From which Greek word is the word 'poet' derived?
3. Who says 'Her (nature's) world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden'?
4. How does Sidney describe the poetical dialogues of Plato?
5. How does Sidney describe poetic imagination?

3.2.2 Section 2:

Definition and Nature of Poetry:

Sidney defines poetry as follows:

'Poetry therefore is an art of imitation, 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'.

He borrows the word 'imitation' from Aristotle's *Poetics* and reinterprets it in the light of his own understanding of poetic art. He does not use it in the Aristotelian sense of 'imitation of an action' (i.e. reality) based on the principle of probability or universality. He calls it 'an art of imitation'. By this he means not the imitation of external reality or imitation of the mere appearance of reality. Poetry is 'counterfeiting' or 'figuring forth' another reality in order to produce 'a speaking picture' of that reality. That another reality is the 'ideal' reality which is beyond the reach of ordinary people's imagination. It is the imitation of the Platonic *Idea*—the prototypical, abstract and perfect *Idea* of the universe—which only the poet can embody in his poetry. Sidney affirms that the poet imitates the *Idea* for 'the skill of the artificer standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit' and the poet hath that *idea* is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he hath imagined them'. Therefore the lovers, warriors, friends and princes as portrayed in poetry are better than any in the real world. Thus, Sidney answers the charges made by not only of Elizabethan Puritans, but also of Plato who said that poetic imitation is twice

removed from reality. The poet directly embodies the Ideal in his poetry. Flowers smell sweeter in the works of poets than they do in the real world.

The poet achieves this unique distinction by virtue of his creative imagination. Imagination is the 'highest point of man's wit' and the poet is gifted with it in abundance so that he could 'create' a better world than it exists or 'invent' a new world altogether. This ability is the gift of 'the heavenly Maker (God)' bestowed on the poet in order to create and transcend the natural order of things--'things far surpassing the nature'. Sidney observes, 'Her nature's) world is brazen, the poets only deliver the golden'. This justifies the word 'maker' which the Greeks gave to the poet.

Thus Sidney advances an important new argument and a new justification for poetry by saying that the poet is indeed a 'maker' and he invents new and ideal things. Invention is the distinguishing character of the poet. In this Sidney combines both the Classical and the Biblical view in the person of the poet and emphasizes the serious nature of poetic creation and its glory and splendour. As such, poetry should be valued and respected by all.

Further, Sidney describes poetry as 'a speaking picture', that is, it is a vivid and articulate picture of the *ideal* with the sole purpose 'to teach and delight'. It is a concrete embodiment of the essence, the soul of life—which is permanent and universal—in the form of a striking image/s which the philosopher gives only through verbal description.

Mere Versification only an Ornament:

Sidney observes that there are different kinds of poetry. They are classified in accordance with their subject matter as the heroic, tragic, lyric, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral and so on. A large number of poets write in the verse form. But writing in verse in itself does not make it poetry. 'It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet—no more than a long gown maketh an advocate'. Sidney compares mere versification to a lawyer's long gown which is just an outward form. But the soul of poetry is the images, 'the speaking pictures', of virtues and vices with a view to delightful teaching which properly describes the poet. So mere versifiers cannot be called poets. Xenophon gave a portrait of a just empire in the name of Cyrus and Heliodorus (4th c. B.C.) gave a picture of love in Theagenes though they are written in prose. Poets have chosen verse as their garment not as 'speaking

words' which fall from the mouth by chance. The serious poets choose each syllable of each word by 'just proportion, according to the dignity of the subject'.

Function of Poetry:

In his definition of poetry, Sidney notes that the ultimate end of poetry is 'to teach and delight'. In this he follows the Roman poet, Horace (65 -8 c. B.C.). The poets imitate in order to teach virtue. They imitate in order to delight so that poetry moves men to goodness 'which without delight they would flye as from a stranger' and to teach them to be moved by goodness. The noblest goal of any learning is moral action and for poetry it is the chief goal. Therefore, Sidney says, 'it is not the rhyming and versing... but the feigning notable images of virtues and vices... with that delightful teaching which is the right describing note to know a poet by'.

Hence, as David Daiches observes, it is the reader who imitates what the poet creates. For Sidney, the poet is the creator of a world which leads those who view it to follow virtue and shun vice. In the poet's world the righteous always prosper and the wicked are punished. So there is poetic justice in poetry. Sidney says that since any learning purifies wit, enriches memory and enables judgement, the final end of poetry is to lead us to 'as high a perfection of our souls' as can be capable of. He claims that the perfection of the soul is best promoted by poetry. Thus Sidney emphasizes both the aesthetic as well as moralizing functions of poetry.

Claims of Poetry better than Philosophy and History as Moral teacher:

Men follow certain professions in accordance with their own inclinations. Some follow astronomy, some music and some mathematics and so on. But these people have serious limitations. Because their subjects are 'serving sciences'. Sidney picks up two professions- philosophy and history, which were considered to be custodians of truth and virtue. He argues that philosophers define virtue in abstract terms and indulge in definitions, divisions and distinctions. The historian, on the other hand, deals with 'old mouse-eaten records' and bases his history on hearsay. He thinks he is better than the philosopher because he teaches by examples. The dispute between the philosopher and the historian is: 'the one giveth the precept, and the other the example'. But the 'peerless poet' performs both the functions: like the philosopher he gives a perfect picture of what should be and combines it with a particular example. For instance, the image of Ulysses in the midst of Calypsos presents a vision of wisdom and temperance and the readers see through all the virtues, vices and

passions. Even Jesus Christ used parables to teach mankind. Aesop's fables are full of allegories under the tales of beasts.

Moreover, the idea of 'poetic justice', where virtue is rewarded and vice punished, is peculiar to poetry. In fact, poetry sets out virtue in the best colours so that everyone falls in love with it. For example, Ulysses is shown in storm and other harsh situations by the poet. But his patience and balanced state of mind are well rewarded at the end. The historian remains captive to the facts of life. He must show Socrates (469 -399 B.C.) put to death like a traitor and Pompey (106 -48 B.C.) and Cicero (106 -43 B.C.) slain for no fault of their own. But the poet rewards the good, and because of this, the poet deserves 'the laurel crown'.

The philosopher too teaches moral virtue. But he does not 'move' the reader to virtue as the poet does. The philosopher shows the path to virtue in the tedious way. He scorns delight. But the poet gives a sweet prospect of the way to virtue so that it attracts men towards it. He writes with words set in delightful proportion, accompanied with enchanting music and with a tale which lures children from play and old men from chimney-corner. Poetic imitation is always delightful. Aristotle also believes that things which are horrible—cruel battles, unnatural monsters, etc. — are made delightful in poetic imitation. Those who have read *Amadis de Gaule* are moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality and courage. There are infinite proofs of the good effects of poetic invention. Hence poetry, among all sciences, is the most suitable to teach it, the most supreme as an incentive to virtue and the most princely to move towards it.

Kinds of Poetry:

There are different kinds of poetry. Sidney prefers them to be unmixed and pure. But some kinds of poetry such as tragical and comical, heroical and pastoral, and prose and verse are mixed. But he concedes that the combination is not hurtful. Sidney discusses several kinds of poetry with reference to their moral functions:

1. **Pastoral:** It deals with rustic life and shows the misery of the people under cruel lords. Sometimes under the guise of the tales of wolves and sheep, the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience can be taught.
2. The Elegiac, the Iambic and the Satiric: The Elegiac moves the heart with pity. It bewails the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world. The

Iambic is wholesome. It makes people ashamed of villainy and wickedness. The Satiric ridicules man's folly or weakness.

3. **The Comic:** It imitates common errors of life which the poet presents in the most scornful way.
4. **The Tragical:** Tragedy opens the greatest wounds of life. It makes kings fear to be tyrants. It teaches the uncertainty of this world and shows the futility of power and glory some people seek.
5. **The Lyric:** The lyric praises virtue with its lyre and music. It sings of moral precepts and natural problems and praise of God. In Hungary people sing songs of their ancestor's valour to kindle courage in them. The lyric arouses men from their lethargy and inspires them to embrace warlike and noble deeds.
6. **The Heroic or Epic:** It is liked by all because it portrays the life and actions of such heroes as Achilles and Aeneas. It teaches and moves to the highest and excellent truth. It shows virtue in the most beautiful and noble form. It is the best and most accomplished kind of poetry.

3.2.2.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Sidney defines poetry as ...
 - i) versification
 - ii) imitation of action
 - iii) counterfeiting or figuring forth
 - iv) divine inspiration
2. Sidney borrows the word 'imitation' from ...
 - i) Renaissance critics
 - ii) Stephen Gosson
 - iii) Aristotle
 - iv) Plato
3. The two functions of literature according to Sidney are ...
 - i) to imitate and instruct
 - ii) to teach and praise
 - iii) to imitate and delight
 - iv) to teach and delight
4. According to Sidney, the poet imitates ...
 - i) the actual reality
 - ii) the world

iii) Platonic *Idea* iv) inner reality

5. Poetic justice is one of the aspects of ...

i) poetry ii) philosophy iii) history iv) astronomy

B) Answer the following in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. What does Sidney compare rhyming and versing of a poet to?
2. Why does the philosopher fail to 'move' the reader, according to Sidney?
3. Why does Sidney call astronomy and mathematics 'serving sciences'?
4. Which kind of poetry moves the heart with pity?
5. Which is the best and most accomplished form of poetry according to Sidney?

3.2.3 Section 3:

Reply to the Objections to Poetry:

According to Sidney, the poet-haters do not understand the worthiness and sacredness of poetry. Their objections to poetry are but an outcome of an itching tongue. They should be ignored. The four chief objections to poetry are: 1. There are many other more fruitful branches of knowledge than poetry; 2. Poetry is the mother of lies; 3. It is the nurse of abuse; and 4. Plato banished poets out of his Commonwealth. Sidney's specific reply to these charges are:

1. No learning is as good as that which teaches and moves to virtue and none can teach both as poetry does. So poetry is the most fruitful branch of knowledge on earth.
2. Of all the writers under the sun, the poet is the least liar. The astronomer, physician, geometrician and historian lie because they affirm something. 'For the poet, he affirms nothing, and therefore never lieth'. He never conjures the facts to be believed as true. He does not cite any authority in support of what he says. He writes about things allegorically and figuratively and not affirmatively.
3. Poetry-haters say that poetry abuses men's wit - comedies teach immoral conceits; lyric is passionate; the elegy weeps for the want of a mistress; and even the heroical praises the love-God, Cupid's deeds. Sidney's reply is that it is man's wit which abuses poetry. Fault is not of poetry, but of its practitioners. If

rightly used, poetry can do more good than any other kind of learning. Poetry in itself is not corrupt.

4. As for Plato's charges against poetry, Sidney argues that Plato himself was the most poetical of the philosophers. Critics believe that as Plato was a philosopher, he was a natural enemy of poets. But this was not so. The poets have always enjoyed respect and honour. Seven cities wanted the blind Homer to be their citizen. Many Athenians saved their lives by reciting Euripides' (480-406 B.C.) verses. Further, Sidney argues that Plato objected to the abuse of poetry and not the poetry. He objected to the poets who gave wrong opinion of the Gods by narrating merry tales about them and thus corrupting the youth. So Plato, 'banishing the abuse, not the thing ... shall be our patron and not our adversary'. Moreover, Plato attributes an inspiring divine force to poetry far above man's wit in his dialogue *Ion*.

Decay of Poetry in Contemporary England:

For the patriot Sidney, England was the mother of excellent minds. But of late, it had developed step-motherly attitude towards poetry. In ancient times kings, emperors, senators and captains not only respected poetry, but they themselves were poets. The king of Sicily, the king of France and the king of Scotland were poets. Sidney regrets that poetry thus loved in all ages and countries was neglected and dishonoured in England. Nobody endures the pain of a pen. Sidney gives reasons for the contemporary disgrace of poetry and poets. Firstly, there is the lack of spirit in the age. Secondly, poets are inferior men who write poetry to earn money. Thirdly, poetry is a divine gift. But it can be nurtured on *art*, *imitation* and *exercise*. Rules of art and models of poetry are in abundance. But the poets do not exercise them rightly. Poetry has two parts—the matter to be expressed in words and words to express the matter. And in neither of the two parts, poets exercise the use of art and imitation rightly. Only a few poetic works are praiseworthy: Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Earl of Surrey's *Lyrics* and Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*.

According to Sidney, English tragedies and comedies do not observe the rules of the art. Only *Gorboduc*, the first tragedy written in England by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, rises to the expected height and morality. Dramatists should follow the three Unities - unity of action, unity of time and unity of place. But in England there are gross absurdities in the use of Unities. It is wiser to begin the play in the

middle of the story and use the technique of reporting the events that happen far away and long before from a vantage point. Sidney is against mixing of tragedy and comedy. It is foolish to mingle kings and clowns which is neither decency nor discretion. Tragi-comedy is unworthy of 'chaste ears' as they arouse loud laughter. The delight of comedy and the dignity of tragedy are compromised. English comedians think that there is no delight without laughter. Laughter gives only a scornful tickling. Therefore, the end of comical part should not be laughter, but it should be mixed with delightful teaching which is the end of poetry. In England comedy is much abused. Therefore poetry's honesty is questioned.

Among other sorts of poetry, the lyrical kinds of songs and sonnets are written. But the poets do not apply their minds properly. Many lyrics deal with love. But they are written in the form of fiery speeches in 'swelling phrases' or in all coldness which fail to move. God has given us good minds and we do not sing the praise of God and the immortal beauty of his Creation. Therefore, poets miss the right use of the matter of poetry.

Diction and Versification:

The diction of English poetry is much worse. It is eloquence dressed up or disguised in a courtesan-like affectation. Poets make use of far-fetched words which are new and unfamiliar to the readers. The figures of speech are 'winter-starved' without beauty and substance. Poets are fond of puns, conceits and word-play of all sorts. But the use of these is merely ornamental and does not move the readers. Similes and metaphors should be used to explain and clarify and not to convince those of contrary opinion. The poets should 'bend to the right use both of matter and manner'. English language is rich and resourceful and capable of excellent flexibility. But the poet need not be bound by the rules of grammar. The poet needs to utter the ideas sweetly and properly which is the end of speech. The art of oratory and of poetry are, therefore, closer.

There are two kinds of versification: the ancient and the modern. English language is adaptable to both the systems of versification. The ancient type is marked by the quantity of each syllable and accordingly the ancient poets framed their verse. The moderns observe only number like that of sounds of words which we call rhyme. The ancient versification is fitter for music. But the modern system with its rhyme is also musical. Both the English and the ancient versification have sweetness and

majesty and so give delight. Truly English language is better than Italian, Spanish or French because it does not have the defects of these languages. These languages have problems with certain types of rhymes.

Conclusion:

To sum up, poetry is full of delightfulness which is conducive to virtue. The charges brought against it are either false or feeble. It is the fault of the poets that it is not esteemed in England. The English language is fittest to honour poetry. So Sidney appeals to his readers not to laugh at poets and poetry. Aristotle valued poetry. Bembus (1470-1547) and Scaliger (1484-1558), both Italian scholars, thought that poets made men honest. God gave us all knowledge through such poets as Homer and Hesiod. Poets are beloveds of God. Poetry can make men immortal.

3.2.3.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. banished poets from his Commonwealth.
i) Socrates ii) Plato iii) Aristotle iv) Sidney
2. According to Sidney, the poet does not tell lies because...
i) he does not affirm anything ii) he is truthful
iii) he cites authorities iv) others tell lies
3. Seven cities wanted ... to be their citizen in ancient Greece.
i) Herodotus ii) Thusidides iii) Homer iv) Euripides
4. For Sidney, poetry could be nurtured on ...
i) divine inspiration ii) art, imitation and exercise
iii) contemporary literature iv) Classical literature
5. advocates the three Unities.
i) Sidney ii) Plato iii) Spencer iv) Shakespeare

B) Answer the following in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. Which country has developed step-motherly attitude towards poetry?

2. Which English play does Sidney praise?
3. What does Sidney oppose in dramatic art?
4. According to Sidney, which language is suitable for both the ancient and modern systems of versification?
5. Which languages have problems with rhyme?

3.3 Summary:

Sir Philip Sidney's reply to Stephen Gosson is a precious document in the history of literary criticism. In his essay, he proves that poetry is not the creation of an idle mind for the idle readers. It is the nurse of civilization. Poetry was written in the earliest times and it was poetry which gradually enabled man to understand and create other kinds of knowledge. Poetry was respected and loved in all the nations—both in civilized and uncivilized nations. Other branches of knowledge developed in the form of poetry. Philosophers and historians appeared under the mask of poets. Poetry is universal. It lasts longer than any other kind of knowledge. The Greeks and the Romans revered poets. The Romans called them 'vates' which meant 'seer' or 'prophet'. The Greek word for 'poet' meant 'maker' or 'creator'. All other arts are slaves of Nature. But the poet is superior to it. Because he is endowed with the gift of imagination with the help of which he creates things either better than nature or creates anew. The poet is not tied to the laws of nature. He moves freely in the world of imagination and creates heroes, demigods, cyclopes, chimeras, furies and so on. He fills his world with beautiful flowers, trees and rivers. Nature's world is imperfect. But the poet's world is golden. The poet alone can create an ideal lover, an ideal warrior and an ideal friend. The poet is a prophet. The oracles of Delphi and the prophesies of Sibylla were delivered in verse. The Psalms in the Bible are songs.

According to Sidney, poetry is an art of imitation. It is representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth. It is 'a speaking picture' written with the purpose 'to teach and delight'. Though Sidney uses the term 'imitation' in his definition of poetry, he does not use it in the Aristotelian sense. The poet imitates the 'ideal' reality whereby he sees the perfect Platonic *Idea* embodied in the external things and presents it to the world. He creates new things by drawing 'on his wit'. Hence there is glory and splendour in poetic creation. Sidney describes poetry as 'a speaking picture' by which he means an elevated or striking picture of life in the new and ideal

form that touches the soul of human beings. Poetry is not just versification just like a long gown does not make a lawyer. It is the image of virtues and vices with delightful teaching which makes a poet.

According to Sidney, the proper function of poetry is to teach and to delight. Poetry moves men to goodness. The poet teaches by presenting an ideal world for the imitation of the reader. The readers learn the path of virtue and shun vice. In the poet's world, the good is rewarded and the wicked is punished. Thus there is poetic justice in poetry. The philosopher teaches virtue in an abstract manner. The historian gives only examples without the idea. But the poet gives both. So the poet is the noblest of all learned men.

Sidney discusses several kinds of poetry with reference to its impact on the readers. The pastoral deals with the humble people's lives; the satiric laughs at men's folly; the comic ridicules common errors; the tragedy reveals the wickedness of man; and the epic portrays the heroic and moral goodness. Thus poetry does good to mankind.

Then, Sidney goes on to reply specifically to the four objections levelled against poetry: that poetry is useless; that it is the mother of lies; that it is the nurse of abuse; and that Plato banished poets from his republic. Sidney argues that poetry is more useful than other branches of knowledge. Poetry is not the mother of lies because the poet does not affirm anything to be true. For the third objection, he replies that it is not poetry which is bad, but some poets write bad poetry. So one should not find fault with poetry in general. Poetry moves men to heroic action and virtue. He gives a number of examples from literature and history to prove his point. As regards the charge that Plato had banished poets from his Commonwealth, Sidney replies that Plato was not against poetry, but against the abuse of poetry.

According to Sidney, there is general decline in the contemporary English poetry. England had developed step-motherly attitude towards poetry despite England being the mother of excellent minds. He gives several reasons for it: lack of spirit in the age, poets with money-motive and no practice in the art of poetry. Sidney praises Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Surrey's *Lyrics* and Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*. He thinks that English tragedies and comedies do not observe the rules of art except *Gorboduc*. He complains that the dramatists do not follow the three Unities in the plays. Comedians strive for laughter without delightful teaching

as the end. Lyrics are also not written properly. The language of poetry is much worse. Unfamiliar words and figures of speech abound in poetry. But English language is rich and free from faults. It is suitable for both the ancient and modern systems of poetry.

3.4 Terms to Remember:

- **treatise:** a book that deals with a subject systematically
- **Antiquity:** related to the earliest times of civilization
- **wit:** used in the old sense of the word meaning genius or understanding
- **prototypical:** original
- **invention:** creation of something new
- **conceit:** an idea; concept: image
- **diction:** choice of words; the word became a literary term in 18th c.
- **versification:** writing in verse i.e. arranged in lines, each conforming to a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables
- **hearsay:** rumours; not based on facts
- **figuratively:** written with the help of imagery counterfeiting or figuring forth: representation in the form of a picture of something ideal
- **allegory:** a narrative that carries a second and important meaning along with the surface story
- **fable:** a short story that exemplifies a moral idea in which preferably animals are used as characters
- **parable:** a short story written with a view to teach a moral lesson
- **affectation:** pretension; deception
- **pun:** a play of words which are similar in sound but different in meaning
- **oratory:** the art of effective speaking

Mythical and Historical References:

Renaissance: It is a name applied to the period of European history (14th to 16th c) in which interest in Classical culture and renewal of intellectual and artistic energies took place. The term means ‘rebirth’ or ‘revival’.

- **Muses:** Greek Goddesses of Learning believed to preside over poetry, arts and sciences
- **Psalms:** religious songs or hymns
- **Homer:** Greek epic poet who wrote Iliad and Odyssey; lived in 8th c. B.C. and was blind.
- **Hesiod:** One of the earliest of Greek poets, lived probably in 7th c. B.C.
- **Classicism:** Respect and adherence to the rules and traditions of the past (Greek and Roman); the writers of Classical times were supposed to have achieved highest level of excellence in arts and literature
- **Romantic spirit:** the spirit of adventure; emphasis on freedom and imagination; opposed to rules and past traditions
- **Brazen:** imperfect (refers to the Age of Bronze the ancient people believed to have existed between The Age of Silver and that of Iron. The Age of Gold, the first era in human civilization, was supposed to be the world of perfection/ideal world)
- **Thebes:** Mythical ancient Greek Kingdom
- **Amphion:** a mythical figure supposed to have built the city of Thebes whose music of the lyre moved the stones and formed the walls
- **Orpheus:** a mythical figure said to have brought back his dead wife from the Hell with the power of his music
- **Prophecies of Delphi:** Delphi was a mythical town with the temple of God Apollo whose words were uttered in verse.
- **Prophecies of Sybilla:** the wise words of an old woman, Sybil of Cumaea
- **Theagenes:** the hero of Greek romance written by Heliodorus (4th c. B.C.)
- **Pylades:** a Greek mythical figure known for true friendship (between Orestes and Pylades)

- **Orlando:** The hero of Italian heroic poems of Ariosto (1474-1533)
- **Cyrus:** a historical figure and a hero of a political romance written by Xenophon (4th c. B.C.), the famous Greek Historian
- **Aeneas:** the hero of the great Roman poet, Virgil's epic poem, *Aeneid*
- **Ulysses:** the hero of Homer's epic, *Odyssey*
- **Calypso:** a nymph on the island of Ogygia. When Ulysses reached Calypso's island, she received him lovingly and wanted him to stay with her, which he refused to do out of his love for his wife. She offered him immortality and eternal youth.
- **Amadis de Gaul:** a prose romance by Lobeira (14th c.); its hero, Amadis, is a model of virtue and chivalry.
- **Achilles:** the hero of Homer's *Iliad*
- **Aesop:** a Greek slave who wrote fables
- **Demi-gods:** half-gods whose one parent is a God and the other a human
- **Cyclopes:** one-eyed monsters
- **Chimeras:** fire-spewing monsters with lion's head and goat's body
- **Furies:** three goddesses of revenge
- **Laurel crown:** In ancient Rome victorious generals were honoured with laurel crowns. Coronation of poets became common in the Renaissance period in Italy.

3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress:

3.2.1.1 Section 1

- A) 1. (ii) Queen Elizabeth
2. (iii) Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse*
3. (iv) Stephen Gosson
4. (iii) poetry
5. (iv) Homer

- B) 1. *Vates*
2. 'poiein'
3. Sir Philip Sidney
4. 'flowers of poesy'
5. 'the highest point of man's wit'

3.2.2.1 Section 2

- A) 1. (iii) counterfeiting or figuring forth
2. (iii) Aristotle
3. (iv) to teach and delight
4. (iii) Platonic Idea
5. (i) poetry
- B) 1. A long gown of an advocate
2. The philosopher teaches virtue in a tedious way.
3. Because astronomy and mathematics follow the order of Nature.
4. The Elegiac poetry
5. The heroic or epic poetry

3.2.3.1 Section 3

- A) 1. (ii) Plato
2. (i) he does not affirm anything
3. (iii) Homer
4. (ii) art, imitation and exercise
5. (i) Sidney
- B) 1. England
2. *Gorboduc*
3. mixing of tragedy and comedy
4. English language
5. Italian, Spanish and French

3.6 Exercises:

A) Write short answers to the following questions (100 words):

1. How does Sidney defend poetry with reference to its antiquity?
2. Explain Sidney's views on versification in poetry.
3. Which are the two functions of poetry according to Sidney?
4. Explain Sidney's claim that 'Her (Nature's) world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden'.
5. Discuss Sidney's views on the diction and versification of contemporary English poetry.

B) Write long answers (250 words each) to the following questions:

1. Discuss Sidney's definition and nature of poetry.
2. Examine Sidney's views on poetry, philosophy and history.
3. Discuss Sidney's views on different kinds of poetry.
4. Discuss the Elizabethan objections to poetry and Sidney's defence of poetry against those objections.
5. Examine Sidney's views on the decline of contemporary English poetry.

3.7 Further Reading:

Buxton, J. (1965) *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance*. London: Macmillans.

Daiches, D. (1985) *Critical Approaches to Literature*. London: Orient Longman Limited.

Saintsbury, G. (1955) *A History of English Criticism*. London: W. Blackwood.

Sidney, P. (1978) *An Apologie for Poetrie*. (ed. Koshy, G.), Delhi: The Macmillan Company of India Limited.

Wimsat, W. K.(Jr.) and Brooks, C. (1974) *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. New Delhi: Oxford.



Unit-4

Literary Movements

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter
 - 4.2.1 Realism
 - 4.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 4.2.2 Naturalism
 - 4.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 4.2.3 Symbolism
 - 4.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
 - 4.2.4 Surrealism
 - 4.2.4.1 Check Your Progress
- 4.3 Summary
- 4.4 Terms to Remember
- 4.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 4.6 Exercises
- 4.7 Further Reading

4.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to....

- understand the importance of major literary movements
- recognize the contribution of different authors in the development of literary movements
- analyze and interpret literary works in the light of different literary trends and movements

4.1 Introduction

A literary movement is a general term for the specific works of literature which share a similar pattern of writing. It simply refers to a period of time in which different authors followed similar patterns of writing or approaches. Usually these authors are a part of the ‘movement’ because they have similar ideas about a number of things ranging from style, content, philosophy, sociological concerns, art, culture, etc. Broadly defined, literary movement is a trend within literary periods in which literature is unified by shared intellectual, linguistic, religious, and artistic influences. In short, literary movement describes a collective upsurge of an ideological or critical approach to literature. The major literary movements discussed in this unit are Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Surrealism. These trends have importance in literary criticism as they represent the trends in literature. The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the literary movement, discussion of certain representative authors and works associated with the movement, and the predominant characteristics or themes of the movement. Let us consider them in detail.

4.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter

4.2.1 Realism

The term ‘Realism’ refers to any work that attempts to portray life accurately without romantic idealization. It is defined as “the science of exact presentation of many complexities, abstract and concrete factors in the work of art”. In fact, realism is an artistic or literary movement characterized by the representation of people or things as they actually are. It is most often associated with the 19th century literary movement that aimed at honest portrayal of ordinary, contemporary life. The greatest novelists, such as Balzac and Flaubert, established the novel as a major literary genre to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality. George Eliot and William Dean Howells introduced the realistic novel in England and the United States respectively. These novelists depicted life and the social world in their works realistically. In short, their novels are the best examples of "objective reality without romantic idealization”. So they are regarded as the originators of realism.

In literary history, realism is usually associated with the genre of the novel because it is uniquely capable of revealing the truth of contemporary life in society. It is applied by literary critics in two diverse ways:

- i) to identify a movement in the writing of the novels during the nineteenth century, and
- ii) to designate a recurrent mode, in various eras and literary forms, of representing human life and experience in literature.

As a literary movement, Realism is concerned with "objective reality". It represents everyday activities, primarily among the middle or lower class society. Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction. The main difference between the realistic and romantic fiction is that while realistic fiction is said to represent life as it really is, the romantic fiction is said to present life more picturesque, fantastic, adventurous, or heroic rather than actuality. Realistic fiction is written to create the impression that it represents life and the social world as it seems to the common reader. So realism is defined as "the faithful representation of reality".

The realistic fiction represents life and the social world as it appears to the common reader. The major novelists who developed realism by representing human life and experience in literature are Balzac, Flaubert, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Daniel Defoe, Richardson, Henry Fielding, Arnold Bennett et al. These novelists attempted to represent life and society realistically in their novels. For example, Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin* (1831; *The Wild Ass's Skin*), *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* (1831; *The Unknown Masterpiece*), *Louis Lambert* (1834), and *The Quest of the Absolute* 1834 are the best examples of realistic novels. In all these varied works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and reporter of contemporary French society.

In England, Samuel Richardson presented realistic fiction in the 18th century. His novel *Pamela* conveys realities about truth, morality, and vice. The reader learns the truth about morality and vice through the characters in Pamela. While Richardson's *Pamela* portrayed life of a lower middle copy mond servant in an aristocratic hones, Henry Fielding started with satiric intention and penned a realistic novel, *Joseph Andrews*. In America, Samuel Clemens was the early pioneer of realism. Writing under the pen name Mark Twain, he was able to reproduce vernacular speech pattern and vocabulary to focus the middle and lower class characters in his novels. His *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the best example of realistic fiction. However, the realistic novel during the Victorian period used journalistic techniques to make the novel closer to real life with facts and general

stereotypes of human nature. For example, Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations* was originally released weekly in newspaper publications and people enjoyed it so much that it was in high demand quickly, and eventually it was turned into one novel. The Victorian novel became popular because the characters in the Victorian novel were lifelike and connected to the middle class life and community.

The realistic novel really developed in the nineteenth century with the work of Austen, Balzac, George Eliot, Tolstoy and others. The energizing principles of George Eliot's novels were accuracy in representation of things as they are and an honest representation of her feelings and perceptions. Her masterpieces *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Mariner* (1861) and *Middlemarch* (1871), secured George Eliot's place high in the realistic fiction in English. Her realism extends from the external world to the world of individual consciousness like the psychological novelists. George Eliot was really committed to the faithful representation of commonplace things. Her *Adam Bede* is an early example of the realistic fiction for which she became celebrated. Eliot herself defined realism as 'the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature.' To her, realism did not mean a naive belief that writing can transparently represent the real world, but the conviction that writing should not falsify or romanticize it.

In short, realism was a movement that represented everyday activities in various contexts, primarily among the middle or lower class society. The major reasons for the emergence of realism in literature in the nineteenth century were the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, the rapid growth in industrialism and urbanization, a relative rise in middle-class and reader's interest in understanding the rapid shifts in culture. The major characteristics of realism are:

- a) Objectivity in presentation
- b) Selective presentation of reality with an emphasis on authenticity,
- c) Characters appear in their real complexity of temperament and motive,
- d) The realistic novel served the interests and aspirations of an insurgent middle class.
- e) Character is more important than action and plot,
- f) Insistence on the experience of the commonplace

- g) Avoidance of the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels.
- h) Emphasis on morality
- i) Diction of the realistic novel is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone is comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact.

In short, realism is a style of writing that aimed at the honest portrayal of ordinary, contemporary life. As an artistic or literary movement developed in the nineteenth century, realism attempted to depict life accurately without idealizing or romanticizing it. So it is regarded as the science of exact presentation of many complexities in the work of art.

4.2.1.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. ----- is the science of exact presentation of many complexities, abstract and concrete factors in the work of art
 - a) Realism
 - b) Surrealism
 - c) Naturalism
 - d) Symbolism
2. As a literary movement, Realism is concerned with -----
 - a) idealization of human life
 - b) images and symbols
 - c) objective reality
 - d) philosophy and culture
3. ----- introduced the realistic novel in England.
 - a) Samuel Clemens
 - b) George Eliot
 - c) Balzac
 - d) Emile Zola

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What does the term 'realism' refer to?
2. Who established the novel as a major literary genre to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality?
3. What were the main reasons for the emergence of realism in literature in the 19th century?

4.2.2 Naturalism

The term Naturalism is generally applied to literature which attempts to reproduce details from life without selection. It was a mainly unorganized literary movement that sought to depict believable everyday reality, as opposed to Romanticism as well as Surrealism. Naturalistic writers often believed that certain factors, such as heredity, social conditions and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character. They exposed the dark harshness of life, including poverty, racism, violence, prejudice, disease, corruption, prostitution, and filth. As a result, naturalistic writers were frequently criticized for focusing too much on human vice and misery.

Naturalism was regarded as a logical outgrowth or a specialized variety of literary realism in the first half of the 19th century. However, it was more explanatory than Realism by identifying the certain causes for a person's actions or beliefs. It displayed some specific characteristics that delimited it from the contemporary realistic literature. Instead of developing plot structure, naturalistic writers focused on the social environment in their works.

Naturalism was a relatively short-lived philosophical approach. Very few writers experienced real success in the naturalistic style of writing. The major writers who developed Naturalism were Emile Zola (1840-1902), Frank Norris (1870-1902), Stephen Crane (1871-1900) and Edith Wharton (1862-1937). The works of Emile Zola and Frank Norris provided inspiration for many of the Naturalist authors. They conceived of their work as experiments in which characters were subjected to various stimuli in order to gauge reactions. For example, Emile Zola's works had frankness about sexuality along with a pervasive pessimism. His most famous contribution to Naturalism was *Les Rougon-Macquart*, a sweeping collection of 20 novels. It is believed that he sought a new idea to convince the reading public of something new and more modern in his fiction. He argued that his innovation in fiction-writing was the creation of characters and plots based on the scientific method. His concern is not with character as such, but how characters react to circumstances. His often grim subject matter is coupled with a sober and scientific narration of details. There is a clinical aspect to his craft that is echoed in his descriptions of novel-writing as a form of science. Later writers would concur, citing Zola as their major inspiration in pursuing the Naturalist aesthetics in literature.

The most potent expression of Naturalism is found in the works of Frank Norris. His chief concern was with how the civilized man overcame the brute, animal nature that still lived inside of him. His most famous novel *McTeague* (1899) is a depiction of the savage side of humanity. It tells the story of a couple's courtship and marriage, and their subsequent descent into poverty, violence and finally murder as the result of jealousy and greed. The novel examines the idea that our actions and traits are not entirely determined by our conscious decisions. We are influenced by our actions and by a power that is larger than our existence.

One of the first truly Naturalist works of literature, and certainly the first in America, was Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. It is a story about a virtuous girl who becomes ruined by forces larger than her. Crane's most celebrated novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was set during the Civil War, and follows one young soldier's experience of that war. His descriptions and scenery were inspired by war and history magazines.

Edith Wharton often produced novels that just as rightly belong in the category of Naturalism. Unlike the bulk of her contemporaries in the Naturalist vein, Wharton's novels dealt almost exclusively with the concerns of the upper crust of society. Her novels *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Age of Innocence*, *The Custom of the Country* etc. present the changing scene of New York City, the foibles of its fashionable elites and the ambitions of the "new people". Her characters often fall from grace through their own mistakes, miscalculation, and sometimes for no apparent reason at all.

In fact, realism and naturalism are two similar literary movements of the 19th and 20th century that deal with the real, cruel world. Realism most straightforwardly is "the truthful treatment of material." The realistic Writers like Mark Twain, George Eliot, Dean Howells etc. focused mainly on every day, natural incidents involving ordinary people, nothing too extreme or out of the ordinary. However naturalism is based on a very different philosophy in which people are prisoners of their inheritance and social environment. In naturalism, life is viewed more as a machine; man is simply just another animal on the planet earth driven by his chemistry and environment. Spirituality has no part in this literary movement; it is all scientifically based.

The Naturalistic writers believed that the laws behind the forces that govern human lives might be studied and understood through the objective study of human beings. They studied human beings governed by their instincts and passions as well as forces of heredity and environment. The main features of naturalism or naturalistic literary works are:

- a) Detached method of narration
- b) Deterministic--natural and socioeconomic forces stronger than man.
- c) Characters--lower socioeconomic class
- d) Naturalists observe, and then write and their writing is often about the darker side of life.
- e) Characters do not have free will. They are conditioned or controlled by environment, heredity, instinct or chance
- f) Language is formal and style is Darwinist--survival of the fittest
- g) pessimistic approach
- h) surprising twist at the end of the story

In short, Naturalism was a literary movement or tendency from the 1880s to 1930s that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character.

4.2.3.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. The Naturalistic writers often believed that certain factors such as ----- and ----- were unavoidable determinants in one's life
 - a) frankness and sexuality b) images and symbols
 - c) heredity, and social conditions d) philosophy and culture
2. ----- was regarded as a logical outgrowth of literary realism in the 19th-century.
 - a) Nihilism b) Naturalism
 - c) Surrealism d) Symbolism

3. The most potent expression of Naturalism is found in the works -----
- a) Charles Baudelaire b) Andre Breton
c) Max Ernst d) Frank Norris

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is Naturalism?
2. Who provided inspiration to develop the naturalistic trend in literature?
3. What is the main feature of Emile Zola's works?

4.2.3 Symbolism

Symbolism is an artistic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind. It is mainly a French Movement in art and literature. It gives a writer freedom to add double levels of meanings to his work: the literal and the symbolic. The main object of symbolism was to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols and symbolized language. Symbols are endlessly suggestive. They are often images which gradually reveal a special mood, or even an intimation of something deeper than life normally reveals. In short, symbolism is ‘representation of ideas by the use of symbols’.

Etymologically, the term ‘symbolism’ is derived from the word ‘symbol’ which means a sign of recognition. It exists literally within the world of the story but which comes to have an abstract meaning beyond itself. For instance, a ‘rose’ given by one character to another may function as a symbol of their love. A ‘caged bird’ might be a symbol of the longing for freedom. The ‘conch shell’ in Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* symbolizes the rule of law; while the ‘pig’s head on a stick’ symbolizes the human impulse to savagery. In the broadest sense, a symbol is anything which signifies something. Some symbols are conventional or public. For example, ‘the Cross’, a ‘swastika’, or a ‘nation’s flag’ have meanings that are widely recognized by the concerned society or culture. Writers use conventional symbols to reinforce meanings. In short, symbol is an object, character, or action that suggests meanings, associations, and emotions beyond what is typical of its nature or function.

The symbolist movement originated in the late 19th century in France to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols.

The Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly. Thus, they wrote in a very metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning. Jean Moreas published the symbolist manifesto in *Le Figaro* in 1886. It names Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine as the leading poets of the Symbolist Movement. They attempted to communicate the underlying mystery of existence through a free and highly personal use of metaphors and images. Their experimental techniques greatly enriched the modern poetry of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot and the modern novel as represented by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. They also attacked the descriptive tendencies of the Realist theatre and the Naturalistic novels. So the symbolist movement is regarded as a reaction against Realism and Naturalism.

The symbolist writers were concerned with expressing various elements of the internal life of the individual. They explored the tension in their lives between the sensual love of women and the spiritual idealization of women. They also described the quests as metaphors for internal explorations into the inner consciousness of the individual. For example, Baudelaire's poem "The Voyage" describes a journey as a symbol of the quest for meaning and satisfaction in life. Many symbolists focused on subjective mental impressions, internal moods, delicate emotional states, and spiritual sentiments in reaction against objective, external and concrete realities. Charles Baudelaire's masterpiece, *Flowers of Evil*, and his important collection of prose poetry *Little Prose Poems*, embody the central ideals of the Symbolist Movement. Paul Verlaine captured the musicality of the French language in his masterpiece, the poetry volume *Songs without Words* (1874). Stéphane Mallarmé who developed the literary ideals of Symbolism was interested in exploring the relationship between everyday reality and an ideal world of perfection and beauty. His *Afternoon of a Faun* is a major work of symbolist poetry. The young generation of writers who developed the Symbolist Movement regarded Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé as the founders of the Symbolist Movement.

Symbolism was in many ways a reaction against the urbanization and materialism of the Victorian Age. It rejected the narrow representational confines of Naturalism, preferring to roam the wider fields of mysticism, idealism, romanticism and obscurantism. Philosophically, it sought the deeper truths which lay

beneath the Naturalist or Impressionist surface. The main characteristics of symbolism are as follows:

- a) Symbolism was largely a reaction against Realism and Naturalism.
- b) It sought to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols and the symbolized language.
- c) The Symbolist poems attempt to evoke, rather than primarily to describe
- d) Symbolism was against plain meanings and matter-of-fact description.
- e) Symbolic imagery was used to signify the state of the poet's soul.
- f) Symbolism was in many ways a reaction against the urbanization and materialism of the Victorian Age
- g) The Symbolists thought that art should express more absolute truths which could only be accessed indirectly, using metaphorical imagery and suggestive forms containing symbolic meaning.
- h) The symbolists wished to liberate the techniques of versification to allow greater room for free verse.
- i) Symbolism was concerned with expressing various elements of the internal life of the individual.
- j) The Symbolist writers describe various journeys, voyages, or quests as metaphors for internal explorations into the inner consciousness of the individual.

In short, Symbolism was a late 19th-century movement in literature and art that sought to express individual emotional experience and mystical or abstract ideas through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols.

4.2.3.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. The symbolist movement was originated in the late 19th century in -----.
 - a) France
 - b) India
 - c) America
 - d) England

2. The Symbolists were interested in the ----- life of the individual.
 - a) imaginative
 - b) social
 - c) internal
 - d) cultural
3. Charles Baudelaire's -----is an important collection of prose poetry.
 - a) The Voyage
 - b) *Flowers of Evil*
 - c) *Afternoon of a Faun*
 - d) *Little Prose Poems*

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is symbolism?
2. What is the main objective of symbolism?
3. Who provided inspiration for the development of symbolism?

4.2.4 Surrealism

Surrealism was a revolutionary movement in literature and the other fine arts. It was started as a firm and precise artistic movement in France by Andre Breton's *Manifesto on Surrealism* in 1924. This manifesto highlighted the importance of the dream state in art and writing. Andre Breton was explicit in his assertion that surrealism was, above all, a revolutionary movement. He defined surrealism as 'Pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought'. The Surrealists wanted to replace conventional realism with full expression of the unconscious mind, which they considered to be more real than the 'real world of appearances'. The expressed aim of Surrealism was a revolt against all restraints on free creativity, including logical reason, standard morality, social and artistic conventions and norms.

Surrealism developed out of the Dada activities during World War I. The most important center of the movement was Paris. Its founder and chief spokesman, Andre Breton, played an important role in Dada experiments. Dada activists reflected a sense of dissolution and uncertainty of the age. They protested with the anti-art gatherings, performances, writings and art works. However, Surrealism propounded its own coherent antidote to both nihilism and optimism.

The Surrealists believed that excessive rational thought and bourgeois values had brought the conflict of the war upon the world. Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and

Philippe Soupault started the literary journal *Literature* and began experimenting with automatic writing and published their writings, as well as accounts of dreams, in the magazine. Breton and Soupault explored deeper into automatism and wrote *The Magnetic Fields* (1920). They believed that automatism was a better tactic for societal change than the Dada attack on prevailing values. They believed that Surrealism would advocate the idea that ordinary and depictive expressions are vital and important, but that the sense of their arrangement must be open to the full range of imagination.

The Surrealist Movement was influenced by the work and research of Sigmund Freud who founded psychoanalysis. Freud had significant influence on the belief and practices of the Surrealists. Freud's work with free association, dream analysis, and the unconscious was of utmost importance to the Surrealists in developing methods to liberate imagination. They embraced idiosyncrasy, while rejecting the idea of an underlying madness. They wanted to free people from false rationality, and restrictive customs and structures. Breton proclaimed that the true aim of Surrealism was “long live the social revolution”.

The main aim of Surrealism was to change the world, partly through social revolution but more centrally through a revolution in consciousness. It proposed the release of the imagination and stood as an implicit criticism of a restrictive rationalism in society and realism in literature. Though international in scope and influence, Surrealism is more firmly rooted in France. Its major writers and artists tend to be French viz. Breton, Soupault, Eluard, Aragon, Masson, Tanguy, Delvaux and others. Its impact in England came late (1936) and was largely ineffectual. But the United States benefited from the wartime presence of some of the leading European Surrealists, and its literature and art bore the marks of this cultural transfusion. The main characteristics of Surrealism are:

- a) the importance of the dream state in art and writing
- b) A pure psychic automatism
- c) The incorporation of chance and spontaneity
- d) Free expression of the most basic drives: hunger, sexuality, anger, fear, dread, ecstasy, and so forth.

- e) A sense of freedom of expression and hostility towards the horrors of World War I
- f) An artistic attempt to bridge together reality and the imagination.
- g) Surrealism strives to expand the reader's idea of what reality is.

In short, Surrealism used images and metaphors to compel the reader to think deeper and reveal the subconscious meaning. It laid emphasis on the mysterious, marvelous, mythological and irrational in an effort to make art ambiguous and strange. So Surrealism is defined as an artistic attempt to bridge together reality and the imagination.

4.2.4.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Andre Breton's *Manifesto on Surrealism* was published in

a) 1924	b) 1914
c) 1922	d) 1941
2. Surrealism developed out of the ----- activities during World War I.

a) creative	b) mystical
c) Dada	d) social
3. -----had significant influence on the belief and practices of the Surrealists.

a) Jean Moreas	b) Emile Zola
c) Sigmund Freud	d) Stephen Crane

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What, according to Andre Breton, is Surrealism?
2. What was the main objective of Surrealism?
3. Who are the leading practitioners of the Surrealist Movement?

4.3 Summary

Literary movement is a general term for the specific works of literature which share a similar pattern of writing. It simply refers to a period of time in which different authors followed similar patterns of writing or approaches. Usually these authors are considered part of a "movement" because they have similar ideas about a number of things ranging from: style, content, philosophy, sociological concerns, art, culture, etc. while studying these literary works it is necessary to have thorough knowledge of the trends in literary writing. The major literary trends such as Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Surrealism are very useful to analyze and interpret works of literature.

4.4 Terms to Remember

- **upsurge** : expansion
- **fantastic** : unbelievable
- **prejudice** : an unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason
- **outgrowth** : development, consequence
- **Stimuli** : a thing that arouses activity or energy in someone or something
- **to gauge** : estimate or determine the amount or level of something
- **pervasive** : all-encompassing
- **concur** : agree
- **aesthetic** : artistic, concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty
- **subtle** : delicate, fine
- **to endow** : to give
- **Manifesto** : A *manifesto* is a published verbal declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of the issuer, be it an individual, group, political party or government
- **mystery** : something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain
- **quest** : search for something

- **to explore** : to discover
- **Materialism** : a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.
- **Mysticism** : *Mysticism* is a spiritual belief stating that a connection can be obtained with God or the spirits through thought and meditation.
- **obscurantism** : the practice of deliberately preventing the facts or full details of something from becoming known
- **to evoke** : to bring to mind
- **Dada activities:** Dada activities included public gatherings, demonstrations, and publication of art/literary journals
- **dissolution** : the act or process of resolving or dissolving into parts or elements
- **antidote** : remedy
- **nihilism:** the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated
- **idiosyncrasy** : eccentricity, odd behavior

4.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.2.1.1 Realism:

- I.**
1. a) Realism
 2. c) objective reality
 3. b) George Eliot
- II.**
1. The term ‘Realism’ refers to any work that attempts to portray life accurately without romantic idealization.
 2. Balzac and Flaubert
 3. The main reasons for the emergence of realism in literature in the 19th century were the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, and the rapid growth in industrialism and middle-class reading public

4.2.2.1 Naturalism:

- I.
 - 1. c) heredity, and social conditions
 - 2. b) Naturalism
 - 3. d) Frank Norris
- II.
 - 1. Naturalism is a literary movement which attempts to reproduce the details from life without selection
 - 2. Emile Zola and Frank Norris provided inspiration for many of the Naturalist authors to develop the naturalistic trend in literature
 - 3. frankness about sexuality along with a pervasive pessimism.

4.2.3.1 Symbolism:

- I.
 - 1. a) France
 - 2. c) internal
 - 3. b) *Flowers of Evil*
- II.
 - 1. Symbolism is an artistic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind.
 - 2. The main object of symbolism was to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols and symbolized language.
 - 3. Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarme provided inspiration for the development of symbolism.

4.2.4.1 Surrealism:

- I.
 - 1. a) 1924
 - 2. c) Dada
 - 3. c) Sigmund Freud
- II.
 - 1. According to Andre Breton, Surrealism is 'pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought'.

2. The main aim of Surrealism was to change the world, partly through social revolution but more centrally through a revolution in consciousness.
3. Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault

4.6 Exercises

Write short notes on the following:

1. Realism
2. Naturalism
3. Symbolism
4. Surrealism

4.7 Further Reading

Abrams, M. H. (2007) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (8th Edition) New Delhi: Akash Press.

Cuddon, J. A. (2000) *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (4th Edition). London and New York: Penguin.

Gray, Martin. (2009) *A Dictionary of Literary Terms (York Handbooks)*, Pearson Education.



Unit-5

Romantic Criticism

Contents

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter
 - 5.2.1 Fancy and Imagination
 - 5.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 5.2.2 Negative Capability
 - 5.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 5.2.3 The Noble Savage
 - 5.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 5.3 Summary
- 5.4 Terms to Remember
- 5.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 5.6 Exercises
- 5.7 Further Reading

5.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- understand the literary theory and practice of Romantic Criticism.
- understand such concepts as fancy and imagination, negative capability, and the Noble Savage.
- study the basic principles of Romantic criticism.

5.1 Introduction:

Romanticism (also the Romantic era or the Romantic period) was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850. Partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, it was also a revolt against the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature, but had a major impact on historiography, education and the natural sciences.

The movement validated intense emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on such emotions as apprehension, horror and terror, and awe—especially that which is experienced in confronting the sublimity of untamed nature and its picturesque qualities: both new aesthetic categories. It elevated folk art and ancient custom to a noble status, made spontaneity a desirable characteristic and argued for a natural epistemology of human activities.

The major features of Romanticism are - free play of emotions and passions, proximity to the everyday life of common man, inspiration sought from country life and nature, primarily subjective. It turned to Medieval Age for inspiration.

English literary criticism of the Romantic era is most closely associated with the writings of William Wordsworth (his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (his *Biographia Literaria* (1817)). Modern critics disagree on whether the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge constituted a major break with the criticism of their predecessors or if it should more properly be characterized as a continuation of the aesthetic theories of seventeenth-and eighteenth-century German and English writers.

Romantic Criticism considers a literary work primarily in relation to its author. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth declared that good poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” of the author. Poetry was seen as a product of the poet’s imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Wordsworth described his poetry as “emotion recollected in tranquility” and specified that a poet’s spontaneity is the result of a prior process of deep reflection and may be followed by second thoughts and revisions. But the immediate act of composition, if a poem is to be genuine, must be spontaneous—that is, unforced, and

free of what Wordsworth decried as the “artificial” rules and conventions. “If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree,” John Keats wrote, “it has better not come at all.” S. T. Coleridge substituted for neo-classical “rules” which he describes as imposed by the poet from without, concept of the inherent organic “laws” of the poet’s imagination; that is, he conceives that each poetic work, like a growing plant, evolves according to its internal principles into its final organic form.

Romantic Criticism made an attempt to judge the work by its sincerity or its adequacy to the poet’s individual vision or state of mind. It was often a study of the particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously, revealed himself in it.

5.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter: -

5.2.1 Fancy and Imagination: -

During the 17th century the term “Imagination” and “Fancy” had often enough been used in vaguely synonymous way to refer to the realm of fairy tale or make-believe. Yet here and there (as in the opening of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*) the term “Imagination ” had tended to distinguish itself from “fancy” and settle toward a meaning centered in the sober literalism of sense impressions and the survival of these in memory.

The relative dignity of the two terms “Imagination” and “Fancy” was well established in English usage by the end of 18th century. It was almost inevitable that the superior *term* should be “Imagination”

Wordsworth made the distinction between imagination (“Impressive effects out of simple elements”) and fancy (“Pleasure and surprise ... excited by sudden varieties of situation and accumulated imagery”) in the note to “The Thorn” in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. In the *Preface to the Poems* of 1815, Wordsworth breaks out in an excited correction of William Taylor’s *British Synonyms Discriminated*, 1813. Wordsworth distinguished two modes of imaging, both inventive. The difference was that one was frolicsome, and inferior, the other was totally serious, and superior. It was this concession to fancy, though it was only identical to Wordsworth’s aim of elevating the imagination, which became a point of grievance with Coleridge. In Chapter XII of his *Biographia*, he comes down on Wordsworth’s venture with a heavy hand.

The *Biographia Literaria* was one of Coleridge's main critical studies. In this work, he discussed the elements of writing and what writing should be to be considered genius. Although the work is not written from Coleridge's poetic mind, it is still written with the qualities and rhythm of the poetic. He discusses not only the literature but many variables that influence and inspire writers. Through the discussion, he makes many value judgments, leaving his audience with a clear understanding of his stance on certain issues. He tackles the issues like politics, religion, social values, and human identity. His treatment of these issues tends to be conservative in its foundation, yet also blatant and original. He does not cater to one certain audience: rather he expresses his own thoughts from a personal viewpoint. Coleridge delivers the *Biographia Literaria* without a seconds thought of whether or not there will be any disagreement from his audience.

Rejecting the empiricist assumption that the mind was a tabula rasa on which external experiences and sense impressions were imprinted, stored, recalled, and combined through a process of association, Coleridge divided the "mind" into two distinct faculties. He labeled these the "Imagination" and "Fancy".

He writes:

The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

“Fancy”, in Coleridge's eyes was employed for tasks that were “passive” and “mechanical”, the accumulation of fact and documentation of what is seen. “Always the ape”, Fancy, Coleridge argued, was “too often the adulterator and counterfeiter of memory”. The Imagination on the other hand was “vital” and transformative, “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation”. For Coleridge, it was the Imagination that was responsible for acts that were truly creative and inventive and, in turn, that identified true instances of fine or noble art.

- **The distinction between Fancy and Imagination: -**

The distinction made by Coleridge between Fancy and the Imagination rested on the fact that Fancy was concerned with the mechanical operations of the mind, those which are responsible for the passive accumulation of data and the storage of such data in the memory. Imagination, on the other hand, described the “mysterious power”, which extracted from such data, “hidden ideas and meaning”. It also determined “the various operations of constructive and inventive genius”.

Coleridge’s division of the imagination into the “primary” and “secondary” draws a distinction between creative acts that are unconscious and those that are intentional and deliberate. “The Primary Imagination” was for Coleridge, the “necessary imagination”. It automatically balances and fuses the innate capacities and powers of the mind with the external presence of the objective world that the mind receives through the senses. It represents man’s ability to learn from nature. The overarching property of the primary imagination was that it was common to all people.

The Secondary imagination, on the other hand, represents a superior faculty which could only be associated with artistic genius. It was this aspect of the imagination, which Coleridge associated with art and poetry. A key and defining attribute of the secondary imagination was a free and deliberate will; “superior voluntary control ... co-existing with the conscious will”. The secondary imagination, once activated by the will, “dissolves, dissipates in order to recreate”.

- **Significance of the Imagination: -**

The significance of the Imagination for Coleridge was that it represented the sole faculty within man that was able to achieve the romantic ambition of reuniting the subject and the object; the world of the self and the world of nature. By establishing the creative act as mimicking a divine principle believed to underlie all

reality - the romantic theorist sought to establish a harmonious relationship between the ideal world of the subject and the real world of the object. Coleridge was convinced that the Imagination acted as “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM”, and that it not only reinforced the notion that perception was active and creative, it established the cosmos as an organic entity.

For Coleridge, the most important aspect of the imagination was that it was active to the highest degree. The creative act called the whole soul of man into activity. The creative act is a godlike-act-of-power and causing-to-be, imagination being the divine potency in man. The creative act by which the poet writes the poem is similar to the creative act by which God ordered the world out of chaos.

- **Coleridge's Theory of the Imagination: -**

- **“Imagination” as “ESEMPLASTIC: -**

Coleridge explained this property of the “Imagination” as “ESEMPLASTIC”, to “shape into one” and to “convey a new sense”. Coleridge in the tenth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* described this ability of the imagination as “Esemplastic”. He borrowed this word from the Greek “to shape”.

Coleridge explained that it referred to the imagination’s ability to shape into one, having to convey a new sense. He felt such a term was necessary as “it would aid the recollection of my meaning and prevent it being confounded with the usual import of the word imagination”. *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, p. 86

“A poet takes images and words and feelings from a number of realms of human endeavor and thought and brings them all together into a poem that he or she writes. This requires a huge effort of the imagination, which we might call the “esemplastic power of the poetic imagination”.

Coleridge argued that the poet relied on both Fancy and Imagination when inventing a poem; he should seek a balance of these two faculties. The “active” and “transformative” powers of the Imagination negated the contribution of, and representation of Fancy. In Coleridge's system, the Imagination is ultimately the only faculty which contributed to the creative process.

In Chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge writes:

“The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary”.

According to Coleridge, Imagination has two forms - primary and secondary. Primary imagination is merely the power of receiving impressions of the external world through the senses, the power of perceiving the objects of sense, both in their parts and as a whole. It is a spontaneous act of the mind. The human mind receives impressions and sensations from the outside world, unconsciously and involuntarily, impose some sort of order on those impressions, so that the mind is able to form a clear image of the outside world. In this way clear and coherent perception becomes possible.

The primary imagination is universal, it is possessed by all. The secondary imagination may be possessed by others also, but it is the peculiar and typical trait of the artist. It is the secondary imagination which makes artistic creation possible.

The secondary imagination is more active and conscious. It requires an effort of the will, volition and conscious effort. It works upon its raw material that are the sensations and impressions supplied to it by the primary imagination. By an effort of the will and the intellect, the secondary imagination selects and orders the raw material and re-shapes and re-models it into objects of beauty. It is 'esemplastic', i.e. "a shaping and modifying power". It re-shapes objects of the external world and steeps them with a glory and dream that never was on sea and land. It is an active agent which, "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to create".

The secondary imagination is at the root of all poetic activity. It is the power which harmonizes and reconciles opposites. Coleridge calls it a magical, synthetic power. This unifying power is best seen in the fact that it synthesizes or fuses the various faculties of the soul for example, perception, intellect, will, emotion, etc. and fuses the internal with the external, the subjective with the objective, the human mind with external nature, the spiritual with the physical. Through this unifying power nature is colored by the soul of the poet, and the soul of the poet is steeped in nature. 'The identity' which the poet discovers in man and nature results from the synthesizing activity of the secondary imagination.

The primary and secondary imaginations do not differ from each other in kind. The difference between them is one of degree. The secondary imagination is more active, more a result of volition, more conscious and more voluntary than the primary one. *The primary imagination is universal while the secondary is a peculiar privilege enjoyed by the artist.*

Imagination and fancy, however, differs in kind. *Fancy is not a creative power at all.* It only combines what is perceived into beautiful shapes, but it does not fuse and unify.

The difference between imagination and fancy is the same as the difference between a mechanical mixture and a chemical compound. In a mechanical mixture a number of ingredients are brought together. They are mixed up, but they do not lose their individual properties. In a chemical compound, the different ingredients combine to form something new. The different ingredients no longer exist as separate identities. They lose their respective properties and fuse together to create something new and entirely different. A compound is an act of creation. A mixture is merely a bringing together of a number of separate elements. (*Fancy is a mechanical mixture and imagination, a chemical compound.*)

Thus *imagination creates new shapes and forms of beauty* by fusing and unifying the different impressions it receives from the external world. *Fancy is not creative. It is a kind of memory.* It randomly brings together images, and even when brought together, they continue to retain their separate and individual properties. They receive no coloring or modification from the mind. *It is merely mechanical juxtaposition and not a chemical fusion.* Coleridge explains the point by quoting two passages from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. The following lines from this poem serve to illustrate Fancy:

Full gently now she takes him by the hand.

A lily prisoned in a gaol of snow

Or ivory in an alabaster band

So white a friend engirds so white a foe.

In these line images are drawn from memory, but they do not interpenetrate into one another. The following lines from the same poem illustrate the power and function of Imagination:

Look! How a bright star shooteth from the sky

So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.

For Coleridge, *Fancy is the drapery of poetic genius and imagination is its very soul which forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.*

Coleridge owed his interest in the study of imagination to Wordsworth. But Wordsworth was interested only in the practice of poetry and he considered only the impact of imagination on poetry but Coleridge is interested in the theory of imagination. He is the first critic to study the nature of imagination and examine its role in creative activity. Secondly, Wordsworth uses Fancy and Imagination almost as synonyms, but Coleridge is the first critic to distinguish between them and define their respective roles. Thirdly, Wordsworth does not distinguish between primary and secondary imagination. But Coleridge's treatment of the subject is characterized by greater depth, penetration and philosophical subtlety. It is his unique contribution to literary theory.

Coleridge argues that fancy and imagination are actually two separate entities. They are not one or synonymous in meaning.

5.2.1.1 Check Your Progress: -

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Romanticism was _____ movement.
a) an artistic and literary c) a political
b) a social d) a technical
2. Romanticism was originated in _____ towards the end of the 18th century.
a) Ancient Greece c) France
b) Europe d) Asia
3. An early attempt of Wordsworth to discriminate between Imagination and Fancy appears in _____ .
a) the note to "the Thorn" in *Lyrical Ballads*.
b) the note to "The Lucy Poems".
c) *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*.
d) *Biographia Literaria*.

4. _____ was one of the Coleridge's main Critical studies.
a) *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* b) *The Poetics*
c) *The Biographia Literaria* d) *The Dialogues*
5. According to Coleridge 'Imagination' was _____ .
a) vital and transformative
b) passive and mechanical
c) the accumulation of fact and documentation of what is seen
d) merely technical and scientific.
6. The "primary imagination" is _____ .
a) related with only the intellectual persons.
b) common to all people
c) the property only of the poets.
d) common to only the Romantic poets.
7. The "Secondary Imagination" is _____ .
a) universal
b) the peculiar and typical trait of the artist.
c) passive
d) common to all people.
8. Fancy is _____ .
a) not creative c) creative
b) social d) a chemical fusion.
9. Imagination is _____ .
a) a chemical fusion b) a mixture
c) a mechanical juxtaposition d) only a kind of memory.
10. For Coleridge, Fancy is _____ .
a) the soul of the poetic creation

- b) the drapery of poetic genius
- c) synonymous to imagination
- d) a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation

B) Answer the following questions in one word / phrase / sentence:

- 1) What, according to Coleridge, is “primary” imagination?
- 2) What, according to Coleridge, is “secondary” imagination?
- 3) What is meant by ‘imagination is esemplastic’?
- 4) What is the difference between primary and secondary imagination?
- 5) What does Coleridge argue about fancy and imagination?

5.2.2 Negative Capability:

John Keats, one of the English Romantic poets of the 19th century, introduced the term ‘negative capability’ to define a literary quality “which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean *Negative Capability*, that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” Keats contrasted this quality with the writing of Coleridge, who “would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude ... from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge,” and went on to express the general principle “that with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.” (M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham: *A Handbook of Literary Terms*; Cengage Learning: 2009, p.183)

The elusive term has entered critical circulation and has accumulated a large body of commentary. When conjoined with observations in other letters by Keats, “negative capability” can be taken (1) to characterize an impersonal, or objective, author who maintains *aesthetic distance*, as opposed to a subjective author who is personally involved with the characters and actions represented in a work of literature, and as opposed also to an author who uses a literary work to present and make persuasive his or her personal beliefs; and (2) to suggest that, when embodied in a beautiful artistic form, the literary subject matter, concepts, and characters are not subject to the ordinary standards of evidence, truth, and morality, as we apply these standards in the course of our practical experience. (Abrams, M. H: *A glossary of Literary Terms*, Seventh Edition: p.174)

John Keats suggested in a letter written in December 1817 that a great thinker is “capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason”. A poet, then, has the power to bury self-consciousness, dwell in a state of openness to all experience, and identify with the object contemplated. The inspirational power of beauty, according to Keats, is more important than the quest for objective fact; as he writes in his “Ode on a Grecian Urn,”

“‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’ - that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

It can sometimes be hard to understand how someone can ‘know’ something through emotion. In our society the word ‘know’ is so strongly associated with the words reason, rationality and logic that it is hard to imagine being able to know something in any other way. Sure, we can know things through language and through perception, but those are basically just two different kinds of input - in the end it’s our reason working on what we perceive or what is communicated to us through language that makes us know something.

Indeed, from a typically Western atheistic-scientific perspective, emotion and faith are actually often dismissed as ‘ways of knowing’ and are perhaps more often thought of as ‘ways of believing’ or better still, ways of coming to a belief.

However, this way of thinking does not have to be the case and, throughout history, there have been examples of people who have tried to downplay the importance of reason and emphasize how important emotion is in really knowing something, in really coming to the truth. Keats believed this and, although this is a bit of a simplification, he called direct, non-rational, emotional access to the truth ‘Negative Capability’.

Negative Capability is complex, but essentially Keats means that he wants his consciousness to become at one with the universe/nature - a bit like when people try to connect with God or become enlightened through prayer, spirituality or meditation. In this state of direct contact between his soul or mind and the rest of the world Keats will appreciate immediately and directly, (without the need to think about it, without the need for reason) the truths of the universe.

Some people try to achieve this direct contact with the truth, this oneness with the universe, by experimenting with mind altering drugs (Aldous Huxley, for

example, took mescaline so that he could see the truth more clearly and wrote a book called 'The Doors of Perception' about his experience) but for Keats, the main way of becoming at one with nature is through poetic experience. In his odes, the beauty of the song of the nightingale or the beauty of Autumn are a powerful enough emotional experience to transport the imagination into direct contact with the truth and this is Negative Capability. For Keats, the ultimate truth is the beauty of intense experience and this can only be an emotional experience, not a rational one. The moment you begin to dissect something rationally, the moment you start to think about things, you lose that sense of direct contact and you lose your grip on the truth.

Think about how you go through your life being you. Because you are who you are and that person is separate from the rest of the world there will always be a gap between the world as it really is and what is going on inside your head. Sure, you can bridge that gap by using your senses to perceive the world, by using language to learn about it from others or by using reason to think about it ... but nonetheless that gap is always there and still needs to be bridged, in Keats' own words we spend our lives 'grasping after facts'. And that creates a problem: what if the stuff on one side of the bridge (the stuff in your head) doesn't match up with the stuff on the other side of the bridge (the stuff in the real world)? This problem will always exist when there is a gap between you and the world although there have been many attempts to prove that it doesn't.

Keats' solution to the problem then, although he wasn't really a philosopher considering this as a problem, is that negative capability does away with the gap and the bridge altogether. *Negative capability allows you to jump directly over the gap, to do away with the bridge and to hurl yourself (through the power of your emotional experiences) directly into the heart of the world as it really is.* In a sense Keats didn't want to think about what love was or what music meant, he didn't want to have to interpret these things because that would let the gap back in and allow the possibility of error. Instead he wanted to be love or to be music. When you are the thing you want to know about, there is no possibility of making a mistake. In essence Descartes, one of the earliest modern philosophers who was also worried about the gap between us and the world, tried a similar trick, only he called these moments of oneness 'clear and distinct perceptions', perceptions so obviously true that they carry you along with the emotional force of their certainty.

Though this sounds nice, there is a problem. Even if negative capability or this sense of oneness is possible (and many Buddhists might believe that it is) it is only ever something that you can experience for yourself. Any attempt to communicate the truths you have found out would have to be made using reason and using language and would thus lose the power of the direct emotional experience. As such, *if negative capability can provide us with an emotional way of reaching the truth, the truth that it provides us with is one that we can never share with other people ... and part of the whole point of the truth, is that it is something that we can all have in common.*

Keats was attempting to evoke that emotional sense of oneness within his readers, to capture that sense of emotional intensity so that they could experience their own truths, because he couldn't explain to them directly the truths that he perceived through negative capability.

5.2.2.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. The poet, _____ first introduced the term Negative Capability.
 - a) William Wordsworth
 - b) S. T. Coleridge
 - c) P. B. Shelley
 - d) John Keats
2. Negative Capability is _____.
 - a) simple
 - b) complex
 - c) a creative
 - d) an imagination
3. Negative Capability can provide us with _____.
 - a) an emotional way of reaching truth
 - b) a way to understand poetry
 - c) a way to distinguish the gap between us and the world
 - d) a way to go away from the truth.
4. The inspirational power of beauty, according to Keats, is _____.
 - a) more important than the quest for objective fact.
 - b) not important to understand the truth.

- c) always as important as the quest for objective fact.
- d) none of the above.

B) Answer the following questions in one word / phrase / sentence:

1. What, according to Keats, is more important than the quest for objective fact?
2. What does the poet bury?
3. What does the Negative Capability do?
4. What kind of power does the poet have?

5.2.3 The Noble Savage

The Noble Savage is ‘(in romanticism) an idealized view of primitive man’ (Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. © Harper Collins Publishers). It is primitive human as characterized in literature, representing natural goodness and simplicity when not encumbered by civilization.

A Noble Savage is a representative of primitive humankind as idealized in Romantic literature, symbolizing the innate goodness of humanity when free from the corrupting influence of civilization.

Ethnomusicologist Ter Ellingson believes that Dryden had picked up the expression “Noble Savage” from a 1609 travelogue about Canada by the French explorer Marc Lescarbot, in which there was a chapter with the ironic heading: “The Savages are Truly Noble”, meaning simply that they enjoyed the right to hunt game, a privilege in France granted only to hereditary aristocrats. It is not known if Lescarbot was aware of Montaigne’s stigmatization of the aristocratic pastime of hunting; though some authors believe he was familiar with Montaigne. Lescarbot’s familiarity with Montaigne is discussed by Ter Ellingson in *The Myth of the Noble Savage*.

The idea of the Noble Savage, according to critic Hoxie N. Fairchild, resulted from “the fusion of three elements:

- 1) the observation of explorers;
- 2) various classical and medieval conventions; and
- 3) the deductions of philosophers and men of letters.”

While scholars debate as to whether Jean-Jacques Rousseau was truly the creator of the literary tradition of the Noble Savage, the concept dates all the way back to the classical period. The overriding literary image of the Noble Savage throughout history is one of a figure who is uncorrupted by civilization and possesses a kind of innocence that has been lost by civilized cultures.

Noble Savage, in literature, is an idealized concept of an uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. The glorification of the Noble Savage is a dominant theme in the Romantic writings of the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The concept of the Noble Savage can be traced to ancient Greece, where Homer, Pliny, and Xenophon idealized the Arcadians and other primitive groups, both real and imagined. Later Roman writers such as Horace, Virgil, and Ovid gave comparable treatment to the Scythians. From the 15th to the 19th centuries, the Noble Savage figured prominently in popular travel accounts and appeared occasionally in English plays such as John Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* (1672), in which the term Noble Savage was first used, and in *Oroonoko* (1696) by Thomas Southern, based on Aphra Behn's novel about a dignified African prince enslaved in the British colony of Surinam. François-René de Chateaubriand sentimentalized the North American Indian.

From the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, the concept of the Noble Savage became a popular element in literature. Columbus wrote of a people who were generous, gentle, had physical beauty, and had minds open to being trained. Voyagers and travel writers for over two centuries proclaimed the "natural goodness of the savages of America and the islands of the South Seas." Many of these travel writers commented on the natural virtues possessed by these Noble Savages, and based on what they observed, raised doubts as to the value of civilization. Many scholars credit Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the primary figure in the history of the Noble Savage concept. According to Rousseau, "the Noble Savage is an individual living in a 'pure state of nature'—gentle, wise, uncorrupted by the vices of civilization." Although the idea of the Noble Savage existed long before Rousseau, he is generally credited with formalizing the concept.

Commentary on the idea of the Noble Savage in literature has covered a wide range of topics and perspectives. As to the origin of the concept, Ter Ellingson claims that there are still unanswered questions, and concluded “that Rousseau's invention of the Noble Savage myth is itself a myth.” Stelio Cro argues that Rosseau loved the idea of the Noble Savage because he saw him as a figure of freedom: “physical freedom as opposed to slavery and tyranny, moral freedom as opposed to religious discrimination or superstition.” According to critic Hoxie N. Fairchild, the Noble Savage is really a creation of philosophers who read into explorers' narratives a concept that would support their disillusionment with civilized society. In examining travel writers, Lewis Saum argues that fur-trade literature shows a concern on the part of the fur traders that the Noble Savage was being corrupted by the encroaching civilization. Terry Jay Ellingson disagrees, claiming that many travel writings depict natives in a very negative light and that these works should be “taken into account if only for the sake of balance, to counteract the tendency built up over a century and a half of unquestioning acceptance of the myth of the Noble Savage.”

Roy Pearce argues that the Noble Savage was a literary invention used for the purpose of creating a history and a culture in America, but one “in which the idea of savagism ... compromised the idea of the Noble Savage and then absorbed and reconstituted it.” Hence, he argues, in the ideology and belief reflected in the literature of the time, natives transformed and became what Americans needed as the country grew. Ironically, the depiction in literature of the Amerindians as Noble Savages was indeed a myth, according to critic Olive Patricia Dickason, who claims that they were “far from being uninformed savages in the ‘infancy of nature,’ but were the products of cultures that had evolved over many centuries.”

5.2.3.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. A Noble Savage is _____.
 - a) a representative of primitive humankind.
 - b) a representative of modern mankind.
 - c) a representative of poets.
 - d) a representative of Greek philosophers.

2. _____ was truly the creator of the literary tradition of Noble Savage.
 - a) John Keats
 - b) Jean-Jacques Rousseau
 - c) Ter Ellingson
 - d) William Wordsworth
3. _____ is a dominant theme in the Romantic Writings of the 18th and 19th centuries.
 - a) The urban life
 - b) The problems of the urban people
 - c) The factual presentation of the savages
 - d) The glorification of the Noble Savage
4. Rousseau loved the idea of the Noble Savage because _____.
 - a) he saw him as a figure of freedom.
 - b) he saw him as a figure of love.
 - c) he saw him as a figure of true philosopher.
 - d) he saw him as a figure of true friend.

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. What is Noble Savage?
2. Who had picked up the expression “Noble Savage” from a 1609 travelogue about Canada?
3. What is Noble Savage in literature?
4. What does Roy Pearce say about the Noble Savage?
5. Why did Rousseau love the idea of Noble Savage?

5.3 Summary

During the 17th century the term “Imagination” and “Fancy” had often enough been used in vaguely synonymous way to refer to the realm of fairy tale or make-believe. Coleridge differentiated fancy from imagination. “Fancy”, in Coleridge's eyes was employed for tasks that were “passive” and “mechanical”, the accumulation of fact and documentation of what is seen. The Imagination on the other hand was “vital” and transformative, “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of

creation”. Coleridge divided imagination into the “primary” and “secondary” imagination. He says that the primary imagination is universal, it is possessed by all. The secondary imagination may be possessed by others also, but it is the peculiar and typical trait of the artist. It is the secondary imagination which makes artistic creation possible.

The poet John Keats introduced the term Negative Capability in a letter written in December 1817. It can be taken to characterize an impersonal or objective author; to suggest that, when embodied in a beautiful artistic form, the literary subject matter, concepts, and characters are not subject to the ordinary standards of evidence, truth, and morality, as we apply these standards in the course of our practical experience. Negative Capability is complex, but essentially Keats means that he wants his consciousness to become at one with the universe / nature - a bit like when people try to connect with God or become enlightened through prayer, spirituality or meditation. In this state of direct contact between his soul or mind and the rest of the world Keats will appreciate immediately and directly the truths of the universe. The negative capability can provide us with an emotional way of reaching the truth.

Noble Savage, in literature, an idealized concept of uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. The glorification of the Noble Savage is a dominant theme in the Romantic writings of the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

5.4 Terms to Remember: -

- **Romanticism:** a style and movement in art, music and literature in the late 18th and early 19th century, in which strong feelings, imagination and a return to nature were more important than reason, order and intellectual ideas
- **Industrial Revolution:** the period in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and the US when machines began to be used to do work and industry grew rapidly
- **esemplastic:** shaping into one and conveying a new sense
- **verisimilitude:** the quality of seeming to be true or real

- **obliterate**: to remove all signs of something, either by destroying or converting it completely
- **contemplate**: to think about whether you should do something or how you should do something
- **primitive**: belonging to a very simple society with no industry, belonging to an early stage in the development of humans
- **slavery**: the state of being a slave, the practice of having slaves
- **tyranny**: unfair or cruel use of power or authority
- **civilization**: a state of human society that is very developed and organized, a society, its culture and its way of life during a particular period of time or in a particular part of the world

5.5 Answers to Check Your Progress: -

5.2.1.1

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. a 2. b. 3. a. 4. c 5. a 6. b
 7. b. 8. a. 9. a. 10. b. 11. c

B) Answer the following questions in one word / phrase / sentence:

- 1) It is universal and possessed by all. It is merely the power of receiving impressions of the external world through the senses.
- 2) It is the peculiar and typical trait of the artist. It makes artistic creation possible.
- 3) It means to shape into one and to convey a new sense.
- 4) Primary imagination is universal and the secondary imagination is the peculiar and typical trait of the artist; it makes artistic creation possible.
- 5) Fancy is the drapery of poetic genius and imagination is its soul.

5.2.2.1

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. d.
2. b.
3. a.
4. a.

B) Answer the following questions in one word / phrase / sentence:

1. the inspirational power
2. self-consciousness
3. It allows you to jump directly over the gap, to do away with the bridge and to hurl yourself directly into the heart of the world as it really is.
4. The poet has power to remain in a state of openness to all experiences, and identify with the object contemplated.

5.2.3.1

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. a.
2. b.
3. d.
4. a.

B) Answer the following questions in one word / phrase / sentence:

1. an idealized view of primitive man.
2. Dryden
3. an idealized concept of uncivilized man, who symbolize the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influence of civilization
4. The Noble Savage was a literary invention used for the purpose of creating a history and a culture in America.
5. because he saw him as a figure of freedom.

5.6 Exercises:

1. Illustrate the theory of Imagination of S. T. Coleridge.
2. What is the difference between Fancy and Imagination?
3. How does Coleridge differ from Wordsworth about the theory of imagination?

4. Describe Keats theory of Negative Capability.
5. What is Noble Savage? How is it related with literature?

5.7 Further Reading:

Wimsatt, W. K. and Cleanth Brooks. *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 1957.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (8th Edition) New Delhi: Akash Press, 2007.

Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (4th Edition). London and New York: Penguin, 2000.

Gray, Martin. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms (York Handbooks)*, Pearson Education, 2009.



Unit-6

New Criticism

Contents

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter
 - 6.2.1 Dissociation of Sensibility
 - 6.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 6.2.2 Objective Correlative
 - 6.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 6.2.3 Paradox
 - 6.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 6.3 Summary
- 6.4 Terms to Remember
- 6.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 6.6 Exercises
- 6.7 Further Reading

6.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- understand the literary theory and practice of the formalist movement.
- understand such concepts as dissociation of sensibility, objective correlative and paradox.
- study the basic principles of New criticism.

6.1 Introduction

New criticism dominated American literary criticism during the twentieth century. The movement was strongly influenced by I. A. Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929), and the critical essays of T. S. Eliot. It was strongly against the study of the biographies of authors, the social context of literature and literary history. New criticism insisted that literary criticism should not deal with the external circumstances or effects of a work, but with a detailed consideration of the work itself. Such textbooks as *Understanding Poetry* (1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1943) written by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren introduced New Criticism in American, and later Indian, colleges and high schools. Other important New Critics are Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, and William K. Wimsatt. F. R. Leavis, an English critic, too, insisted on the detailed analysis of individual works.

For Eliot, a poem should be treated “primarily as poetry and not another thing.” The New Critics regard the poem as an independent and self-sufficient verbal object. In analyzing and evaluating a particular work, they eschew reference to: 1) the biography of the author, 2) the social conditions at the time of its production, 3) its psychological and moral effects on the reader, and 4) literary history.

The New Critics used the procedure of ‘close reading’: the detailed and subtle analysis of the complex interrelations and ambiguities (multiple meanings) of the components within a work. You may refer to such books as I.A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* and William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930).

The New Critics believed that the language of literature differs from the language of science and of logical discourse. The language of literature is characterized by figures of speech, and symbols. The business of a critic is to analyze the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech, and symbols.

The New Critics held that in literature, words, images, and symbols are organized around a central theme and these elements manifest “tension,” “irony,” and “paradox” in achieving a “reconciliation of diverse impulses” or an “equilibrium of opposed forces.”

In this unit, we are going to concentrate on such concepts as “dissociation of sensibility,” “objective correlative,” and “paradox.”

6.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter

6.2.1 Dissociation of Sensibility

Dissociation of sensibility is a literary term first used by T. S. Eliot in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets". It refers to the way in which intellectual thought was separated from the experience of feeling in the seventeenth century poetry.

Eliot used the term to describe the manner by which the nature and substance of English poetry changed "between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning." In the essay, Eliot attempts to define the metaphysical poet and in doing so to determine the metaphysical poet's era as well as his discernible qualities.

Eliot's theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' may be said to be an attempt to find some kind of historical explanation to the dissolution of the tradition of unified sensibility which found its perfection in the writings of Dante and Shakespeare. The unified sensibility was a sensibility which was the product of a true synthesis of the individual with the traditional, of feeling with thought and of the temporal with the eternal.

For Eliot, as with Coleridge, poetry is a union of opposites but whereas Coleridge explains that this reconciliation of opposites is brought about by the synthetic power of the secondary imagination, Eliot replaces the words 'secondary imagination' by the words 'unified sensibility' to express the operation of the poet's mind. Eliot assigns primacy to the poetic sensibility which for him is the basis for writing poetry.

By 'sensibility' Eliot does not merely mean feeling or the capacity to receive sense impression. He means much more than that. By 'sensibility' he means a synthetic faculty, a faculty which can amalgamate and unite thought and feeling, which can fuse into a single whole the varied and disparate, often opposite and contradictory experiences, the sensuous and the intellectual.

The great Elizabethans and early Jacobean had developed a unified sensibility. That is why they were widely read, and their thinking and learning modified their mode of feeling. Such a fusion of thought and feeling is to be found in the poetry of Donne as well as in much of modern poetry, but it is lacking in the poetry of Tennyson. The fact is that after Donne and Herbert a change came over the mind of

England. The poets lost the capacity of unifying thought and feeling. The 'unification of sensibility' was lost, and a 'dissociation of sensibility' set in. After that the poet can either think or feel; there are either intellectual poets who can only think, or there are poets who can only feel. The poets of the 18th century were intellectuals, they thought but did not feel; the romantics of the 19th century felt but did not think. Tennyson and Browning can merely reflect or ruminate but cannot express their experience poetically.

Eliot writes: "Tennyson and Browning are poets and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odor of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating desperate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes." ("The Metaphysical Poets").

The Metaphysical poets like the Elizabethans had a unified sensibility. They were the successors of the Elizabethan dramatists. Like them, the Metaphysicals, too, could be simple, artificial, difficult or fantastic. Then came Milton and Dryden and their influence was most unhealthy, because as a result of their influence there set in a 'dissociation of sensibility' from which English poetry has recovered only in the modern age. Both Milton and Dryden were great poets and they rendered important service to the cause of poetry. Under their influence, the English language became more pure and refined. But at the same time, the feeling became more crude. It is for this reason that the feeling expressed in Gray's "Country Churchyard" is cruder and less satisfying than the feeling expressed in Marvell's "Coy Mistress".

Although the theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' cannot claim to be an original concept, its importance is beyond question, and its influence has been abiding for it was Eliot who for the first time found a convincing expression and idiom to the widespread belief of a split in the personality not only of the artist but also in modern men and women.

The doctrine, like all his other critical concepts, has its own limitations and also its proper field of application. Although the theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' is generally applicable to metaphysical poetry, it is not true of all the poems of the

metaphysical poets. Mr. Leishman, for example, in *The Monarch of Wit* says that the concept of the 'dissociation of sensibility' cannot be applied to all the poems of John Donne. Eliot himself, as Leishman goes on to explain, discovered 'a fissure of thought and sensibility' in John Donne which means that "in the terminology of 1921, Donne's sensibility was dissociated. Similarly it has been pointed out by a large number of critics that although the doctrine of the 'dissociation of sensibility' can be justified with reference to some of the poems of the metaphysical poets, it has been unduly extended to the Elizabethan dramatists.

The second criticism that is commonly leveled against Eliot's appraisal of the metaphysical poets is that although the metaphysical poets received high praise from Eliot, in actual practice his creative and critical work has very little of metaphysical quality. In his poems such as "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men" and *Four Quartets*, the metaphysical quality of his earlier verse seems to have almost disappeared. Mr. Duncan in *The Revival of Metaphysical Poets* even doubts the metaphysical quality of his earlier verse.

But in spite of all these criticisms, Eliot's theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' is undoubtedly one of his most significant contributions to critical analysis, for it exerted a tremendous influence over the creative and critical talents of his contemporaries so that the poets became conscious of the traditions of the unified sensibility.

6.2.1.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

- 1) New Criticism is specially.....movement.
a) classical b) romantic c) American d) modern
- 2) 'Dissociation of sensibility' is a literary term first used by
a) Wordsworth b) Milton c) T.S. Eliot d) Johnson
- 3) According to T.S. Eliot, 'sensibility' meansfaculty.
a) creative b) synthetic c) ideal d) scholar
- 4) According to Eliot, the common man's experience is

- a) chaotic b) simple c) nervous d) disturbed

5) According to Eliot, the intellectual poets can only

- a) think b) write c) imagine d) narrate

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

- 1) What is the name of the essay in which Eliot first used the term 'dissociation of sensibility'?
- 2) Name the word which Eliot replaced for the words 'unified sensibility'.
- 3) What is meant by sensibility?
- 4) How does Eliot describe the experience of the common man?
- 5) What type of sensibility did the metaphysical poets have?

6.2.2 Objective Correlative:

Washington Allston, the American Painter, first used the term "objective correlative" about 1840, but T. S. Eliot made it famous by making use of it in an influential essay "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919). Eliot writes: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, 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." If writers or poets or playwrights want to create an emotional reaction in the audience, they must find a combination of images, objects, or description evoking the appropriate emotion. The source of the emotional reaction isn't in one particular object, one particular image, or one particular word. In the concept of the 'objective correlative', Eliot's doctrine of poetic impersonality finds its most classic formulation.

According to Eliot, the poet cannot communicate his emotions directly to the readers; he has to find some object suggestive of it and only then he can evoke the same emotion in his readers. It is through the objective correlative that the transaction between author and reader necessarily takes place. For this object is the primary source of, and warrant for, the reader's response whatever that may be; and it is also the primary basis for whatever inferences we may draw about what it is that the "author wanted to say." Briefly speaking, what Eliot means by his doctrine of the objective correlative is that a great work of art is nothing but a set of conceptual

symbols or correlatives which endeavor to express the emotions of the poet, and these symbols constitute the total vision of the creative artist.

For example, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare has to convey the mental agony of Lady Macbeth. He does so in "the sleep-walking scene", not through description, but through an unconscious repetition of her past actions. Her mental agony has been made objective, so that it can as well be seen by the eyes as felt by the heart. The external situation is adequate to convey the emotions, the agony of Lady Macbeth. Instead of communicating the emotions directly to the reader, the dramatist has embodied them in a situation or a chain of events, which suitably communicate the emotion to the reader. Similarly, the dramatist could devise in *Othello* a situation which is a suitable objective correlative, for the emotion of the hero. *Hamlet* is an artistic failure for here the external situation does not suitably embody the effect of a mother's guilt on her son. The disgust of Hamlet is in excess of the facts as presented in the drama.

It becomes apparent that it is neither the intensity of the emotion nor the greatness of its components that determines the poetic quality of a poem but what matters is the intensity of the fusion, and one of the ways in which the poet achieves this intensity is through the embodiment of an emotion in a concrete object. That is why Matthiessen interprets the term 'objective correlative' to mean a situation or image which represents the poet's emotion. Furthermore, the theory of the 'objective correlative' is thus based on the assumption that every poem cannot only be broken into its correlatives but the correlatives can be pieced together to form a larger whole.

What Eliot may have had in mind was that the emotions of poetry should be provided with motives, or that the responses of the poets should be responses to a defined situation. The actions, gestures and words of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep arouse the same sense of anguish in the readers as they do in Macbeth himself, and hence his words on hearing of his wife's death seem quite inevitable and natural under the circumstances. This is also the case with the anguish of Othello. This is so because the external action and situation are quite adequate for the internal emotion. But this is not so in *Hamlet*. There is no object, character, situation or incident which adequately expresses the inner anguish of the Prince of Denmark. His suffering is terrible, but the full intensity at his mother's guilt is not conveyed by any character or action in the play. He suffers terribly, but his suffering is far in excess to the

character and situation as presented in the play. A similar situation in real life would not arouse equally intense emotion in normally constituted people. Shakespeare wanted to convey something unexpressibly horrible but the character of Gertrude and the whole plot of the play is inadequate for the purpose. In other words, Shakespeare has failed to find a suitable 'Objective Co-relative' for the emotion he wanted to convey. Herein lies the real source of the artistic failure of *Hamlet*.

Different critics have explained the phrase 'objective correlative' in different ways. For Cleanth Brooks, 'objective correlative' means "organic metaphor", for Sister Mary Cleophas Costello "the intensity of meaning-structure". Eliseo Vivas takes it as a vehicle of expression for the poet's emotion; Allan Austin treats it as the poetic content to be conveyed by verbal expression. Such diversity of opinion does not necessarily reflect confusion on the part of Eliot. Instead, it testifies most eloquently to the varied interests and concerns of his commentators and the variety of principles which they had introduced for the purposes of interpretation, refutation, or approval.

Eliot's theory of the objective correlative reminds us of Aristotle as well as the French symbolists. Like Aristotle, Eliot is of the opinion that it is not the business of the poet to 'say' but to 'show', not to present but to represent. In other words, Eliot's concept of the objective correlative is based on the notion that it is not the business of the poet to present his emotions directly but rather to represent them indirectly through the 'objective correlative' which become the formula for the poet's original emotions. One of the reasons why Eliot admires Dante's poetry is that Dante's was 'a visual imagination,' because he attempted 'to make us see what he saw,' because he did not lose his grasp over 'the objective correlative.'

Eliot had learnt from the French symbolists that emotion can only be evoked; it cannot be expressed directly. Mallarme contended that poetry is not made of ideas but of words, and explored the potentialities of words as modes of evocative suggestion. Eliot's theory was also anticipated by Ezra Pound in "The Spirit of Romance." Pound admitted that in the ideographic process of using material images to suggest immaterial relations, the poet has to be as impersonal, as the scientist: "Poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres and the like, but equations for the human emotion." In Pound's phrase "equations for the human emotion," we find Eliot's 'objective correlative' foreshadowed.

The theory of the 'objective correlative' is also a continuation of the views of the Imagists. As Eliot himself explains in his Introduction to the *Selected Poems* by Marianne Moore, 'the aim of imagism....was to induce in peculiar concentration upon something visual, and to set in motion an expanding succession of concentric feelings.' Thus the ideas of the Imagists are similar to those of Eliot contained in his theory of the 'objective correlative'; it is not the poet's aim to set in motion his original emotion but 'to induce a peculiar concentration upon something visual'.

The basic idea in Eliot's theory of the 'objective correlative', that the emotions in poetry are embodied in an object, owes much to the romantics. For example, Coleridge points out 'that images however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature...do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by predominant passion, or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion.'" Wordsworth also says much the same thing when he says 'that poetry proceeds from the soul of man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world'. In the Victorian Age, Ruskin elaborated the idea further when he pointed out that great poets represent the object as it is, the same time conveying their emotion. In the twentieth century both Hulme and Pound expounded the theory that the poet should choose something external to represent his emotions, and they stressed the need for accuracy and concreteness of the object that would be symbolic expression of the emotions of the poet.

Eliot's theory of the objective correlative has been criticized by Eliseo Vivas on two grounds. First, Eliot's view implies that the artist knows in advance the particular emotion for which he makes object, a situation or an event, the correlative. Eliseo Vivas advances the hypothesis that it is only through the act of composition, through his efforts to formulate it in words that the poet discovers his emotion. As such he cannot have an advance knowledge of the particular emotion for which an object is made the co-relative. Secondly, the emotion expressed in a poem can neither be of exclusive interest to the reader, nor can he feel exactly the same emotion as the poet did. Furthermore criticism of *Hamlet* as 'an artistic failure' has been refuted by a great majority of scholars. However, Eliot's theory of objective correlative applies well to his own poetry.

6.2.2.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

- 1) 'Objective Correlative' is the term first used by
 - a) Washington Allaston
 - b) S.T. Coleridge
 - c) John Donne
 - d) Matthew Arnold
- 2) Eliot formulated his doctrine of the 'Objective Correlative' in his essay
 - a) Hamlet and his Problems
 - b) The Function of Criticism at the Present Time
 - c) The Cavalier Poets
 - d) The Metaphysical Poets
- 3) According to Eliot the emotions of poetry should be provided with.....
 - a) motives
 - b) imagination
 - c) ideas
 - d) pictures
- 4) According to Cleanth Brooks, 'Objective Correlative' means
 - a) organic metaphor
 - b) organic plot
 - c) organic unity
 - d) organic thought

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

- 1) According to Eliot, how can the poet communicate with the readers?
- 2) How can the transaction take place between the author and reader?
- 3) What is 'Objective Correlative'?

6.2.3 Paradox

M. H. Abrams defines paradox as 'a statement which seems on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd yet turns out to make good sense'. He cites as an instance of a paradox the last two lines from John Donne's sonnet "Death, Be Not Proud":

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Many New Critics extended the term 'paradox' from its limited application to a type of figurative language. For them, the term 'paradox' encompasses all surprising deviations from, or qualifications of, common perceptions or commonplace opinions. Cleanth Brooks, one of the prominent American New Critics, made a huge claim that "the language of poetry is the language of paradox," in his book *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947).

Brooks claims the centrality of paradox by demonstrating that paradox is "the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry". He contends that referential language is too vague for the specific message a poet expresses; he must "make up his language as he goes". This, Brooks argues, is because words are mutable and meaning shifts when words are placed in relation to one another.

In the writing of poems, paradox is used as a method by which unlikely comparisons can be drawn and meaning can be extracted from poems both straightforward and enigmatic. Brooks points to William Wordsworth's poem "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free". He begins by outlining the initial and surface conflict, which is that the speaker is filled with worship, while his female companion does not seem to be. The paradox, discovered by the poem's end, is that the girl is more full of worship than the speaker precisely because she is always consumed with sympathy for nature and not - as is the speaker - in tune with nature while immersed in it.

In his reading of Wordsworth's poem, "Composed upon Westminster Bridge", Brooks contends that the poem offers paradox not in its details, but in the situation which the speaker creates. Though London is a man-made marvel, and in many respects in opposition to nature, the speaker does not view London as a mechanical and artificial landscape but as a landscape composed entirely of nature. Since London was created by man, and man is a part of nature, London is thus too a part of nature. It is this reason that gives the speaker the opportunity to remark upon the beauty of London as he would a natural phenomenon, and, as Brooks points out, can call the houses "sleeping" rather than "dead", because they too are vivified with the natural spark of life, granted to them by the men that built them.

Brooks ends his essay with a reading of John Donne's poem "The Canonization", which uses a paradox as its underlying metaphor. Using a charged religious term to describe the speaker's physical love as saintly, Donne effectively argues that in rejecting the material world and withdrawing to a world of each other, the two lovers are appropriate candidates for canonization. This seems to parody both love and religion, but in fact it combines them, pairing unlikely circumstances and demonstrating their resulting complex meaning. Brooks points also to secondary paradoxes in the poem: the simultaneous duality and singleness of love, and the double and contradictory meanings of "die" in Metaphysical poetry (used here as both sexual union and literal death). He contends that these several meanings are impossible to convey at the right depth and emotion in any language but that of paradox. A similar paradox is used in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, when Juliet says "For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch and palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss."

Brooks' contemporaries in the sciences were, in the 40's and 50's, reorganizing university science curricula into codified disciplines. The study of English, however, remained less defined and it became a goal of the New Critical movement to justify literature in an age of science by separating the work from its author and critic and by examining it as a self-sufficient artifact. In Brooks's use of the paradox as a tool for analysis, however, he develops a logical case as a literary technique with strong emotional effect. His reading of "The Canonization" in "The Language of Paradox", where paradox becomes central to expressing complicated ideas of sacred and secular love, provides an example of this development.

Paradox is essential to the structure and being of the poem. In *The Well Wrought Urn* Brooks shows that paradox was so essential to poetic meaning that paradox was almost identical to poetry. According to literary theorist Leroy Searle, Brooks' use of paradox emphasized the indeterminate lines between form and content. "The form of the poem uniquely embodies its meaning" and the language of the poem "affects the reconciliation of opposites or contraries."

R.S. Crane, in his essay "The Critical Monism of Cleanth Brooks," argues strongly against Brooks' centrality of paradox. For one, Brooks believes that the very structure of poetry is paradox, and ignores the other subtleties of imagination and power that poets bring to their poems. Brooks simply believed that "'imagination' reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant

qualities.” Brooks, in leaning on the crutch of paradox, only discusses the truth which poetry can reveal, and speaks nothing about the pleasure it can give. Also, by defining poetry as uniquely having a structure of paradox, Brooks ignores the power of paradox in everyday conversation and discourse, including scientific discourse, which Brooks claimed was opposed to poetry. Crane claims that, using Brooks’ definition of poetry, the most powerful paradoxical poem in modern history is Einstein’s formula $E = mc^2$, which is a profound paradox in that matter and energy are the same thing. The argument for the centrality of paradox (and irony) becomes a *reductio ad absurdum* and is therefore void (or at least ineffective) for literary analysis.

6.2.3.1 Check Your Progress :

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

- 1) According to Brooks, theis the language of paradox.
a) language of poetry b) artistic presentation
c) emotional effect d) imagination
- 2) The paradox is used as a tool for
a) narration b) analysis c) conversation d) imagination
- 3) Brooks shows that paradox is essential to
a) essays b) novels c) drama d) poetry

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

- 1) What is the view of Brooks regarding the language of poetry?
- 2) What is the use of Paradox?
- 3) What is the importance of the paradox?

6.3 Summary

Eliot's theory of the 'dissociation of sensibility' is undoubtedly one of his most significant contributions to critical analysis and judgment, for it exerted a tremendous influence over the creative and critical talents of his contemporaries so that the poets became conscious of the traditions of the unified sensibility. Although

the idea contained in the doctrine of the objective correlative is traceable to a number of critics, there is no doubt that Eliot gave to the phrase its unique currency and elaborate interpretation. The phrase 'objective correlative' has become the recognized term to signify the way emotion is expressed through a work of art. Paradox is not just a witty or amusing statement. Paradoxes have serious implications in the world of literature, because they make statements that often sum up the main ideas of the work.

6.4 Terms to Remember:

- **discernible:** recognize or become aware of.
- **dissolution :** the action of dissolving or decomposing.
- **contradictory:** opposed or inconsistent.
- **ruminate :** think deeply
- **refined :** improved something
- **crude :** rough or simple
- **reconciliation :** find a satisfactory way of dealing with things that are opposed to or contradict each other .
- **synthetic :** combined parts into an organized whole.
- **amalgamating :** combine to form one organization or structure.
- **desperate :** having a great need for something.
- **chaotic :** in a state of complete confusion and disorder.
- **fragmentary :** a small part broken or separated off.
- **evoked :** obtain response
- **refutation :** prove a statement
- **explored :** discuss in detail
- **influential :** power to affect
- **sensory :** powers by which one sees, hears or tastes
- **evoked :** to call up
- **endeavor :** to strive, try

- **organic** : fitting together harmoniously
- **Symbolist** : be a symbol of
- **induce** : to persuade
- **embody** : to give a concrete form
- **concreteness** : real
- **referential** : a source of information in a book or article
- **mutable** : lacking the power of speech
- **enigmatic** : difficult to understand
- **canonization**: the laws of the Christian church
- **codified** : organize procedure
- **reconciliation** : to find a satisfactory way of dealing with things that are opposed to or contradict each other .
- **discordant** : not in harmony or agreement
- **crutch** : the most important point under discussion

6.5 Answers to Check Your Progress.

6.2.1.1

- A)** 1) American
 2) T.S. Eliot
 3) synthetic
 4) chaotic
 5) think
- B)** 1) the Metaphysical Poets
 2) secondary imagination
 3) feeling or the capacity to receive sense impression
 4) chaotic, irregular, fragmentary
 5) unified sensibility

6.2.2.1

- A)** 1) Washington Allston
2) Hamlet and His Problems
3) motives
4) organic metaphor
- B)** 1) He has to find some object.
2) through the Objective Correlative.
3) a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events.

6.2.3.1

- A)** 1) Language of poetry
2) analysis
3) poetry
- B)** 1) The language of poetry is the language of paradox.
2) To draw the unlikely comparisons and to extract meaning from the poem.
3) Paradox is the structure and being of the poem.

6.6 Exercises

Answer the following questions in about 250 words each.

- 1) Describe in detail T.S. Eliot's views on 'Dissociation of Sensibility.'
- 2) Write a detailed note on 'Objective Correlative'.
- 3) Critically comment on Cleanth Brooks' views on 'paradox'.
- 4) Describe the salient features of New Criticism.

6.7 Further Reading:

Eliot, T.S. "The Metaphysical Poets". *Centenary College of Louisiana*. 20 Feb. 2008.

Austin, Allen. "T. S. Eliot's Theory of Dissociation." *College English*. Vol. 23, No. 4. (Jan., 1962), pp. 309-312.

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Seventh Edition.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 2nd ed. New York: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Eliot, T. S. "Hamlet and His Problems." 5 April. 2007.

Eliseo Vivas, *The Objective Correlative of T. S. Eliot*, reprinted in *Critiques and Essays in C*

Eliason, James L. (March–April 1996). "Using Paradoxes to Teach Critical Thinking in Science". *Journal of College Science Teaching* **15** (5): 341–44.

Crossley, J.N.; Ash, C.J.; Brickhill, C.J.; Stillwell, J.C.; Williams, N.H. (1972). *What is mathematical logic?* London-Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.



Unit-7

Matthew Arnold : "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"

Contents

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter
 - 7.2.1 Section I
 - 7.2.1.1 Check Your Progress
 - 7.2.2 Section II
 - 7.2.2.1 Check Your Progress
 - 7.2.3 Section III
 - 7.2.3.1 Check Your Progress
- 7.3 Summary
- 7.4 Terms to Remember
- 7.5 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 7.6 Exercises
- 7.7 Further Reading

7.0 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to —

- understand Matthew Arnold's views on the function of criticism.
- explain the essential qualifications of a competent critic.
- understand the role of creation and the role of criticism in the society.

7.1 Introduction

Matthew Arnold was born in the small village of Laleham situated on the river Thames in the County of Middlesex on 24 December 1822. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, was the famous schoolmaster of Rugby. He was a great scholar and a propagandist for the classical method in education. He inculcated in Matthew also a love of the great classics of the ancient times. Matthew's mother, Mary Penrose, was a woman of remarkable character and intellect. Matthew was the eldest among the nine children. He was educated at Winchester, Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford. At college, he was regarded as the best scholar of the classics. He won the Newdigate prize for his poem on Cromwell in 1843 while he was at college. However, he failed to distinguish himself as a scholar and only passed with a second class degree. In 1847, he left college and took up the job of the Private Secretary to the famous Whig Party leader Lord Lansdowne. He fell in love with Miss Wightman, the daughter of the judge Sir William Wightman. Sir William Wightman refused his consent to their marriage as Matthew was poor then. At that time, Lord Lansdowne came to Matthew Arnold's help and appointed him on the post of the *Inspector of Schools*. The job secured him financially and he married Miss Wightman in 1851. Matthew lived a happy married life, and had six children. He also had happy social life, and enjoyed a wide circle of friends. However, he died suddenly while running after a tramcar on the 15th of April 1888.

Matthew Arnold was a great poet, educationist and critic. He began his literary career by writing poetry. His important poetical works are: *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* (1849), *Empedocles on Etna* (1852), *Poems, First Series* (1853), *Poems, Second Series* (1855), and *New Poems* (1867). His poetry is elegiac, meditative and melancholy. It is preoccupied with spiritual alienation and the loss of religious faith. He worked on the post of *Inspector of Schools* for 35 years from 1851 to 1886. He did a valuable work in the field of education. He was also appointed as Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857. He, then, abandoned writing poetry and started writing essays and prose works. After the publication of *The Preface to the Poems* in 1853, he wrote nothing but criticism for the rest of his life. His critical essays are of the highest order. His prose has an air of freedom, confidence, high spirit and gaiety. His prose works fall into three major classes: literary criticism, general social criticism and religious criticism. His general social, political and religious criticism has lost much of its importance nowadays. However, his literary

criticism is of enduring interest and is more vital and influential even today than it was in his own times.

7.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter

7.2.1 Section 1:

Matthew Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" appeared first in 1864 in *the National Review*. It was published as the first essay in his book *Essays in Criticism, First Series* (1865). In it, Arnold defines criticism, elaborates its functions and also prescribes essential qualifications of a competent critic. Arnold wrote this essay with reference to the social, religious, economic and political conditions which were prevalent at that time. He realized that British society, particularly the middle class, was materialised and brutalised. He found the cultural anarchy everywhere. The rising middle class of the society was engrossed in materialistic life. It had no ideals and values of its own. According to Arnold, England was particularly lacking in criticism. The English people suffered from provinciality and they had narrow and closed minds that resisted fresh and true ideas. Hence, Arnold dubbed them 'Philistine'. He intends to civilise the English middle class and bring about cultural regeneration. He expresses the need of receiving fresh ideas in thought and style from the best sources in the world. According to him, the best sources are the ancient Greek poetry and the modern French prose. He, thus, assigns a cultural function to criticism. His views of criticism should be taken into account in the light of degenerating and chaotic conditions of the contemporary criticism and society.

At the very beginning of the essay, Arnold points out the objections made to his view of criticism. In one of his *Lectures on Translating Homer*, he expressed the view, "**the function of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is.**" According to him, the main function of the critic is to find out the real worth and merit of an object without caring for any practical, historical or personal consideration. Many persons did not agree with his view. They thought that Arnold has assigned an excessive importance to criticism. They asserted the inherent superiority of the creative effort of the human mind over its critical effort. William Wordsworth also asserted that the creative faculty is superior to the critical faculty. In one of his letters, he said that the considerable time and energy should be spent on

original compositions instead of wasting in writing critiques on the works of others. He thought that false or malicious criticism can do much harm.

Arnold, however, does not agree with such views. He gives various reasons in support of his stand. He does not agree with the view that the critical activity is very harmful one. He does not agree that instead of writing the admirable *Lives of the Poets*, Dr. Johnson should have given his time to such inferior works as his *Irene*. He also does not agree that William Wordsworth, instead of writing his *Preface*, should have continued to compose inferior poems in his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. Both the works, *Lives of the Poets* and *Preface* are seminal works in the field of literary criticism. According to Arnold, Dr. Johnson's *Irene*, a play in blank verse, is very much inferior to his *Lives of the Poets* which is considered as the finest example of biographical criticism in the English language. Similarly, Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, a group of the hundred and two sonnets, is inferior to his *Preface* which is considered as a brilliant proclamation of the Romantic critical creed. Arnold also praises Goethe, the German poet-critic, for his critical works of the highest order. Goethe's critical works make survey of the literature of the whole world. Therefore, According to Arnold, critical activity is not always inferior to the creative activity. He gives preference to the critical activity than to the creative activity of an inferior kind.

7.2.1.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

- 1) Matthew Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" appeared first in _____ in *the National Review*.
 - a) 1853
 - b) 1861
 - c) 1864
 - d) 1888
- 2) Arnold expressed the view that "the function of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is" in his _____ .
 - a) *On the Study of Celtic Literature*
 - b) *On Translating Homer*
 - c) *Culture and Anarchy*

- d) *Essays in Criticism, Second Series*
- 3) _____ asserted that the creative faculty is superior to the critical faculty.
- a) William Wordsworth b) P. B. Shelley
- c) Lord Byron d) John Keats
- 4) Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* and William Wordsworth's *Preface* are seminal works in the field of _____.
- a) novel b) poetry
- c) drama d) literary criticism
- 5) Matthew Arnold praises the famous German poet-critic _____ for his critical works of the highest order.
- a) *Saint-Beuve* b) Homer
- c) Sophocles d) Goethe

7.2.2 Section 2:

Arnold further proceeds to examine the essential functions of criticism to the mind and spirit of the critic as well as other people. He points out three important functions of criticism:

I. Criticism makes creation possible:

Arnold admits that the critical power is of a lower rank than the creative. There is no doubt that creative activity exercised in the production of the great works of literature and art gives the supreme happiness. There is also no doubt that one can get this happiness in other activities such as well-doing, learning and criticizing. Another thing is that the exercise of the creative power in the production of great works of art and literature is not possible at all times and in all ages. Hence, the efforts should be spent on developing conditions which will make creation possible. Arnold further points out that the creative faculty works with certain materials. In the case of literature, this material consists of ideas, especially the best ideas current at the time. If there is no such current of ideas, creation cannot take place.

According to Arnold, the business of the philosopher is to discover and originate new ideas whereas the business of the literary genius is to produce a work of synthesis and exposition. He says, **“The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations — making beautiful works with them, in short.”** Thus, a great creative artist can prosper only when the right type of atmosphere prevails and the best ideas are current. The power of the man and the power of the moment must work together for the creation of a master-work of literature. Hence, the function of criticism is to create such a current. The critic acquires a wide knowledge of literature as well as other subjects, and creates an intellectual atmosphere in which creation can take place. He makes the best ideas prevail. The intellectual stir and growth brought by the new ideas results in the creative activity of the highest order.

II. Criticism plays educative role:

According to Arnold, a poet must know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry. It is criticism which gives the poet the knowledge of the human life and of the world. The poets may acquire this knowledge from the study of books. It can be easily acquired when there is a current of best ideas. For example, there was a burst of creative activity in England of Shakespeare and in Greece of Pindar and Sophocles because in those ages the society was fully saturated with fresh and intelligent thoughts. However, in the England of the first quarter of the 19th century, there was neither a national glow of life and thought nor a culture and a force of learning and criticism. Therefore, the poetry of the romantic age is deficient in thought and substance. This makes Byron’s poetry so empty of matter and Shelley’s poetry so incoherent. Wordsworth is the greatest among the romantic poets but he too is wanting in completeness and variety. These poets had no sufficient materials to work with.

Arnold is aware that his critics would point out that there was much intellectual stir and activity caused by the French Revolution in the early 19th century. He points out that French Revolution very soon took a political and practical turn, and it did not remain for a long time a disinterested intellectual and spiritual movement. He further points out that the Renaissance and the Reformation were disinterestedly intellectual

movements. Therefore, these movements could establish a current of best and fresh ideas, and could flourish literature in England. The French Revolution failed because it was tied to political and practical considerations. It caused stir in the society but it could not flourish literature of the highest order. It quit the intellectual sphere and ran into the political sphere. This was a grand error of the French Revolution. The French Revolution created in England an epoch of concentration. England of the Romantic age rejected and opposed European and French ideas. Edmund Burke was considered as the great voice of that epoch of concentration. Burke's writings contain the true philosophy of an epoch of concentration.

According to Arnold, criticism must be disinterested. Criticism must be a free play of the mind on all subjects for its own sake and for the sheer pleasure of knowing. It must not have any ulterior motives or practical considerations. Arnold defines criticism as, **“the free play of the mind on all subjects in order to know the best that is known and thought in the world, without any political considerations.”** Criticism values knowledge and thought at its best. It can be disinterested by keeping aloof from the practical view of the things. By disinterestedness, Arnold means complete detachment from all political and practical considerations.

According to Arnold, the true function of criticism is to know the best that is known and thought in the world and, thus, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. He finds that English criticism is lacking in this function, and it is guided by practical considerations. He points out that the French journal *Revue des Deux* is an organ for the free play of the mind and its main function is to propagate the best that is known and thought in the world. However, the British journals, such as the *Edinburgh Review*, the *British Quarterly Review*, and the *Times*, do not disinterestedly pursue true ideas. They are guided and controlled by one or the other political party for their own interests. Arnold finds that English criticism is in a hopeless state. However, he sees a ray of hope in the two facts. Firstly, England has witnessed an era of peace after the bloodshed of the French Revolution, and the country has become more receptive to ideas from the continent. Secondly, the Englishmen are freer to indulge in the free play of the mind on all subjects because of the increased leisure provided by the scientific and technological revolution in the age.

III. Criticism provides a cure for self-complacency:

Arnold thinks that English people are overtaken by self-satisfaction and complacency. The average English people regard their country to be the best in the world. Arnold quotes Sir Charles Adderley and John Arthur Roebuck in whose speeches such a claim is made. According to Arnold, this self-satisfaction and complacency are retarding and vulgarising as they retard further progress and coarsen the human spirit. He quotes the newspaper reports which say that there are frequent child-murders in England due to poverty and suffering. This proves that the claims of superiority of the English people in the world are hollow and baseless. Hence, it is the function of criticism to shake-off this self-satisfaction and complacency. The critics should bring together contrasts to perform this function. Thus, criticism must make the people realise their imperfections and shortcomings. Only then, it will save people from a false self-complacency and sense of superiority. It should free itself from all futile conflicts and controversies. It should rise above all political and narrow practical considerations. It should take humanity a step further on the road to perfection. It should make man's mind dwell on what is perfect and beautiful in the whole world. It should try to widen the mental and spiritual horizon of the human beings.

7.2.2.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

- 1) According to Matthew Arnold, to discover and originate new ideas is the business of the _____.
 - a) literary genius
 - b) scientist
 - c) educationist
 - d) philosopher
- 2) Matthew Arnold says that the poetry of the _____ is deficient in thought and substance.
 - a) Elizabethan age
 - b) Romantic age
 - c) Victorian age
 - d) Modern age
- 3) By disinterestedness, Matthew Arnold means a complete _____ from all political and practical considerations.

- a) attachment
 - b) involvement
 - c) detachment
 - d) engagement
- 4) Matthew Arnold thinks that _ _ _ _ _ people are overtaken by self-satisfaction and complacency.
- a) English
 - b) Greek
 - c) American
 - d) French
- 5) Matthew Arnold points out that the journal _ _ _ _ _ is an organ for the free play of the mind.
- a) Edinburgh Review
 - b) *Revue des Deux*
 - c) Quarterly Review
 - d) The Times

7.2.3 Section 3:

Towards the last part of the essay, Arnold has prescribed certain characteristics/qualifications for a critic. According to him, the critic must be a man of wide learning. The critic must be learned not only in one subject but also in all subjects. He must know the best that has been thought and known in the world in order to perform his function well. He must be detached, and he must rise above all practical and political considerations. He must work patiently and resolutely to prevail the best ideas. He must be sincere so that he will be able to convince the practical man and he will not be misunderstood. He must make fine distinctions between what is perfect and what is not, and he must also teach others to make such types of distinctions. He is likely to be misunderstood as the great critics Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and William Cobbett were misunderstood. Arnold points out that the danger of such a misunderstanding is very great in England because English people are very practical and they consider intellectual independence as sheer nonsense and waste of time. In such conditions, the critic will be tempted to go with the stream. However, According to Arnold, the critic must overcome all such considerations in order to perform his function well.

Arnold is aware of the fact that criticism is at a very low ebb in his age. Many false estimates prevail in the age. Inferior books are praised indiscriminately. Such false and indiscriminate valuations deaden our sensibility and capacity to distinguish between what is beautiful and what is not. According to Arnold, the critic must

- c) the critic
d) the educationist
- 2) Matthew Arnold points out that the danger of misunderstanding for a critic is great in _____.
- a) Germany
b) France
c) England
d) India
- 3) According to Matthew Arnold, a true critic must be entirely _____ of the practical spirit and its aims.
- a) independent
b) dependent
c) intellectual
d) spiritual
- 4) Matthew Arnold has pointed out that _____ is at a very low ebb.
- a) German literature
b) French Literature
c) Indian Literature
d) English literature
- 5) Matthew Arnold especially recommends the literatures of _____.
- a) England and Scotland
b) France and Germany
c) America and Canada
d) India and Pakistan

7.3 Summary:

Matthew Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" is a major critical contribution in the field of criticism. It brings out Arnold's shrewdness, penetration and gift of powerful phrasing. It was written with a particular point of view. It must be studied with reference to the social, political, economic and religious conditions which prevailed in Arnold's age. Arnold's view of criticism must be examined in the context of the degenerating and chaotic situation of the contemporary English criticism and society. According to him, there was no intellectual atmosphere in England in the early 19th century and, therefore, there was something immature in the poetry of the romantic poets such as Shelley, Byron, Keats and even Wordsworth. However, Arnold appears to be wrong in his judgements of the romantic poets because these poets are considered as the luminaries among the English poets. The greatness of these romantic poets is recognized universally and they are respected greatly for the imaginative and subjective expression of their thoughts in their poetry.

Arnold has prescribed exact and demanding characteristics for a critic. According to him, the critic must study the best literatures in the world. He considers the literatures of Europe consisting from Homer to his own age as one literary tradition. The critic must acquire a sense of this literary tradition. He must be disinterested and detached. Arnold thinks that the critic must rise above political and practical interests. However, he ties the critic down to cultural and moral interests. Thus, Arnold disregards his own principles in this essay. He has also plagiarised greatly in this essay. His definition of criticism, “**the disinterested endeavour to know and propagate the best**”, is borrowed from *Saint-Beuve*, the French critic. The essay also brings out that Arnold is a critic of his age. He has criticised the age for its complacency, vulgarity and coarseness. For him, the literature of the age is in a hopeless state. It is far inferior compared to the literatures of France and Germany. It praises the worthless and inferior books and institutions. The people are complacent and vain about their superiority. This hampers their cultural and intellectual advancement. There is truth to some extent in Arnold’s criticism of his age.

Thus, Arnold has virtues as well as faults as a critic. However, his virtues far outweigh his faults. To speak of his virtues, it can be said that he is the very first critic to emphasize the importance of a comparative study of different literatures. His relating literary criticism to culture in the widest sense has left a strong and lasting influence on the future generations of the critics. His emphasis on high standards in literature and culture is of the greatest importance for civilizing the future generations everywhere. Therefore, Arnold is considered as the greatest literary critic of the Victorian period and one of the greatest in the history of English criticism, ranking with John Dryden, Ben Johnson, S. T. Coleridge and T. S. Eliot.

7.4 Terms to Remember:

- **propagandist:** a person who spreads propaganda (false or exaggerated ideas or statements)
- **classics:** the literature and culture of the ancient Greek and Roman people
- **brutalise:** make somebody unable to feel normal human emotions such as pity
- **anarchy:** a situation in which there is no order or control

- **engrossed:** greatly involved in something
- **provincialism:** the attitude of people who are unwilling to consider new or different ideas
- **regeneration:** revival or development
- **chaotic:** a state of complete confusion or disorder
- **critique:** a piece of written criticism of a work or art
- **malicious:** showing hatred
- **seminal:** very important and having a strong influence on later developments
- **materials:** fresh and true ideas
- **synthesis:** the act of combining separate ideas, beliefs, styles etc.
- **exposition:** a full explanation of a theory
- **stir:** make somebody excited or feel something strongly
- **burst:** a short period of particular activity
- **saturate:** to fill something completely
- **disinterested:** not influenced by personal feelings
- **Renaissance:** the period in Europe during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries when people became interested in the ideas and culture of ancient Greece and Rome and used these influences in their own art and literature
- **Reformation:** new ideas in religion in the 16th century Europe that led to attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church and to the forming of the Protestant Churches
- **epoch of concentration:** an age of withdrawal from foreign influences
- **ulterior:** hidden
- **propagate:** to spread an idea or a belief
- **complacency:** a feeling of satisfaction with yourself that you do not think any change is necessary

- **retard:** make progress of something slower
- **vulgarize:** spoil something
- **coarsen:** make somebody offensive
- **resolutely:** strongly; determinedly
- **indiscriminate:** acting without careful judgement
- **discern:** understand something that is not clear
- **sphere:** an area of activity, influence or interest
- **beneficent:** giving help
- **impartial:** neutral, unbiased
- **confederation:** union; combination; alliance
- **antiquity:** the ancient past, especially the times of the Greeks and Romans
- **conception:** the process of forming an idea or plan
- **ardent:** very enthusiastic; passionate
- **starved:** not having something that you need
- **fragmentary:** made of small parts; incomplete

7.5 Answers to Check Your Progress:

7.2.1.1:

- 1) (c) 1864
- 2) (b) *On Translating Homer*
- 3) (a) William Wordsworth
- 4) (d) literary criticism
- 5) (a) *Saint-Beuve*

7.2.2.1:

- 1) (d) philosopher
- 2) (b) Romantic age

- 3) (c) detachment
- 4) (a) English
- 5) (b) *Revue des Deux*

7.2.3.1:

- 1) (c) the critic
- 2) (c) England
- 3) (a) independent
- 4) (d) English literature
- 5) (b) France and Germany

7.6 Exercises:

I) Answer the following question in about 250 to 300 words each:

- 1) Justify Matthew Arnold as a critic with the reference to his essay “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”.
- 2) Matthew Arnold’s “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” is a critique on his age: Explain.
- 3) What are the roles of criticism and the roles of creation in the society?
- 4) What are the three important functions Matthew Arnold assigns to criticism?
- 5) Comment on Matthew Arnold’s definition of criticism and the characteristics he prescribes for a critic.

II) Write short notes on:

- 1) The function of criticism
- 2) The educative role of criticism
- 3) Qualifications/characteristics of a critic

7.7 Further Reading:

- Arnold, Matthew (2007) *Essays in Criticism*. Meerut: Shalabh Publishing House.
- Compton-Rickett, Arthur (2006) *A History of English Literature Vol. I & II*. New Delhi: Srishti Book Distributors.
- Goodman, W. R. (2003) *English Literature for Competitive Examinations*. Delhi: Doaba Publications.
- Tilak, Raghukul (2011) *Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism*. New Delhi: Rama Brothers India Pvt. Ltd.
- Trivedi, R. D. (2007) *A Compendious History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
- Wimsatt, William K. & Cleanth Brooks (1974) *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co.



Unit-8

Critical Appreciation

Contents

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

8.2.1 Content

8.2.1.1 Check Your Progress

8.2.2 Form

8.2.2.1 Check Your Progress

8.2.3 Critical Appreciation

8.3 Summary

8.4 Terms to Remember

8.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.6 Exercises

8.7 Further Reading

8.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will be able to

- know the nature of practical criticism.
- know a few important literary terms.
- know how critics have done practical criticism.
- write critical appreciation of poetry.

8.1 Introduction

This unit begins with the discussion of the practical criticism. It also studies the process of critical appreciation of poetry.

Practical criticism is also known as ‘applied criticism’. It is a way of discussing particular works of literature. It does not give importance to the biographies of authors, the social context of literature, literary history and the psychological or moral effects of literature on the reader. Instead, it concentrates on the detailed analysis of the individual work itself. It is held that each work has the “organic unity” of overall structure and verbal meanings. Words, images, and symbols in the work are organized around a central and humanly significant theme.

Practical criticism provides a “close reading” of single texts. The procedure of “close reading” involves the detailed and subtle analysis of the complex interrelations and multiple meanings of the components within a work. This explicative procedure tries to analyze the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech, and symbols. Students interested in knowing this procedure further may refer to such books as I.A. Richards’ *Practical Criticism* (1929) and William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930).

Practical criticism is an attempt to analyze and explain the effects of a literary work such as a poem, a play or a novel by reference to its

- theme
- subject
- organization
- techniques
- style

This unit will concentrate only on learning the method of analyzing and explaining a single poem.

8.2 Presentation of Subject Matter:

8.2.1 Content:

Often, the distinction is made between the “content” and “form” of the poem. The question “What is the poem about?” leads us to the content or subject matter of the poem, while the question “How is the poem organized?” makes us discuss the form of the poem.

The term ‘theme’ refers to a general concept or doctrine used in a poem. The poet may assert his theme directly or may simply imply it. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton states the theme of his poem explicitly. The theme of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, in his own words, is: “assert Eternal Providence,/And justify the ways of God to men.” One of the very common themes is “Carpe Diem”, a Latin phrase which means “seize the day”. The speaker in the carpe diem poem says that life is short and time is fleeting and makes an appeal to his beloved to make the most of present pleasures. ‘The rose’ in such poems stands for shortness of life and the finality of death. Examples are: Robert Herrick’s “To the Virgins to Make Much of Time” (“Gather ye rosebuds, while ye may”) and Edmund Waller’s “Go, Lovely Rose.” Read also Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress.”

Every poem involves a theme which is embodied and dramatized with the help of meanings and imagery.

The theme of the poem can be moral, religious or philosophical.

In many poems, the theme is worked out by means of imagery. The term ‘imagery’ signifies all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem. Such sense qualities can be

- visual (sight)
- auditory (hearing)
- tactile (touch)
- thermal (heat and cold)
- olfactory (smell)
- gustatory (taste), and
- kinesthetic (sensations of movement).

For example, William Wordsworth's "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways."

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and oh,
The difference to me!

The second stanza of the poem includes such visible objects as "violet", "stone", "star", and "sky".

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as **a star**, when only one
Is shining in **the sky**.

Lucy's natural charm, like that of the violet, was derived from her modesty. She, too, was "half-hidden from the eye," obscure and unnoticed. Lucy is then compared to the star. Lucy was completely obscure to the world as the modest flower in the shadow of the mossy stone. However, to the eye of her lover she was the only star in his heaven.

In this poem, the imagery *is* the poem. The imagery is not something “additional”—merely decorative. The poem renders the experience of love dramatically in concrete terms. Thus, stanza 2 is the core—the very heart—of the poem.

Critical appreciation is an attempt to understand the meaning of the poem.

8.2.1.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Another expression for ‘content’ is-----.
a) form
b) subject matter
c) happy
d) message
2. The term ‘theme’ means a general-----.
a) doctrine
b) plot
c) setting
d) rhythm
3. What does the poet use to work out his theme?
a) metre
b) music
c) lines
d) imagery
4. Who wrote “She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways.”
a) William Wordsworth
b) William Shakespeare
c) John Milton
d) John Donne
5. What kind of imagery has been used in the second stanza of “She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways”?
a) olfactory
b) gustatory
c) visual
d) auditory

8.2.2 Form:

The form of a work is an interaction among diverse words and images to produce multiple meanings.

The language of a poem is often figurative. It is a departure from the standard meaning of words, or the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. “Figures of thought” or tropes enable the poet to achieve a departure in the meaning of words. “Figures of speech” or schemes help him achieve a departure in the syntactical order or pattern of the words.

Let us first discuss the most common “figures of thought” or tropes:

Simile: a comparison between two different things using the word “like” or “as”

Examples:

1. “O my love’s **like a red, red rose**” (A line from Robert Burns’ poem)
2. “And ice, mast-high, came floating by,/As **green as emerald.**”

(Lines from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

Metaphor: a word or expression applied to a distinctly different kind of thing or action

Examples:

1. “Eye, **gazelle**, delicate **wanderer**,/**Drinker** of horizon’s fluid line.” (Lines from “Not palaces, an era’s crown” by Stephen Spender)

(Here “eye” is **tenor** and the three words “gazelle”, “wanderer” and “drinker” are **vehicles**)

2. “How sweet the moonlight **sleeps** upon this bank.” (A line from William Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*)

(Here a verb “sleeps” has been used metaphorically.)

3. “Annihilating all that’s made/To a **green** thought in a green shade.” (Lines from Andrew Marvell’s “The Garden”)

(Here an adjective “green” has been used metaphorically.)

Metonymy: one thing applied to another with which it is closely associated

Example:

“**Doublet and hose** ought to show itself courageous to **petticoat.**” (A line from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*)

(Here typical attire has been used to signify the male and female sexes.)

Synecdoche: a part of something is used to signify the whole

Example: In “Lycidas”, Milton refers to the corrupt clergy as “**blind mouths.**”

Personification: an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings

Example:

On a huge hill
Cragged and steep, **Truth** stands;
And he who will reach her
About must and about must go;
(Lines from Donne’s “Satire – III”)

Kenning: a descriptive phrase in place of the ordinary name for something

Example: “**foamy-necked floater**” for a ship under sail, “**storm of swords**” for a battle

Conceit: a striking parallel between two very dissimilar things or situations

Examples:

1. “two faithful fountains/Two walking baths, two weeping motions,/Portable and compendious oceans.”

(Lines from “Saint Mary Magdalene” by Richard Crashaw)

2. “Let us go then, you and I/When the evening is spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table.”

(Lines from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot)

Hyperbole: bold overstatement, or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or of possibility

Example:

Not poppy nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,

Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
which thou ow’dst yesterday.

(Lines from Shakespeare’s *Othello*)

Irony: a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is directly expressed

Example:

“It grieves me much,” replied the Peer again,
“Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.”

(Lines from Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*)

(Here the Peer is not at all aggrieved and does not think that poor Sir Plume has spoken at all well.)

Litotes: the assertion of an affirmative by negating its contrary

Example:

“That is not a pleasant place.” (A line from *Beowulf*)

Paradox: a statement which seems on its face to be absurd yet turns out to make good sense

Example:

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; *Death, thou shalt die.*

(Lines from John Donne’s sonnet “Death, Be Not Proud”)

Periphrasis: circumlocution

Example:

“from the snowy leg...the inverted silk she drew”

(A line from James Thomson’s *The Seasons*)

(Here the poet simply means: “she took off her silk stocking.”)

Pun: a play on words that are either identical in sound or very similar in sound, but are very diverse in meaning

Example:

“Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a **grave** man”

(A line from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*)

(Here Mercutio, bleeding to death, says grimly.)

Understatement: something represented as much less in magnitude or importance than it really is

Example:

“And never lifted up a single stone.”

(A line from Wordsworth’s *Michael*)

(Here Wordsworth closes his narrative using a simple, unemphatic statement to enhance the effect of a deeply pathetic or tragic event)

Let us also discuss the most common “figures of speech” or schemes.

Apostrophe: a direct or explicit address either to an absent person or to an abstract or nonhuman entity

Example:

“Thou still unravished bride of quietness”

(John Keats begins his “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by apostrophizing the Urn; he thereby personifies the nonhuman object.)

Invocation: a direct or explicit address to a god or muse or some other being to assist the poet in his composition

Example:

And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th’ upright heart and pure,
Instruct me....

(Here John Milton invokes divine guidance at the opening of *Paradise Lost*)

Rhetorical Question: a question which is not asked in order to request information or to invite a reply, but to function as a forceful alternative to the assertion

Example:

1. O, Wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

(Lines from Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind")

2. "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

(A line from W. B. Yeats' "Among School Children")

Chiasmus: a sequence of two phrases or clauses which are parallel in syntax, but reverse the order of the corresponding words

Example:

The years to come seemed **a waste of breath,**

A waste of breath the years behind.

(Lines from Yeats' "An Irish Airman foresees His Death")

Zeugma: expressions in which a single word stands in the same grammatical relation to two or more other words, but with an obvious shift in its significance

Example:

And the waves oozing through the port-hole **made**

His berth a little damp, and him afraid.

(Lines from Byron's *Don Juan*)

Antithesis: a contrast or opposition in the meanings of contiguous phrases or clauses that is emphasized by parallel structures

Example:

Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike

(A Line from Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot")

Alliteration: the repetition of consonants at the beginning either of a word or of a stressed syllable within a word

Example:

In Xanadu did **Kubla Khan**

A stately pleasure-**dome decree**:
Where Alp, the sacred **river, ran**
Through caverns **measureless to man**
Down to a **sunless sea**.

(Lines from Coleridge's "Kubla Khan")

Consonance: the repetition of a sequence of two or more consonants, but with a change in the intervening vowel

Example:

"Out of this house"—said **rider to reader**,
"Yours never will"—said **farer to fearer**,
"They're looking for you" said **hearer to horror**,
As he left them there, as he left them there.

(The last stanza from W.H. Auden's "O where are you going?" said reader to rider")

Assonance: the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds—especially in stressed syllables—in a sequence of nearby words

Example:

Thou still unravished **bride** of **quietness**,
Thou foster **child** of **silence** and slow **time**.
(The opening lines of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn")
(Here we have repetition of /ai/ sound)

Parallelism: a similar order and structure in the syntax

Example:

Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray.
(Lines from Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*)

Rhyme: the repetition of the stressed vowel and of all the speech sounds following that vowel

1. **End rhymes:** such repetition at the end of a verse line
2. **Internal rhymes:** such repetition within a verse-line

Example:

In mist or **cloud**, on mast or **shroud**,
It perched for vespers **nine**,
Whiles all the **night**, through fog-smoke **white**,
Glimmered the white moon-**shine**.

(Lines from Colridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner")

(Here we have internal rhymes (within lines 1 and 3) and end rhyme (lines 2 and 4))

Rhythm:

English is a stress language. Syllables in English are either stressed or unstressed. This produces a recognizable though variable pattern in the beat of the stresses in the stream of sound.

Rising	defend	Falling	beauty
	(Iambic)		(Trochaic)
	engineer		tenderly
	(Anapaest)		(Dactyl)
Spondee	Half-hidden		
Pyrrhic	Temperate		

Iambic Pentametre has unstressed followed by stressed syllable. There are five iambic feet. Example is:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day

The lowing herds wind slowly o'er the lea

(Gray, 'Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard')

The first line conveys mechanical regularity of the toll of the bell.

The second line communicates the slow return of the tired animals.

8.2.2.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. What do words and images produce in a poem?
a) multiple riddles b) multiple meanings
c) multiple questions d) multiple answers
2. The language of a poem is-----.
a) slippery b) beautiful
c) musical d) figurative
3. By making use of tropes, the poet tries to achieve a departure in-----.
a) the order of words b) the meaning of words
c) the pattern of the words d) none of the above
4. Schemes are devices which help the poet achieve a departure in-----.
a) the syntactical order or pattern of the words
b) the meaning of words
c) the morphological pattern of the words
d) all the above
5. The term 'hyperbole' involves-----.
a) repetition b) exaggeration
c) circumlocution d) contrast

8.2.3 Critical Appreciation:

I

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;-on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! You hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I can only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

“Dover Beach” by Matthew Arnold

Glossary:

- **the straits:** the straits of Dover, between Dover and Calais, English and French ports respectively
- **moon-blanced:** pale and colourless in the moon
- **tremulous cadence flow:** the slow rise and fall of the tides
- **Aegean:** the sea between Greece and Asia Minor
- **naked shingles:** the bare pebbles left on the sea-shore at low tide
- **darkling:** dark, used both as an adjective and as an adverb

Critical Appreciation:

Arnold's "Dover Beach" is a lyric. It presents the reader with a virtual journey through time. There are many themes in this single poem. In this poem, Arnold laments the transition from an age of certainty into an era of loss of traditions. He communicates his sadness using the nostalgic image of the sea. "Misery", "sadness" and "melancholy" are the key terms in the poem. Yet the poet chooses to conclude the poem with an emotional appeal for honesty: "Ah, love, let us be true/to one another." To the poet, love is the only true certainty left as the world around collapses under "struggle" and "flight". The image of "the sea" with its nostalgic nature and ability represents time and timelessness simultaneously. "Sadness", "misery", "melancholy", "pain" accompany this effect and reveal the overall sense of regret and helplessness the poet feels before the powers of time and inevitable change.

The tone of the piece is determined by the constant presence of "melancholy" and "misery" in the poem that stretch on with a "long withdrawing roar...." The poem opens expressing the calmness of the narrative voice ("The sea is calm to-night./The tide is full, the moon lies fair."). Yet, later on there comes the negativity in the tone of the poem: "But now I only hear /Its melancholy...." The end of the piece, however, implies that the change in the things around us is something inevitable. The tone

changes in the last verse of the poem. It now not simply resents change, but is also a tone pleading with the reader to realise nothing is as stable and reliable as one perceives it, not to take the world for granted, and to stay "true/ to one another".

The first stanza introduces the theme of sadness. The second stanza brings in the theme of Time, where the poet alludes to Sophocles, one of the greatest Greek dramatists. The ancient Greek poet once heard the note of human misery by the side of the sea and expressed it in his tragedies. Time here is represented by the image of the sea - with its vastness evoking powerful admiration. The theme of mutability is lined with the sea's unreliable nature. It is presented as something inevitable and insecure. This, in its turn, leads onto the theme of humans staying true and honest to one another - this involving love for each other - as the only way to remain together, "for the world, which seems/to lie before us like a land of dreams/Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light."

The poem consists of four unequal stanzas in irregular rhyme. The structure of the poem gives the immediate impression of being inconsistent and built upon no particular rules. There are four stanzas, none of which are alike, with no particular rhythm or rhyme pattern. The stanzas lead onto one another by different themes although they appear to be quite unconventionally structured. Thus the end of the first stanza - occupied with sadness - brings on the "misery" of stanza two; then the image of sea and insecurity of the end of the second verse invites the need of love of the following and ending stanza. The unity of the poem is in this way complete and its impact on the reader stretches far beyond the lines.

II

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and Morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both Day and Night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

“A Poison Tree” by William Blake

Glossary:

- **wrath:** anger
- **foe:** enemy
- **wiles:** schemes, designs
- **veil'd:** covered
- **outstretch'd:** dead

Critical Appreciation:

The prose meaning of William Blake's "A Poison Tree" is: 'As soon as I told my friend that I was angry with him, the anger died away; but when I was angry with my foe, I cherished the anger, and by cunning and deceitful behavior I laid a trap for him which was his (and mine) undoing.' This is a simple summary, but it is inadequate to suggest the range and depth of experience that the poem covers. The poem contains extraordinary poetic thought. Blake is mainly concerned to express certain psychological facts: if we express our emotion of anger, we get release from that emotion, but if we hide our anger, then it may produce the 'sweetness' and evil of revenge. Blake expresses these facts in a strange and complex manner.

The manner is that of a vision described with great clarity and definiteness. The poet is giving clear and vivid utterance to most subtle and ambiguous feelings. And it is the union of clearness of vision and complete simplicity of language with the

profound ambiguity of his attitude that gives the poem its power. There is both good and evil in the speaker: he is good and wise to speak openly to his friend, he is evil to hide his feelings to overcome his foe. His 'fears'; and his 'tears' are real as well as assumed. The 'smiles' and the 'soft delightful wiles', noted down as evil, are at the same time felt to be delightful, and the sinister apple is a beautiful thing. The ambiguity continues to the end where the poet is 'glad' at the murderous victory he has won over his foe. A further ambiguity is felt in our recognition of the 'honest' confession of dishonest behavior. Nearly all the poem is concerned with the development of the metaphor of the word 'grow'. After the first verse of six short statements, there is marvelously easy and sure transition to the vividly concrete setting and action. The poem contains the wealth of the poet's experience, experience understood and controlled with such certainty as to be felt inevitably and profoundly true.

In a poem of sixteen lines there are some sixteen clauses. Nearly every line is in a sense self-contained, yet so perfectly does the action 'grow' out of the initial 'logic.' But the poem is a coherent whole. There is no feeling of thoughts having been clothed picturesquely. The vision, which is one of the action, moves directly. The thought is fused in it. And it moves, not just by its intrinsic quality as vision, but by the inevitability and suggestiveness imparted by the poet's language: vision and language are one. The repetition of 'And' gives deliberateness and relentlessness. This impression is enhanced by the quiet, even movement maintained throughout, the climax coming from the greater force for its being calm. But though the movement is quiet, it is emphatic; the speech-rhythm is heightened in such a way as to stress clearly the key words. The rhymes are magnificently used: 'told', 'end', 'angry', 'foe', 'not', 'grow'. The verse movement and the sound work with this kind of unforced emphasis throughout.

The pattern of the poem is regular, but its regularity is functional. The pattern makes for the clarity, the certainty, the coherence of the poetic statement. It seems the only possible expression for the ordering of the experience that led to the poetry. The climax gains its great force by the juxtaposition of 'glad' with the 'foe outstretched beneath the tree'. The poet's acceptance shocks despite his having led us with such certainty to such a culmination. The horror of his exultation is the greater for its being controlled. The word 'out-stretch'd' contributes powerfully. It is a 'physical' word. Its sound emphasizes its meaning. It is impressive for appearing

against the glad and gladdening morning. The morning being the time of the sun's rising and of the birds' singing, its presence suggests more horror and 'ambiguity'. The word 'out-stretch'd' is also in strong meaning-and-sound-contrast with 'stole': 'stole'... 'outstretch'd'- the stealthy act, the retribution. The word may also suggest 'outdone'.

Other significant details of the poem are: the conjunction and opposition of day and night and the mystery of darkness; the suggestion of Satan in the Garden of Eden, and the apple of the tree of knowledge. The poem provides a superb example of poetic thought. The experience of the duplicity of human behavior is given concrete embodiment—the apple shines there for all of us. It is a visionary poem. Fundamentally we feel the profound 'meaning' of the vision, which is not oddly personal but has a universal human application. And we feel it not because of Blake's penetrating psychological faculty—though that is of course there in the poem—but because of his power to express his experience in words that are strong and vivid.

III

They flee from me, that sometime did me seek
With naked foot, stalking in my chamber.
I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek,
That now are wild, and do not remember
That sometime they put themselves in danger,
To take bread at my hand; and now they range,
Busily seeking with a continual change.

Thanked be fortune it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once, in special,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small,
There with all sweetly did me kiss,
And softly said: 'Dear heart, how like you this?'

It was no dream: I lay broad waking.
But all is turned, thorough my gentleness,
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodness,
And she also to use new fangleness.
But since that I so kindly am served:
I would fain know what she hath deserved.

“They Flee From Me” by Sir Thomas Wyatt

Questions:

1. What is the poem's form?
2. What is the poem's metre and is it the same throughout the poem?
3. Find out the words / expressions used in an unusual way, and comment on their use.
4. What's the poem about?

Answers:

1. The poem is in a rhyming stanza ababbcc. This is known as rhyme royal. It is a form often used by Chaucer, and by Shakespeare in his narrative poem *Lucrece*. There are traces of internal or half rhymes in 'danger' and 'range' which tie the two couplets closely to the initial quatrain.
2. The underlying metrical pattern appears to be a version of an iambic pentameter (a ten syllable line in which the stress falls on every second syllable). There are moments which clearly depart from this pattern, however, and several of these occur at moments of drama: line 15 ('It was no dream: I lay broad waking') contains only nine syllables, and the last is a feminine, or unstressed syllable. The caesura seems to take a disproportionate length of time, as though the speaker of the poem is pausing in amazement. A similar checking of the flow of the line occurs in line 9. There is clearly a great deal of flexibility in the treatment of the pentameter. Line 13, in particular, seems to contain only eight syllables.
3. The word 'Guise' has two meanings which could fit this context: 1. Manner, method, way; fashion, style. and 2. A disguise, a mask. Also, a dance or

performance in disguises or masks; a masquerade, a show.' So the whole phrase 'After a pleasant guise' could mean either 'in an agreeable manner' or 'after an elaborate entertainment.'

'Stalking' can refer either to the action of a shy animal 1. To walk softly, cautiously, or stealthily... said of an animal **or** of a hunter (2. To go stealthily to, towards (an animal) for the purpose of killing or capturing it). This poses a problem: are the creatures referred to here the hunted or the hunters?

'Fashion' presumably means 'manner'; but in a poem which makes so much of 'thin array', or fine clothes, there may be a secondary sense of 'modish dress'.

In this poem there are several words which may not be used in their modern sense: 'danger' may mean 'peril', but there may also be an earlier sense in play: 1. 'Power of a lord or master, jurisdiction, dominion; power to dispose of, or to hurt or harm.' That would mean that the creatures are not necessarily putting themselves at risk by taking bread from the speaker, but that they are putting themselves in his power.

The phrase 'arms long and small' is odd on first reading, since the modern senses of 'long' and 'small' are not compatible with each other. Oxford English Dictionary though reveals the obsolete sense of 'small': '1. a. Of relatively little girth or circumference in comparison with length; not thick, stout, or fleshy; slender, thin.'

In the third stanza a number of abstract nouns seem to be used with a peculiar emphasis. 'Gentleness' probably means 'good breeding, courtesy, affability; kindness, mildness.' The word 'Goodness' seems almost to be sarcastic: 'she has graciously permitted me to go', the poem appears to say, which is a bitter way of describing the end of an affair. 'Newfangledness' is defined by the OED as 'The fact or state of being newfangled or new-fashioned; novelty, innovation', but it is used by Chaucer to mean 'fickleness'. So the lady has been given permission to be changeable or even fickle in love. And this is the result of her 'goodness' and the speaker's 'gentleness'. Those apparently beneficial moral attributes do not appear to be having good consequences for the speaker.

4. The question 'what is the poem about?' is a different sort of question from the previous ones, since a poem can be 'about' a lot of things at once. It can be about a love-affair (and this poem seems to be about something of the kind) and about

desire, or lust or perplexity or all of those things. In this particular poem the two levels of the question appear to interact with each other: it is not clear exactly what sort of scene is being described. It is also not clear entirely what the poet thinks about it.

What sort of scene is being described? This is actually a very difficult question to answer: as in a dream you are not quite sure of who anyone is or exactly what they are doing. These problems begin in the first line. Who are 'they' in the first line? They take bread, like deer or birds, but 'they' seem also to be associated with the very specific woman referred to in stanza 2. We should note that this woman is also referred to only by a pronoun. The poem does not reveal enough to enable us to be sure of her identity or her precise relation to the speaker, just as it does not reveal enough to allow us to be sure what 'they' are in the first line.

8.3 Summary

The three main sections in this unit enable students to understand poetry as a distinct form of literature and also know about the theme, content, structure and figures of speech that help us understand a poem. This analysis will further enable them to understand the topics on literary criticism prescribed for their study.

8.4 Terms to Remember:

- **imply**: entail, mean
- **explicitly**: openly, clearly
- **Carpe Diem**: take the opportunity, grab the chance, make the most of it
- **fleeting**: brief, short-lived
- **tenor**: the subject
- **vehicles**: the metaphorical terms
- **circumlocution**: roundabout substitutes in place of low, technical, or commonplace terms
- **contiguous**: neighbouring, adjacent

8.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.2.1.1

1. b) subject matter
2. a) doctrine
3. d) imagery
4. a) William Wordsworth
5. c) visual

8.2.2.1

1. b) multiple meanings
2. d) figurative
3. b) the meaning of words
4. a) the syntactical order or pattern of the words
5. b) exaggeration

8.6 Exercises

I Write a critical appreciation of the following poem with the help of the points given below.

Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on,
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.
“Break, Break, Break” by Alfred Tennyson,

Questions:

- a) What is the theme of the poem?
- b) Why do you think does the speaker say “cold gray stones”?
- c) How does the speaker react to the fisherman’s boy and to the sailor lad?
- d) Comment on the structure of the poem.
- e) Find out the examples of alliteration in the poem.

II Write a critical appreciation of the following poem with the help of the points given below.

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by—
Let us (said he) pour on him all we can;
Let the world’s riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flow’d, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:

When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in nature, not the God of nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast.

“The Pulley” by George Herbert

Questions:

- a) What is the theme of the poem?
- b) What is the significance of the title of the poem?
- c) Comment on the stanza pattern of the poem.
- d) Find out the examples of alliteration in the poem.

8.7 Further Reading

- Abrams, M. H. (2007) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (8th Edition) New Delhi: Akash Press.
- Cuddon, J. A. (2000) *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (4th Edition). London and New York: Penguin.
- Gray, Martin. (2009) *A Dictionary of Literary Terms (York Handbooks)*, Pearson Education.
- Alexander, L. G. (1966) *Prose and Poetry Appreciation for Overseas Students*. London: Longman-Green and Comp. Ltd.
- Richards, I. A. (2002) *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment*. New Delhi: UBS Publishers.
- Seturaman, V. S., C. T. Indra and T. Siraman. (1995) *Practical Criticism*. Madras: Macmillan India Ltd.
- Davis, Joseph, K. Pathea, R Broughton and Michael Wood. (1977) *Literature*. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Comp. Glenviews.
- Scott, A.F. (1982) *Close Readings: Critical Appreciation of Poetry*. London: Heinemann.
- Brooks, Cleanth. (1976) *Understanding Poetry*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Reeves, James. (1965) *Understanding Poetry*. London: Pan Books Ltd.
- Barcha, G. D. (2005) *Understanding Poetry*. Jaipur: Saraswati Publishers & Distributors.

